Protest of ‘Pennntrification’ shuts down UPenn convocation

By Workers World Philadelphia bureau

University City Townhomes, renamed the Peoples Townhomes by residents and activists, sits next to the campus of the University of Pennsylvania. On Aug. 29, over 100 residents and supporters converged on UPenn’s convocation for the 2,500 students of the incoming class of 2026, shouting down President Liz Magill with chants of “Housing is a human right” and “Stop Pennntrification.”

As Magill and other university officials gave up trying to conduct their ceremony and walked off stage, Townhome residents and other participants used bullhorns to educate the hundreds of receptive first-year students on how the university is greatly to blame for displacing people of color from the nearby area known as the Black Bottom, a historically Black neighborhood. Workers World Party member Brice Patterson denounced the university for its long history of insults and crimes against the city’s Black community.

Townhomes resident Rasheda Alexander complained that Magill had ignored their calls for a meeting for months. Calling out the university for its part in gentrifying large parts of West Philadelphia, Alexander called on the Ivy League institution to purchase the Townhomes property so residents could stay. Purchasing the homes and keeping them affordable for residents would amount to spare change from UPenn’s huge endowment, which rose 41.1% in 2021 to $20.5 billion. (tinyurl.com/3wbnh6mh)

The UC Townhomes was built in 1983 as low-income housing, as a result of protests demanding affordable housing. The Frank Rizzo administration gave the land to IBID, a subsidiary of the Altman Group, for $1 to build and manage the affordable homes through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Now Altman can reap an estimated $100 million by selling the property to developers and evicting the 68 families, many of whom include children, seniors and people with disabilities. Protests, podcasts, rallies and meetings continue in Philadelphia, as UC Townhomes residents resist the threatened eviction from their homes, now postponed to Oct. 7.

Housing is a right

The enthusiasm from the successful Aug. 29 action spilled over the next day to a Community Speak-out on the Housing Crisis, sponsored by Workers World Party. UC Townhomes resident organizers Sheldon Davids and Darlene Foremen joined other housing activists on a panel at the Calvary Center for Culture and Community.

Davids described the UC Townhomes...
The people of Jackson, Mississippi, are in critical need

This statement from Cooperation Jackson on the current water crisis in the state capital of Jackson, Mississippi, and on the organization’s goals, was posted Aug. 30 at cooperationjackson.org.

Due to climate change and decades of neglect of our city’s infrastructure, critical portions of Jackson have flooded and incapacitated our city’s water treatment facilities. As a result, the entire city has been without drinking water, and it is not clear when the system is going to be repaired and [full] water access restored.

The Governor has declared a state of emergency and is deploying the National Guard to supply water to the residents of Jackson. However, to ensure that aid is delivered directly to the people of our community in West Jackson, we are engaging in an autonomous relief effort to ensure that the homeless, the elderly and those with limited transportation in our community get the resources they need.

We are asking all of our friends, comrades and fellow cooperators to join us in the effort by contacting us at: Kwayani Balagoon Center for Economic Democracy and Sustainable Development, P.O. Box 1925, Jackson, MS 34215, at 601-355-7224 and at CooperationJackson@gmail.com.

Cooperation Jackson is an emerging vehicle for sustainable community development, economic democracy and community ownership.

Our long-term vision is to develop a cooperative network based in Jackson, Mississippi, that will consist of four interconnected and independent institutions: a federation of local worker cooperatives; a cooperative incubator; a cooperative education and training center (the Kuwasi Balagoon Center for Economic Democracy and Development); and a cooperative bank or financial institution.

Cooperation Jackson’s basic theory of change is centered on the position that organizing and empowering the structurally under- and unemployed sectors of the working class, particularly from Black and Latino communities, to build worker-organized and owned cooperatives will be a catalyst for the democratization of our economy and society overall.

Cooperation Jackson believes that we can replace the current socioeconomic system of exploitation, exclusion and the destruction of the environment with a proven alternative. The new economy is based on equity, cooperation, worker democracy and environmental sustainability to provide meaningful living-wage jobs, reduce racial inequities and build community wealth. It is a practical, scalable and replicable model and excluded workers and communities are organized in democratic organizations and social movements, they become a force capable of making transformative social advances.

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 immigrants, migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means homelessness, 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 education or anything else — unless they can pay for it.

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Join us in the fight for socialism!

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No social problems can be solved under capitalism.
Lack of affordable housing makes HUD vouchers useless

By Betsy Piette

On Sept. 1, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued its annual Fair Market Rents (FMR) report for 2023. This estimates the amount of money needed next year to cover gross rents (rents and utility expenses) on 40% of rental housing in any given area.

HUD states that it will increase FMRs across the U.S. by an average of 10%, because “rents have risen so quickly, voucher holders are increasingly unable to find units available to rent within HUD payment standards.”

HUD Secretary Marcia L. Fudge admitted that “voucher holders are unable to use those vouchers, because the value has not kept up with rapid rent increases.”

Yet how Fudge can justify HUD’s measly 10% increase is unfathomable. In 2022 the HUD voucher program was essentially worthless. Legally HUD has to give vouchers, but these mean nothing when a majority of landlords won’t accept them.

Over 400 residents of the University City Townhomes in West Philadelphia currently face eviction, because Altman Group, the corporate developer who owns the property where their 70 homes are located, refused to continue its HUD contract in October 2021. While fighting to retain their homes, UC Townhomes residents have discovered that few Philadelphia landlords will accept HUD vouchers. And the properties that can be rented with the vouchers are often unlivable.

Looming U.S. eviction crisis

UC Townhomes residents are not alone. There is a looming eviction crisis developing, which reflects the failure of the government to take steps necessary to provide adequate affordable housing for millions in need.

The U.S. Census Bureau now estimates that 3.3 million tenants could be evicted in the next two months. In 2018, before COVID-19, only 3.6 million eviction cases were filed in the entire year.

While the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the ability of millions of workers to pay their rent, soaring rental rates were the bigger problem. In June 2022, median rents in the U.S. were over $2,000 per month — the highest ever recorded. Census Bureau figures revealed that 8.5 million tenants fell behind in rent in August 2022. (People’s Dispatch, Sept. 1)

Across the U.S. rents have increased by around 25% since early 2020, with a 15% increase in 2021 alone. While there is a tendency to blame the housing “shortage,” the 2020 Census found that nearly one-in-ten homes are vacant. The shortage is in homes that are both livable and with rents that working and poor people can afford.

By January 2019 the U.S. already faced a shortage of 7 million affordable housing units for low-income renters; there were only 37 affordable rental homes for every 100 low-income tenant households. By 2022 a worker needed to earn at least $21.25 per hour to afford a modest one-bedroom home. While Biden campaigned on raising the federal minimum wage to $15 per hour, it has remained at $7.25 since 2009.

The lack of available affordable housing caused demand to skyrocket, drastically increasing rents. No administration has acted on providing sufficient affordable housing. Few U.S. cities have rent-controlled units.

Housing has become a multibillion-dollar industry, controlled by a handful of superwealthy landlords. Altman Group, which purchased the land where UC Townhomes is located for $1 in 1989, now aims to sell it for $100 million.

Protest of ‘Penntrification’ shuts down UPenn convocation

Continued from page 1

as “one of the last bastions that allows people of color to build community with easy access to services and amenities. We have reached out to pertinent shareholder and have been rebuffed time and again.

“It wasn’t until we took actions that we got attention. We are not standing at the end of the tunnel — there is still light ahead for us. Our fight is to keep people in their homes. Every human has the right to a home. This fight sets precedent.”

Darlene Foreman, a resident of the UC Townhomes for 29 years, raised three children there, where everything needed for her family was nearby. She stated: “We are hardworking families. It is not fair for the owner to do this to us. We are not asking for more time anymore, because we are not going anywhere. They [Altman Group] didn’t think we would fight back, but we are going to fight to stay.”

Alex Stewart with the Workers Revolutionary Collective and the Philadelphia area Cooperative Alliance challenged the audience to move away from compliance with situations that are not serving community people. “If we choose not to comply but follow the lead of our elders here, we will find we are more similar than different. We have to move toward building what we need.”

UPenn’s decades of racist gentrification

Cindy Loy, with Mobilization4Mumia, challenged the city’s historic use of eminent domain to evict thousands of Black families from the area where UC Townhomes is located. She described how five entities, including the University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University, Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science (now University of the Sciences), Presbyterian Hospital (now Penn Presbyterian Medical Center) and the Osteopathic Medical School (now Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine), established the West Philadelphia Corporation in 1959 to rebrand the area as “University City.”

“The WPC, as a major not-for-profit community development organization, built the University City Science Center in the 1960s in the Market Street corridor as one of five planning units designated for the University Redevelopment Area by the Redevelopment Authority,” she explained. “The RDA proceeded to expand the project by displacing the majority-Black residents in the Black Bottom.

“The University of Pennsylvania is a multimillion dollar nonprofit, paying no taxes to the city. The creation of the WPC was one of UPenn’s biggest sins.”

5 million homes needed across the U.S.

Michael Wilson with Workers World described growing up in the Black Bottom, when the universities made it easier for their employees to buy homes there and drive out the original residents. “Housing is becoming one of the biggest fights the U.S. has seen. We need 37 million housing units to meet the demand.

“Our fight is against the capitalist developers and the local governments that accommodate them. For most workers the choice boils down to paying the landlord or feeding their families. When wages average $16 an hour, there is no choice.”

Other speakers included Assantewaa Nkrumah-Ture with the Philadelphia Tenants Union and Jimi Alade with Workers World. WW members Brice Patterson and Joe Piette co-chaired the program. Nipun Kottage with UPenn medical students announced plans for a Sept. 7 “Housing Healthcare” rally.

Organizers have called for supporters to come out to City Hall at 5 p.m. on Sept. 7, a month prior to the October eviction deadline. They will hold a press conference about the current status of the campaign to save the townhomes, followed by a rally in support of the residents’ fight to save their homes. Darlene Foreman urged supporters: “Stand with us. If we win, then the entire country will win!”

Housing is health care

Over 100 health care workers from the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (HUP) — including nurses, social workers and medical students — rallied in front of the hospital on Sept. 2 in support of the Save the UC Townhomes campaign.

Residents there are fighting to remain in one of the last affordable housing complexes near the UPenn campus. The health care workers carried banners and chanted “Housing equals health care!” and “Stop Penntrification!” as they marched through campus after the rally.

— Report by Marie Kelly

At university's first-year student convocation, Townhomes resident Rashida Alexander denounces UPenn's historic role in destroying Black community, Aug. 29.

Community Speak-Out on the Housing Crisis panelists (from right to left): Sheldon Davids, of the Foreman, Alex Stewart, Cindy Loy, Assantewaa Nkrumah-Ture, Jimi Alade, Brice Patterson and Nipun Kottage, Aug. 30 in Philadelphia.
Cyber surveillance = 21st century Taylorism

By Martha Grevatt

“In the factory we have a lifeless mechanism,” Karl Marx wrote in “Capital,” whereby the worker “becomes its mere living appendage.” Although the monumental work was first published in 1867, Marx’s words speak to the condition of many workers today — and not only to factory workers. Across all sectors of the economy, bosses have introduced new, ultra-high-tech surveillance tools. “Algorithmic management,” the subject of a number of recent articles and studies, subjects workers to a new form of dehumanization that has drawn comparisons to the early 20th century’s “scientific management.”

As David Ovetz writes in the September/October issue of “The Park and Estate,” this latest use of technology as a strategy to control and manage workers is based on the use of algorithms, mathematical programs that use data to solve problems and make decisions. Rather than use human observers to collect and interpret the data, as industrial engineer Frederick Taylor did in the late 19th to early 20th centuries, algorithms do it automatically, thus taking away the observer’s capacity to think.

“Such tools rely on the recent acceleration of computer processing speed and increased data storage to allow algorithms to surveil, collect and process data about worker productivity. This process is often used interchangeably with ‘artificial intelligence,’ or AI. Algorithms directly access and evaluate workers’ performance to provide real-time directions with little-to-no human intervention.”

Amazon workers and workers are among the super-exploited workers forced to work with a monitoring device, worn on their body, that tracks their every movement and assigns a monetary value to “time off task.” Uber and Lyft drivers have similar monitors in their vehicles. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, company-issued computer terminals have been used to surveil other workers who work from home — but companies are keeping the technology in place as workers return to the office.

Not only productivity is monitored. Algorithms observe workers’ facial expression and tone of voice. Workers who look or sound less than cheerful over long hours of surveillance have their work and life under a system based on exploitation of workers who varies.
On the picket line
By Marie Kelly

Railroad Workers United rejects tentative agreement

The Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) released recommendations Aug. 16 on contract negotiations between Class One rail carriers (BNSF, CSX, Union Pacific and the other freight train corporations) and union railway workers.

Rail workers had hoped the PEB would support their legitimate concerns about safety and working conditions. These concerns include forced 24/7 on-call schedules, inadequate train crews and poor compensation for these essential workers, who have risked their own and their families’ health to keep the trains moving during the pandemic.

The freight railroad union members voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike but were bound by the late 1926 Railway Labor Act to await PEB intervention in the labor dispute. There was unprecedented unity among the 12 rail labor unions in the demands made of the carriers.

However, the leadership of four of the unions, the United Rail Unions coalition, seem ready to accept the PEB agreement. This coalition includes the Machinists (IAM), the Transportation Communications Union (TCU), TCU’s division of Railway car-workers and the Electrical Workers (IBEW).

The elected leadership’s disloyalty to the rank-and-file members prompted Railroad Workers United (RWU) to issue a statement that included a 12-point proposal on why members should vote “No.” RWU is an interunion, cross-craft solidarity caucus of freight railroad workers who call on management to recognize the unions.

The PEB failed to address the working conditions and safety issues that polled rail workers said were their top concerns. Even the offer of a seemingly generous wage increase shrinks when rising inflation is factored in and when compared to the massive profits the rail carriers have reported since the pandemic.

Given the supply chain crisis, the PEB ruling is proof that, when push comes to shove, the federal government will always side with capitalist corporations against workers. Hopefully, the RWU can convince the rail workers to continue the struggle until victory is won.

Tech workers: Labor is not for sale to apartheid Israel

Over 1,000 Google and Amazon workers have petitioned Amazon Web Services and Google Cloud executives to stop supporting (in the building construction) of the Israeli military. Dubbed Project Nimbus, it will provide cloud service for increased surveillance and oppression of the Palestinians in their homeland.

The tech workers are saying they do not want their labor for these anti-Palestinian atrocities. Google worker Ariel Koran resigned recently after being targeted by Google because of her organizing efforts against the military contract. Now a campaign called “NoTech for Apartheid” has been launched, and a rally by Google and Amazon workers will take place Sept. 8. Sign the petition in support: notechforapartheid.com.

Health care workers won’t back down

Health care workers continue to push demands for safe staffing and retention strategies. Multiple picket lines and one-day strikes are happening at health facilities all over the U.S.

Members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 829 at Sequoia Hospital in California have been on the picket line since mid-July. And 2,000 members of the National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW) began their strike in mid-August at four Kaiser Permanente facilities in California, and now there are picket lines in Hawaii. In August 96% of the members of the Michigan Nurses Association-University of Michigan Professional Nurse Council gave the thumbs up for a strike authorization, boosting the leverage of their bargaining team.

The nurses at Armstrong County Medical Hospital in Western Pennsylvania know the strength of labor power. As affiliate members of Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP), the ACMH nurses held a five-day strike in March, before heading back to the bedside and the bargaining table.

Five months later they were successful in winning a new contract that addressed staffing and retention of RNs, LPNs and technicians. “Signing the contract was a major victory for the union, its members and the community,” said Sandra Harrison, treasurer of ACMH Nurses United. “Our goal was to retain staff and recruit new nurses. Patient care was always our top priority. We are happy to announce a 25% to 29% wage increase to the members.”

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Palestinian prisoner unity forces occupation retreat

The below text is excerpted from a Sept. 1 posting by Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network.

The Palestinian prisoners’ movement announced a new victory on September 1, 2022, in which the occupation prison administration retreated from its new repression measure directed against the prisoners ... in its announcement that prisoners with life sentences and lengthy sentences would be transferred from one prison in the country to another. This repressive policy, along with a series of raids and invasions of the prisoners’ homes, was launched by the prison administration after the 2020 Freedom Tunnel, in which six Palestinian prisoners liberated themselves from Gilboa prison and the prisoners’ dedication to achieve freedom in the most difficult circumstances and the failure of the Israeli occupation’s much-hyped “prison reform” failed in every way.

Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network salutes the prisoners’ momentous and important achievement, coming one day after the victory of Khalid Awwad after 182 days of hunger strike.

The Palestinian prisoners are engaged in a daily confrontation with the jailer and the occupier and are leaders of the Palestinian resistance movement, reflecting a true unity without compulsion or corruption. The steadfastness of the prisoners themselves, their united front and the strong support of the Palestinian resistance all made it clear that this was a confrontation in which the occupier had no route forward and was forced to retreat by the unbreakable will of the prisoners’ movement.

This moment must also be an occasion for all supporters of the Palestinian people for Palestine and the Palestinian people to build on this accomplishment to escalate the campaign for the liberation of all of the nearly 10,000 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails and detention centers, and their families against violence followed Wurm. Some well-known but most unknown. Political discussion and activism around self-defense and violence against women became a very important topic of political action and discussion in the progressive movement at that time. Here are a few cases.

Joan Little was the first woman to be acquitted of murder in the name of self-defense. If convicted, she would have faced the death penalty. Little, while in prison, defended herself against a jailer who was raping her. The guard was 6 feet tall and 200 lbs. Little was 5’3” and 120 lbs. Joan Little defense committees, vocal and active, were set up across the U.S. and internationally and were a key to her victory.

Angela Davis wrote of her case: “Joan Little may not only have been the victim of a rape attempt by a white racist jailer; she has truly been raped and wronged many times over by the exploitative and discriminatory institutions of this society. All people who see themselves as members of the existing community of struggle for justice, equality and progress have a responsibility to fulfill toward Joan Little.”

“Those of us — women and men — who are Black or people of color must understand the connection between racism and sexism that is so starkly manifested in her case. Those of us who are white and women must grasp the issue of male supremacy in relationship to the racism and class bias which complicate and exacerbate it.” (Joann Little: “The Dialectics of Rape,” 1975)

Days after giving birth, Marissa Alexander, a Black woman in Florida, fired a warning shot at the wall, when her abusive, estranged husband threatened her and she was unable to escape. The mother of three was in prison for three years and under house arrest for two. She was released in 2015 following a national campaign to free her.

CoCe McDonald, a Black trans woman, and her friends were forced to defend themselves on the streets of Minneapolis. Struck in the face with a glass by a bar patron with Nazi tattoos, CeCe stabbed him in self-defense, and he died. An international defense committee was set up. McDonald served 19 months in prison and was released in January 2014. McDonald spoke around the country in support of survivors of violence and abuse, especially trans people. Workers World reporter Leslie Feinberg wrote extensively on McDonald’s case.

In California, Wendy Howard and her children had been abused by her partner since 2002. The abuse was verbal, physical and sexual. Howard tried to stop the abuse, but the district attorney did police it in 2019. The abuser attacked Wendy in her home while her children and grandchildren were there. Forced to shoot him in self-defense, she was charged with first-degree murder. Howard faces a maximum sentence of 50 years to life.

Wendy Howard’s new trial date is set for Sept. 12. During her bail hearing, the judge agreed that there was evidence of justified self-defense and lowered the bail from $1 million to $500,000. But her Kern County District Attorney still refused to drop the charges. Please go to her website: defendwendy.com and see how you can help.

Self-defense against abuse is not a crime! Trying to survive under capitalism is not a crime! End the “abuse to prison pipeline”!

This author’s aunt, Polly Taylor, initiated the Free Yvonne Wanrow campaign with her partner Marge Nelson.

**Part 2**

**Yvonne Wanrow: Victory made self-defense viable**

**By Phebe Eckfeldt**

Part 1 appeared in Workers World, Aug. 29, “Yvonne Wanrow set precedent for self-defense cases.”

In 1976, Elizabeth Schneider and Nancy Stearns, attorneys for Indigenous woman prisoner Yvonne Swan Wanrow, filed a successful motion for Wanrow with the Washington State Supreme Court. Up until this point, the law or a court had never taken into account the right of a woman to self-defense and what self-defense meant.

Before the Wanrow case, self-defense was not seen as a viable defense strategy for women who killed their abusers. The Wanrow case was intended to determine what degree of force would be necessary to use for a man facing a man, not a woman against a man.

The use of weapons was not taken into account for a conflict of women against men, or if the person believed they were in danger.

A new law instructed the jury to take into account the severity of the threat. Whether they thought the defender was actually in danger, but whether the defender themselves thought they were in danger. The judge had restricted Wanrow’s ability to use a self-defense claim. Racism and sexism also needed to be taken into account. This is what her defense committees and lawyers worked hard to do.

On the morning of Feb. 23, 1976, Wanrow sat in a Spokane, Washington, courthouse. American Indian Movement (AIM) members packed the courtroom, lawyers. American Indian Movement (AIM) members packed the courtroom, standing against the walls and filling the aisles. Outside, the sound of drumming, singing and chanting filled the air, as hundreds more AIM members and supporters took over the parking lot.

**Case became precedent setting**

Wanrow could not know it at the time, but her case would be precedent setting for women who killed themselves or their children against domestic, physical or sexual violence.

On Jan. 7, 1977, the Supreme Court of Washington ruled in her favor; a new trial was ordered. In April 1979 Wanrow pled guilty to manslaughter and second-degree assault. She received five years probation and one year of community service. She had only served three days in jail.

Reflecting on her struggle, Wanrow said, “That was what saved me, to focus on something else, minimize my personal struggles. It put me in solidarity with other Indian people. Instantly, I was sympathetic to AIM. I understood it as being a spiritual movement. American Indian Movement — that doesn’t sound like any military force to me. It sounds like the wind. It sounds like a spirit, a spirit of defense. We are in defense of our land, our life and our human rights. There is nothing wrong with self-defense, and self-defense is not a crime....” (“Fighter for Women’s Rights Tells Her Story of Self-Defense,” Seattle Post Intelligencer, April 8, 1983)

Many cases of women and gender-oppressed people fighting back and their families against violence followed Wanrow. Some well-known but most unknown. Political discussion and activism around self-defense and violence against women became a very important topic of political action and discussion in the progressive movement at that time. Here are a few cases.

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**Yvonne Wanrow**

Artist works on Gaza mural tribute to Palestinian prisoners who dug themselves out of Israeli Gilboa prison in 2021.
Abolitionists from the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement traveled from Houston to Galveston on Aug. 26 to address the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TB CJ) about issues affecting those incarcerated in Texas. TB CJ is in charge of nearly 150,000 imprisoned people. The families and friends of these people went to give voice to the issues that affect people most harmed by the horrific system.

The Houston-based abolitionists took off from the S.H.A.P.E. center, a Pan-African community center before meeting up with abolitionists from across the state. Many of them have, or have had, loved ones incarcerated within a prison system with conditions so brutal that countries like Scotland refuse to extradite its citizens to be sentenced in Texas. (The Marshall Project, March 17)

"No one should be denied their civil rights. All people, including prisoners, should be treated with dignity and respect," said Deloy Parker, executive director of S.H.A.P.E. Dignity and respect are hard to find within the prison system and are certainly not dispensed by the Board of Criminal Justice overseeing the Texas Department of Corrections, which has literally descended from, and still moves in lockstep with, the actions of enslavers and perpetrators of genocide. Founded as an era when convict leasing extended the afterlife of enslavement through forced labor, this practice continues today as those imprisoned in Texas are forced to work and paid nothing. (See “Legacy of the Sugar Land 95,” Workers World, Oct. 5, 2010)

Among the issues addressed by the abolitionists were deadly heat with no air conditioning; lack of diabetes care, mental health care and other medical care, generally; the prohibition of written communications on the faulty grounds that drugs are mailed in rather than actually being brought in by guards; the breakdown of a budget focusing on punitive measures and not rehabilitation or prison diversion programs; and an inhumane housing section called Administrative Lockup that seems to be kept a secret. (See “Extreme Weather and Mass Incarceration Deaths,” Workers World, Nov. 9, 2013)

After speaking truth to power at the meeting, the abolitionists demonstrated together with fervor outside the conference center where the board had met. The conditions in Texas prisons are deadly, especially in a pandemic. The state disproportionately and cruelly imprisons people, including Black (BIPOC) people, people with disabilities — and other people vulnerable under capitalism — in record numbers.

Texas has an incarceration rate of 840 per 100,000 people (including prisons, jails, immigration detention and juvenile justice facilities); it locks up a higher percentage of its people than most other countries on Earth.

So, Paul’s friend, who put the bullet in the back of Cherry’s head, is doing life; and then they continued to lie when the Court of Criminal Appeals said, “Hey, go back and look at this and tell us what happened.” Corey Session of the Innocence Project Texas said, “To have a district attorney do this is unprecedented.”

No one knows what a possible outcome for a new hearing for Paul Storey could be, as this has never happened: a district attorney saying in court that her prosecuting attorneys lied, hid evidence and committed perjury.

An additional factor is, of course, the pervasive, killing racism. Paul Storey is Black. Of the 194 people on death row in Texas, 75% are people of color, and 46% are Black. Fewer than 12% of people in Texas are Black.

Shankle-Grant told Workers World she is hopeful now that the DA has exposed the continuous lies, the perjury and the withholding of evidence: “Our family has always supported Paul, and finally some truth is coming out. We are cautiously optimistic for Paul.”

The facts of U.S. “legal” injustice are so numerous that they could fill many, many libraries. This is just one of the millions of shocking examples.

Abolish the whole rotten, racist system, now!

WW COMMENTARY

No justice in this system

By Gloria Rubac

The criminal justice system? NO! Never say this phrase again because there is no justice in this system! We must change our vocabulary and call it what it is — a criminal injustice system.

An example? In late August this headline appeared in Texas: “Tarrant Co. prosecutors knowingly lied under oath during death penalty case, district attorney says.”

Texas abolitionists are exhilarated after confronting the Texas Board of Criminal Justice, meeting in Galveston Aug. 26, about inhumane conditions for incarcerated people in the state.

In the U.S. incarceration extends beyond prisons and local jails to include other systems of confinement. U.S. and state incarceration rates include people held by those other parts of the justice system, so they may be slightly higher than commonly reported incarceration rates, which only include prisons and jails.

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice overseeing these concentration camps for poor and oppressed people are perpetuat-
By Victor Grossman
Karl-Marx-Allee, Berlin

August 2022 — It’s a momentous day! Not for the world, maybe not at all — it’s nothing special. But for me! Just 70 years ago, in nervous panic, I took off my U.S. Army jacket, shoes and sleeve insignia, and stepped into the swift Danube River which, at Linz in 1952, I jumped into — and the leftist, mostly Communist administration of the Eastern sector of Austria, divided from the rest of Austria, combined from two weeks in a barred but polite lockup, then drove across the river, in a surprisingly quiet Sunday landscape, as village mayor, or my two brothers-in-law as teachers and teachers’ replacements, like my father-in-law, a pro-union carpenter. The majority of FBI files about me (at 10 cents a page) revealed that J. Edgar Hoover’s boys had watched me closely, as a leftist worker, as the House Un-American Activities Committee of the U.S. Congress, based on evidence, little of what I had done, and they had been shut down. I was lucky again; the GDR was the most successful, most untroubled of all in the “East Bloc.” For the Germans, I was lucky again; the GDR was the most successful, most untroubled of all in the “East Bloc.” For the GDR, I was lucky again; the GDR was the most successful, most untroubled of all in the “East Bloc.”

Across the river

The GDR leaders, in full power, did aim at noble purposes but usually trained with Stalinist clichés, grow flexible enough to find rapport in printed or spoken word with the average, changeable citizen? There were indeed successes — but too few and far between. In the 1980s difficulties multiplied, exploiting attempts to retake East Germany. The State Security or “Stasi,” cleverly misused to increase political and economic pressure and guidance in confiscating major industry and breaking the power of those worst enemies of the world and the Germans — the Krupps, Siemens and IG Farben, and the ousting of giant Prussian landowners, the Junkers, who so often offended Germany into mass bloodshed and disaster.

In the all-powerful Politburo of the ruling [GDR] party, Hermann Axen had barely survived Auschwitz and Buchenwald (his brother and parents did not). Albert Norden [another Politburo member] had escaped to the U.S.; the Nazis killed his father, a rabbi, in Theresienstadt. In the GDR, except for three or four mild word-cliques, I met no anti-Semitism in all those 38 years. Those were divided up when needed; no-one could rarely compete in mass popularity with the Beatles and Stones, Elvis Presley and suspense-laden Hollywood B-films. Many but certainly not all East Germans appreciated the Soviets’ major role in defeating the Nazis and their persistence and genuine desire to help in saving the fighting 1930s character of the CIO unions. Grossman, who saved me from home fascism, offered no support or checkbook to pay for my daily insulin shots or maternal leaves (six months paid, [additional] if wanted) for my son, who was born in the Robeson archive, finally as a freelance journalist, lecturer and author. I was not treated as a privileged “American,” as some assume, but my last three occupations were indeed, in every state, the two-stroke Trabant cars — I really “got around” to nearly all areas, with all age levels, in all possible milieus. This may or may not seem almost Utopian. Then why did they risk their lives to leave? Why was a wall built to keep them in? Why did they vote to join West Germany — and ditch the GDR? Why did it fail?

The GDR leaders, in full power, did aim at noble purposes, and yet the GDR had probably come closer than any other country and breaking the power of those worst enemies of the world and the Germans — the Krupps, Siemens and IG Farben, and the ousting of giant Prussian landowners, the Junkers, who so often offended Germany into mass bloodshed and disaster.

Enticements, propaganda and real problems

The Russians offered lots of good culture, such as Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky; top-quality dancing; “Peter and the Wolf” and “The Cruel Plan”; “The Birth of a Nation.” They could rarely compete in mass popularity with the Beatles and Stones, Elvis Presley and suspense-laden Hollywood B-films. Such enticements, which included some of high quality, based on an unusual American mix of Anglo-Scot, Irish, Jewish, Italian and especially Black cultures, were very misused to increase political and economic pressure and guidance in confiscating major industry and breaking the power of those worst enemies of the world and the Germans — the Krupps, Siemens and IG Farben, and the ousting of giant Prussian landowners, the Junkers, who so often offended Germany into mass bloodshed and disaster.

In the 1980s difficulties increased, upward trends slowed and slipped downward. The USSR, with its own problems, offered no assistance. Such problems were difficult but, in a chang- ing world, hardly rare or insurmountable — except that every problem was utilized in the [West’s] unceasing attempts to retake East Germany, use its skilled but exploitable working class and move eastwards from there. This was the real tragedy of the GDR, created to oppose such doings, was crude enough to make the situation worse. Almost the GDR had probably come closer than any country in the world to achieving that legendary goal of abolishing poverty, while sharply decreasing the frightful...
Why the imperialists praise Gorbachev

By Sam Marcy

When the last Secretary General of the ruling Communist Party of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, died Aug. 30, the rulers of the imperialist world poured out of place and contrary to what a communist leader ought to say in such a situation. That praise could only take place if his historic role was to facilitate the dismantling of the first workers’ state. The Soviet state represented a threat to the imperialists’ ability to exploit the workers in the imperialist countries and the peoples of oppressed nationalities all over the world through their super-exploitation by world imperialism.

If they celebrate his role in history, it is because he was an instrument of the imperialists to facilitate the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the CPUSA. When Gorbachev, who became the leader of the USSR in 1985, first presented his program of Perestroika and glasnost, there was confusion in the world movement as to what this would lead to. Workers World Party’s Chairperson Sam Marcy evaluated Gorbachev’s program in real time.

Articles which Marcy wrote from 1985 to 1990 were gathered and published in his book, “Perestroika: A Marxist Critique,” which examined critically both the words of Gorbachev and the negative developments within the Soviet Union during that period, as they occurred. Anyone who wants to understand the role of the USSR in the historic shift in world’s politics would benefit from reading Marcy’s “Perestroika,” available online at workers.org/books/ along with “Soviet Socialism: Utopian or Scientific?” which analyzed the USSR after its dissolution.

The following are excerpts, with our subtitles, from an early chapter of “Perestroika,” “The history of the USSR.”

On Dec. 7, 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev delivered a speech to the United Nations General Assembly in New York which demonstrated that perestroika was central to his world view.

Gorbachev took this occasion to make a speech that raised many international issues and a number of important proposals dealing with armaments and weapons systems. However, Gorbachev did not confine himself to such matters. He threw in a virtual renunciation of the world class struggle in favor of ideological and religious incompatibility. He did not mention it. He said they “grew out of clashes of social and political interests, national enmity, ideological or religious incompatibility.” … and even today many would want these vestiges of the past to be accepted as immutable law.

“Concurrently with wars, animosities and divisions among peoples and countries, another trend with equally objective cause was growing, namely, the process of the emergence of a mutually interrelated and integral world.” … Today, further world progress is only possible through the preservation of universal human consensus as we move forward to a new world order.

The history of past centuries and millennia was a history of wars that raged almost everywhere, of frequent, desperate battles to the point of mutual annihilation. They grew out of clashes of social and political interests, national enmity, ideological or religious incompatibility. … and even today many would want these vestiges of the past to be accepted as immutable law.

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An indictment of modern capitalism

Just imagine if the Joe Biden administration and Congress had agreed to spend $54 billion to advance health care in the U.S. as COVID-19 variants continued to claim more lives. Instead of life expectancy dropping for the second year in a row, more lives would have been saved. That $54 billion would not cover the cost of a national health care system — but it would be a start. Instead, the Biden administration allocated this money to buy weapons systems to expand the war in Ukraine. Another $83 billion was spent on the Pentagon. Funding and expanding the imperial war economy, with more threats against both Russia and China, has been Biden’s priority since taking office.

Now the average U.S. life expectancy based on 2021 data is just 76.1 years — the lowest that life expectancy has been since 1969. It is the biggest decline — 2.7 years in total — in almost 100 years, since the start of the so-called “Spanish Flu” in 1918 — which actually started with U.S. soldiers being mustered in Kansas for WWI. For people of color the numbers are more dire. For Black people, average life expectancy dropped to 75.4 years. Since 2019 Indigenous people and Alaska Natives experienced a drop in life expectancy from 71.8 to 65.2 years.

Deaths from COVID-19 and increasing numbers of people dying from overdoses are recognized as the primary causes of the life expectancy declines in the U.S., including a historic shortage of qualified teachers willing to return to classrooms after their experiences during the pandemic.

Measurements of a society’s ability to provide an equitable standard of living include provisions for health care, housing, employment with livable wages, nutritious food, education and environmental security. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in early 2020, the U.S. capitalist economy was proving inadequate on all these measures.

Plunging math and reading scores

The minimum wage has remained stagnant since the early 1970s. Efforts to secure a national health care system have failed repeatedly. Now national measurements of students’ performances in reading and math have experienced a dramatic drop, according to a study released last fall by the National Assessment of Educational Progress that tests 9-year-old students found scores fell more than they have in 30 years.

Again, the COVID-19 pandemic, which made in-person learning impossible for most students during 2020 and 2021, can be faulted. But other factors contributed to the crisis in education in the U.S., including a historic shortage of qualified teachers and an escalating political culture war, as state politicians and local school boards pass policies restricting what teachers can say about U.S. history, race, racism, gender and sexual orientation and LGBTQ+ issues.

Many teachers are leaving their jobs because they refuse to comply with these white-supremacist directives. The link between drops in life expectancy and lower student test scores is more complicated than just the COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. capitalist system continues to value profits above human life and maintains its historic stranglehold over workers and oppressed peoples through systemic white supremacy. It must be smashed and replaced with a socialist system based on human needs where health care, education and living wages are prioritized. The future of humankind depends on this.

My 70 years and the departed GDR

Continued from page 8

growing rich-poor gap based on an obscene profit system. But it could not afford the immense assortment of goods — foods, apparel, electronics, vehicles and travel, which the West offered, above all the U.S. and West Germany.

The GDR citizenry took all its amazing social advantages for granted and dreamt of scarce bananas and unavailable VWs, of Golden Arch and Golden Gate — without realizing that these are largely available and affordable due to poverty, of children in West Africa or Brazil, of exploited pickers in Andalusian or Californian fields and orchards.

Some are just now beginning to realize that those billionaire giants, after cheating so many people of color, wrecking world climate and wielding ever deadlier weapons of annihilation, may soon feel impelled to squeeze and break the comfortable middle classes in their own countries. The start is already felt by many families.

I look back at my 70 years as an ex-pat and still consider myself a patriotic American — never for the USA of Morgan and Rockefeller — but for that of John Brown, Harriet Tubman, Eugene Debs and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Du Bois, Robeson, Malcolm and Martin.

I also love and admire great Germans — Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Karl Liebknecht, the great Polish-German Rosa Luxemburg — and great writers: Gotthold Lessing, Goethe, Heinrich Heine, Thomas Mann, Bertolt Brecht.

And I respect and empathize with people from all lands, my brothers and sisters, for Angela Davis, too. And not, like its ultimate stronger and victorious opponents remained unfulfilled — largely out of fear that it has not yet been sufficiently erased and forgotten.

Despite my sometime feelings in those years of despair, even at mistaken paths or missed opportunities, I still look back with a mixture of nostalgia, regret and also pride at its many hard-won achievements, in culture, in living together, in overcoming the cult of greed and rivalry, in unflinching GDR support for the Mantelas, the Allendes and Ho Chi Minhs, for Angela Davis, too. And not, like its ultimately stronger and victorious opponents remained unfulfilled — largely out of fear that it has not yet been sufficiently erased and forgotten.

I am glad I lived through them.

There are long lines as families seek out food banks throughout the U.S., here in Phoenix, Arizona, June 29.

An estimated 1 in 4 teachers have left the school system, creating a catastrophic teacher shortage. In many school districts, hundreds to thousands of teaching positions remain unfilled, as families scramble.

On top of pandemic-induced teacher exhaustion, low pay and inadequate school funding, many districts are encountering an escalating political culture war, as state politicians and local school boards pass policies restricting what teachers can say about U.S. history, race, racism, gender and sexual orientation and LGBTQ+ issues. Many teachers are leaving their jobs because they refuse to comply with these white-supremacist directives.

The link between drops in life expectancy and lower student test scores is more complicated than just the COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. capitalist system continues to value profits above human life and maintains its historic stranglehold over workers and oppressed peoples through systemic white supremacy. It must be smashed and replaced with a socialist system based on human needs where health care, education and living wages are prioritized. The future of humankind depends on this.

Low-Wage Capitalism
By Fred Goldstein

Describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class in the United States of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx’s law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval.

El capitalismo en un callejón sin salida
Por Fred Goldstein

Goldstein utiliza las leyes de la acumulación capitalista de Marx, y la tasa decreciente de ganancia, para demostrar por qué el capitalismo global ha llegado finalmente a un punto de inflexión.

Capitalism at a Dead End
Job destruction, overproduction and crisis in the high-tech era
By Fred Goldstein

Goldstein uses Marx’s laws of capital accumulation, and the diminishing rate of profit, to demonstrate why global capitalism has finally reached a tipping point.

For more information on these books and other writings by the author, Fred Goldstein, go to LowWageCapitalism.com. Available at major online booksellers.
Tens of thousands in Prague say no war, sanctions

By John Catalinotto

Some 70,000 people, according to police — and 120,000 per organizers’ estimate — marched in the Czech capital. Prague went on Sept. 2 to protest the Czech Republic government’s participation in the NATO-backed sanctions war in Ukraine against Russia. Under the slogan, “Czech Republic first,” the demonstrators objected to the sanctions against Russia and the heavy cost this places on the working class. They demanded the right of choice and self-determination, and a mass movement to turn against the war.

This newspaper has closely followed and featured reports on the organizing drives of Amazon and Starbucks workers and recent unionization campaigns at Trader Joe’s, Chipotle, REI, Apple and other companies.

On this year’s Labor Day, WW expresses solidarity with these workers, all those celebrating union pride on this day, and the unorganized and low-wage earning workers who are fighting for workplace rights and a union. We need to support the workers, especially young people, women, other gender-oppressed and LGBTQ+ people, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, Arab and immigrants, who are fighting for all workers.

Since Workers World first in 1959, the newspaper has featured coverage of workers’ struggles. Our newspaper is partisan, siding with workers and oppressed people fighting for their rights against capitalist bosses. The struggles of our class are covered in our pages and in our biweekly column “On the Picket Line.” Not only does WW write about worker organizing, but our writers and staff members join picket lines and rallies!

Your donations matter!

Workers World relies on our readers’ backing. The Nonprofit Supporter Program was founded 45 years ago to help build this socialist newspaper. Since the early 1990s, the fund has supported the website workers.org, where WW articles are posted daily and the PDF file of every weekly paper is displayed.

Unforeseen circumstances during the pandemic caused us to reduce the number of printed issues to once a month. But the weekly online newspaper has never been skipped during this 2 ½-year health crisis. And while WW’s staff is voluntary, both the printed newspaper and the website are expenses. Although many online publications require fees to read their articles, WW does not. Our articles are free to all readers.

Workers.org contains news and analysis of global and U.S. events and struggles and is a resource for political activists. The website posts firsthand accounts by workers’ activists in many countries, translated by our staff. Articles by worker-organizers keep the newspaper current on key U.S. union drives.

For a donation of $75 to $100 to $300 a year, members receive a year’s subscription and one, two or three free subscriptions to give to friends. Supporters can receive the book, “What road to socialism? (Notify us of your request.) Or read it for free at workers.org/book.

Write monthly or annual checks to Workers World.

Mail them with your name and address to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Or sign up to donate online at workers.org.

We’re grateful for your support.

¡Hacer que la educación sea gratuita!

La crisis de la deuda continúa

La crisis de la deuda de los estudiantes no terminará con las recientes “correc- ciones” bidenescas a los problemas de los préstamos estudiantiles. En 2021-2022, el promedio anual de la matrícula en las universidades públicas para un estudiante del estado era de 10,388 dólares — y 22,698 dólares para un estudiante de fuera del estado. Y los costos en las universidades privadas para el mismo promedio fueron de 38,185 dólares. (thinkimpact.com, average-college-tuition/)

Por año.

Estos costos estimados no incluyen el alojamiento, la comida ni los libros. Educación Data estimó el 15 de julio que un año de libros y materiales universitarios tiene una media de entre 628 y 1,471 dólares.

¿Qué hacer? La deuda media de los estudiantes después de cuatro años de educación post-secundaria es de 37,000 y 40,000 dólares.

Origen de la crisis

¿Cómo se ha llegado a esta lamentable situación? La respuesta es fácil: el capitalismo endémico de la esclavitud.

En 1996 el Congreso privó a la principal agencia federal de préstamos directos, el Servicio de Asesoría sobre Préstamos Estudiantiles, de sus poderes. La guerra en Vietnam para la que se había convertido en un título cada vez más caro, incluso en las universidades y colegios públicos.

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**Clínicas de metadona: acabar con el estigma y el control social**

**Por Princess Harmony**

En la década de 1930, la empresa alemana I.G. Farben buscaba una solución a la escasez de opiáceos. La empresa encontró la solución en un producto químico llamado Dolphine. Pero en realidad la etiqueta Dolophine viene de la palabra latina “dolor”, que significa dolor, y la palabra francesa “fist” que significa “físico”. Se trataba de un medicamento que acababa con el dolor.

**Desarrollo del tratamiento con metadona**

Pero el dolor era sólo una de las cosas para las que se utilizaría la metadona. Después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, el Centro de Investigación de Adicciones de la Granja de Narcóticos de EE.UU. (un centro penitenciario y de investigación financiado por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos) demostró que no había ningún peligro de abstinencia de la metadona en pacientes de heroína. Los investigadores vieron la superioridad de la metadona a los demás opioides del mismo modo que la insulina sirve a los diabéticos. Lo encontró en la metadona. La Dra. Nyswander — y los investigadores en el proyecto— desarrollaron el uso de la metadona como programa de tratamiento.

Creyendo que la adicción a los opiáceos era una enfermedad crónica —más que un fracaso moral— el Dr. Dole buscó un medicamento que sirviera a los adictos a liberarse de su adicción. Su colaboración era una pareja hecha en el cielo de la sanidad.

Por desgracia, la respuesta a este nuevo descubrimiento de que la metadona podía detener la enfermedad de la adicción no fue tan agradable. En el ámbito médico, las personas que impulsaban los modelos de tratamiento basado en la abstinencia y la privación del medicamento de los adictos no estaban dispuestos a desarrollar un modelo de tratamiento asistido con medicamentos, la buprenorfina (Suboxone, Subutex, Sublocade, Zubsolv). Los que se quejaron al Tratamiento de los Opioides para hacer permanentemente las normas de dispensación de metadona relajadas de la COVID-19 y permitir que los pacientes reciban su tratamiento de metadona en una farmacia después de la inducción a un programa. Pero hasta que esto ocurra, ¿cómo se puede liberalizar la prescripción de metadona para los pacientes que la necesitan? Hacer permanentemente la relación de las obligaciones y del control social.

En el marco del capitalismo, los adictos suelen pagar elevadas cantidades de dinero por el privilegio de participar en los programas de las clínicas de metadona. Se les agota el dinero cada vez que acuden a la clínica. El precio del tratamiento con metadona para las personas que no tienen un seguro que cubra este es otro estallido del estrangulamiento y explotación de las clínicas de metadona. La industria de la adicción gana dinero a costa del sufrimiento humano; potencialmente más de 200 dólares por visita a la clínica. Si un médico de atención primaria pudiera recetar metadona, el control y el beneficio sobre la vida del adicto se reduciría y éste podría reincorporarse realmente a la sociedad. Si la metadona se administrara bajo el control de un médico de atención primaria, más personas que la necesitan podrían obtenerla, y más personas no tendrían que sufrir sobredosis y muerte por adicción. Hacer permanentemente la relación de las obligaciones y del control social. No es el único problema que enfrentamos en las clínicas de metadona. Los pacientes de color y a personas que viven en la pobreza son etiquetados como “drogadictos” que obtienen una dosis de metadona en la clínica. Fomentar la comprensión de que los pacientes de metadona son personas normales que reciben medicamento para una enfermedad crónica de larga duración, como la diabetes. Sin embargo, hay resistencia a los esfuerzos por liberalizar la prescripción y dispensación de metadona. La Asociación Americana para el Tratamiento de la Dependencia de Opioídes, que sirve a los intereses del sistema de clínicas de metadona, se opone incluso a las reformas más pequeñas. El grupo se opone a la OTAA porque, según sus líderes, provoca un aumento del “desierto” o de la distribución ilícita de metadona. Pero la razón por la que la metadona se desvía es porque la gente que la necesita no puede obtenerla debido a los obstáculos del sistema actual. Se exige a los pacientes que tengan opioides en su sistema, a pesar de que estarían en abstinencia para necesitar ese medicamento; se exige a los pacientes que acepten el asesoramiento, aunque no puedan reunirse debido a otras responsabilidades. De hecho, es más fácil conseguir heroína, fentanilo y sus análogos en las calles que entrar en un programa de metadona. Los marxistas y los que están en recuperación —deben trabajar por la liberalización de la metadona. La gente podría conseguir metadona sin que se les mirara con desventajas. Las personas que buscan metadona se merecen algo mejor. ¿