

Protest of ‘Penntification’ 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 Penntification.”

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



UC Townhomes residents and supporters take over UPenn first-year students’ convocation, Aug. 29.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

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 fight to stop evictions continues

For over a year, 68 Black, Latinx and Indigenous families have been fighting to stop their evictions by IBID Associates.

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

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Labor Day: Amazon and Starbucks workers and supporters march in solidarity, Sept. 5, New York City.

WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

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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: Kuwasi Balagoon Center for Economic Democracy and Sustainable Development, P.O. Box 1932, Jackson MS 39215, 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 interdependent 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



People of Jackson appeal for help, watched over by a mural of the historic anti-lynching activist and journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett.

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 democratic alternative. An alternative built on equity, cooperation, worker democracy and environmental sustainability to provide meaningful living-wage jobs, reduce racial inequities and build community wealth. It is our position and experience that when marginalized and excluded workers and communities are organized in democratic organizations and social movements, they become a force capable of making transformative social advances. □

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, Sasha Mazumder

Copyediting and Proofreading: Paddy Colligan, S. Hedgecoke

Contributing Editors: LeiLani Dowell, G. Dunkel, K. Durkin, Sara Flounders, Gloria Rubac

Mundo Obrero: Carlos Vargas

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Lack of affordable housing makes HUD vouchers useless

By **Betsey 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 which 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 prop-

erties 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 3.8 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 1983, now aims to sell it for \$100 million. □

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



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

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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 shareholders and 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 alike, with more similarities than differences. We have to move toward building what we need.”

UPenn’s decades of racist gentrification

Cindy Lou, 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 5 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. 2 “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!” □



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

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



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Community Speak-Out on the Housing Crisis panelists (from right to left): Sheldon Davids, Darlene Foreman, Alex Stewart, Mike Wilson, Cindy Lou, Asantewaa 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 “Dollars and Sense”: “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, thanks to computer processing. ...

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

Amazon and fast-food workers are among the super-exploited workers forced to work with a monitoring device, worn on their body, that tracks their every movement and notes any and all “time off task.” Uber and Lyft drivers have similar monitors in their vehicles.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, company-issued computers 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 the phone can accrue negative points that can lead to discipline.

Surveillance has even entered the caregiving professions. The Aug. 14 New York Times reported that counsel-

ors, social workers and hospice chaplains are being electronically monitored for how much time they spend with each patient. Two years ago Rev. Margo Richardson’s employer “started requiring chaplains to accrue more of what it called ‘productivity points.’ A visit to the dying: as little as

one point. Participating in a funeral: one and three-quarters points. A phone call to grieving relatives: one-quarter point.”

The practice has racist implications. A study this year by the Washington Center for Economic Growth states: “Modern workplace surveillance in the United States is rooted in a historic distrust of workers, particularly low-wage workers, with racist foundations in slavery and following exploitative labor practices. In ‘Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness,’ for instance, sociologist Simone Brown of the University of Texas at Austin traces the surveillance, measuring and marking of enslaved Black people in the United States through to present-day technologies of surveillance and biometrics classifications.”

Taylorism on steroids

Frederick Winslow Taylor published “The principles of scientific management” in 1909. Following his “principles,” time-study engineers observed workers, monitoring their production speed with a stopwatch, or photographed and filmed workers to assess how they could produce more products in the same amount of time. Workers were ordered to eliminate “superfluous” movements and work more intensely.

Henry Ford enthusiastically implemented Taylorism around the same time that he introduced the assembly line to automobile manufacturing.

Time studies were still being conducted when this writer took a job in the auto industry in 1987. The data accumulated was then weaponized against the workforce by imposing higher production quotas — with no additional pay, of course. These old methods of exploitation were still being employed even as robotic technology was slashing the number of workers needed to build vehicles.

But now even the hated time-study manager has been replaced by electronic monitoring of worker movement.



Quote is from an anonymous worker.

Management jobs are being cut in favor of cyber-bosses. Workers can literally be disciplined and fired algorithmically, without any human being involved in the process. Sometimes, they don’t even know they are being surveilled.

Through oppressive cyber-spying workers are given a not-too-subtle message: Work harder and faster or be fired! This is the most modern form of what Marx, in “Capital,” called “increasing intensity of labor” — making the work-

ing class work more intensely for the same wage. The goal is to produce more “surplus value.” In a given workday, in a certain number of hours, a worker produces enough value to cover the cost of wages and benefits. However, the worker has to keep working beyond that time, producing a “surplus” above what the worker needs to survive. This surplus labor time doesn’t cost the capitalist one penny; the capitalist pockets the surplus in the form of profits.

Surplus value goes up in direct proportion to the degree that the labor process can be intensified.

Marx identified another way to increase surplus value as “increasing the productiveness of labor.” Then, as now, new technology was used to reduce the number of workers needed to do the same work. This process, in tandem with the intensification of labor, continues today with the most modern, demeaning, job-slaying technology imaginable.

But the drive for profit is producing the force to counter it: a young, class-conscious and militant working class that is determined to win union representation at Starbucks, Amazon and numerous other big capitalist chains. As history demonstrates, workers need united action — through unions — to set limits on speedups, including the new cyber-speedups.

Ultimately, to end the dehumanization that defines work and life under a system based on exploitation of one class by another, the working class must fulfill its historic role as the gravedigger of capitalism. □

Ohio teachers win through mass solidarity

By Otis Grotewohl

In a climate of recent worker mobilizations and fights, teachers in two different Ohio school districts started their school year off in a class battle against their employers. The teachers of both districts are represented by the Ohio Education Association (OEA), an affiliate of the National Education Association.

Columbus teachers strike and win

The first labor action of Ohio teachers was a week-long strike of roughly 4,000 teachers in the state capital of Columbus, which is the state’s largest school district. It was the first teachers’ strike in that city since 1975. The strike ended when a majority of Columbus Education Association members ratified a three-year contract Aug. 28.

Teachers were not intimidated by an unknown assailant who attacked the picket line with a BB gun on Aug. 23.

Lack of air conditioning and heating was one of the major points of contention between the union and the school board. The new contract grants teachers a 4% raise for the next three years and a written commitment for climate-controlled temperatures in all areas of the school buildings by 2025-2026.

The contract reduces class sizes and restricts outsourcing of teaching positions to private corporations. And it limits the number of schools that music, art and physical education teachers — who teach in more than one school — can be assigned to.

Teachers in Niles fight for fair contract

Teachers in the Northeast Ohio town of Niles — a suburb of Youngstown — were poised to go out on strike Sept. 1, the expiration date of their three-year contract. At the 11th hour, just before midnight, members of the Niles Education Association were able to pressure school

board officials to finally offer a fair contract.

The number one issue was salaries. Niles is the second largest school district in Trumbull County, but according to union spokesperson Traci Kempe, “the base salary for Niles teachers is the second lowest” in the county. (WKBN, Aug. 31) This is expected to change with the tentative agreement ratified by members on Aug. 31.

In the buildup to a potential strike, the union accused the school board of Unfair Labor Practices. Some school officials had even openly encouraged NEA members to “fire” the union. In an act of coercion, the district’s chief financial officer sent an email to Niles teachers that said they could continue working during a strike without crossing a picket line and reminded them they would lose pay and benefits if they did strike. (WFMJ, Aug. 31)

Teachers were not intimidated by an unknown assailant who attacked the picket line with a BB gun on Aug. 23.

In anticipation of a work stoppage, the school board voted to hire the Michigan-based union-busting company Huffmaster Crisis Response. Huffmaster professionalizes strikebreaking and has a history of using violence against picketers. The Teamsters sued Huffmaster for physically assaulting a member during a strike outside a Portland Nabisco plant in 2021.

Roughly 200 teachers and their supporters packed the board meeting the night before the contract was set to expire. The police were called when the angry crowd chanted in solidarity with the teachers, following divisive comments from the school superintendent. (Tribune Chronicle, Aug. 31)

NEA President Tracy Ledsome shared her thoughts with Workers World: “The amount of solidarity we have been shown from other union members locally and statewide has been overwhelming. The support we have received from the OEA and the NEOEA [North Eastern Ohio Education Association] is a true testament to why we belong and the importance of continuing to stand together and fight for what’s right.”

While teachers in one Ohio school district were able to win significant gains through a strike, and teachers in another were triumphant just short of one, neither local union’s victory would have been possible without collective solidarity and support.

The writer attended Niles City Schools from 1989 until he graduated in 2001. During that period, Niles teachers went on strike several times.



After voting to strike, Columbus teachers stream out of the Greater Columbus Convention Center with picket signs.

Labor Day sip-ins for Portland Starbucks workers

By Maddi Johnson

Sept. 5 — When it comes to Starbucks, Portland has the highest unionization density of any city in the U.S. Local supporters of Starbucks workers kept the pressure on when they attended 14 “sip-ins” over the long Labor Day weekend. These events, organized by Portland DSA, show workers and managers alike that the people support unionization.

Quinton, a regional union organizer fired a few years ago in retaliation for his efforts, spoke to roughly 20 people at the Westmoreland location, which was the first Starbucks store in the metro area to unionize. Their speech touched on the necessity of labor momentum here in Starbucks’ backyard, the Pacific Northwest.

The Macadam location has now heeded the call, voting almost unanimously to unionize just two weeks ago. Milo, a 6-year Starbucks veteran, told Workers World that the vote was to fight against poor representation, understaffing and



WW PHOTO: LYN NEELEY

At the Macadam Starbucks in Portland, Oregon, Maddi Johnson, on the right, and Milo, second from the right.

alienation. “It’s kinda sad because I remember when I was trained, it was really great ... in terms of the connection with coffee and the culture around coffee — I feel like it was stronger. And I feel like that’s kind of died away a little bit.”

Labor doesn’t have to be soul-crushing; it’s capitalism that makes it that way. Workers like Milo want to connect with their craft, their community and each other, but they can’t do that when they’re treated as expendable.

Solidarity with Starbucks Workers United! □

New York City march backs unions at Amazon, Starbucks

In the first of a series of solidarity actions with workers’ organizing drives this September, hundreds of workers and supporters answered a joint call by the

Amazon Labor Union and Starbucks Workers United to march for union recognition on Labor Day. They gathered outside Starbucks owner Howard Schultz’s Manhattan luxury apartment (in the building converted to condos for the wealthy from St. Vincent’s Hospital) in the West Village to shout, “Union busting is disgusting” and call on management to recognize the unions.

The demonstrators then marched to Amazon owner Jeff Bezos’s penthouse dwelling on 26th Street and Fifth Avenue; afterward, they wound up the action in Times Square. ALU leader Chris Smalls, speaking at the first site, called upon the newly formed unions to strike together to win. Veteran labor organizers and youthful activists have rallied behind the organizing efforts of Starbucks and

Amazon workers and others fighting to form unions.

— Report by John Catalinotto



WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

Chris Smalls, president of Amazon Labor Union, with Starbucks workers at CEO Howard Schultz’s penthouse, New York City, Sept. 5, on Labor Day.



WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

Marchers hauled a giant rat to taunt Amazon owner Jeff Bezos in front of his penthouse apartment on Fifth Avenue.

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 1926 Railway Labor Act to wait for 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 from all crafts, all carriers and all unions across North America. (tinyurl.com/yz58ee64)

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 doing business with the apartheid Israeli government. In particular, workers denounce Google’s \$1.2 billion contract with 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 tech giants to promote further attacks on Palestinians, like the recent Israeli raids on six Palestinian human rights groups. Google worker Ariel Koran resigned recently after being targeted by Google because of her organizing efforts against the military contract. Now a campaign called “No Tech 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 15% to 23% wage increase to the members.”

PASNAP President Maureen May added, “This contract, with its emphasis on measures to improve retention, acknowledges the contributions of frontline caregivers and by prioritizing their well-being, also prioritizes patient care. We are thrilled.” (cranberryeagle.com, Aug. 26) □



Part 2 Yvonne Wanrow: Victory made self-defense viable

By Phebe Eckfeldt

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

In 1976, Elizabeth Schneider and Nancy Stearns, attorneys for Indigenous woman prisoner Yvonne Swan Wanrow, filed a supplemental brief 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 jury in her case was instructed 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 not 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, courtroom, flanked by her two women 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 defended 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 defending themselves 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:

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

Angela Davis wrote of her case: “Joann 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 Joann 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 strikingly 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.

CeCe 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 mounted. 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 writer Leslie Feinberg wrote extensively on McDonald’s case. (workers.org/2012/12/5776/)

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 and police did nothing. 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 the 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.



Yvonne Wanrow

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 1 September 2022, in which the occupation prison administration retreated from its new repressive measures imposed upon the prisoners ... in its announcement that prisoners with life sentences and lengthy sentences would be transferred from one prison to another, every six months.

This repressive policy, along with a series of raids and invasions of the prisoners’ rooms, was launched by the prison administration after the 2021 Freedom Tunnel, in which six Palestinian prisoners liberated themselves from Gilboa prison, highlighting both Palestinians’ dedication to achieve freedom in the most difficult circumstances and the failure of the Israeli occupation’s much-heralded “high-security” system. ...

Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network salutes the prisoners’ movement on this important achievement, coming one day after the victory of Khalil Awawdeh 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 compromise or corruption. The steadfastness of the pris-

oners 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 justice and liberation for Palestine and the Palestinian people to build on this accomplishment to escalate the campaign for the liberation of all of the nearly 5,000 Palestinian prisoners, part and parcel of the liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea.

Statement No. 6 – Issued by the Higher National Emergency Committee of the Palestinian Prisoners’ Movement

Dear people of our great nation ...

The Zionist enemy and its prison management agents realized that the prisoners are ready to pay the highest price for their dignity and rights. And that, behind them, is a people and a resistance willing to pay the highest price in order to support their fighters in the prisons of the Zionist occupation. This is why the enemy decided to retract its unjust decisions and arbitrary measures against your imprisoned sons and daughters and to give in to their demands.

In this regard, we are sending you the following messages from behind bars, from the arenas of confrontation in the dungeons of imprisonment:

First: We decided to stop the open



CREDIT: MAHMUD HAMS

Artist works on Gaza mural tribute to Palestinian prisoners who dug themselves out of Israeli Gilboa prison in 2021.

hunger strike after the prison administration retracted its order to periodically arbitrarily transfer prisoners with life sentences.

Second: We extend our heartfelt thanks to all of our people and to all the free people of the world who supported us in these steps, and our thanks are also extended to our factions for their high level of willingness to support our struggle.

Third: If the enemy retreats from its measures, if this indicates anything, it is that this enemy does not retreat from its

aggression except when it sees our steadfastness and unity that is continually embodied within the dungeons of imprisonment, and we hope that this unity will be extended and realized in all arenas of the homeland in confrontation of the occupation.

Fourth: We salute the prisoners for their patient steadfastness and constant readiness to confront aggression, who have shown the highest degree of willingness to sacrifice in order to preserve their dignity and rights. ... □

Texas prison abolitionists confront the state

By Workers World Houston bureau

Abolitionists from the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement traveled from Houston to Galveston on Aug. 26 to address the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ) about issues affecting those incarcerated in Texas. TBCJ 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 Deloyd 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 Criminal Justice, which is literally descended from, and still moves in lockstep with, the actions of enslavers

and perpetrators of genocide. Founded as the Texas Department of Corrections in 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, 2019)

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, July 20)

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 brutally imprisons people of color, LGBTQ+ 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.

system, so they may be slightly higher than the 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-



PHOTO: THE TEXAS DEATH PENALTY ABOLITION MOVEMENT

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

ing actual crimes against humanity. The Texas abolitionists — in solidarity against that violence — won’t stop fighting prisons and prison brutality until the afterlife of enslavement is abolished. □

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.”



Paul Storey with mother Marilyn Shankle-Grant during a visit on Texas death row.

Let me tell you about Marilyn Shankle-Grant’s son, Paul Storey. Paul and a friend were accused of murder and robbery, and both were offered a deal of life in prison if they pleaded guilty. Paul’s buddy took the deal, but Paul did not. Why? Because he did not kill the victim, Jonas Cherry.

So, Paul’s friend, who put the bullet in the back of Cherry’s head, is doing life; and Paul Storey is on death row, sentenced under Texas’ awful Law of Parties.

Four states other than Texas have “law of parties” statutes. But Texas is the only state that applies it in capital cases, making it the only state in the country where people can face the death penalty even though they didn’t actually kill the victim, according to the Death Penalty Information Center. (tinyurl.com/5e7uf54w)

In a totally surprising move in late August, Tarrant County District Attorney

Sharen Wilson filed a brief with the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals asking to grant a new hearing for Paul Storey. As it turns out, the two prosecuting attorneys lied in the trial, telling the jury that Cherry’s family wanted the death penalty, when it was them, the prosecutings attorneys, who wanted the death penalty.

These prosecutors had known since before the trial that Cherry’s parents were opposed to the death penalty. They withheld this information from Storey’s lawyers, which is against the law. The two prosecutors, who were serving in the Tarrant County District Attorney’s office, knowingly lied during closing statements.

Withholding exculpatory information and telling lies in a criminal trial is — criminal.

Current DA Wilson says the two prosecutors continued to lie under oath when the issue came to light: “They blatantly lied.” Those are her words in the filing. (tinyurl.com/yc3j8xjh) Blatantly lied 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 prosecutors 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! □



For a first-hand account, see interviews with Attica organizer and survivor Che Nieves, in Workers World, Aug. 11, 18, and 20, 2021: ‘The Black Panthers educated me on my oppression,’ ‘I carried the legacy of struggle in prison’ and ‘50 years later, Attica hasn’t changed’ at workers.org.



“LEONARD PELTIER’S WALK TO JUSTICE”





A SPIRITUAL WALK FROM MINNEAPOLIS MN TO WASHINGTON D.C.
TO SEE THE RELEASE OF ELDER AND POLITICAL PRISONER LEONARD PELTIER

These are dates of of future events. Please follow the Facebook page for time, location and event detail updates. No drugs, alcohol, weapons or anyone under the influence at any walk events.
<https://www.facebook.com/LeonardPeltierWalkToJustice/>


SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

8/31	Free Leonard Peltier Rally	Minneapolis, Minnesota
9/1	Sunrise Ceremony and Beginning of the Walk	Franklin Avenue Minneapolis, Minnesota
9/5	Justice for Leonard Peltier Rally and Prayer	Federal Courthouse Eau Claire, Wisconsin
9/17	Free Leonard Peltier Rally and Prayer	Madison, Wisconsin
9/24	Leonard Peltier’s Walk to Justice Rally and Prayer	Chicago, Illinois
10/1	Rally and Prayer for Justice in an Unjust Justice System	Southbend, Indiana
10/11	Free Leonard Peltier Rally and Prayer	Federal Building Toledo, Ohio
10/19	Justice for Elder Leonard Peltier Rally and Prayer	Anthony J. Celebrezze Federal Building Cleveland, Ohio
10/28	Free Leonard Peltier Rally and Prayer	Joseph F. Weis, Jr. U.S. Courthouse Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
11/14	Free Elder Leonard Prayer and Rally	Capital Building Washington D.C.
11/18	Free Leonard Peltier Concert, Rally and Prayer	Washington D.C.






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RURAL

My 70 years and the departed GDR

By Victor Grossman
Karl-Marx-Allee, Berlin

August 2022 — It’s a momentous day! Not for the world — for which 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 still-occupied Austria, divided the U.S. Zone from the USSR Zone. Although very wet at this short sector, it was part of the long Iron Curtain. And I was swimming across it in what most [U.S.] Americans would consider a very wrong direction!

It was not really my free choice! In 1950 the McCarran Act ruled that all members of a long list of “Communist Front” organizations must immediately register as foreign agents. I had been in a dozen: American Youth for Democracy, the Anti-Fascist Spanish Refugee Committee, the Southern Negro Youth Congress (I gave them a dollar in solidarity), the Sam Adams School, the American Labor Party, Young Progressives and — most heinous of all, the Communist Party. The maximum penalty for not registering could be \$10,000 — PER DAY! — and five years in prison!! Neither I nor anyone else bowed to that monstrosity!

But in January 1951, during the Korean War, I was drafted — and required to sign that I was never in any of those on that long, long list. Should I risk years in prison by admitting my infamy? Or sign and, by staying mum, hope to survive two army years with no one checking up? I signed.

However, they did check up! Decades later, thanks to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 1,100 pages (!) of FBI files about me (at 10 cents a page) revealed that J. Edgar Hoover’s boys had watched me closely, as a leftist Harvard student (the names of seven informants were redacted) and as a worker in Buffalo, where I had hoped to help in saving the fighting 1930s character of the CIO unions.

In August 1952 a Pentagon letter listed seven of my memberships and ordered me to “report on Monday to HQ.” The threatened penalty for my perjury: up to five years, perhaps in Leavenworth. By then dozens of Communists had been indicted; many were sent to prison. I had luckily been sent not to Korea but to Bavaria, next to Austria. With no one to advise me, I chose the Danube.

Across the river

Across the river, in a surprisingly quiet Sunday landscape, in no way like an Iron Curtain, the Soviets kept me two weeks in a barred but polite lockup, then drove me north to the German Democratic Republic, East Germany. I was lucky again; the GDR was the most successful, most untroubled of all in the “East Bloc.” For the next 38 years, as an American, raised with a broad, varied education (six public schools, Bronx Science, Dalton, Fieldston, Harvard), I watched, with left-leaning but not dogmatically limited eyes, the rise and then fall of this Western outpost of socialism (or Communism, “state socialism,” “totalitarianism” or whatever).

I found neither Utopia nor, back then or ever, the hunger, poverty and general misery the American media might have led me to expect. Even in the crucial, difficult year 1952-1953, less than eight years after the war, while shop offerings were limited, lacking variety, style and often just that very item you were looking for, they were stocked well enough with the basics.

East Germany was much smaller and, in terms of industry and natural resources, far poorer than West Germany. It had borne over 90% of the war reparations burden; the heavily destroyed USSR did not drop these until 1953.

The GDR lacked the huge investment possibilities for war criminal monopolies like Krupp, Siemens, Bayer or BASF, whose factories it nationalized, as well as the politically aimed assistance of the Marshall Plan. Large numbers of its scientific, management and academic staffs, mostly pro-Nazi, had fled from the occupying Red Army — and the leftist, mostly Communist administrators who came with it — and got jobs with their former bosses, who were soon prospering again along the Rhine and Ruhr. This seriously weakened the [GDR] economic revival, but I felt happy that the war criminals were gone.

As an ardent (and Jewish) anti-fascist, I rejoiced to find that the entire atmosphere was anti-Nazi! Unlike West Germany, the schools, universities, courts, police

departments, all were cleansed of the swastika crowd, even when at first this meant new, barely trained replacements, like my father-in-law, a pro-union carpenter as village mayor, or my two brothers-in-law as teachers. My spouse trembled when she was reminded of her brutal teachers before 1945. In the altered East German schools, corporal punishment was immediately forbidden.

Of course there were countless problems in a country ruled by Hitler & Co. for 12 years, where cynicism was widespread and Stalin’s cultural views and anti-Semitism exerted undue influence until his death in 1953. Luckily, the aged Communist leader Wilhelm Pieck was able to shield the GDR to a large degree in this regard. And from the start, anti-Nazi leftists, often returned Jewish exiles, became leaders in the entire cultural scene — theater, music, opera, literature, journalism and film, where true masterpieces were created, often against fascism, but boycotted and hence unknown in West Germany and the U.S.



PHOTO: GABRIELE SENFT

Author Victor Grossman (left) greets Pete Seeger, folk singer and left political activist, at Schönefeld Airport, GDR, in 1986.

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-clichés, I met no anti-Semitism in all those 38 years. Those still infected with fascist ideology were careful, except with family or buddies, to keep their mouths shut. Which was okay with me!

Step by step our living standard — of my very dear spouse, Renata Kschiner Grossman, who saved me from homesickness, our two sons and myself — kept improving, like that of nearly everyone in the GDR, as [the country] pulled itself up by its own thin bootstraps. Impressing me most as an American: no layoffs, no unemployment; there were jobs for everyone.

No student debt

Rents averaged less than 10% of most incomes; evictions were forbidden by law. In the early years, large apartments were divided up when needed; no-one slept in the streets or went begging. Food pantries were unneeded; even the word was unknown. So was student debt. All education was free, and monthly stipends covered basic costs, making all jobbing while at college unnecessary.

A monthly medical tax on wages or fees (maximum 10%) covered everything. In my case, nine (free) hospital weeks with hepatitis, plus four weeks at a health spa to recuperate, and four more a year later in Karlsbad. My spouse had three rheumatism cures, four weeks each, in the Polish and Harz mountains.

All costs were covered, and we also got 90% of our salaries. Prescribed drugs were fully covered, also den-

tal care, glasses, hearing aids; I had no need of my wallet or checkbook to pay for my daily insulin shots or my 10-year active pacemaker. Nor for my spouse’s two maternal leaves (six months paid, [additional] if wanted with guaranteed job). No charge for full child care, participation in sports, summer camps, nor for contraception aid nor for free abortions after a new law was passed in 1982. So many fears were gone — so many were totally unknown!

I participated fully in the generally very normal life. First as a factory worker, an apprentice lathe operator, then a student, editor, director of a new Paul/Eslanda 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 meant that — in my series of four little two-stroke Trabant cars — I really “got around” to nearly all areas, with all age levels, in all possible milieus.

This may really seem almost Utopian. Then why did some 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?

There were all too many reasons. East Germany was occupied by a country it had been taught to hate, whose soldiers had fought it hardest [and] were often violent in the first weeks and were poorer and more difficult to love than prosperous, hence generous, gum-chewing GIs, who came from a wealthy, undamaged homeland.

Many but certainly not all East Germans appreciated the Soviets’ major role in defeating the Nazis and their 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 Farbens, and the ousting of giant Prussian landowners, the Junkers, who so often officered 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 Cranes Are Flying.” But these 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 cleverly misused to increase political and economic influence and power in the world, especially in the East Bloc. They were paired, above all in Germany, with clever propaganda adapted from both Goebbels and that master peddler-publicist of anything from toothpaste to capitalism, Edward L. Bernays [known as the “father of propaganda”].

While GDR leaders, in full power, did aim at noble goals, how could such elderly men, hardened by years

of life-and-death struggle against Nazi murderers 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 increased, upward trends slowed and slipped downward. The USSR, with its own problems, offered no assistance. Such problems were difficult but, in a changing 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. The State Security or “Stasi,” created to oppose such

doings, was crude enough to make the situation worse.

And yet 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,

Continued on page 10

Why the imperialists praise Gorbachev

By Sam Marcy

When the last Secretary General of the ruling Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, died Aug. 30, the rulers of the imperialist world powers made it clear that they considered him their hero. 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 nations all over the world that are super-exploited by world imperialism.

If they celebrate his role in history, it is only because his leadership of a grouping inside the Soviet Union and inside the CPSU facilitated the USSR's collapse and in turn facilitated the imperialists' ability to exploit the majority of humanity.

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 history of the 20th century 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," "Gorbachev's World View," that critiques the talk Gorbachev made at the United Nations in December 1988, revealing the bourgeois ideology expressed by someone who was supposedly a Marxist leader. We publish this selection with the confidence that it will attract a new generation of working-class readers — to learn from history and develop a new and successful communist leadership that can help bring humanity through the next series of capitalist crises to a better, socialist world.

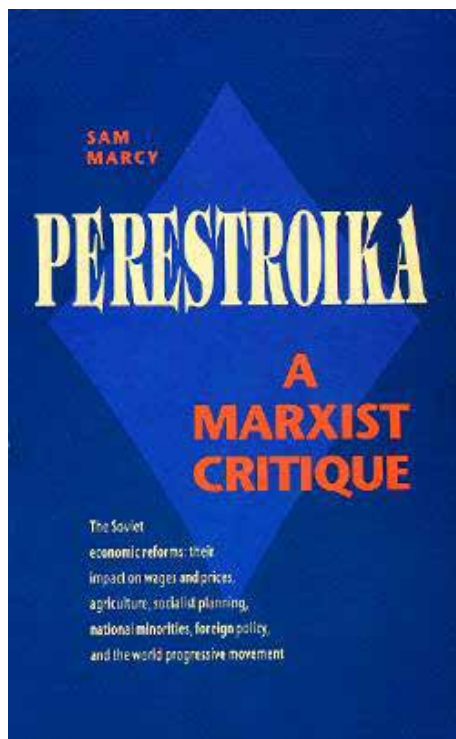
— Note by John Catalinotto

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 the 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, of Marxism's principal tenets and world conceptions. He took it on himself to present a sociological thesis on world history and social developments that proposed to answer the question: "What will mankind be like when it enters the 21st century?"

His answer projected a fantastic new world order which would have been fitting for a bourgeois liberal from one of the capitalist countries but was altogether out of place and contrary to what a communist leader ought to say in such a situa-



tion. Nor had this new world historic view been approved first by any conference or congress of the Soviet Communist Party.

We cannot repeat [Gorbachev's whole Dec. 7] speech here but will quote especially from those sections dealing with "universal human values":

"Today, we have entered an era when progress will be shaped by universal human interests. ... The awareness of this dictates that world politics, too, should be guided by the primacy of universal human values. ...

"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. ...

"But concurrently with wars, animosities and divisions among peoples and countries, another trend with equally objective causes was gaining momentum — the process of the emergence of a mutually interrelated and integral world. ... Today, further world progress is only possible through a search for universal human consensus as we move forward to a new world order ...

"We are, of course, far from claiming to be in possession of the ultimate truth. But, on the basis of a thorough analysis of the past and newly emerging realities, we have concluded that it is on those lines that we should jointly seek the way leading to the **supremacy of the universal human idea** over the endless multitude of centrifugal forces, the way to preserve the vitality of this civilization, possibly the only one in the entire Universe." [Emphasis in Gorbachev's original speech]

Where is this true now?

Where is it true that we are entering an era in which world politics are shaped by universal human interests? Can this be seen in the attitude of the U.S. toward Nicaragua, Cuba, Haiti, Afghanistan, South Africa, the Philippines, the Middle East? Of course, the extreme right in the bourgeois camp interpret this view as nothing more than a communist trick. The more moderate among the bourgeoisie, while they welcome Gorbachev's renunciation of the class struggle, as they would say "at least on paper," are nevertheless giving up not one inch in the struggle, except insofar as some military reductions may be mutually advantageous.

Nor have Reagan, Bush, Thatcher,

Mitterrand or other imperialist leaders responded to this speech with any concessions on bourgeois ideology and their world view.

Each class has its own point of view

There is not today and never has been any consensus on what universal human interests are. Each class and each social grouping evaluates human interests from its own point of view. If Gorbachev knows of classes and groups which have surrendered their interests in deference to universal human values, it would be very illuminating to learn of them. ...

[Referring to Gorbachev's statement] it is difficult to find a historical summary anywhere, even in bourgeois texts, which so completely disregards the opening sentence of Part I of the Communist Manifesto: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."

Marx revealed the motive force

What Marx did was to show the motive force behind these struggles. The springboard for them all was class antagonism, the class struggle of the exploiters and oppressors on one side and the oppressed on the other. Nobody has put it better than did Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto: "Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes."

According to Gorbachev, these struggles are not class struggles at all. If they are, he didn't mention it. He said they "grew out of clashes of social and political interests, national enmity, ideological or religious incompatibility." But all of Marxism teaches that national enmity, ideological and religious incompatibility are merely manifestations of class interests and not the other way around. All these clashes, including imperialist wars, grow out of contradictory class interests, out of the division of society into antagonistic classes and into oppressing imperialist nations versus oppressed peoples. ...

But it [Gorbachev's thesis] must be dealt with now, if only because the views represented in this thesis come from the head of the Soviet Union, where Marxism is a state doctrine, and hence what he says is regarded as a representation of Marxism. It would be altogether different if one could say, well, this is just a diplomatic maneuver to conciliate the imperialist bourgeoisie. However, they show no inclination whatever to be conciliated by any kind of political document.

U.S. unveiled the Stealth bomber

Indeed, virtually at the same time that Gorbachev was in New York for this speech, the U.S. government unveiled the Stealth bomber. Shortly thereafter

Reagan dispatched a naval armada to the Mediterranean, opened an offensive naval action against Libya and shot down two of its reconnaissance planes.

Gorbachev spoke of "the emergence of a mutually interrelated and integral world." This is a bourgeois cliché which has been repeated over and over but does more to confuse than to enlighten about trends in the contemporary world. There is no question that spectacular advances in electronics, aerospace and countless other developments have demonstrated that the scientific and technological revolution is of a global character. ...

However, this has not alleviated or diminished the class character of the [global] village, the existence of rich and poor, of boss and worker, landlord and peasant, exploiter and exploited.

Does the scientific-technological revolution soften and moderate the class struggle? Or does it in reality aggravate it? Does it not in fact accentuate the limitless, predatory search for higher and higher profits?

Hasn't the scientific-technological revolution, this so-called new interdependence of an integral world, resulted in impoverishing the greater portion of humanity, while enriching the most powerful, predatory multinational corporations? Haven't the last two decades proven conclusively that the entire technological and scientific apparatus is mostly at the service of the military-industrial complex, that whatever integration, whatever interdependence has occurred has made the poorer countries not less but more dependent upon the rich imperialist ones?

Capitalists happy to liquidate socialism

Gorbachev confuses sociology with technology, making it appear that one invalidates the other. This has been a favorite theme of liberal bourgeois theoreticians over the years, that technological progress on a world scale and the mutually interrelated processes in both systems make for their integration into a world system, a system where world socialism is happily liquidated into the bourgeois system! ...

Nine-tenths of his thesis is calculated to frighten the working class with the spectre of nuclear war. But it hasn't at all frightened the imperialist bourgeoisie, who have used this period to rearm and modernize their industry, especially the military-industrial complex. For all the tremendous antinuclear conferences with their prestigious scientific personnel, they never seem to frighten the military-industrial complex. Whatever their subjective aim, their result is to frighten the working class and oppressed people into making concessions, while the bourgeoisie make none. ...

Will the new thesis soften the U.S. up in trade negotiations? Or will the bourgeoisie make the most of the difficulties in the USSR? ... □

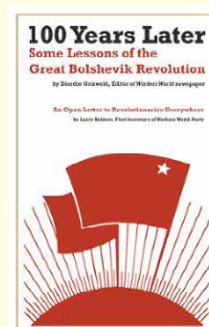
100 Years Later

Some Lessons of the Great Bolshevik Revolution

By Deirdre Griswold

Contents: From Marx's view of social evolution to Lenin's 'Imperialism' ♦ Social gains in the early years of Soviet power ♦ 'Whose state? Our state' — meaning all nationalities ♦ External and internal problems, strengths and setbacks ♦ To the 0.001 percent: You are cheering too soon

Download it free from www.workers.org/books



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 \$813 billion was spent on the Pentagon. Funding and expanding the permanent 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 1996. 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 declines. Deaths from accidents and unintentional deaths are a significant factor; according to the National Center for Health Statistics, many stemmed from drug overdoses.

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.

On Sept. 2, the Biden administration stopped providing the \$15 billion needed for the COVID-19 free home tests program, increasing the risk for broader COVID-19 spread and the financial burden of testing on poor and working people.

For the capitalist country considered the most developed on the globe, this is quite an indictment. The U.S. remains the only major capitalist country to fail to provide health care to the masses — millions of whom are uninsured.

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 1980s. 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 week. 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 contribute to the crisis in education in the U.S., including a historic shortage of qualified teachers willing to return to classrooms after their experiences during the pandemic.



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 system, creating a catastrophic teacher shortage. In many school districts, hundreds to thousands of teaching positions remained unfilled when schools recently opened. Several school districts report being unable to open classrooms. In Philadelphia, two charter schools announced they were closing just as the new school year began, leaving hundreds of families scrambling.

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, housing, 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, appliances, 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 or 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, from Guam to Guatemala — and Gaza.

Learn from the GDR

I can only hope that new generations learn from the GDR and not only from its blunders, nasty habits and limitations, born of its history and all too realistic fears of being overthrown.

The GDR was finally overthrown and stands no longer as a barrier to renewed billionaire expansion — economic, political and military — to the south and east. It is still being belittled or maligned — largely out of fear that it has not yet been

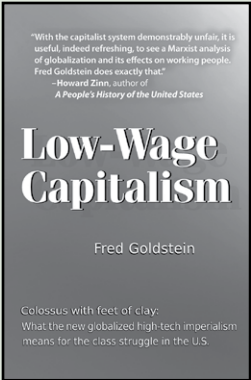
sufficiently erased and forgotten.

Despite my sometime feelings in those years of despair, even anger 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 partly overcoming the cult of greed and rivalry, in unflinching GDR support for the Mandelas, the Allendes and Ho Chi Minhs, for Angela Davis, too. And not, like its ultimately stronger and victorious opponents in Bonn, for the Pinochets, Francos, racists and apartheid tyrants.

I recall our achievements in avoiding war and striving for lives without fear or hatred. By and large they were good years. I am glad I lived through them. □

Low-Wage Capitalism

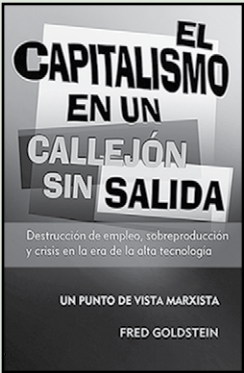
By Fred Goldstein



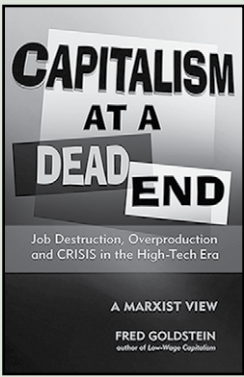
Describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class in the United States of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx’s law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages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

El capitalismo en un callejón sin salida

Por Fred Goldstein



Fred 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

Fred Goldstein uses Marx’s laws of capitalist 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, on Sept. 2 to protest the Czech Republic government’s participation in the NATO-backed 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 rightist regime resign. Mass sentiment in Western Europe, which the imperialist media had bullied into accepting anti-Russia propaganda during the first months of the war, is beginning to turn against the sanctions, which threaten the working class everywhere with high heating costs and a cold winter. Besides the massive turnout in Prague, signs of opposition are taking place in Germany and France. □



Sept. 2 protest in Prague against Czech Republic participating in NATO- and U.S.-backed war in Ukraine.

On Labor Day, hail workers in motion! *Support Workers World*

Workers World/Mundo Obrero newspaper cheers on the Amazon and Starbucks workers who are leading struggles to unionize their workplaces. These mainly young people of many nationalities and genders are in the forefront of the class struggle in the U.S. Their bold actions have sparked an upsurge of worker-led union drives in other companies and industries. Their bravery in defying vicious corporate union busting is inspiring workers around the country. 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 earners who are fighting for workplace rights and a union. We laud the workers, especially young people, women, other gender-oppressed and LGBTQ2S+ people, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, Arab and immigrants, who are fighting for all workers. Since Workers World’s first issue 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 WW 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 Workers World attended this New York City rally on Oct. 21, 2021, in solidarity with Amazon Labor Union’s petition for an NLRB election at the JFK8 warehouse in Staten Island, New York. The ALU won this historic victory!



PHOTO: GABBY JONES

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 1/2-year health crisis. And while WW’s staff is voluntary, both the printed newspaper and the website entail monthly 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 writer-activists in many countries, translated by our staff. Timely 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, respectively, 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/books. 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.

MUNDO OBRERO editorial

Después de años en los que los políticos sólo hablaban y no hacían nada con respecto a la deuda estudiantil, tan grave que incluso personas de 60 años siguen cargando con 300.000 dólares de deuda universitaria, el 25 de agosto el presidente Joe Biden anunció una modesta medida ejecutiva para cancelar parte de la deuda de los préstamos federales, justo a tiempo para la carrera del Partido Demócrata hacia las elecciones de mitad de mandato. No nos malinterpreten: estamos a favor de cualquier medida que pueda dar a la gente algún alivio de sus asombrosos préstamos estudiantiles. Y si todos los que reúnen los requisitos aprovechan todas las ofertas de la propuesta, hasta 43 millones de personas obtendrán un respiro, incluida la cancelación total de la deuda para unos 20 millones. (Todas las opciones en tinyurl.com/bdd56mhb) Se trata de un gran negocio para muchos, especialmente para las personas de origen pobre o modesto, de las comunidades negras y de gente de color, que son las que más deuda han contraído. A menudo, estos estudiantes fueron la primera generación de sus familias en asistir a la universidad, y no tenían ningún respaldo económico para lo que se ha convertido en un título cada vez más caro, incluso en las universidades y colegios públicos.

La crisis de la deuda continúa

La crisis de la deuda de los estudiantes no terminará con las recientes “correc-

¡Hacer que la educación sea gratuita!

ciones” bidenescas a los problemas de los préstamos estudiantiles. En 2021-2022, el promedio anual de la matrícula y las tasas requeridas en una universidad pública para un estudiante del estado era de 10.388 dólares — y 22.698 dólares para un estudiante de fuera del estado. Y los costes en las universidades privadas para el mismo promedio fueron de 38.185 dólares. (thinkimpact.com/average-college-tuition/) Por. año. Estos costes estimados no incluyen el alojamiento, la comida ni los libros. Education Data estimó el 15 de julio que un año de libros y materiales universitarios puede tener una media de entre 628 y 1.471 dólares. ¿El resultado? La deuda media de los estudiantes después de cuatro años de educación post-secundaria es de entre 37.000 y 40.000 dólares. **Origen de la crisis** ¿Cómo se ha llegado a esta lamentable situación? La respuesta es fácil: el capitalismo, al estilo estadounidense. En 1996 el Congreso privatizó la principal agencia federal de préstamos directos, Student Loan Marketing Association o Sallie Mae, y la dejó libre para que se convirtiera en una vaca lechera para los bancos y los cobradores de deudas. En la década siguiente, el precio de las acciones de Sallie Mae subió un 1,900%. De 2010 a 2013, cuando los estudiantes empezaron a endeudarse cada vez más, los beneficios de Sallie

Mae fueron de 3.500 millones de dólares. (revealnews.org, 28 de junio de 2016) El Congreso creó generaciones de deudores bien educados. En lugar de un futuro financiero estable, los estudiantes se empobrecieron, atrapados en deudas, incapaces incluso de comprar un auto — o de arriesgarse en una carrera que podría no ser “lucrativa”. **Ataques a la educación pública** La educación pública de EE.UU. en general sigue siendo atacada por las fuerzas de derecha, supremacistas blancas y capitalistas. Ya en la década de 1890, después de la Reconstrucción, las legislaturas segregacionistas de Jim Crow atacaron las escuelas públicas integradas que las legislaturas de mayoría negra habían creado. El ataque continuó durante la era moderna de los Derechos Civiles, cuando las juntas escolares segregacionistas del Sur literalmente saquearon las escuelas públicas de equipos y dinero para establecer academias privadas “cristianas.” Ahora, el 21 de junio, el Tribunal Supremo de Estados Unidos dictaminó que las escuelas religiosas privadas tienen “derecho” a ser financiadas con dinero público. Como la escuela privada Grace Christian School de Verico (Florida), que en junio envió un correo electrónico a todos los padres diciéndoles que retiraran a sus hijos LBGTQ+ inmediatamente, agrupando “la homosexualidad, el lesbianismo, la bisexualidad y la identidad transgénero” con “la bestialidad, el incesto, la fornicación, el

adulterio y la pornografía [como] pecaminosos a los ojos de Dios y de la iglesia.” (insider.com, 20 de agosto) **Liberación de la educación** Se ha aprobado una serie de proyectos de ley reaccionarios para limitar la discusión en las escuelas públicas de Estados Unidos de muchos temas socialmente importantes, como el racismo y la historia de la esclavitud de los negros, las identidades de género y la sexualidad. Es de suponer que las actuales leyes de supremacía blanca prohibirían la enseñanza del hecho de que los esclavizadores de las plantaciones de los siglos XVIII y XIX también aprobaron leyes — ique hacían ilegal enseñar a leer o escribir a las personas de color esclavizadas o libres! El capitalismo estadounidense está desesperado por encerrar las mentes de los trabajadores y los oprimidos, mediante la deuda o la ley. Miren el contraste con la Cuba dirigida por los socialistas. La educación en todos los niveles — desde preescolar hasta la escuela de medicina — sigue siendo gratuita para todos los cubanos, con sólo algún servicio comunitario requerido como parte de esa experiencia. Qué opción. ¿Estar endeudado con los bancos? O estar libre de deudas, y volcar tu corazón y tu mente en un futuro que ayudes a crear — un futuro libre de capitalismo opresivo donde la gente construya justicia, imaginación y belleza. Traducción: Deborah Rodriguez.



CREDIT: KQED

Trabajadores agrícolas y simpatizantes marchan junto al río Sacramento en el día 22 de una marcha de 335 millas a través del Valle Central de California, hasta el capitolio del estado, por los derechos sindicales.

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 opio y a la incapacidad de la compañía para crear nuevos analgésicos. La empresa encontró la solución en un producto químico llamado entonces Dolophine.

Ahora llamado metadona (Methadose, Diskets), circuló una leyenda urbana según la cual la Dolofina llevaba el nombre de Adolf Hitler. Este rumor no debería sorprender, ya que parte de la mano de obra de I.G. Farben era mano de obra esclava del campo de exterminio de Auschwitz; y una de las filiales de I.G. Farben suministró el gas venenoso, Zyklon B, que mató a más de un millón de personas en cámaras de gas.

Pero en realidad la etiqueta Dolophine viene de la palabra latina “dolor”, que significa dolor, y la palabra francesa “fin” que significa “fin”. 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 en Lexington, Kentucky, entre 1935 y 1974) probó la metadona en pacientes de heroína, proporcionando altos niveles del medicamento y luego retirándolo, para ver qué pasaba con los pacientes. Cuando se retiraba la metadona, los pacientes adictos continuaban con la abstinencia durante días o semanas.

Antes de la disponibilidad de la metadona, se utilizaban la codeína y la morfina para tratar la adicción a la heroína. Los investigadores vieron la superioridad de la metadona sobre los tratamientos anteriores. A mediados de la década de 1950, dos médicos estadounidenses — Vincent Dole y Marie Nyswander — desarrollaron el uso de la metadona como programa de mantenimiento.

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 los opiáceos del mismo modo que la insulina sirve a los diabéticos. Lo encontró en la metadona. La Dra. Nyswander investigó e informó sobre sus experiencias tratando de ayudar a los músicos de jazz 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 las que promovían el modelo de tratamiento asistido por medicación con metadona discutían con vehemencia sobre los objetivos y las metas.

En la izquierda, los Panteras Negras amenazaron con quemar las clínicas de metadona, porque ese método no abordaba las causas fundamentales de la adicción en la gente de color y los pobres: la pobreza, el racismo, la falta de acceso a la atención sanitaria y la opresión sistemática del capitalismo

Pero la respuesta al tratamiento con metadona acabó por cambiar, con una ola menor de críticas y una ola creciente de aceptación.

Beneficios del tratamiento con metadona

A pesar de los rumores de que la metadona podía carcomer los huesos, destruir los dientes, arruinar los riñones y dañar el hígado, varios estudios realizados en la década de 1970 demostraron que no había ningún peligro para los consumidores de metadona a largo plazo. En la década de 1980, durante la epidemia de SIDA, apa-

recieron investigaciones que demostraban que los consumidores de metadona se seroconvertían en menor medida que los adictos activos que no usaban metadona. (tinyurl.com/2f9dh4kn)

A finales del siglo XX y principios del XXI, se descubrió que la metadona aumentaba la calidad de vida de sus usuarios, detenía la propagación de los virus del VIH y de la hepatitis C y estabilizaba incluso los casos más duros de adicción a los opioides. (tinyurl.com/3893jde6)

Por estas razones, la metadona se considera ahora uno de los estándares de oro en el tratamiento de la adicción.



Pero todavía hay preguntas: ¿Cómo se puede poner la metadona a disposición de las personas que la necesitan? ¿Y por qué es necesario el programa especial de clínicas de metadona en EE.UU., cuando otros países han liberalizado sus sistemas y han hecho que el medicamento sea accesible en las farmacias normales?

Las clínicas de metadona son un sistema de control social

El sistema de clínicas de metadona debe cambiarse de raíz. El sistema de clínicas de metadona — no la metadona en sí — es un sistema de control social.

Las clínicas de metadona atienden principalmente a personas de color y a personas que viven en la pobreza. Esto es importante porque reciben un tratamiento mucho peor que las personas que reciben el régimen alternativo de tratamiento asistido con medicamentos, la buprenorfina (Suboxone, Subutex, Sublocade, Zubsolv). Los que toman buprenorfina son en su mayoría personas blancas con seguro privado y se consideran más dignos de confianza que los que toman metadona. (jamanetwork.com, 8 de mayo de 2019)

Los doctores Dole y Nyswander querían que el tratamiento con metadona prosperara, porque consideraban que la adicción era una enfermedad crónica como la diabetes. Sin embargo, las clínicas se han alejado de esa ética al tratar a las personas con trastorno por consumo de opioides como “drogadictos” poco fiables. El sistema de las clínicas de metadona instituye rígidos controles sobre los negros y morenos y los blancos pobres, que aún no han podido dejar la metadona.

Las clínicas de metadona controlan casi todos los aspectos de la vida de sus sujetos. Las clínicas controlan cuándo entra un adicto y cuándo puede atender sus propias responsabilidades. Los pacientes no tienen la opción de saltarse la terapia de grupo y las actividades de grupo de la clínica de metadona, sino que deben asistir de acuerdo con las leyes de los estados.

Las horas a las que las clínicas de metadona permanecen abiertas y dispensan la medicación interrumpen las responsabilidades vitales que tienen los pacientes que toman metadona. Dado que las clínicas suelen abrir a las 5 de la mañana, los pacientes que tienen un trabajo suelen tener que compaginar su tratamiento con su trabajo, a menudo posponiendo su trabajo sólo para obtener su medicación.

Día tras día, el sistema de metadona requiere que la

mayoría de los pacientes acudan una vez al día, siete días a la semana. Sólo durante la pandemia de COVID-19 esto ha cambiado. Durante el punto álgido de la epidemia, los programas de tratamiento con metadona pueden dar a sus pacientes estables 28 días de metadona. Pero se desconoce si estas normas relajadas continuarán cuando el COVID-19 retroceda.

La cadena de la industria de la adicción

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 lo cubra es otro eslabón del entramado de control y explotación de las clínicas de metadona. La industria de la adicción gana dinero a costa del sufrimiento humano: potencialmente más de 100 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 reducirían y éste podría reincorporarse realmente a la sociedad. Si la metadona se administrara bajo el cuidado 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.

El sistema de clínicas de metadona debería abolirse por completo. Los pacientes deberían poder obtener su tratamiento de sus médicos de atención primaria, en lugar de los vagamente llamados “especialistas en adicción”. Pero hasta que esto ocurra, ¿cómo se puede liberalizar la prescripción de metadona para los pacientes que la necesitan?

Hacer permanente la relajación de la metadona y COVID-19

Un paso es aprobar en el Congreso la Ley de Acceso al Tratamiento de los Opioides para hacer permanentes las normas de dispensación de metadona relajadas de la COVID-19 y permitir que los pacientes reciban su tratamiento en una farmacia después de la inducción a un programa.

Otro objetivo es combatir el estigma que pesa sobre los consumidores de metadona. El sistema de clínicas de metadona permite imágenes estereotipadas de “drogadictos” que obtienen una dosis de metadona en la clínica. Fomentar la comprensión de que los pacientes de metadona son personas normales que reciben medicamentos 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 Opiáceos, 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 palabras, provocaría un aumento del “desvío” 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 conseguirla 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 — deberían trabajar por la liberalización de la metadona. La gente podría conseguir metadona sin que se les mirara como desventurados drogadictos. Las personas que buscan metadona se merecen algo mejor. □