

Tennessee Goddam

*Alabama's gotten me so upset
 Tennessee made me lose my rest
 And everybody knows about Mississippi Goddam*
 ("Mississippi Goddam," Nina Simone, 1964)

Passed in 1870, the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race or previous condition of servitude" and grants Congress "the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 adds that, "No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color."

How much the real world deviates from the law on paper was demonstrated by the fascistic majority in the Tennessee state legislature April 6. The requisite two-thirds supermajority voted to oust duly elected House Reps. Justin Jones and Justin Pearson. In banishing these two young Black men, the Tennessee House effectively disenfranchised the 200,000 voters in Memphis and Nashville who elected them, in the state's two largest cities.

Is this not a violation of the 15th Amendment and the Voting Rights Act?

Their "crime" was to participate in a mass, multinational protest of mostly young people demanding the legislature pass gun restrictions to halt a spate of school shootings, after an April 3 Nashville school shooting left 3 children and 3 adults dead. Having previously had their microphones cut off on the House floor, Jones, Pearson and Rep. Gloria Johnson briefly stood behind the podium, chanting into a bullhorn. A motion to expel Johnson, who is white, failed by one vote.

editorial

House Speaker Cameron Sexton called the action of "The Tennessee Three" an "insurrection," comparing it to the Jan. 6, 2021, siege of the U.S. Capitol. Rep. Gino Bulso called it a "mutiny."

When young Tennesseans came back to the state Capitol to support their representatives, they made the point that the same reactionary legislature bans abortions, bans books, attacks trans people and refuses to ban the sale of assault weapons.

A historic pattern

The eyes of the world are on Tennessee after this blatant example of white supremacy.

The brazenness of the legislators was hardly exceptional in the home state of Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest, who had become a millionaire trading in enslaved Africans and had co-founded the KKK after the Civil War.

One statue of this racist was finally removed from



Tennessee Rep. Justin Jones, front, and Rep. Justin Pearson after expulsion from state legislature. On April 10, the Nashville Metropolitan Council voted to have Jones reinstated to the Tennessee House of Representatives. The Shelby County Commissioners will vote on whether to reinstate Pearson.

a Memphis park in 2017; a second on private land in Nashville and viewable to motorists on Interstate 65 came down four years later. That same year a bust of Forrest was finally removed from the same state Capitol building in Nashville, where the vote against "The Three" took place.

In contrast, the Tennessee state Capitol has never had a bust or statue of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was assassinated in Memphis in 1968 while supporting a strike of Black sanitation workers.

Speaking to Symone Sanders-Townsend on MSNBC, Rep. Jones said, "What happened yesterday was an act of violence. It was a public lynching," and he called the state legislature "a body that is so defined by white supremacy, patriarchy and plantation capitalism." Pearson stated that, "Race again became the defining factor in the separation between what happened to Rep. Jones and I and Rep. Johnson." (April 8)

Johnson described a meeting of the Criminal Justice Committee to discuss a bill to add the firing squad and electric chair to methods of capital punishment. As if that wasn't bad enough, "one of the members said 'I think we need to add hanging by a tree.' . . . I have heard comments like that on multiple occasions." (msnbc.com)

A visibly angry Vice President Kamala Harris made a sudden trip to Tennessee to support the expelled legislators, who had met earlier, virtually, with President Joe Biden.

The Democratic Party officialdom would like to control and contain this important fight against racist disenfranchisement. Whether they can do that in light of the mass anger this incident has provoked remains to be seen.

Whatever **form** this battle ultimately takes, its **content** — an ongoing struggle of the most oppressed for the basic democratic right to vote and be represented — deserves the solidarity of progressives and all those who consider themselves revolutionaries. □

WW COMMENTARY

A double standard

By Monica Moorehead

On April 1, the Louisiana State University (LSU) Tigers women's basketball team won its first NCAA championship, after trouncing the University of Iowa Hawkeyes 102-85. What made this game significant was that it attracted the most viewers for any college women's basketball championship to date — 9.9 million. Also Caitlin Clark, Iowa's guard, had just been named AP's player of the year for the regular season.

What was not lost to anyone paying attention is that the Tigers team is predominantly Black, and the Iowa team has only one player of color. The LSU players noticed this, especially Angel Reese, the 6'3" power forward, who was named Most Outstanding Player during the Final Four playoffs. Reese recorded double-doubles (10 or more rebounds and points scored) in 34 games this season, a NCAA record.

Days before the championship game, all the Tigers heard from the media, 24/7, was how great a player Clark is and can any team stop her. The Tigers were not predicted to make the Final Four, much less the championship round.

Once it became clear the Tigers would win the game, Reese took the opportunity to show Clark her "hand," a gesture to show that a person should be seen, not ignored. Reese then pointed to her fourth

finger to show that she will be receiving a championship ring, not Clark.

Reese was giving Clark a dose of her own medicine, since Clark made a similar hand gesture toward a Louisville Cardinal player in a previous game.

Reese received negative backlash on social media, where sports reporters accused her of being "a classless piece of sh_t" and even referred to her as a "f_cking idiot."

Racism: the underlying factor

Reese responded to the insults at the victory podium: "All year, I was critiqued for who I was. I don't fit the narrative; I don't fit the box that y'all want me to be in. I'm too hood. I'm too ghetto. Y'all told me that all year. But when other people do it [hand gesture], and y'all don't say nothing."

"So this is for the girls that look like me. For those that want to speak up for what they believe in. It's unapologetically you. And that's why I did it tonight. It was bigger than me tonight. And Twitter is going to go into a rage every time."

"And I'm happy. I feel like I've helped grow women's basketball this year. I'm looking forward to celebrating and then next season." (CNN, April 3)

And then to add insult to injury, First Lady Jill Biden stated publicly that besides the LSU team being invited to the White House, that the Iowa team should also be

invited, because they played "good."

It has been a White House tradition to invite the championship team of each major sport, pro or amateur, not the runner-up. Reese called Biden's comment "a joke" and initially stated that neither she or the team will be coming to the White House, and as an alternative, the team will instead "visit the Obamas." That reaction has since been retracted, along with Biden's invite to the Iowa team. But the damage had already been done.

Never before had it been raised that a losing team visits the White House. Only now, when a predominantly white team lost, was it considered. Over 40% of NCAA Division I women basketball players are African American.

To her credit, Clark came to Reese's defense, saying that she did not deserve the criticism.

The bottom line is the major issue of racism. When it comes to how Black and white players are treated, there has always been a double standard in U.S. society. When Clark used the same hand gesture Reese did, she received no criticism. Meanwhile Reese was painted as a "taunter."

Sexism also plays a role, since women players are described negatively if they "trash talk." This behavior is totally accepted for male players.

North Carolina State University Professor Joy Gaston Gayles, an expert on

intercollegiate athletics, states: "Angel's response is a good representation of resistance to anti-Blackness. She's intentionally deciding to be herself, regardless of society's refusal to recognize her humanity as a Black woman."

Gaston Gayles continued: "to call any human a 'classless piece of shit' is never okay; but for a Black woman, it's steeped in what Moya Bailey termed misogynoir: the unique and specific type of violence that happens to Black women at the intersection of racism, sexism and anti-Blackness." (Forbes, April 3)

Since she led LSU to winning the championship, Angel Reese has reached more than 3 million followers on Instagram and TikTok combined. □



Angel Reese during April 1 championship game.

¿Es Israel una ‘democracia’?

Durante las últimas 13 semanas, Israel se ha visto sacudido por manifestaciones masivas de cientos de miles de personas, especialmente en Tel Aviv, dirigidas contra el gobierno neofascista de extrema derecha encabezado por el primer ministro Benjamin Netanyahu, un carnicero.

Lo que provocó las protestas fue una propuesta de “paquete de reformas” que reduciría el poder judicial del gobierno y daría a los políticos israelíes, considerados el ala “moderada”, más autoridad para elegir a los jueces. Netanyahu declaró que ese cambio era necesario para equilibrar el poder entre jueces y parlamentarios. Al mismo tiempo, Netanyahu sigue enfrentándose a acusaciones de corrupción.

Las manifestaciones han sido tan implacables que los cambios de la “reforma” se han suspendido, al menos por ahora. Por ahora, sólo un pequeño número de personas que se oponen a las reformas de Netanyahu han cuestionado las políticas de apartheid israelíes.

Los críticos de Netanyahu dicen que los cambios propuestos serían una amenaza para la “democracia” de Israel, lo que suscita las siguientes preguntas: ¿Es Israel una democracia ahora y lo ha sido alguna vez desde su fundación? Las respuestas son un rotundo ¡¡¡NO!!!

El Estado de Israel es una formación ilegal fundada sobre la sangre, el sudor y las lágrimas del pueblo palestino, que fue el habitante original de la tierra durante miles de años. Los imperialistas británicos aprobaron la Declaración Balfour en 1917, declarando que Palestina se convertiría en un “hogar nacional para el pueblo judío”. Una pequeña minoría del pueblo judío vivía entonces en coexistencia pacífica con los palestinos, antes de que se codificara la declaración.

Como se escribió en un editorial de WW de diciembre de 2022: “La fundación oficial del Estado israelí en 1948 fue acompañada de masacres y de la expulsión forzosa mediante el terror genocida y la intimidación de tres cuartas partes de la población de la Palestina de entonces. Unas 750 ciudades y pueblos fueron literalmente borrados de la faz de la Tierra y sus restos arrasados, lo que se conoce como Nakba, alias “el Desastre”.

“En violación del derecho internacional, por no hablar de los derechos humanos de los palestinos, los militares

israelíes ocuparon hogares y tierras árabes, jurando no permitir jamás que el pueblo que habían desarraigado y expulsado cruelmente regresara a su patria. En 1967, en otra guerra de agresión, los israelíes se apoderaron de Cisjordania, Gaza y los Altos del Golán, donde aún permanecen para controlar, bloquear y aterrorizar”. (workers.org/2022/12/68147)

Israel se convirtió en un Estado de guarnición militar para los intereses imperialistas en esta región rica en petróleo. Para el pueblo palestino, Israel es un Estado colonial de colonos gobernado por el puño de hierro de la supremacía blanca. Los palestinos, incluidos jóvenes trabajadores y niños, son golpeados sin piedad, asesinados y desarraigados de sus hogares, mientras los asentamientos sionistas se expanden a diario en los Territorios Ocupados.

A pesar de la brutal ocupación de las Fuerzas de Defensa Israelíes (IDF), armadas hasta los dientes por el Pentágono, el pueblo palestino sigue resistiendo heroicamente y contraatacando a esta represión con protestas y huelgas masivas, armado sólo con piedras y botellas. Este tipo de resistencia sigue inspirando no sólo a las masas oprimidas de todo Oriente Medio, sino de todo el mundo, incluidos los centros imperialistas como Estados Unidos.

Un número creciente de activistas judíos, muchos de ellos jóvenes, desafían al sionismo y se ponen del lado del pueblo palestino uniéndose a la campaña BDS (Boicot, Desinversión y Sanciones) y a otras campañas militantes para contribuir a debilitar políticamente y aislar a Israel. La resistencia también ha provocado que las Fuerzas de Defensa de Israel se enfrenten a una crisis cada vez mayor a causa de quienes se ven obligados a realizar el servicio militar obligatorio y se enfrentan a procesos judiciales por negarse a matar palestinos.

Bajo la actual inestabilidad israelí subyace que, a pesar de cometer actos terroristas, Israel ha sido incapaz de contener la búsqueda de liberación nacional del pueblo palestino, especialmente recuperar de sus opresores sus tierras legítimas, antiguas y robadas.

En lugar de ondear la despreciable bandera israelí, deberían ondear con orgullo miles de banderas palestinas, prohibidas por el gobierno de Netanyahu. ¡Palestina será libre! □

editorial

- ♦ **In the U.S.**
- A double standard 1
- ♦ **Editorials**
- Tennessee Goddam 1
- ♦ **Noticias en Español**
- ¿Es Israel una ‘democracia’? *editorial* 2

Online articles

- ♦ **In the U.S.**
- Man dies in Georgia detention center LINK
- On the picket line LINK
- Justice for Angel Davis! LINK
- MA demands: Restore COVID protections! . . LINK
- Boston Teamsters prepare Aug. 1 UPS strike . . LINK
- Houston supports Starbucks workers LINK
- Antiwar forces march on Boeing LINK
- Mary Pinotti Kaessinger — Rest in power! . . . LINK
- UAW convention revives fighting tradition . . LINK
- Chicago: pro-labor mayoral candidate LINK
- ♦ **Tear Down the Walls!**
- California prisoners demand change LINK
- ♦ **Around the World**
- France: Will workers take the offensive? LINK
- ♦ **Noticias en Español**
- Brasil, China acuerdan intercambios sin dólar . LINK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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