

# Wildfires devastate Native Hawaiian lands

By Will Hodgkinson

This week, wildfires are devastating Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) lands in U.S.-occupied Hawai‘i. The largest fires have erupted on Hawai‘i and Maui, Hawai‘i’s two largest islands, burning over 2,000 acres. As of this article’s publication, over 100 people are confirmed dead. At least 1,000 other people remain unaccounted for, and authorities expect the death toll to rise.

Many residents had no warning of the fires and had to flee into the ocean, where they waited for hours until rescue came. In all, over 11,000 residents have evacuated. These wildfires are the deadliest recorded on a U.S.-claimed territory in over a century. (New York Times, Aug 12)

Lāhainā, the capital of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i — which was invaded and violently overthrown by the U.S. in 1893 — experienced the greatest devastation, with 2,200 structures reported destroyed. The Lāhainā region is sacred to the Kānaka Maoli, who recognize it as the birthplace of the goddess Kihawahine. (The Conversation, Aug. 11)

## Cultural sites and artifacts destroyed

The buildings lost in Lāhainā include the Waiola Church, which housed the remains of several Kānaka Maoli monarchs, the Na ‘Aikane o Maui Cultural Center, home to many important Polynesian and Kānaka Maoli documents and artifacts now destroyed by the fire, and Pūnana Leo, one of the few immersive Kānaka Maoli language schools still in existence.

Carmen Hulu Lindsey, chairwoman of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs said, “We have watched our precious

cultural assets, our physical connection to our ancestors, our places of remembering — all go up in smoke.”

The destruction caused by the fires has worsened an already dire housing shortage for many Kānaka Maoli, who lack access to the land and its resources due to theft by the U.S. settler colonial state. While Hawai‘i’s capitalist government spends tens of millions of dollars every year helping to build luxury resorts and beach houses for predominantly white settlers, thousands of Kānaka Maoli remain unhoused on their own lands. A Stanford Medicine study found that on the island of O‘ahu alone, Kānaka Maoli make up over 50% of the unhoused population. (tinyurl.com/5n9bb23a)

After the fires, many more Kānaka Maoli lost their homes and now lack the assistance necessary to help them rebuild. As Kūhiō Lewis, CEO of the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement, explained, “The one thing that gave [many Native Hawaiian residents] stability — a place to stay at night for some there — they don’t even have that anymore.”

While federal aid and relief has been slow in coming to Hawai‘i, where fires continue to rage, the Biden Administration has asked for an additional \$24 billion in military aid for the proxy war in the Ukraine, exposing, once more, the priorities of the U.S. militarist, imperialist state.

## ‘No government agency is helping us’

In the absence of an adequate government response, many Kānaka Maoli have organized their own relief efforts. On Maui, volunteers handed out food, clothes,

and other supplies to survivors. “There is no government agency helping us. This is our home, our community,” said Jareth Lumlung, a Kānaka Maoli volunteer leading these relief efforts. (tinyurl.com/4kwkft7)

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## Summer Smith ipresente!

Workers World Party mourns the tragic loss of Summer Smith, a founding member of the Salt Lake City, Utah, branch of WWP, who died from a long, heroic battle with cancer on Aug. 10. She was 41 years old. Summer was a single mother, a teacher and union activist.

An obituary in tribute to Summer Smith will appear in a future WW. Rest in power, Comrade Summer.

— Workers World newspaper staff



PHOTO: VICTORIA SETHUNYA

Summer Smith at Wells Fargo protest for workers’ rights, Salt Lake City, Jan. 1, 2020.

## Environmental racism links Lāhainā and Katrina

WW COMMENTARY

By Monica Moorehead

August 29 will mark the 18th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, one of the deadliest hurricanes in U.S. history, which devastated much of the Gulf Coast (specifically Louisiana and Mississippi) and disproportionately struck New Orleans. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration states that this Category 4 hurricane caused at least \$108 billion in structural damage, leading to more than one million people being displaced, many permanently, especially the poor and people of color.

According to livescience.com, an



Ninth Ward flooded after Hurricane Katrina, August 2005.

estimated 1,833 people died in the hurricane and the flooding that followed. (Aug. 27, 2015) That flooding, mainly caused by broken levees, overwhelmed the Ninth Ward, a predominant working-class Black neighborhood in New Orleans. Over 1,000 people died from flooding in this neighborhood alone.

Fast forward almost 18 years later to Aug. 9, when tragic wildfires swiftly devastated huge swaths of the Hawaiian island of Maui, including the historic town of Lāhainā. Over 100 people have died and the death toll is expected to rise even higher. The structural damage for residents is estimated to be over \$1 billion with the destruction of over 2,000 buildings.

There were no sirens to warn people before the rapidity of the wildfires as many people died from being burned alive, smoke inhalation and general lack of escape routes. DNA findings are now being required to identify many of the victims.

While no source of the fires has been officially determined, one possibility was the dangerous active power lines combined with high mountain winds

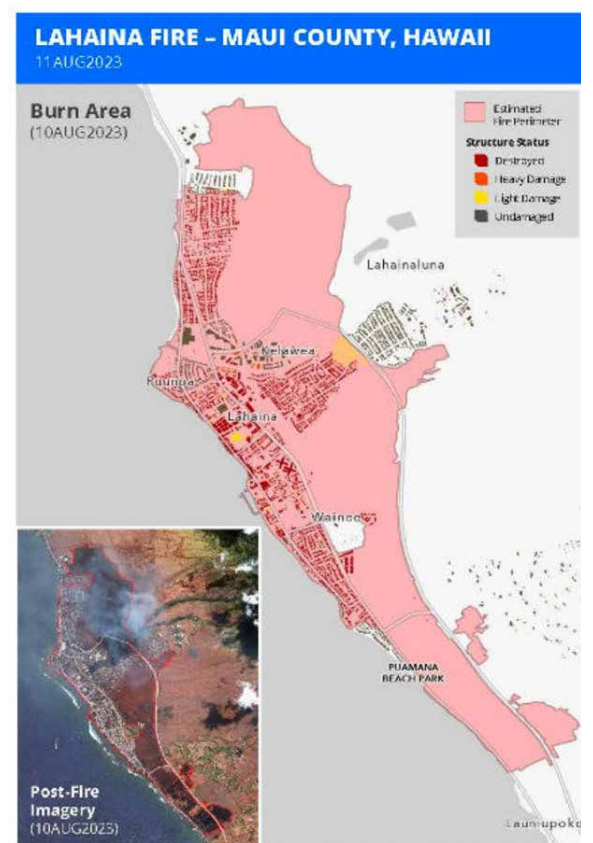
emanating from Hurricane Dora, a Category 4 storm located to the south of Maui in the Pacific Ocean.

Katrina and the Hawaiian wildfires have more in common than not. Both were impacted by climate change, which has grown dramatically worse between 2005 and 2023.

Regarding the potential impact of Katrina, Kerry Emanuel, Professor of Atmospheric Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, stated in the scientific journal Nature in early August 2005, that “North Atlantic hurricane power was strongly correlated with the temperature of the tropical

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Government map shows nearly every building in Lāhainā, the capital of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, destroyed or damaged (dark red and light red).



# No more weapons to Kiev

As if Washington had not exported enough misery to Eastern Europe — no, to all of Europe and Russia — in the past two years, the Biden administration has asked Congress for another \$24 billion in aid for Ukraine this August. This is on top of \$113 billion already approved. Most of the money is for arms and military training. To attract broader support, Biden has linked the war money to funds for emergency relief and border security in the U.S.

Biden has reason to worry about getting approval. This worry goes beyond the visceral rejection of anything to do with Biden by ultra-right Republicans who never met a warplane they didn't like. A CNN poll published Aug. 4 showed 55% of the respondents opposing more aid to Ukraine. Even more telling, about 80% of those polled believe the war will drag on indefinitely.

This disgust with the war has arisen despite the overwhelming propaganda falsely presenting the Kiev regime as a bulwark of democracy and courage. This is true even with few U.S. troops coming home in body bags, and none

officially. This poll foretells an upswing in opposition should the war continue to drag on or to escalate.

Perhaps workers in the U.S., who have no real interest in defending Kiev, in expanding NATO or in demonizing Vladimir Putin, let alone provoking Russia, are catching on to Washington's plans for Ukraine.

If they read between the lines, even in the corporate media's war reports, they might decide that the vaunted Ukrainian "counteroffensive" has flopped and that corruption haunts the Kiev regime's state structure from its top arms dealer — who made billions of dollars disappear — to the military recruiters who accept bribes to excuse individuals from conscription.

War bloggers argue that weapons sent from NATO's stocks soon go missing, many quickly destroyed by Russian artillery and missiles. For the merchants of death in the U.S. — that is, the owners of the military-industrial complex — this is happy news. This war is a perpetual market for their goods. For the working class in the U.S. and the other NATO countries, it's a perpetual burden.

The sniff of defeat in Kiev has reached across the sea. Rot stinks. A handful of rich are getting richer on the misery of a war. And this war, as we have shown in articles over the past 20 months, has been provoked by NATO's eastward expansion. The antiwar movement in the United States must demand: No more funds for war in Ukraine! □



Philadelphians demand money for people's needs, not war, Oct. 15, 2022. PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

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## Join us in the fight for socialism!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Marcha contra la cumbre de la OTAN, Madrid, España, 26 de junio de 2022.

# ¡Detengan la guerra contra Irán antes de que empiece!

Desde el 8 de agosto, el Pentágono ha desplegado 3.000 marineros e infantes de marina en los mares cercanos a Irán, algunos en buques civiles. Tres semanas antes, el “Secretario de Defensa” de Estados Unidos, Lloyd Austin, envió “el destructor USS Thomas Hudner, cazas F-35 y cazas F-16 a la zona de responsabilidad del Mando Central de Estados Unidos para defender los intereses estadounidenses...” (ABC News, 7 de agosto).

Como de costumbre, los portavoces militares y civiles estadounidenses cubren sus maniobras militares con mentiras, afirmando que su objetivo es un enemigo suponer que se trata de una Gran Mentira, al igual que las Grandes Mentiras relativas

a Irak, Afganistán, Libia, Yugoslavia, Vietnam y Corea - y esa es la lista corta.

La verdad está clara: el imperialismo estadounidense es un país opresor que impone la explotación de clase a los trabajadores del mundo y saquea los recursos naturales de naciones incapaces de competir con armas, finanzas o producción. Hoy en día, cuando el capitalismo estadounidense está en declive, Washington utiliza el Pentágono y sus más de 800 bases militares en todo el mundo y en su propio país para mantener o recuperar la dominación. O como lo llama el Pentágono, “para defender los intereses de Estados Unidos”.

Este año Washington, que ha estado librando una guerra por delegación de la

OTAN en Ucrania contra Rusia, está navegando con buques de guerra en los mares cercanos a Taiwán y Corea para apuntar a China y Corea del Norte, y está a punto de intervenir en la región del Sahel en África. Ahora Irán está en la lista.

Con respecto a Teherán, la administración de Donald Trump rompió un tratado y volvió a imponer sanciones. El grupo del presidente Joe Biden ha continuado con las sanciones. Estas sanciones económicas perjudican el comercio, perturban la economía iraní y hacen sufrir a los iraníes.

Hay una forma sencilla de evitar el conflicto: ¡Deshacerse de las sanciones!

En lugar de eso, Biden y compañía han recibido a la legítima resistencia iraní aumentando el peligro de guerra. Enviar marineros e infantes de marina a esta región caliente pone a estas tropas en

peligro, arriesgando sus vidas para crear un pretexto para un ataque contra Irán - inventado por la máquina de propaganda del Pentágono, si es necesario (recuerden el Golfo de Tonkin, agosto de 1964).

Para los antiimperialistas, para aquellos de nosotros en el movimiento que hemos absorbido las lecciones enseñadas por primera vez por el revolucionario ruso V.I. Lenin durante la Primera Guerra Mundial, no hay necesidad de esperar a que un denunciante como el difunto Daniel Ellsberg conozca la verdad de clase de estas últimas maniobras bélicas de Estados Unidos contra Irán.

Saquen a los marineros e infantes de marina estadounidenses de los mares cercanos a Irán. Poner fin a las sanciones económicas contra Irán. ¡Detengan la guerra imperialista antes de que empiece! □

## MUNDO OBRERO editorial

## Environmental racism links Lāhainā and Katrina

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Atlantic during hurricane season, and that both had been increasing rapidly over the previous 30 years or so. It attributed these increases to a combination of natural climate oscillations and to global warming.”

Before the recent wildfires, Maui had already been suffering from a combination of a severe drought and high humidity, deadly precursors to wildfires.

Hurricane Katrina and the Maui wildfires have something else in common: They are both social disasters that expose historical and present-day issues of racism and national oppression that permeate every aspect of U.S. society.

Is it surprising that Native Hawaiians reported that the local government did next to nothing? It did nothing to help evacuate people before the wildfires and provided little aid in the aftermath of the destruction.

Is it surprising that thousands of people were unable to escape Hurricane Katrina days before it landed due to apathy and unpreparedness by various levels of government — local, state and federal?

The lack of response in Hawai‘i is similar to what happened during Katrina when the Federal Emergency Management Agency rightfully came under heavy fire for its lack of aid for the most marginalized people, especially in the Black community.

The Indigenous people in Hawai‘i and the Black population both constitute internal nationally oppressed populations who have been historically occupied, exploited and repressed by white supremacy for centuries.

Hawai‘i was colonized by the U.S. in 1893 before it became a U.S. state in 1959. Hawaiian lands are now dominated by at least 12 U.S. military bases and thousands of acres have been privatized by billionaires. Black people were

enslaved starting in 1619 and are still denied full democratic rights.

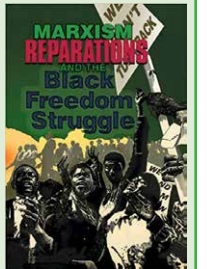
Both groupings deserve reparations as a result of all forms of institutionalized discrimination including environmental racism. □

### Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

Edited by Monica Moorehead

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper.

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## Wildfires devastate Native Hawaiian lands

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Most corporate media coverage of the fires has lamented the damage and disruption experienced by tourists and predominantly white settlers. Many articles have erased the Kānaka Maoli altogether, describing their homelands as a “tropical getaway.” Although a few reports have mentioned the climate crisis, the bourgeois press has ignored the direct role of capitalism, imperialism

and settler-colonialism in causing these disasters.

Hawai‘i’s wildfires are just some of the many blazes — sparked by record-breaking droughts, heat waves, and extreme weather — which have devastated Indigenous lands around the world. Yet, they are also the specific and direct result of the ongoing settler-colonial occupation of Hawai‘i.

In 1893, U.S. planters and businessmen orchestrated a coup d’état that overthrew the sovereign monarchy of

Hawai‘i, dethroning Queen Lili‘uokalani and preparing the way for U.S. annexation in 1898. U.S. settler authorities stole and enclosed thousands of acres of Kānaka Maoli land and imposed a system of cash crop cultivation that decimated traditional agriculture, conservation and forestry.

On Maui, white landowners diverted waterways to irrigate sugar and pineapple plantations, draining vital reserves. Lāhainā, a lush wetland prior to U.S. colonization, has dried up. The invasive grass that replaced the native vegetation that was stripped to make way for cultivation overran fallow lands and helped fuel the recent wildfires. Today, tourist resorts, golf courses and other playgrounds for the rich continue to guzzle millions of gallons of water every year, denying Kānaka Maoli communities vital resources and environmental protections.

### Protests vs. U.S. Navy ships’ toxic leaks

As previous Workers World articles have described, ongoing U.S. military occupation has caused further environmental devastation. Kānaka Maoli

activists continue to protest the headquarters of the U.S. Navy’s Pacific Fleet at Wai Momi (Pearl Harbor), which has leaked tens of thousands of gallons of jet fuel and other toxic chemicals into the aquifer at Kapūkaki (Red Hill), leaving thousands of residents without clean drinking water. ([workers.org/2022/01/61110](http://workers.org/2022/01/61110))

“Our water has been taken away from us,” said Kānaka Maoli organizer Noelani Ahia in a recent interview. “And it’s left us in this dry, barren, almost unrecognizable... condition we’re living in under the settler government. So, you combine the dispossession with the overtourism, with the overdevelopment, and you have this trifecta for disaster.” (Democracy Now, Aug. 11)

The fires in Hawai‘i are yet another horrific consequence of capitalism, imperialism and settler-colonialism that continue to inflict environmental and human destruction on an unimaginable scale. A lasting solution to these environmental catastrophes can only come when the Kānaka Maoli, along with all other Indigenous nations worldwide, including in the continental U.S., win full sovereignty and take back their stolen lands. □



Aftermath of Maui wildfires, Aug. 10, 2023.

PHOTO: BIG ISLAND NOW