

Protect Wet'suwet'en land!

By Will Hodgkinson

New details have emerged about the militarized campaign of state and corporate persecution targeting land defenders of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation in so-called Canada. The third annual Peace and Unity Summit was held August 15-16 in Gidimt'en Clan territory, home of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation.

Wet'suwet'en leaders detailed how private security operatives and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) have attacked and terrorized Indigenous activists using tactics taken directly from a U.S. counterinsurgency "playbook" written by David Petraeus, retired U.S. Army general and an architect of U.S. invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

For over a decade, the Wet'suwet'en First Nation has resisted the Coastal GasLink Pipeline project, which would devastate the yintah, the Wet'suwet'en unceded homeland. Coastal GasLink is a partnership between the Canadian fossil fuel company TC Energy and the private equity giant Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. (KKR), which bought a 65% stake in the project in 2019.

In 2018, Coastal GasLink got an injunction against protesters, allowing Canada's settler authorities to occupy sovereign Wet'suwet'en territory. Since then, Wet'suwet'en land defenders have endured a coordinated onslaught of



Leaders at Peace and Unity Summit, August 15-16, 2023, Gidimt'en Clan territory, Wet'suwet'en First Nation.

PHOTO: SYDNEY COLES

surveillance, intimidation, and brutality.

Over the past four years, RCMP SWAT teams have raided the land defenders' camp three times, arresting over 75 land defenders, as well as journalists covering the protests. In the most recent raid in 2021, RCMP arrested over a dozen protestors.

Raids: 'a form of war'

Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chief Na'Moks described the 2021 raids as, "a form of war, physical and psychological." (ricochet.media, Aug. 17)

Police, abetted by private security guards, regularly harass land defenders, following them, conducting traffic stops, and searching their cabins — often in the middle of the night. One land defender reported receiving a rape threat via a CB radio from a Coastal GasLink employee, which police did nothing to investigate.

Such violence goes hand-in-hand with pipeline projects such as Coastal GasLink, which directly contribute to the ongoing epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). "Man camps" that house pipeline employees have

become centers of human trafficking, sexual violence, and murder, where thousands of Indigenous women have disappeared or been killed. In Canada, the homicide rate for Indigenous women is at least six times higher than for non-Indigenous women. (tinyurl.com/yc7ehnnz)

"We absolutely won't stand down; we have every right to be here," said land defender Sleydo' Molly Wickham, a spokesperson for the Gidimt'en Clan. "This is an occupation of our land. Our ancestors have been here for thousands of

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Anti-LGBTQ2S+ bigotry behind yet another fatal hate crime

Lauri Carleton, a clothing store owner in Cedar Glen, California, and a staunch ally of the LGBTQ2S+ community, was murdered in cold blood on August 18. Her crime? Displaying a Pride flag outside her store. The killer, later fatally shot by sheriff's deputies, subjected Carleton to homophobic slurs before shooting her and had posted anti-LGBTQ2S+ content on social media.

The reaction of this small town west of Los Angeles was one of shock and disbelief but also anger, especially in the LGBTQ2S+ community.

But this violent hate crime against an ally did not occur in isolation. At least 15 transgender and gender non-conforming people have been murdered so far in 2023, the majority trans women of color.

Mass shootings at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando in 2016 and Club Q in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in 2022, are part of a pattern of homophobic and transphobic violence. Members of the LGBTQ2S+ community are twice as likely to be the target of a hate crime as cisgendered heterosexual people.

The dire situation has prompted the Human Rights

Campaign, a moderate civil rights organization, to state it has "officially declared a state of emergency for LGBTQ+ people in the United States." (hrc.org) HRC has cited an "unprecedented and dangerous spike in anti-LGBTQ+ legislative assaults sweeping state houses this year."

The spate of bigoted legislation has fomented the hatred behind the tragic deaths of Carleton, of trans and gender non-conforming people, and of other members and allies of the LGBTQ2S+ community. That is the context in which the uptick in hate crimes has to be viewed.

But what is the root of those many bills, which range from bathroom bans to bans on gender-affirming care for minors to "Don't say gay" bills and more? Right-wing Republicans, some of them outright fascists, are pushing the bills. Did they just appear from out of nowhere?

The extreme right wing of the capitalist class is just that — a wing of the capitalist class. They are but the most extreme representation of the patriarchal value system, which includes anti-LGBTQ2S+ bigotry, that is

endemic to class society.

As Leslie Feinberg explained in 1992 in "Transgender Liberation, a movement whose time has come": "In reality it was the rise of private property, the male-dominated family and class divisions [that] led to narrowing what was considered acceptable self-expression. What had been natural was declared its opposite."

To put an end to hate-filled acts of violence against the LGBTQ2S+ community and allies like Lauri Carleton, we must get rid of the capitalist system that spawns them. □



Makeshift memorial for Lauri Carleton, pro-LGBTQ2S+ ally murdered by a bigot Aug. 18, 2023.

WORKERS WORLD
editorial

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The significance of the 1963 March on Washington

The observation of the 60th anniversary of the historic March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom took place Aug. 26. On Aug. 28, 1963, an estimated 250,000 Black and white protesters traveled from all over the country, mainly on buses and trains, to rally at the Lincoln Memorial in solidarity with the Civil Rights struggle in the South demanding an end to racist segregation and violence.

The march also linked the struggle for racial equality with economic justice, especially decent paying jobs for Black communities. The United Auto Workers had a visible presence at the march.

This massive outpouring occurred months after Birmingham, Alabama’s notorious, fascist Public Safety Commissioner, Bull Connor, unleashed vicious police dogs and ordered firefighters to turn on their fire hoses on a May 3, 1963, march of hundreds of Black school children.

The historic march happened one month before the horrific bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church by the Ku Klux Klan, also in Birmingham — aka “Bombingham” — that killed four young Black girls during their Bible study.

While the Washington march is mainly famous for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s iconic “I have a dream” speech, then President John F. Kennedy attempted to sabotage the event with his behind-the-scenes violence-baiting of the march. In June of 1963, Kennedy met with



six prominent Civil Rights leaders, including Dr. King, hoping to convince them to cancel the march. Fortunately, he did not succeed.

The LGBTQ2S+ question loomed large over whether the march would take place due to the pivotal role played by Civil Rights leader Bayard Rustin. Rustin was a conscientious objector as a Quaker during World War II, and he was gay. Some of the march organizers expressed concern that if Rustin’s antiwar stance and especially his sexual orientation became public, it would hurt the outcome of the march. But due to the principled support of the Black labor leader A. Philip Randolph and Dr. King, Rustin maintained his

prominent organizing role. There were other little known but important behind-the-scenes issues, including the lack of leadership roles for Black women activists. That would not happen today. However, despite these internal and external political issues, this historic march became an important milestone in helping to advance the legal struggle for bourgeois democratic rights for Black people that began post-Civil War and continued post-Reconstruction.

And that struggle continues today in various forms, from Black Lives Matter to the just demand for reparations. □

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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.

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‘Stop Cop City’ solidarity protest in New York City



WW PHOTO: SHERRY FINKELMAN
Richie Merino at Aug. 26 protest

A solidarity protest occurred in New York City on Aug. 26 against the construction of “Cop City” in Atlanta, and to voice opposition to the Atlanta police department’s hiring event that day. The demonstration took place outside the New York Hilton hotel, as police recruiters were inside.

Atlanta police came to recruit New Yorkers to become cops to suppress the Stop Cop City movement which opposes the construction of a \$90 million police training facility in Atlanta, built over the Weelaunee Forest — a land once inhabited by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation before their forced displacement. The cops label anti-Cop City protesters

“outside agitators,” but they are the real “outside agitators” – recruiting people from out of state to help quash the popular movement of tens of thousands of Georgia residents.

The protest was organized by the Weelaunee Defense Society NYC, the Black Alliance for Peace, the Palestinian Youth Movement and Dare to Struggle, bringing together a diverse coalition of groups united in their opposition to the project.

The protesters made their stance clear with chants of “Cop City will never be built!” and “APD out of NYC!,” rejecting not only the construction of the police training facility but also condemning the fascist violence by Georgia State Patrol

officers and Atlanta police.

State troopers murdered forest defender Manuel “Tortugueta” Terán in the Weelaunee forest on Jan. 18. (NPR, March 11)

The protest attracted dozens of participants who shared a common goal: to stop the construction of Cop City and advocate for alternative approaches to community safety. They faced off with New York City police and carried signs and banners bearing slogans that highlighted their rejection of Atlanta’s “killer cops” and the need for investment in community resources rather than a costly and unnecessary police training facility.

— Story by Richie Merino

Autoworkers ‘ready to rumble’

By Martha Grevatt
Detroit

United Auto Workers International President Shawn Fain, speaking to the UAW rank and file on Facebook live August 24, announced the results of a membership vote to authorize a strike against Ford, General Motors and Stellantis: 97% in favor of striking. Some locals voted 99% and a few even 100% to support a walkout if the companies don’t agree to an acceptable contract by Sept. 14, when the current contracts expire.

A vote of 90% or more in favor of striking is not unusual in the UAW during contract negotiations; it’s the rule rather

than the exception. What makes this vote different is that the new, democratically elected International Executive Board has spent the past few months preparing the membership to take on the auto companies. There have been “red shirt Wednesdays,” in-plant and parking lot meetings and, most recently, “practice pickets.”

Hundreds of rank-and-file autoworkers attended an Aug. 20 Solidarity Rally at UAW Region 1 headquarters. Fain and other IEB members, along with workers on the plant floor, blasted the exorbitant corporate

profits and executive salaries, putting forward demands for big pay increases, restoration of the cost-of-living allowance,

elimination of pay and benefit tiers, a raise in retiree pensions, and a shorter work week with no cut in pay.

In conclusion Fain asked the question, “Are you ready to rumble?”

The crowd roared, clapped and stomped its feet in agreement.

Be ready, come Sept. 15, to join a UAW picket line near you.

Martha Grevatt is a retired Stellantis worker who served on the executive board of UAW Local 869.



Ford assembly plant hit with “practice picket” Aug. 24, 2023, Louisville, Kentucky. PHOTO: UNITED AUTO WORKERS

Rally for Puerto Rico’s struggle for independence

By Richie Merino
New York City

A rally took place Aug. 26 in front of the U.S. military recruiting station in Times Square in New York City, to demand an end to U.S. colonization in Puerto Rico. The chosen location aimed to raise awareness of the ongoing struggle faced by the people of Puerto Rico against U.S. imperialism, colonization and military occupation.

This demonstration also commemorated 125 years of resistance by the Puerto Rican people, who continue to fight against gentrification, as well as the neoliberal privatization of their public beaches, schools, energy grid, and water resources.

Crowds gathered and were educated on La Junta, the fiscal control board composed of wealthy Wall Street capitalists that dictates the austerity-driven

economic policies in Puerto Rico.

The rally, which was organized by A Call to Action on Puerto Rico, also honored the memory of Puerto Rican

Independista Franky Velgara Valentín, who sadly passed away on Aug. 25, 2022. Various organizations were represented at the gathering, including Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico (Juntas NY y NJ), Jericho Movement, and Workers World Party.

Rallies will continue in the coming months to mobilize support and strengthen the movement to end the U.S. colonization of Puerto Rico. The ultimate goal is to achieve independence and sovereignty for the people of Puerto Rico. Their rights and aspirations will be respected once the U.S. is booted from the island.

Puerto Rico will be free! Throw the Yanquis to the sea! ☐



New York City rally, Aug. 26, 2023 PHOTO: ISMAEL NUÑEZ

Protesters in New York demand an end to U.S./French domination in West Africa



Demonstrators gathered in front of the French Mission to the United Nations in New York City Aug. 22 at a protest organized by the December 12th Movement, calling for "France out of Africa/ Hands off Niger."

Speakers passionately demanded the withdrawal of U.S. and French troops from West Africa and the closure of military bases in Niger. Their powerful voices highlighted the U.S. and Europe's ongoing colonial exploitation of Africa's rich natural resources.

With an emphasis on the dire consequences of this criminal domination, the speakers shed light on the harsh living conditions faced by the masses of people in Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and other West African nations, where extreme poverty and the lack of basic necessities persist. The protesters united against U.S. and French imperialism, advocating for self-determination for the continent.

— Story and photos by Richie Merino



On the picket line

By Marie Kelly

Health care workers

COVID-19 cases are on the rise again, and health care workers have not forgotten how hospital bosses failed them during the height of the pandemic. Multiple strikes and labor actions are still happening across the U.S.

Respiratory therapists at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center have joined the Ohio Nurses Association, affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers. The vote in early August was 101 to 19, showing the overwhelming support of respiratory therapists for their right to collective bargaining. They join over 190,000 nurses across Ohio who belong to the ONA.

“This is a big step forward in building solidarity in the healthcare workforce to improve working conditions and quality care for our patients,” said Ohio State University Nurses Organization President Rick Lucas, RN. (Ohio Nurses Association, Aug. 9) OSUNO is the Ohio State University local of the ONA.

In New Jersey, nurses at the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital began a strike on Aug. 4. The 1,700 RWJ nurses are members of United Steelworkers (USW) Local 4-200. They voted down a hospital contract proposal and issued a 10-day strike notice. Adequate staffing is at the top of the nurses’ list of demands.

Kelsey Khan is one of the striking nurses. She describes an average day in the life of a staff nurse at RWJ, where she was assigned

six patients, including an elderly confused person at risk of falling; a patient receiving a blood transfusion which requires careful monitoring; a COVID-19 patient whose oxygen levels were dropping; a patient who needed blood drawn immediately; and a patient who was frustrated because they hadn’t been cleared to go home.

According to Khan: “The first contract proposal was voted down by a staggering 96 % of members. This is because the proposal had no action plan to safely staff units based on acuity (how sick patients are). In fact, the proposal omitted a staffing ratio altogether. Nurses refused to accept an offer that prioritized profits over our patients.” (labornotes.org, Aug. 23)

Kaiser Permanente workers held a series of pickets last month during contract negotiations to draw attention to the dismal state of profit-driven health care. Picket lines were up in California, Colorado, Oregon and Washington state.

Graduate students

After nine months of negotiating and a five-month strike, University of Michigan graduate students have proven that solidarity and withholding labor are effective in defeating the capitalists in the university administration. In April, a judge rejected the university’s attempt to force the 2,000 members of Graduate Employees Organization (GEO) to end their strike. The strike continued through the summer until the university capitulated, and the union won a contract that the union leadership is calling historic.

The new agreement includes a 20% raise over three years for

graduate student instructors on the Ann Arbor campus, while those on UM’s Dearborn campus get a 10.5% increase. GEO did not achieve its goal of parity between the Ann Arbor main campus and the Dearborn satellite campus. Doctoral students will receive a stipend over 12 months, a change from the current plan that only covers them when classes are in session. This amounts to a 50% increase.

Birthing parents will get 12 weeks of paid leave. Copays for physical therapy and mental health services were reduced and gender-affirming procedures will be covered under the graduate student health plan. Amir Fleischmann, a GEO spokesperson, said the contract shows the “power of a long-haul strike and worker-led campaign ... This has been over two years in the making. We’ve had literally thousands of workers participating in this campaign at every step of the way, from formulating our

platform to coming and watching and participating in bargaining sessions to going on strike.” (tinyurl.com/yc2jcmnb)

In Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania residence advisers are following the example of other student workers and attempting to unionize. The UPenn RAs won a victory this August when the National Labor Relations Board denied the university’s claim that the residence advisers are not workers and thus are not entitled to join a union.

The 220 student workers at Penn will vote to join Office and Professional Employees International Union Local 153. Scott Williams, an organizer with that local, who has helped unionization efforts in half a dozen universities, said, “This is the first university [UPenn] that has contested the obvious reality that these workers are, in fact, workers.” (tinyurl.com/bp4sjz47) □

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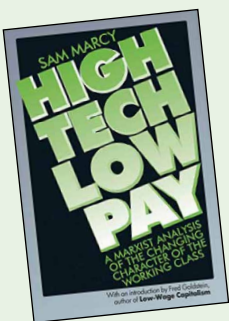
In the midst of the pandemic, the Trump administration sought to further damage the Cuban economy not only by reinforcing the blockade with 243 new sanctions, but also by including Cuba on the of State Sponsors of Terrorism list.

This designation makes it much harder for Cuba to make transactions using international banking systems and acquire necessary goods on the international market, such as fuel, food, construction supplies, hygiene products, and medicine.

We want to reach more than one million signatures to demand that the current US government remove Cuba from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list and unconditionally end the blockade, which is rejected by the entire international community.

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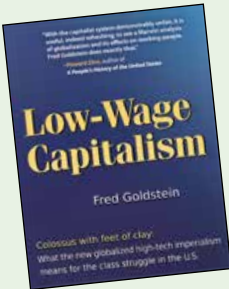


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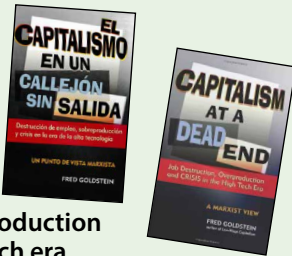
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years, and they think they can come in here and harass us, intimidate us, fine us, jail us to the point that we’re going to get off our own land? They’re trying to remove us like they always have from our own territories.” (Ricochet Media, May 8, 2022)

As Wet’suwet’en leaders described at the Summit, many of these brutal tactics come from “Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies,” a U.S. counterinsurgency “playbook” written by Petraeus, a former CIA Director and commander of the NATO/U.S. occupations in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

In 2013, the year after he left the CIA, Petraeus joined KKR as Chairman of its Global Institute. “I identify ways to reduce risk,” Petraeus said of his work with KKR. “Once we’ve made investments, we help companies as they run into problems.” (Popular Resistance, Aug. 20)

Collusion between U.S., Canadian oppressors

Given the information revealed by Wet’suwet’en leaders, it appears Petraeus

used old contacts to “solve” the “problems” posed by Indigenous resistance to Coastal GasLink. RCMP Superintendent John Brewer commands the Community-Industry Response Group (C-IRG), the taskforce assigned to quash Indigenous resistance to corporate pipelines, mining, and other settler resource-extraction on Indigenous lands.

As C-IRG commander, Brewer oversaw the RCMP occupation of Wet’suwet’en land. Prior to this assignment, he served on Petraeus’s staff as Senior NATO Police Adviser in Afghanistan.

The roles of Petraeus and Brewer in persecuting the Wet’suwet’en highlights the links between Western imperialism overseas and the ongoing settler colonial occupation and genocide of Indigenous nations on Turtle Island.

Police and security forces have regularly used such counter-insurgency tactics against Indigenous land defenders and water protectors, such as at Standing Rock, located in North Dakota and South Dakota, where private contractors used attack dogs, water cannons, tear gas grenades and rubber bullets against

unarmed protesters.

“These men are trained to kill where they have been fighting, they probably killed before and now they’re pointing guns at Indigenous people,” said Gitxsan leader Hup-Wil-Ax-A Kirby Muldoe, describing threats from police and corporate security trained in counterinsurgency tactics.

Yet despite this onslaught from settler authorities, Wet’suwet’en land defenders vowed to continue their resistance.

‘I am standing in my truth’

“I can’t be afraid of anything if I am standing in my truth,” said Geylene Morris, a Wet’suwet’en activist and one of the organizers of the Peace and Unity Summit. “If there was nothing for me to stand on, no truth of my ancestors to stand on, I probably would be scared. All of my ancestors who did this before me are behind me, and in all the work that I have done, my daughter knows that I will keep her safe, even when I am no longer on this Earth.”

The campaign of surveillance, persecution, and violence the Wet’suwe’ten

are fighting against reveals the implacable drive of the capitalist settler system to continue exploiting the Indigenous lands and resources on which it depends.

The U.S. and Canada are among the largest fossil fuel producers and exporters in the world, releasing billions of tons of CO₂ every year, even as climate disasters multiply.

Even the neoliberal “green solutions” to the climate crisis, such as electric vehicles (EVs) and wind power, entail “rare-earth” strip mining and wind-farm development that is bringing further destruction to Indigenous lands.

To end this genocidal regime of resource extraction, we must be in solidarity with Wet’suwe’ten in their struggle against the Coastal GasLink Pipeline, which is devastating their homelands.

As wildfires continue to rage throughout Indigenous lands in so-called Canada and worldwide, it is becoming increasingly clear that a genuine solution to the ecological devastation inflicted by capitalism can only come through full sovereignty and self-determination for all Indigenous nations. □