

WGA strikers, students tell Warner CEO

'Pay your writers'

By Steve Gillis
Boston

Writers Guild, East strikers and their supporters from Boston-area unions, recently organized Boston University graduate and residence-life workers, and graduates in red caps and gowns — more than 1,000 people — converged on BU's commencement May 21. The target of their anger: the union-busting commencement speaker, David Zaslav, CEO of Warner Bros. Discovery.

The protesters checked in at the university's Playwrights' Theater, which workers there had turned into strike solidarity headquarters for the day. The theater is home of the Graduate Playwriting Program at BU. The demonstrators all signed up there to get picket signs and be assigned to gate picket duty.

WGA East strike captains assigned picketers to the main entrance and the VIP entrance to the stadium event. The main force stretched two blocks along Commonwealth Avenue. There they greeted thousands of graduates and their families with news of profound labor conflict at the prestigious campus.

The solidarity between students and workers had grown over the past year. In recent months over 4,000 BU graduate and residence-life workers voted in near-unanimous landslides to join the Service Employees Union (SEIU).

Teach Brown and Zaslav a lesson

Then on May 3, outgoing-BU President Robert Brown announced Zaslav for commencement speaker, the day after WGA began their well-publicized national strike. Brown's words threatened university workers, the WGA and the students. Immediately the student workers went into action, reaching out to WGAE leadership in solidarity and demanding that the

administration immediately "Cancel Zaslav!"

Thousands of BU students pay \$50,000 per year and more to earn Fine Arts degrees, including screenwriting, media arts, film technology, music, acting and theater arts. Their "Cancel Zaslav!" campaign featured Hollywood-quality social media, posters, petitions, film and community events, which went viral as Boston Globe headlines had for weeks announced its hundreds of labor and community supporters and reached millions coast to coast.

Solidarity spreads

The solidarity throughout the BU community — whose 140 acres of campus and dormitories make it one of Boston's largest landlords — reached thousands more neighborhood workers at Starbucks, Target, Taco Bell, REI and Alphabet, who joined the call denouncing BU's overt union busting, as did local political leaders.

A widely disseminated BU Young Democratic Socialists (YDSA) leaflet summarized the attack as "a slap in the face to both the writers on strike . . . and to the graduating seniors at BU who plan to work in the industry."

Anya Epstein, a leader of WGA-East from New York City, commanded the chants atop a Jersey stone barrier outside the Nickerson Field main entrance. Some 7,526 graduates and their families first heard her message loud and clear: "No Wages, No Pages!"

Hundreds of graduates raised their fists and took turns in the line, many writing pro-union messages on their



WW PHOTO: MAUREEN SKEHAN

Anya Epstein of WGA-East commanding the strike line at BU commencement, May 21, 2023.

caps, including the crowd favorite: "F*!# Zaslav!" A few brave gowned graduates refused to cross the line, skipping the corporate pomp, but getting A+ for solidarity.

'Bye-bye to AI'

Epstein's most sustained chant spotlighted Zaslav and fellow Hollywood studio moguls' headlong drive to replace writers' talented labor and artistry with artificial intelligence (AI), a major issue of the now month-long industry strike.

"When I say AI, you say bye-bye! AI, bye-bye! AI, bye-bye!" drowned out BU's pomp and circumstance outside the stadium. Even blocks away, where VIPs exited limousines to reach the theater through a side-entrance picket, they had to hear the chants.

Inside, when President Brown rose to

introduce Zaslav, whole sections of graduates, many holding new degrees in media and entertainment writing, raised solidarity hell. They and their family members immediately started booing, heckling, turning their backs and chanting for 22 minutes.

At one minute and 21 seconds into a widely reported video, a righteous graduate stunned the aviator-sunglassed boss Zaslav, yelling out, "F--- you, you piece of sh--!" Hundreds rose to their feet cheering and began rhythmically clapping and chanting: "Pay your writers!" The disruption didn't stop until Zaslav, an alumnus of BU's law school who had pocketed \$286 million of workers' surplus labor over the past two years, sat down in a disgrace that went viral.

WGA's leaflet explained the stakes: "While Warner Bros. Discovery President and CEO David Zaslav prepares to speak at Boston University's commencement, television and screen writers are facing the most comprehensive assault on our compensation and working conditions in a generation. The studios have taken advantage of the transition to streaming to underpay writers at all levels. . .

"The same race-to-the-bottom practices that hurt writers hurt workers up and down the call sheet. That's why so many are standing with writers: the entertainment guilds and unions, international writers' unions, other labor organizations and political and community leaders."

To support and join the writers' strike lines, go to wgastrike.org.

Steve Gillis is a 37-year member and an elected leader of the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, United Steelworkers Local 8751, now working for the members and retired from driving. USW Local 8751 brought their loudhailer sound equipment to the WGA-East action in solidarity with the strikers.

Arab League invite to Syria stuns U.S. imperialism

By Sara Flounders

The following is the message Sara Flounders was invited to deliver to the May 28 meeting of the International Arab Forum to Break the Siege on Syria.

Greetings and warm solidarity to the International Arab Forum to Break the Siege on Syria.

I'm Sara Flounders, Co-director of International Action Center and member of the International Relations Committee of Workers World Party.

It is an honor to join you in celebrating the breaking of the unjust siege imposed on Syria. This siege was part of a global war, led by U.S. imperialism, and waged for more than 12 years. Many thousands

of people were killed, and millions were displaced.

We celebrate with you the end of the illegal freeze of Syria's membership in the League of Arab States and the invitation to President Bashar Assad to the Arab Summit in Riyadh, in Saudi Arabia.

We join with you in demanding an end to the illegal U.S. / NATO / G7 sanctions on Syria. These criminal starvation sanctions must be rejected and denounced by the whole world.

Syria is owed reparations for these sanctions and war of destruction by U.S. and NATO countries.

We join with you in the hope for the unity of the Arab people. This is the only way forward.

Despite 12 years of unrelenting siege,

U.S. imperialism has failed! It has failed in its efforts of destroying the elected Syrian government and replacing it with a regime submissive to Washington. U.S. imperialism has failed in its effort to isolate Syria. The invitation by the Arab League was a defeat for Washington.

Now U.S. imperialism is busy planning new wars. Its wars never end.

It was the George W. Bush administration that at the end of 2003 listed Syria as a U.S. target for isolation and overthrow.

The war against Syria continued through the administrations of Presidents Barack Obama, Donald Trump and now Joe Biden. Republican and Democratic administrations were united in war and in imposing the harshest sanctions on Syria.

This policy has been costly for the

people of Syria, the people of West Asia and the world.

We join with you in celebrating this great victory for the Syrian people and its government. This is a victory for the Arab people and for all steadfast people of the world.

We express our solidarity with Syria's allies — governments and popular organizations — that aided and participated in Syria's defense.

We salute the courageous Syrian people, who were forced to sacrifice so much to combat the U.S.-led aggression.

Long live Syrian sovereignty and independence from imperialism.

End the sanctions now!

U.S. get out now! □

Kissinger at 100: still a war criminal

Henry Kissinger reached 100 years old today, May 27, 2023, offering proof that world-class war criminals can escape punishment if they commit their crimes in the service of U.S. imperialism.

Kissinger was National Security Adviser to President Richard Nixon and then Secretary of State under Nixon and President Gerald Ford. Many of his well-wishers in the ruling class and its media are using this birthday to note his role in U.S. “diplomacy” during that period, 1969-77.



CARTOON: STEVE BRODNER

Like the late Zbigniew Brzezinski, the global strategist who served Democratic Party presidents, Kissinger was a European migrant to the U.S., who provided the intellectual framework for imperialist policies during the Cold War. Kissinger provided the rationale for the mass murders committed under Republican presidents; Brzezinski for the Democrats.

Most in the ruling-class media will praise him. Some may point out flaws. For those, like Workers World, who evaluate his role from the point of view of the working and exploited peoples of the world, what stands out are his crimes and that the goal of these crimes was to continue the domination of much of the world by a tiny group of superrich capitalists and bankers.

His greatest, though not his only crimes, were committed against the peoples of Southeast Asia, specifically the Vietnamese and Cambodians.

Yes, it was the Democrats in the Lyndon Johnson administration, who escalated the war and sent more than a half million U.S. troops to Vietnam by 1968. But the January-February Tet Offensive that year showed the weakness of the U.S. intervention. By late 1969, besieged by protests, the Nixon administration had already begun to withdraw troops; negotiations became inevitable.

Kissinger and Nixon began negotiations, but their policy included stepping up the bombing of the Vietnamese people. In an attempt to stop the Vietnamese from liberating their country, Kissinger even threatened to use nuclear weapons against them. In the end, the U.S. rained more tonnage of bombs on Vietnam than all the allied bombers dropped on Germany in World War II, costing millions of

Vietnamese lives.

Kissinger pushed for the bombing of Cambodia, overthrowing the neutral government and killing hundreds of thousands of Cambodians in the countryside. This policy left a chaotic situation that eventually led to the deaths of many more Cambodians.

In an insult to the Vietnamese people fighting for their liberation, in 1973 the Nobel Committee tried to offer the Peace Prize to Kissinger and to the Vietnamese patriot, Le Duc Tho, as they had both signed the peace treaty. Le Duc Tho, then-spokesperson for the North Vietnamese delegation to the Paris Peace Talks, refused to jointly accept it with the war criminal. The Vietnamese communists were not only heroic; they were principled.

As Secretary of State, Kissinger oversaw the CIA’s overthrow of the elected government of President Salvador Allende in September 1973 in Chile. Replacing Allende was the military dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet, which murdered tens of thousands of Chileans and opened the country to a takeover by imperialist banks and corporations.

Kissinger’s policies gave a green light to the generals in Argentina to torture, murder and arrest tens of thousands of Argentines. Despite its love of the Argentine generals, Washington still backed its junior partner, British imperialism, in the war to reconquer Argentina’s Malvinas islands in 1982.

That list omits many of Kissinger’s crimes. But it’s enough for a conclusion.

The important question is not whether Kissinger was an effective strategist for U.S. imperialist interests. That’s a question of interest only to the ruling class.

The important question involves what happened as a result of his conduct. Our conclusion: To expand the interests of a tiny class of billionaires, Kissinger provided the strategy for carrying out war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Those who fought against those crimes did the right thing. Those who defend those crimes and celebrate the birthdays of their centenarian perpetrators are the enemies of the vast majority of the world’s people. □

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

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