

MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

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STUDENT INTIFADA

WW COMMENTARY

By Monica Moorehead

The student uprising that began at Columbia University in New York City on April 17 has evolved into a global phenomenon, reaching even Antarctica.

What sparked this movement, a real Intifada that takes the form of Gaza Solidarity Encampments, is the ongoing horrific genocide in Gaza by the U.S.-backed Israeli apartheid regime that began in October. This genocide, which has played out on all forms of social media, has claimed over 35,000 lives and over 78,000 injured Palestinians as of May 5, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza.

At one point, students established over 100 encampments on college campuses throughout the U.S. The protesters demand the college administrations divest from Israeli companies and Israeli-linked companies, especially those with ties to industries making weapons that have massacred Palestinians, including over 15,000 children. The protesters demand a permanent end to the genocide.

While these encampments have used peaceful tactics, the organizers have sent a clear message that they would not be silent. They condemn their college management and the Joe Biden administration for their complicity with genocide.

These students tell the world that they are exercising their right to free speech and the freedom of assembly, outlined in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights, ratified by Congress in December 1791. They proclaim that their encampments will remain intact until their demands are met, no matter how long it takes.

Brutal police, local and state, armed to the teeth with batons, pepper spray, flash-bang grenades, zip ties and rubber bullets, have violated these basic bourgeois democratic rights at many of these encampments. Police have even drawn guns against unarmed young people.

At the University of California, Los Angeles, police were either absent or just stood by as armed pro-Israel forces attacked these encampments with fireworks, lead pipes and chemical sprays and carried out other acts of terror, causing multiple injuries. Pro-Palestinian protesters had their COVID masks and keffiyehs ripped off to make them more vulnerable to right-wing attacks. Muslim students have had their hijabs removed while being arrested, a violation of their religious rights.

The police, with the support of these reactionary college administrators, have turned these peaceful encampments into virtual war zones.

The real perpetrators of violence

College administrators, echoing the Biden administration, have pushed the utterly false narrative that the encampments were antisemitic and an affront to Jewish students. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, many anti-Zionist Jewish students participated in the encampments to say that the genocide in Gaza will not be carried out in their name.

This false claim of antisemitism provides a cover for Washington to continue its support for a regime, which,



In response to the genocidal Israeli assault on Rafah, students gather at Hunter College in New York City. Despite police brutality, they take their protest to near the Met Gala, May 6, 2024.

WW PHOTOS: BRENDA RYAN

since its founding in 1948, has embodied naked ethnic cleansing, mass displacement and overt anti-Arab racism. This regime claims that its right to self defense justifies its destruction of Gaza and the deliberate starvation of Gazans. Let's be clear: A state that uses an occupying force to subjugate an entire Indigenous population has no right to exist, much less the right to slaughter others.

Consider the situation of the Indigenous nations in the Americas when Christopher Columbus first arrived in the hemisphere in 1492. The settlers from Europe were to systematically steal their land. Didn't Indigenous peoples have the right to resist by any means necessary?

Didn't the African people enslaved in the Western Hemisphere since 1619 have the right to resist violent enslavement? And didn't the people of South Africa, also victims of white settler apartheid, have the right to resist their violent oppressors?

The pretext college administrations use to order police raids is that the encampments allegedly pose a danger to Jewish students. In reality, the police raids are the real violence and a danger to all who oppose Zionism and its imperialist apologists, such as the U.S. rulers.

Why abolish the police?

Why are these student encampments, whose tactics are peaceful, being attacked with such ferocious brutality? These encampments call the very existence of Israel into question, and Israel has become the number one world social pariah. And as much as they expose Israeli crimes, the student encampments have an anti-U.S. theme within the belly of the beast — U.S. imperialism.

In his famous "State and Revolution," the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin defines the role of the state — that is, the armed bodies of men and women, which

maintain the rule of one class over another. In U.S. capitalist society, the state protects the domination of the billionaire ruling class over the interests of the multinational working class, which also includes students.

Today the students are challenging U.S. support for Israel. Since Israel is a key link in imperialist domination



Hunter College, New York City, May 6, 2024.

worldwide, the U.S. rulers order their state to use violent force against them as soon as the masses raise their heads when their unjust rule is challenged.

There can be no justification for the police to invade campuses like storm troopers to disrupt and terrorize students demanding divestment, the end of genocide and the liberation of the Palestinian people. Just as any resistance by the Palestinian people is a right, so is the resistance by the students to defend themselves from a state that does not represent their interests.

Right now there is a demand for cops off campuses. One day in the not too distant future, as class consciousness continues to grow, this demand will evolve to abolish the police and to abolish capitalism, the system that fuels so much repression and all forms of bigotry. The working class has every right to become the gravediggers of their oppressors. □

Outside agitation?

Let's make it clear from the top that it is perfectly legal, normal and excellent to offer solidarity, encouragement, material support and, if asked, advice and training to students who oppose genocide. It is even the duty of experienced organizers to offer such acts of solidarity.

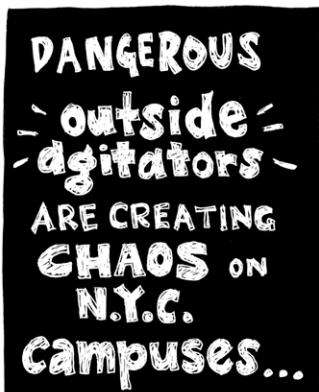
When the corporate media, as it did on and around May 1, writes of "outside agitators" participating in encampments, it borders on ridiculous. If politicians such as New York City Mayor Eric Adams and New York Governor Kathy Hochul attack the encampments as being a hotbed of outside agitators, we know they are grasping at straws. And that they're lying, lying, lying.

With this lying bluster, politicians and media are covering up the role of the real outsiders who have intervened at the universities. These actors are brought in to disrupt the protests and harm the students. In some cases — regarding the MAGA right wing — their goal is to destroy the educational organizations they consider insufficiently racist, xenophobic and sexist.

The most obvious outside agitators are the state and local police. These are professionals, mercenaries, with no essential ties to education, who the school administrations call in from the outside to invade campuses and arrest and beat students.

There is the U.S. Congress, whose committees summoned university chancellors and presidents to answer blatantly vicious and ridiculous questions under threat of contempt. They even demanded the leaders of the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard and MIT resign, forcing the first two to quit and showing all university leaders they better get tough with students. Those Congressional fascist types are way outside.

Joining the fray are big-money donors to university endowments, threatening to withhold funds if the school administrations fail to call down the wrath of the capitalist state on pro-Palestinian students — and fail to expel them too. These rich donors may be alumni, but they are neither students nor



professors and they're certainly not workers at the university. They are outsiders, outsiders with money, and in the capitalist United States, money talks.

Less obvious outside agents are the fascist elements who pretend to be local students who attack the encampments, often employing violence (UCLA). Sometimes they even shout out anti-Jewish slogans that media report as coming from the encampment (Northeastern University in Boston).

WORKERS WORLD editorial

Then there is the corporate media, making in some cases blatant, in others subtle, attacks. The gutter press and broadcast news simply slander the students as violent and antisemitic, although they know these statements are false. The more sophisticated pro-imperialist and pro-Israel opinion writers lecture the students on alleged errors in their tactics. Their common goal is demoralization of the activists.

The truth is that thousands of students have surprised everyone — including those who rule the United States — and have energized and encouraged poor and oppressed people all over the world. When attacked by police, they have attracted even more support from fellow students, teachers and workers, on and off their campuses, who have also been energized.

For six months, those who became involved in the encampments watched Israel commit genocide in real time, caught on social media. They watched the U.S. government arm Israel and supply political and diplomatic as well as logistical support — that is, being complicit with genocide.

And now, like the boy who was unafraid to point out the emperor's nakedness, those in the encampments have made millions more people aware of these crimes of the U.S. empire. The students need no extra "outside" agitation. They are already doing the right thing.

Like anyone in a struggle with a monster, these students could use solidarity. And anyone else who opposes genocide should show them that solidarity. □



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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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