

Amazon workers

The struggle has just begun

Make this a new period of working class challenge

By Saladin Muhammad

The following edited remarks were made at an April 9 webinar, “The Struggle Continues: Next Steps for BAmazon Union and Beyond—Organizers’ Meeting.” The Support Amazon Workers solidarity campaign (supportamazonworkers.org) organized the session. Saladin Muhammad is a founding member of the Southern Workers Assembly (southernworker.org) and Black Workers For Justice, based in North Carolina.

There’s disappointment at the vote against a union at Amazon in Alabama. But recognizing the absence of a real strong labor movement and a strategy for



organizing labor in the shop, we go into the campaign for “next steps” with a different kind of view than simply based on winning a particular election.

For any outcome of the Bessemer Amazon workers campaign, we go on with a view of how a workers’ struggle begins to open up and create a new climate—and possible new alignments and new forms of organization—that could make organizing in the South, and organizing nationally, much more powerful.

The Amazon corporation, as we know, is one of the biggest corporations in the world, with great amounts of money—a global corporation. And it has new technology that it’s using to organize, monitor and intensify the production levels of the workers. For those of us who consider



Protest outside Amazon fulfillment center in Durham, N.C., March 20.

ourselves on the left, and for trade unionists as well, it’s important to see this battle as an opening battle.

The battle in the form of solidarity actions has even brought together progressive forces of different political and ideological tendencies that might not ever have come together had there not been this kind of struggle. That’s a positive development.

The battle created a political climate coming out of the Black Lives Matter period where workers surfaced and probably felt—in spite of the weaknesses from labor’s absence in the South—that this climate was the time to rise up and take the risk of challenging a big corporation. We have to look at some of the positives.

For those of us who recognize that the struggle against capital is not some instant action, it’s not simply a protest. It’s a strategy that’s deeply rooted in the working class and the oppressed sectors—especially those who have a level of consciousness

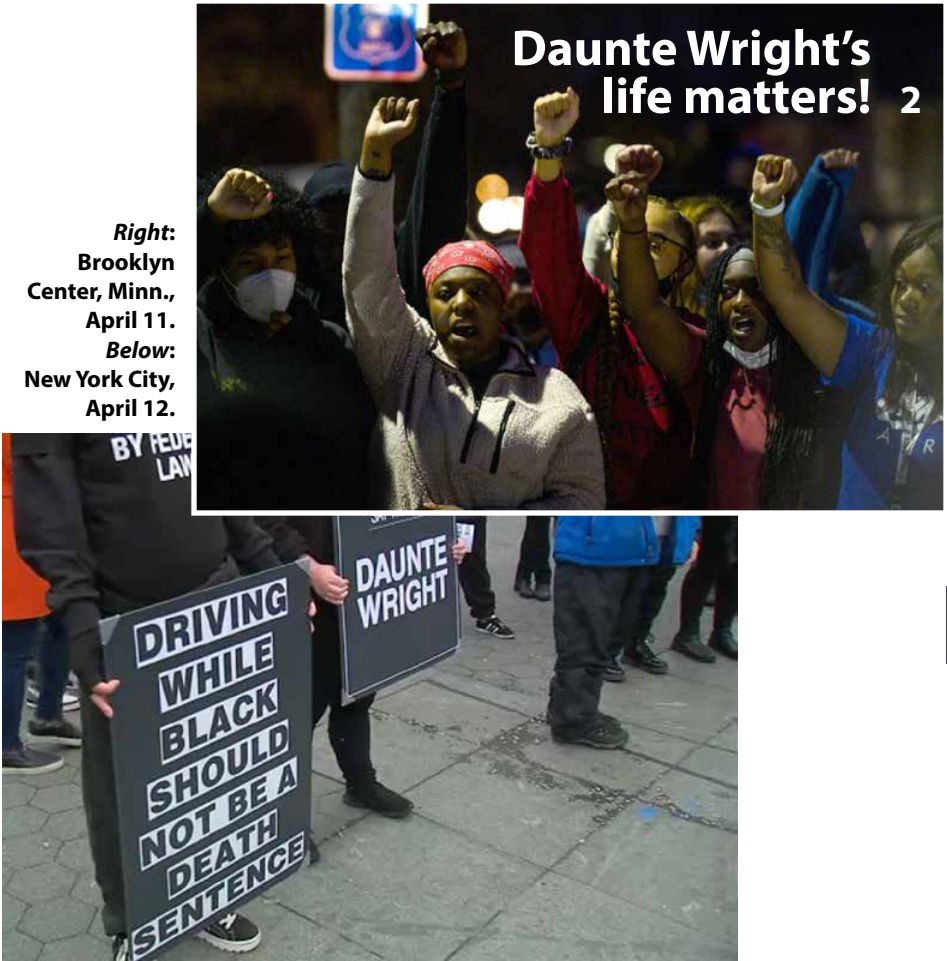
about exercising power and can identify the weaknesses in our employers and who know them as the backbone of a system that’s reinforced by the state.

So I raised these things to say: Let’s not be too disappointed! We have an obligation not to let this expression of consciousness and the courage to go up against the big corporation—we must not let it disappear.

And that’s one of the roles for the left or for progressive forces of the labor left and the trade unions—to make this a new period of working-class challenge, of the working-class movement. That’s a positive. I think it’s important.

Biden was forced by the climate to make that statement implying support for unions—like Roosevelt was forced by a climate of workers’ struggle. Had BAmazon Union been a campaign that didn’t have national and international

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Right: Brooklyn Center, Minn., April 11.
Below: New York City, April 12.

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‘Injustice at every turn’
Victory for Jalil Muntaqim
Stop retaliation against Bryant Arroyo
Breaking prison chains
Chip Fitzgerald, ¡presente!
ALL OUT FOR MUMIA! April 23-25

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Justice for Daunte Wright! Smash police terror!

By Devin Cole

On April 11, police in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, on the northwest border of Minneapolis, fatally shot a young Black man named Daunte Wright. According to witnesses, Daunte Wright was being stopped by Brooklyn Center police when he was shot by an officer. He then got back in his car and drove away, driving a few blocks before crashing the vehicle.

According to the Washington Post, the police told his father, Aubrey Wright, that they stopped his son initially due to an air freshener allegedly blocking his rearview mirror. The father questioned the police motive since his son’s car windows were tinted. The police then claimed that they asked Wright to step out of his car for an “outstanding warrant” before he was killed. (April 12)

Police officials are now saying that the killing of Daunte Wright was an “accident” since the officer who shot him thought it was a taser.

This recent killing of the 20-year-old father of one child comes at a time where just 10 miles away, a white cop, Derek Chauvin, is in the middle of a trial to determine if he will be legally punished or not for murdering 46-year-old George Floyd, a Black man, in late May 2020, by kneeling on his neck for 9 minutes and 29 seconds.

Later in the evening of April 11, hundreds of protesters marched on the Brooklyn Center police station. The police shot tear gas, marker impact rounds and rubber bullets at protesters, including media reporting from the street. One medic was reportedly hit with a rubber bullet.

During the day following the murder, Daunte Wright’s mother, Katie Wright, asked people to come to the location where he was shot to demand answers as to what happened, but the crowd was quickly dispersed by the police.

These protests led by anti-police terror organizers and



Carrying Black Lives Matter flags to denounce killing of Daunte Wright (inset photo), protesters in Brooklyn Center, Minn. are assaulted by police, April 11.

activists lasted well into the morning of April 12, with sources such as Unicorn Riot reporting as late as 12:45 a.m. that local police, backed by the National Guard and the Minnesota State Patrol, were threatening to arrest all protesters, as well as the media. (tinyurl.com/yjg27uv3)

All professional sports teams in the Twin Cities have cancelled their games for April 12 in response to the shooting of Wright.

The cop’s fascistic response to the uproar against terror against the Black Lives Matter movement proves further that police everywhere, the long arm of the capitalist-imperialist state — though decaying — are still terrorizing communities of the colonized and oppressed. And the struggle against them and the entire repressive state is intensifying further and further.

Daunte Wright’s life matters! Hands off the protesters! Smash police terror now! □



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

Join us in the fight for socialism!

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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Vol. 63, No. 15 • April 15, 2021
Closing date: April 14, 2021

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Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published monthly by WW Publishers, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Phone: 212.627.2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$36; institutions: \$50. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from NA Publishing, Inc, P.O. Box 998, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-0998. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Subscription information is at workers.org.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl. New York, N.Y. 10011.

Capitalism, racism and the Michigan COVID surge

By Martha Grevatt

After a year of masking, social distancing and with significant sectors of the U.S. population vaccinated, COVID cases are beginning to decline. There are fewer reported deaths and hospitalizations. This is welcome news.

But there are exceptions. COVID is spiking again in Michigan with new cases averaging over 7,000 per day — seven times the state’s figure for February. Hospitals are again being pushed to capacity, and two or three dozen new deaths are reported on a daily basis.

Detroit and Flint, the state’s two poorest cities, have some of the highest numbers of new COVID infections. Both cities are majority African American, and both suffered disproportionately during earlier pandemic surges. Racism — also behind the Flint water crisis and the looting of Detroit city assets during the 2013 bankruptcy — allowed COVID to reach genocidal proportions in Michigan.

While close to a third of Michigan’s population has received at least one dose of the COVID vaccine, only one in five Detroit residents have received their first shots. These racist health care inequities that are pervasive across the U.S. — as opposed to alleged widespread distrust of the health care system — are driving these disparities. If the system was fair, workers of color would be first in line for the vaccine, as they are disproportionately consigned to the jobs of “essential workers.”

A majority of Michigan’s incarcerated workers are Black, Brown and Indigenous. Like all incarcerated workers in the U.S., they have higher rates of COVID

infection and deaths, but are the last to be vaccinated.

Another factor in Michigan’s latest COVID crisis may likely be the large number of workers dependent on the auto industry. Ford, General Motors and Stellantis (which includes Chrysler) have a majority of their U.S. plants in Michigan. There are also numerous independent parts factories in the state that supply them. The Detroit Three plants were closed, early into the pandemic, but reopened in May 2020 with inadequate preparation or precautions.

Auto plants typically have thousands of workers under one roof, who labor indoors in poorly ventilated buildings. Even with masking, physically distant workspaces and sanitation procedures, COVID is spreading among autoworkers and their families. There are new cases reported every day at Stellantis’ Warren Stamping Plant, which this writer retired from in 2019. Nonunion parts plants workers have fewer protections.

With vehicle sales climbing, the auto companies’ only concern is cranking out more products to maximize profits.

Right-wing anti-maskers and spikes in rural communities

While the numbers of new cases are highest in urban centers, percentage-wise the rates are rising the most in rural counties where the populations are overwhelmingly white and typically vote Republican. This is the political base of “Unlock Michigan,” the group pushing a ballot initiative to overturn the governor’s power to issue executive orders. They oppose Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s mandatory mask requirement

and previous closures of bars, restaurants and other businesses.

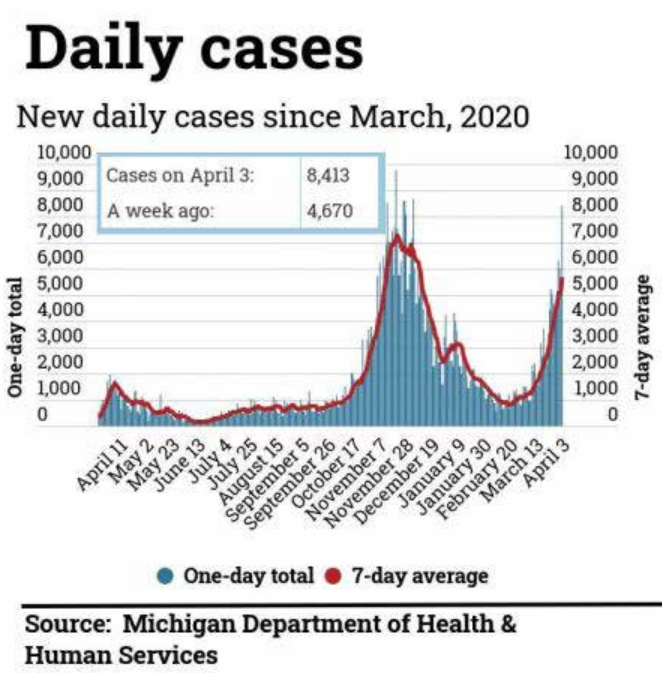
Under the influence of right-wing propaganda, many in these rural areas openly defy masking requirements and make a point of attending superspreader events, including the many pro-Trump rallies last year. They have made serious death threats against Whitmer, and some militia members face jail time in a plot to kidnap her. Michigan fascists are among those appearing in the now-infamous photos of the Jan. 6 Capitol siege.

Predictably, this dangerous political element is now spreading the pandemic in communities which often lack a nearby hospital.

A third aspect of the crisis is the increase of infections among adults aged 20-40 years old and K-12 students as schools reopen.

Michigan’s dire COVID situation led Whitmer to ask President Joe Biden to increase the state’s vaccine allotment. So far Biden has denied her request, holding to plans that base allocations solely on the number of adults in each state without regard to income or ethnicity. This position will lead to more deaths.

If Michigan is to halt the spike in COVID numbers and flatten the curve



like the rest of the country, Whitmer must issue new, enforceable emergency orders immediately. Her latest “voluntary” appeals to continue masking and distancing and avoid indoor gatherings are inadequate. Facing reelection in 2022, Whitmer unfortunately appears to be putting her career above public safety.

While ex-President Donald Trump deserves much of the blame for the hundreds of thousands of COVID deaths during his administration, the disaster in Michigan reminds us not to let Democratic politicians off the hook. Recent events in the state — whose workers have generated so much wealth for the capitalist class — are another argument for a socialist system that puts human needs before profit. □

Vaccines highlight differences between capitalism and socialism

By Joshua Hanks

Early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear which countries had effective responses to the spread of the virus, and which did not.

Wuhan, China, underwent a strict lockdown for 76 days, successfully bringing the virus under control in the world’s first city to identify an outbreak. The rest of China also controlled the virus, preventing potentially millions of deaths had they allowed it to spread at the same horrific scale as did Britain, Belgium, Italy and the U.S.

All these highly developed capitalist countries were thought to be the most prepared to confront a pandemic. Yet most developed capitalist countries failed spectacularly to control the virus, despite outliers like New Zealand which benefit

from geographical isolation and a less dense population.

The pandemic revealed many fundamental differences between capitalist countries and countries oriented toward socialism. These differences encompass deep, core aspects of society — how much or how little human life is valued, whether science takes precedence over the pursuit of profit, and individualism versus collectivism. With the production and distribution of vaccines coming into full force, more differences are coming to light.

China and Vietnam brought the virus swiftly under control and vigorously suppressed its reintroduction. These countries pursued a preventative, multipronged strategy that saved countless lives and greatly shortened the severe social and economic disruption caused by the pandemic.

Vaccines are an important tool for these countries — socialist Cuba stands out for its vaccine research and production. China is the world leader in vaccine exports, with their vaccines reaching 60 countries. Yet vaccines are clearly not their last, desperate hope to contain the worst pandemic in over a century.

Most developed capitalist countries, having failed to prevent COVID’s spread from the beginning, must rely far more on vaccines to control the pandemic. Nothing else they have done has been able to extinguish the virus’s deadly rampage throughout their populations.

Contradictions in profit system limit vaccine access

With the massive accumulation of wealth and talent granted to capitalist countries that occupy the top of the imperialist world order, they have highly developed, high-tech pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. Infused with federal funding, private corporations developed novel vaccines using cutting-edge mRNA technology. These vaccines could theoretically be quickly tweaked to respond to mutant virus variants and could one day provide a universal flu vaccine, or even possibly an effective HIV vaccine. Unlike older vaccines, their production does not require handling live viruses, thus increasing safety at labs and production facilities.

Yet the capitalist relations of production in which this technology was developed limit its full potential for use in serving human needs. Aggressive use of patents can restrict their deployment, increase prices and give huge power to private

pharmaceutical and biotech companies.

Pfizer demanded that Argentina and Brazil put up state assets — military bases and embassy buildings — as collateral for potential vaccine-related legal costs. In one Latin American country that has a confidentiality agreement with Pfizer, a vaccine deal was delayed for three months due to Pfizer’s aggressive negotiating. (tinyurl.com/3h7zp3z8)

The components in mRNA vaccines are controlled by private capitalist corporations. Only a handful of Western companies, such as Germany’s Merck and Canada’s Acuitas, supply the lipid nanoparticles that coat the mRNA bundle in the vaccines and make them viable.

At a press briefing April 9, World Health Organization Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that 87% of vaccines have gone to wealthier countries, while low-income countries received just 0.2%. (tinyurl.com/xeubrpjxj) This is the inevitable result of vaccine research and production when controlled by a few large corporations, which supply those with the most ability to pay first and squeeze out every outrageous concession they can from developing countries.

Imperialism relies on military invasions and drone strikes, but it needs private corporations based in imperialist countries using vaccines and other lifesaving technology to coerce and manipulate sovereign countries in the Global South.

Cuba and China vaccine leaders

The vaccine story is not just being written by Pfizer and Moderna. Cuba and China are vaccine leaders, but they are

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Capitalism on a Ventilator

The impact of COVID-19 in China & the U.S.

“What one learns from Capitalism on a Ventilator is that the economic and human cost of the pandemic was far from inevitable. An entire section of the book is devoted to China’s solidarity with the rest of the world in the fight against COVID-19. After four months of difficult struggle, China successfully contained the pandemic and immediately diverted masks, testing kits, medical personnel, ventilators and other forms of assistance to countries across Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. The U.S. received generous donations of medical equipment from China during the first wave of the pandemic. China was also the first country to declare that its COVID-19 vaccine would be a public good.”

— Danny Haiphong in a review for *Black Agenda Report*

CAPITALISM on a VENTILATOR
The impact of COVID-19 in China & the U.S.
An anthology of social justice activists discussing a global choice: cooperation vs. competition
Edited by Sara Flounders & Lee Siu Hin
A Project of the International Action Center & China U.S. Solidarity Network

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For incarcerated trans women: ‘Injustice at every turn’



By Princess Harmony

According to the 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey, one in six transgender people have been imprisoned. For Black transgender people the ratio is one in two. The prison system is no place for anyone to be, but for a trans person the prison system is especially threatening. A study done in the California prison system found trans people are 13 times more likely to be sexually assaulted than other incarcerated people. Imprisoned in Georgia, Ashley Diamond was raped 14 times by both sexually violent inmates and prison staff. This was after a guard talked about her

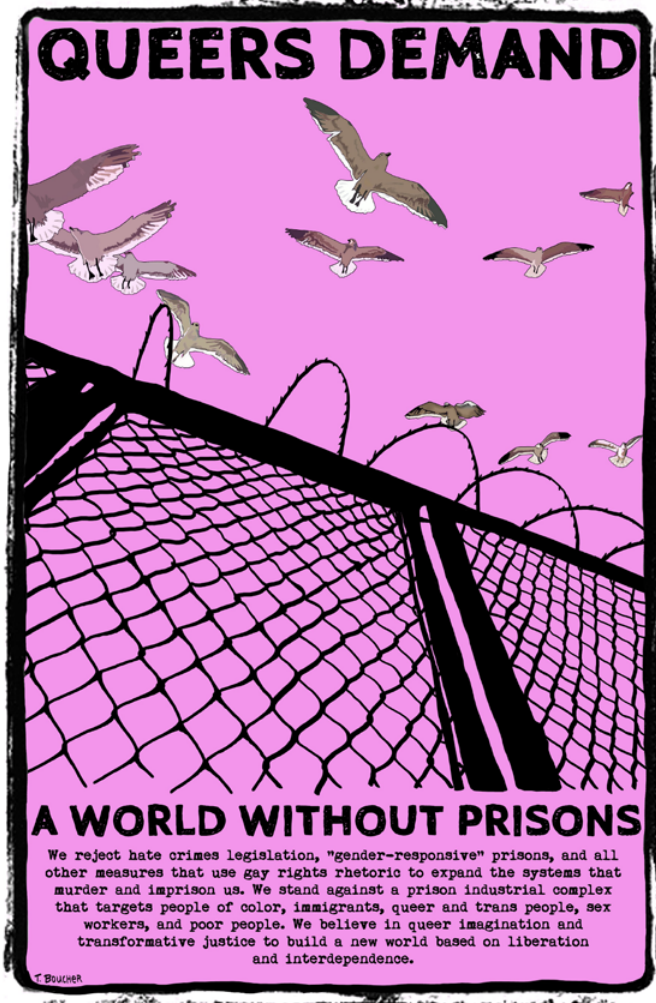
gender identity using slurs like “freak” and “it.” With the aid of the Center for Constitutional Rights and the Southern Poverty Law Center, Diamond is suing the Georgia Department of Corrections for placing her in a men’s facility. Trans women, in most cases, are either incarcerated with cis men or put into special queer-centric pods, if available. As seen in Diamond’s case, guards either do nothing to protect trans people, or they make their experience worse by assaulting them or letting other incarcerated people assault them. In Michigan, an incarcerated person identified as Jane Doe sued the Department of Corrections March 2 for mistreatment after they placed her in a cell with a convicted rapist and murderer, who assaulted her multiple times. She was supposed to be sent to the G. Robert Cotton Correctional Facility for people with gender dysphoria, but that never happened. The correctional officers were responsible for this horrid example of transmisogynistic violence. In fact, any complaints or requests from her were met with threats. While physical violence is highly common against trans women in prison, other forms of violence abound, including the deliberate defeminization of trans women. Trans women are stripped of everything that makes them feel feminine, including prescribed hormones like estrogen

or progesterone and testosterone blockers like spironolactone. Hormone replacement therapy is medically necessary for trans women, yet often prison doctors deny access to that treatment. In 2016 an update of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey was released called “Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey.” It found that a whopping 37% of incarcerated trans people are mistreated by correctional officers. Further, 41% of Black and 21% of Latinx trans people report being put in a holding cell because of their gender nonconformance. Additionally, 47% of Black and 30% of Indigenous trans people report being sent to prison or jail for any reason. Because trans women often have to resort to “criminality” to survive on the streets, this makes them targets of the “criminal justice” system. Police harass trans women — just for walking while transgender — which results in their being imprisoned unjustly. Staff violence at New Jersey facility for women

While most trans women are sent to men’s facilities, there are times when trans women can get into a woman’s facility. However, being in a women’s facility does not protect any woman — cis or trans — from being assaulted by correctional officers, who are no less brutal than the staff in men’s facilities. Rae Rollins, a transgender woman sentenced to the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women, filed a lawsuit in New Jersey Superior Court March 19, alleging she required hospital attention after she was beaten, punched and kicked by prison guards. The attack on Rollins was one of a series of violent staff attacks against incarcerated people on Jan. 11 and 12. Other incarcerated people were forcibly removed from their cells by violent staff who invaded and tore apart their cells. One person was beaten so badly,

their skull was broken, though not fatally. Rollins’ lawsuit named the New Jersey Department of Corrections, Commissioner Marcus Hicks and staff at the facility, which has never been a humane place for the incarcerated woman. Under capitalism no prison will ever be humane, but this particular prison is the worst women’s facility and one of the worst facilities in general. While eight of the staff were arrested, there still remain staff who treat the incarcerated women, especially trans women, as less than human. Hopefully, Rae Rollins’ lawsuit will be one of the nails in the EMCFW’s coffin. The lawsuit cites a toxic environment, made more toxic by the presence of transphobic staff who mistreated her. It states: “... the large-scale attack on multiple incarcerated individuals on Jan. 11, 2021, and the continuing course of verbal abuse, physical abuse and relation against Plaintiff constitute a violation of her constitutional right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment.”

The lawsuit and the punishment of eight EMCFW staff have led lawmakers in New Jersey to demand the removal or resignation of NJ DOC Commissioner Hicks, who claims he plans to reform EMCFW to make it more humane. An independent investigator was brought on by Gov. Phil Murphy. As Marxist-Leninists, we know that prisons under capitalism are inhumane and cannot be reformed. They act as concentration camps for the working class, in particular Black, Indigenous, Latinx and gender oppressed. We must put pressure on the profit-driven corporations that drive this injustice system. We must demand prison abolition and reparations for all the mental and physical abuse incarcerated workers have been made to suffer. Power to Ashley Diamond! Power to Jane Doe! Power to Rae Rollins! Free them all! □



PA DOC: Stop persecuting Bryant Arroyo for exercising free speech!

By Ted Kelly

Bryant Arroyo, an incarcerated worker at Pennsylvania SCI Frackville, was placed in isolated custody for several days — in other words, thrown in

the hole — for suggesting to friends and family that they keep their recordings of video conference calls and share what he says through social media, so the public can learn how bad the PA Department of Corrections treats incarcerated people.

To attend a Skype hearing April 5, Arroyo was made to wear a bright orange jumpsuit, hands cuffed behind his back and chained, while never leaving SCI Frackville — the hearing officers were in SCI Mahanoy.

He was found not guilty on 2 of 3 charges and returned to the general population. Arroyo’s only “crime” was free speech, but officials punished him by denying him access to video conference calls for 60 days. On April 7, he was returned to isolation for “observation” for 15 days, while officials conduct further investigations.

Friends and supporters of Bryant have since been contacted by Frackville Superintendent Kathy Brittain and told their visits with him will be restricted indefinitely. Arroyo is a well-known advocate for environmental justice, who has been outspoken against abuse by the PA DOC, especially during the COVID crisis. □

STOP RETALIATION AGAINST THIS INCARCERATED ACTIVIST!

SCI Frackville administrators have placed **Bryant Arroyo**, incarcerated Puerto Rican environmental activist, in solitary confinement for exercising his **First Amendment rights** and **exposing deplorable conditions** in PA prisons.

CALL FRACKVILLE SUPERINTENDENT BRITTAIN
570-874-4516, ext 2102

CALL PA SECRETARY OF CORRECTIONS WETZEL
717-728-4109

TELL THEM:

- **TAKE BRYANT ARROYO (CUI126) OUT OF RESTRICTED HOUSING** and return him to his cell in general population
- **RESCIND THE 60-day RESTRICTION** of video conference calls
- **STOP HARASSING HIM** for exercising his constitutional right to free speech

Victory for Jalil Muntaqim over Monroe County DA

By Ted Kelly

After 49 years, on Oct. 7, 2020, political prisoner Jalil Muntaqim was finally released, becoming the last remaining Black Panther Party member to survive the New York State prison system. However, Monroe County District Attorney Sandra Doorley charged Muntaqim



with felony voter fraud immediately after his release, claiming that he attempted to register to vote. New York, like many other states in the U.S., formally disenfranchises those with felony convictions even after they have been released from prison.

After public outcry and mobilization, Muntaqim beat the charges. On April 9, the former Black Panther appeared on a virtual event on the history of COINTELPRO and the Black Panther Party, hosted by Coalition for Civil Freedoms.

“We continue to build movements that serve the interests of our common humanity and not the greed of the billionaires who control and own 90% of the wealth of this country,” Muntaqim said April 9. □

Breaking the prison chains

By Mirinda Crissman

Rebellion at St. Louis City Jail

A continuous assault on imprisoned inhabitants at the “Justice Center” in downtown St. Louis, Missouri, precipitated the fourth prison rebellion in recent months April 4. (tinyurl.com/yk44uu4g)

Two separate groups smashed out windows in different areas and displayed messages like “Help Us.” People could be heard chanting: “We want court dates!”

The majority of people held in city jails like this one are in pretrial status, without having been convicted of any crime. They are trapped inside for years and exposed to medical neglect and COVID while awaiting trial.



Onlookers watch as incarcerated workers chant from broken windows at the city jail in St. Louis, April 4.

The city’s response to these brave people asking for life was to hire more guards, rather than to change the deadly conditions that have generated consistent resistance. Response to previous rebellions against inhumane conditions was to create yet another toothless advisory task force with little ability to change conditions, but which simply repeated more of what was already known.

Meanwhile, racism in policing and the courts continues. For instance, in St. Louis City jails, Black residents are held in pretrial detention three times as often as white residents, according to the “Court Reform” section of a recent St. Louis City Department of Corrections and American Community Survey. This data reflects U.S. trends as well. (tinyurl.com/yc5m8xun)

And what’s more, local governments in the U.S. — which serve capital and those who hoard wealth — spend around \$13.6 billion each year on pretrial detention. On any given day, 555,000 people are locked up and have

not been convicted of anything. Some of these people are arrested for a few hours or days and have not yet been brought before a judge. Others are too poor to afford money bail and end up waiting for trial for years. (Prison Policy Initiative, March 24)

The disproportionate effect of the “injustice system” on people who have been continuously assaulted by colonialism and capitalism happens because prisons, jails and detention centers are built to incarcerate oppressed groups of people within the U.S., in order to serve those amassing wealth off the plunder of the entire world.

Prisons, jails and detention centers — both before and especially during COVID — guarantee a likelihood of premature death to people whom a racist, sexist society deems unfit. Thus are perpetuated extreme inequality and suffering for the many to the benefit of the few. Abolish the conditions that make prisons necessary. Tear down the walls!

Death of an incarcerated Oklahoma worker

Conditions at Oklahoma County Detention Center were so bad — as in many prisons, jails and detention centers — that one of the prisoners allegedly took a guard hostage during a medicine distribution March 27. That incarcerated member of our collective class, the working class, was named Curtis Montrell Williams. He was shot and killed by a guard. His death was livestreamed as a spectacle to social media by guards Lt. Coy Gilbert and Officer Kevin Kulman. (tinyurl.com/4dk3uhzx)

Curtis Montrell Williams was one among many in the jail complaining that there was no running water and that they weren’t being fed. Other conditions, like bedbugs and roaches in overcrowded cells, have been common complaints about the facility for years. (NY Post, April 5)

Curtis’ mother, Rhonda Lambert, said the conditions at the jail caused her son severe mental anguish and were responsible for prompting him to lose control. The incident with Williams was the latest in a string of deaths at the jail, which was seized from the inhumane custody of the local sheriff’s office in July by the newly formed Oklahoma County Jail Trust. Five incarcerated people have been killed at the jail in 2021, including Williams. (Oklahoman, March 29)

Prisons, jails and detention centers precipitate more violence than they supposedly protect the people outside from. There have been countless uprisings in these facilities across the world and over time, with one of the largest clusters of recorded prison uprisings in recent history happening as the COVID pandemic compounds misery in these concentration camps for the poor and the oppressed.

Prisons, jails and detention centers have been built as powerful tools of isolation. But as the movement for abolition continues to heat up inside the walls — given the unabated inhumane conditions incapable of being reformed — it’s only a matter of time before the struggles of incarcerated members of our class inside and the struggles of solidarity supporters outside are networked together. □

Regarding the farewell of Romaine “Chip” Fitzgerald

Black Panther Party soldier Romaine “Chip” Fitzgerald died March 28 in a California hospital. The 71-year-old had been incarcerated for over 51 years, the longest-held member of the Panthers. The following statement was issued on behalf of the family and Committee to Free Chip.

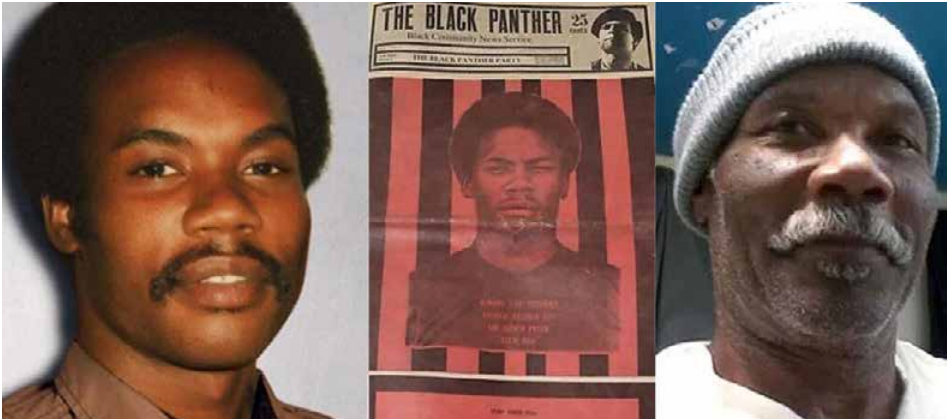
On Sunday, March 28, 2021, at 3:04 p.m., our brother, uncle, cousin, comrade and friend, Romaine “Chip” Fitzgerald, joined the ancestors. For a week, he lay barely conscious in a Los Angeles hospital as he struggled to extend his life after suffering a massive stroke in California’s gulag known as Lancaster.

Chip’s strength and dedication to life remained intact as he defied those doctors who said he would not make it through the night in the hours after his initial arrival at the hospital. A stalwart soldier, he fought until his very last breath. Chip

died as he had lived: fighting. A service is being planned which may be in a month or so due to COVID, followed by a memorial. We want to also thank the many thousands who put their voices together to free Brother Chip.

Among the government’s many victims, Romaine “Chip” Fitzgerald was a member of the Black Panther Party in Los Angeles. Incarcerated since 1969, he grew old in prison and was disabled many years ago by an earlier, less lethal stroke. Like millions of Black youth during the sixties, Chip, at the age of 17, joined the freedom struggle as the social justice movement rapidly expanded to include massive numbers of urban youth.

The government’s conduct towards Chip proves that important elements of our society are guided by an irrational tradition that values vengeance over justice or reconciliation. This failure demonstrates the nation’s unwillingness to fully



CREDIT: FREEDOM4CHIP.ORG

Chip Fitzgerald: as a young person (left), on the cover of the Black Panther Party’s newspaper (center) and in a more recent photo (right)

acknowledge historic wrongs perpetrated against Black Americans.

Chip never compromised

Romaine “Chip” Fitzgerald was a social justice activist and it is inhumane to imprison activists for 50 years or more, particularly while others convicted of comparable crimes have served significantly less time. A closer look reveals the only differences between those serving shorter sentences and those serving

longer ones are the political beliefs and affiliations some had with social justice groups like the Black Panther Party.

Chip never compromised, though he continued to the end to seek redress for this egregious wrong by working with his lawyer, family and defense committees to end his half-century nightmare of a slow death behind bars. For us the living, Chip’s passing is a lesson to keep fighting the good fight. To give when perhaps it’s hard to give. And to live when perhaps life seems so empty.

Chip’s life did not leave us without a clear message. During his final days in the hospital, the authorities felt the need to chain and shackle Chip to his bed. Despite the fact that he was hardly conscious, they saw this demeaning action as necessary. What they failed to understand is that you can neither jail nor shackle the spirit of liberation. May we all aspire to leave this same impression of daring to struggle until our last breath. And may Chip’s stalwart example give us the courage to dare to win.

All Power to the People!
Free All Political Prisoners! □

The People for Mumia

April 23rd @6-8PM EST

Virtual Fundraiser & Speak Out: Activists, Youth, Writers, Musicians, and Former Political Prisoners express what Mumia means to the Movement today.

Taking the Streets for Mumia!

April 24th @2-6PM EST

Rally & March Demanding Mumia's Immediate Release - It's Mumia's Birthday!

Meet: Philadelphia City Hall

In the Spirit of Maroon!

April 25th @8AM-1PM EST

We honor Russell Maroon Shoatz with a Community Clean up, Prayer & Celebration

Maroon Garden

Meet: 58th & Spruce

Long Live Walter Wallace, Jr!

April 25th 2-5PM EST

We remember Walter Wallace, Jr, & honor the fight of all Freedom Fighters

Meet: Malcolm X Park

52nd & Pine St.

ALL OUT FOR MUMIA!

We Free Him Or He Dies

Mobilize to Shut Down Philly April 23-25

Register, live updates & donate: LetMumiaOut.com

Demand Biden issue an executive order to implement the PRO Act

The fight of Amazon workers for union rights has just begun!
Union busting is disgusting. It can be stopped!

Sign this message to Biden and raise this demand at protests and rallies. Act now to defend Workers' Right to Organize!

The PRO Act — Protecting the Right to Organize Act — shields workers seeking to form a union from retribution or firing, strengthening the government's power to punish employers who violate workers' rights. It outlaws mandatory meetings that employers often use to try to quash an organizing drive. Workers need the protection of the PRO Act now.

The PRO Act will make it harder for companies like Amazon, Uber, Lyft and other huge corporations to classify millions of gig workers as independent contractors. This expands the pool of workers eligible to unionize.

The PRO Act overturns provisions of the odious 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, which for almost 75 years has helped bosses bust unions and break strikes. The PRO Act would allow secondary strikes and boycotts. The PRO Act weakens misnamed state "right-to-work" laws by allowing unions to charge a representation fee to workers who opt out of union membership.

But the PRO Act has run into a brick wall of opposition in the Senate, where 60 votes are needed to overcome a filibuster. Shelving the essential labor protection because it won't pass the Senate is NOT the only way forward.

President Joe Biden can issue an executive order to activate the basic labor protections in the PRO Act. Moreover, Biden can go even further in securing union

rights. How? One, by making union recognition by "card check" mandatory, eliminating the need for an National Labor Relations Board election — a process that gives bosses undue influence in the outcome of the vote. Two, by repealing Taft-Hartley altogether.

Biden has already issued 38 executive orders in the last 10 weeks.

Biden has issued executive orders on the environment, education, access to voting, immigration policy, Medicaid coverage, gun control, public health and combating COVID-19. Clearly the president has the established legal precedent and constitutional authority to protect basic labor rights.

ONLY the president has the authority under the U.S. Constitution to issue an executive order. Trump issued more than 220 executive orders to reverse many worker and civil rights gains. Every president has used their executive power to impose basic changes, forward or backward, through executive orders. Franklin D. Roosevelt issued 3,721 executive orders. **The Emancipation Proclamation was an executive order that ended chattel slavery in the U.S.**

Biden pledged to be "the strongest labor president you have ever had" during his candidacy, and the PRO Act was a cornerstone of his election platform.

We call on President Biden to use his authority to protect workers' right to organize.

Make the PRO Act effective immediately! □



Make this a new period of working class challenge

Continued from page 1

support, Biden wouldn't have taken that position. So we have to look at some of these elements, these factors in our summations of this campaign.

Strengthen the rank-and-file movement

Yes, there were weaknesses. And one of the weaknesses is that there is a weak rank-and-file movement in the local trade unions all around the country, in the U.S. unions — there was no pushing the unions, pushing the union leadership to mobilize in support of the Bessemer Amazon workers. Most of the solidarity actions took place outside of the unions. Some local unions mobilized, but there was a lack of a rank-and-file labor left throughout the trade union movement to complement the courage and the initiative taken by the Amazon workers.

These Amazon workers were majority Black workers — they were Black workers in the South, in a place where labor has been missing as a movement. And a place where the working class was the most divided throughout the history of this country.

Massive support needed to be built by labor and the trade union movement so that the Black working class can understand that when it steps forward — in its majority, in plants, in communities throughout the country and especially throughout the South — that organizations of the working class, the trade union movements, etc., are there with them side by side by side.

And if there's no feeling that that's the case, then we are in trouble, comrades, in terms of the struggle against systemic racism, or national oppression as I characterize it, or colonialism as others characterize it. If not, we are in real trouble.

In the Southern Workers Assembly, our perspective has been how to build the rank-and-file infrastructure, rank-and-file anchored infrastructure in the form of workers' assemblies that have deep roots or build deep roots in key workplaces and key industries — to unite the rank and file in workers' assemblies that

have community support.

We saw that this was a need as we moved to build for the February 20 actions to support the Amazon workers. And we saw this as a need as a follow-up to the outcome of the vote, whichever way it went.

On April 18, we're going to be organizing a four-part series of a workers' school that speaks to the new industry that workers will be confronting in the 21st century, like Amazon. The school will be about how to prepare ourselves for a struggle that's going to involve more and more big government protected in and by

technologically advanced industries.

The school is going to show that, wherever workers are oppressed, they can find a way to challenge that, to disrupt corporations, to attack this power at critical places in the global economy and in the U.S. economy. We can find a way to challenge these big corporations.

But we have to go deeper into the working class and the oppressed. And we can't just rely on the unions to be the vehicle to go deep; we've got to go deep so that's the preparation for union campaigns and more.

Finally, there has to be a framework for the left to unite in order to build a mass workers' movement — a radically oriented, politically independent, mass workers movement. This is the perspective that the Southern Workers Assembly has. And for some of us who got a couple of years under our belt, we're trying to make sure that's completed based on the amount of time we think we got left on this earth.

We've got to have a strategy, and it's got to go beyond subjective feelings and needs. I think we can do it, and I think we have to be inspired by the initiative of the Bessemer Amazon workers, and we need to encourage them. We need to have speaking tours, bring them all around the country. Our unions and all our workers' organizations, we need to have celebrations — celebrating their courage and their initiative and celebrating this period that they have just opened up. We can do that. Thank you, comrades. □



Demonstrators protest outside office of Amazon union busting law firm Morgan Lewis in Philadelphia, March 20.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Paul Robeson gave voice to the trees and forests

By Henry Hagins

This article first appeared on Jan. 27, 2015. Robeson was born April 9, 1898 and died Jan. 23, 1976.

If Paul Robeson were alive today, he’d be toasting and defending people’s hero Ramsey Orta (who filmed the police killing of Eric Garner) and roundly condemning the rigged-grand-jury decisions, escape hatching the police murderers of Garner, Tamir Rice and Mike Brown, in particular, and the countless others who indignantly join them.

Robeson would also point to the oppressive machinery of the state as being ultimately responsible for this continued outrage against the most vulnerable populations in society, easily determining that this practice is totally unacceptable!

And he’d heartily salute the valiant folks of Ferguson, Mo., especially the youth, for refusing to be intimidated by the contorted face of militarily armed and trained police, National Guard and intelligence personnel, dispatched to contain livid community residents and their supporters.

The state’s response to a crisis they created was to “send in the troops,” like they’ve done in Iraq and elsewhere over their sordid imperial history, thus earning the indigenous people’s enmity and contempt by their mere presence as invaders and occupiers. Ferguson is a first cousin to Detroit 1967 — in a whole lot of ways!

Honoring the memory of Paul Robeson is no ceremonial gesture. Why? As a highly recognized and accomplished artist on many levels, he helped set a riveting standard about what creative people are “obligated” to do — if they are “organically” joined to the progressive needs of humankind — and, that is, to “fight for freedom or slavery.” Paul Robeson devoted his life to humanity’s highest ideals in the most extraordinary ways. Few rival his fields of significance.

The essence of who this gentle giant really was is in his classic work, “Here I Stand,” issued by Beacon Press in 1958. This rugged Rutgers alumnus clearly states his own case, partially seasoned by the hostile atmosphere he endured as a member of the school’s football team and as a “rare” student on campus.

In spite of tremendous pressure, Robeson



PHOTO: AMANDA ST. AMAND

Paul Robeson, left, joins the picket line outside the American Theater on Jan. 25, 1947. He had performed the night before to an integrated audience at the Kiel Opera House in St. Louis, Mo., but refused to play in segregated theaters.

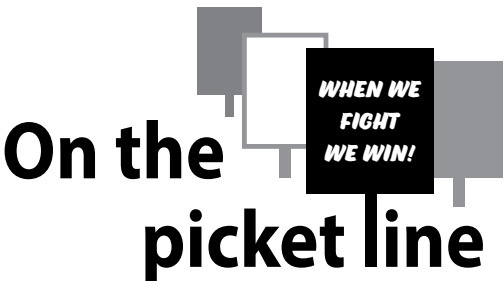
distinguished himself as a student and as a human being in ways that are still marveled. Gil Noble, the late host of the New York-based ABC show, “Like It Is,” did an exceptional documentary on him entitled “The Tallest Tree in the Forest” in 1977. Noble did another outstanding one about Robeson around 1999, also called “Here I Stand.”

Both provide fitting tributes to an extraordinary artist who’d been deeply influenced by his dad and the historic period in which he grew up and greatly influenced.

Accolades and descriptions of his noted accomplishments are too voluminous to detail here, but we include some highlights that undergird his designation as a “Renaissance man,” who without hesitation offered his skills and talents in loyal service to the delight, liberation and advancement of people, in the millions, around the planet. The decades between the 1920s and early 1960s reflect his greatest works.

Never forgot his roots in the working class

As one of Harlem’s own, Robeson was a central and unavoidable figure in its glorious Renaissance. His connections to Langston Hughes, Hubert Harrison, Lena Horne, Arturo Alfonso Schomberg, Nicolás Guillén,



By Marie Kelly

7 Up Strike Settlement

The 90 workers at the 7 Up distribution center in the Detroit suburb of Redford ended their 22-day strike, with 66% of strikers voting to accept the negotiated contract. The strike had widespread community support in this union town, with many union members attending rallies and picket lines.

The workers at 7 Up are represented by Teamsters Local 337. Their demands included Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a paid holiday and an end to the two-tier wage structure established in 2005. Workers hired after 2005 earn approximately \$4.00 less per hour. About 80% of workers hired after 2005 are Black, while 80% of workers hired before 2005 are white.

Union negotiators agreed to address the two-tier wage structure through attrition. This means lower seniority workers can only upgrade to the higher pay scale to replace someone who quits, retires or dies. Teamsters bargainers failed to win the MLK holiday demand, agreeing that workers could take the federal holiday off as a paid personal day, instead of it becoming a contractual company holiday. The Teamsters negotiations with 7 Up is an example of the weakened position of labor in this country. It’s time for workers to demand their union leadership get tough and start fighting harder against capitalist corporations and their greed. (tinyurl.com/yh3lumb4)

Steelworkers strike ATI

The 1,300 workers at Allegheny Technologies (ATI) haven’t had a raise in over six years. Represented by the United Steelworkers (USW), they went on strike at nine ATI facilities March 30. The union negotiators cite unfair labor practices along with the company’s abysmal compensation record.

One worker who has been employed at ATI for 14 years describes working seven days a week for 18 months in order to keep the company afloat during the pandemic. The company has chipped away at health care benefits and wants the ability to change health care plans in the future without union input. The USW charges that ATI is holding pension benefits hostage, withholding them from workers impacted by plant shutdowns in Louisville, Ky., and Waterbury, Conn., until a contract settlement is reached.

ATI President and CEO Robert Wetherbee’s message to shareholders boasts that ATI generated \$490 million in profit in 2019, and “revenues under the GE contracts alone are expected to exceed 2.5 billion over the life of the agreements.” The USW message is: “Our picket lines are strong and well supported; our resolve for a fair and equitable contract continues and grows stronger every day.” Solidarity! (www.usw.org)

Solidarity with a union brother: Labor supports Mumia’s release

For decades global and national unions have aligned with the movement to free the wrongfully convicted political prisoner, Mumia Abu-Jamal.

In 1995, Bay Area Typographical Union Local 21 (CWA) wrote to then-Governor of Pennsylvania, Tom Ridge, that Mumia’s case was “a political frame-up.” That year, while Mumia was still on death row, he refused to schedule a 20/20 interview until the NABET-CWA broadcast engineers’ strike at ABC was settled. Now, Mumia, in poor health, is facing death by incarceration, and nothing but releasing him from prison is just and decent.

Pablo Neruda and Tony Benn modestly point to the magnitude of people he knew and interacted with, including countless ordinary folk who rightly and proudly claim they knew him, too.

He and his spouse, Eslanda Goode Robeson, went to Spain in the 1930s to help boost the morale of U.S. volunteers in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade fighting with anti-fascist forces against Francisco Franco, who saw the world through Hitler’s eyes.

Robeson generously supported the coal miners in their march for better wages and working conditions in Wales and Scotland. His roots lay deep with the common folk of his ancestry and with those around the world.

Once you heard his organically melodious baritone voice, in any language, you were never the same. Standing-room-only throngs flooded his guest appearances in the Soviet Union in particular.

And when J. Edgar Hoover and Joe McCarthy tried to intimidate him during the anti-communist witchhunt in the 1950s, Robeson told them in effect to “talk to the hand.” The State Department took away his passport and encouraged promoters to cancel their contracts with Robeson. Yet his voice still reached Canada and England through the benefits of the technology of the time! With great dignity and determination, he refused to bow to government pressure.

And Paul Robeson never backed away from his love and support of the Soviet people, expressing his open admiration for their stunning defeats of Hitler’s armies at Leningrad and Stalingrad during World War II, and elsewhere.

Robeson respected the Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro and collaborated with Albert Einstein, progressive groups and individuals to combat lynchings, racism and other forms of oppression in the United States and around the world. He even did a benefit concert for Japanese Americans rounded up and forced into internment camps during World War II. He never abandoned the notion that “An artist [in whatever genre] must elect to fight for freedom or slavery.” (“The Whole World in His Hands,” Susan Robeson, 1981)

He lived by uncompromising example.

In a nutshell, Paul Robeson urged the people to use their talents, whatever they are, in service to humanity. Think he had it right. □

Larry Goldbetter, president of the National Writers Union calls on members to support the campaign to free Mumia now. Members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), who shut down 30 ports in 1999 to show solidarity with Mumia, continue to work in the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Most recently, the International Dockworkers Council, with 140,000 members, called on Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf to release Mumia for humanitarian reasons, but also reiterating their belief in his innocence. Finally, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), in a letter to Wolf, demanded Mumia be released, stating: “His only crime is exposing the racist, capitalist justice system in the U.S., which for decades defended and supported the Apartheid government ...” (tinyurl.com/yve983r4) □

Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

Edited by Monica Moorehead
An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper.

Racism, National Oppression & Self-Determination • Black Labor from Chattel Slavery to Wage Slavery • Black Youth: Repression & Resistance • The Struggle for Socialism Is Key • Domestic Workers United Demand Passage of a Bill of Rights • Black & Brown Unity • Harriet Tubman, Woman Warrior • Racism & Poverty in the Delta • Haiti Needs Reparations, Not Sanctions • Alabama’s Black Belt: Legacy of Slavery, Sharecropping & Segregation • Are Conditions Ripe Again Today? Anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion

Free PDF at workers.org/books

DREAMERS confront Texas senators, demand citizenship NOW!

By Gloria Rubac

Young activists with United We Dream held demonstrations outside the office of Texas Sen. John Cornyn and the house of Sen. Ted Cruz April 6 in Houston. They contend that lives are on the line and demand passage of the DREAM Act, the SECURE Act for people with Temporary Protected Status and the Farm Workforce Modernization Act.

As protesters arrived, the group Mariachi Calmecac fired up their instruments and played old favorites, including La Cucaracha [the cockroach] with a reference to Ted Cruz. News reporters interviewed the youth. There were homemade signs as well as preprinted ones, all in support of immigrants and DREAMERS, TPSers and farmworkers.

Several youth took turns on the bullhorn, energizing the crowd that kept growing. Houston cops tried to intimidate, but this was a futile job for them as the chanting grew ever louder: “Undocumented and Unafraid!”

“Familias Inmigrantes y Estudiantes en la Lucha is here in solidarity with United We Dream, with Indivisible Houston and everyone who is here today because we are here for the same reason. I know we are here to stay! I came here when I was five years old, and I will turn 36 this year. I haven’t been home to Mexico in over 30 years. I am undocumented and unafraid, and I am here to stay,” said Cesar Espinosa.

“I will continue to fight alongside each one of you, not only the DREAMER community, but for everyone who deserves to have their status corrected, including our hardworking parents, our essential workers,” he told the cheering crowd. “I am undocumented and unafraid!”

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, known as the DREAM Act, would grant temporary conditional residency, with the right to work, to unauthorized immigrants who entered the U.S. as children. It was first proposed in 2001 and has been reintroduced several times, but has never passed either the U.S. House or the Senate.

According to the Immigration Law Center: “The DREAM Act gives undocumented students including high school valedictorians, varsity sports stars and class presidents a way to obtain legal residency. Often these youth were brought to the U.S. by their parents at a very young age. They’ve lived much of their lives in the U.S. and have flourished academically and socially. More often than not, they’re deeply rooted in their communities through church work, volunteering and other extracurricular activities.”

Former President Donald Trump tried to end DACA, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, but last June the U.S. Supreme Court blocked his administration’s effort. This brought relief to untold numbers of people — youth and their whole families. Many of these youth have now finished high school and college,

some earning master’s degrees and even Ph.D.s. Many now have their own children who are U.S. citizens.

DACA was introduced by President Barack Obama on June 15, 2012. It has allowed immigrants who were born after June 16, 1981, who arrived in the U.S. before age 16, and who have lived here since June 15, 2007, to be eligible to legally work and be protected from deportation. This status had to be renewed every two years.

A version of the DREAM Act was included in the American Dream and Promise Act, which actually passed in a bipartisan vote by the U.S. House of Representatives in June 2019. There is now a related bill introduced in the U.S. Senate, but it has yet to be considered by the full Senate.

When the protest was in front of Sen. Cruz’s house, a car with a huge white spider on top kept circling the block of mansions in Houston’s wealthiest neighborhood. One DREAMER explained that Cruz is like a spider, but instead of spinning webs, he spins lies about immigrants and DREAMERS.

United We Dream announced: “In a historic victory for our movement, the House of Representatives passed the Dream and Promise Act and the Farm



Mariachi Calmecac performs at action outside Sen. Ted Cruz’s home.

WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

Workforce Modernization Act, two bills that would provide a pathway to citizenship for over 5 million immigrant youth, TPS and Deferred Enforced Departure holders, and undocumented farmworkers living in the U.S.

“The Senate must bring the Dream Act, the SECURE Act (the Senate counterpart to Dream and Promise Act), and the Farm Workforce Modernization bills to the floor by April 30.”

UWD is asking all supporters to send a letter or contact their U.S. senators — and demand they vote YES on The Dream Act, the SECURE Act, and the Farm Workforce Modernization Act.

As Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata said, “The land belongs to those who work it.” In 2021, this country belongs to those who keep it going, from the fields to the factories to the homes of the wealthy.

DACA, Si! Deportation No! Legalization Now! □

Vaccines highlight differences between capitalism and socialism

Continued from page 3

charting a much different course than capitalist countries. Their vaccine development is state-led and owned collectively by the people, not big corporations.

Cuba opened its first biotech research and production center in 1981. The industry now operates under BioCubaFarma, the Cuban organization of Biotechnology and Pharmaceutical Industries. It is a network of 34 publicly owned companies and scientific institutions working together to coordinate a planned, society-wide approach to pharmaceuticals and vaccines.

The Center of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB) carries out research, development, and production in the areas of human and animal vaccines, therapeutic molecules, such as monoclonal antibodies, and genetically modified plants. Cuba’s Finlay Institute is the country’s premier vaccine research and development center, known for developing the world’s first meningitis B vaccine over 30 years ago. (tinyurl.com/h242znwe)

For a small country of 11 million people, under heavy sanctions from and an illegal blockade by the U.S., Cuba’s biomedical sector is unusually sophisticated compared not only to its peers in the Global South, but to many developed capitalist countries. It now has five COVID-19 vaccines in development, with two in stage III clinical trials named Soberana-02 and Abdala.

Cuba is the first Latin American country to develop vaccines and is by far the smallest in the world to do so. Thanks to decisions made decades ago by the Communist Party of Cuba to prioritize the health of the island’s people, Cuba is in a prime position today to develop and mass produce vaccines and other pharmaceuticals.

Cuba’s current COVID-19 vaccines do not use the novel mRNA technology but simpler tried-and-true methods using a fragment of virus protein to stimulate an immune response. China’s Sinovac and Russia’s Sputnik-V vaccines rely on synthesized or extracted virus fragments.

Cuba plans to vaccinate all of Havana by the end of May, 60% of the country by August and the entire country by the end of 2021, which will make it one of the world’s first to achieve “herd immunity.” Vaccinations are voluntary, but the government expects broad adoption by the public, who are highly educated and informed on issues regarding public health. This is due to decades of extensive public health campaigns, free national health care, free education and the promotion of science and technology.

Cuba’s vaccine industry is currently reorganizing to be able to produce 100 million doses for export. (tinyurl.com/s8urns8z) It has signed contracts to produce vaccines in Venezuela and Iran, greatly expanding the scale of the international vaccine effort. It is developing vaccines that can be stored at room temperature for weeks, making them attractive to developing tropical countries.

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines must be kept at ultracold temperatures, creating a logistical problem for countries without developed medical infrastructure. Ronald Sanders, Antigua and Barbuda’s ambassador to the U.S., told the Washington Post that “Europe, the U.S. and Canada bought up all the vaccines already. So if Cuba does pass its trials, and the WHO does approve it, yes, we will be in line for it, and gratefully so. And I would be surprised if the Cubans charged us more than cost and a minor amount of money.” (Washington Post, Mar. 29)

China’s vaccine effort is remarkable in many ways, and like Cuba’s it’s led by publicly owned industries, not capitalist corporations. By the end of 2022, China plans to produce 5 billion vaccines and vaccinate 70% of its own population annually. (tinyurl.com/37krwnp6)

China has administered over 160 million shots domestically, second only to the U.S., and has shipped over 80 million doses around the world, plus another 90 million doses’ worth of ingredients to be finished in factories in Indonesia and Brazil, according to the April 9 South China Morning Post. Responsible for a third of the total vaccines administered globally, despite making up less than a fifth of the world’s population, China is a world leader in COVID vaccines.

China is also working on its own domestically produced mRNA vaccines, which are expected to start rolling out by the end of 2021. Plans for a phase III trial for one such vaccine are already underway, and Mexico has agreed to stage trials of it and the subsequent manufacturing.

Last December, a production facility that can produce 120 million doses of the mRNA vaccine began construction in China. Developed jointly by China’s Academy of Military Science (AMS), Walvax Biotechnology and Suzhou Abogen Biosciences, the ARCoV mRNA vaccine can be kept at room temperature for up to a week, unlike the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. China has developed its own lipid nanoparticle coating, so that it would not have to rely on Western capitalist firms such as Merck for this critical vaccine component. (Korea Times, Apr. 11)

Outside China and Cuba, Russia is another major player in the global vaccine effort. Russia’s vaccine development is also state-led, and the country benefits



Under capitalism: limited supplies despite clear need.

greatly from the highly developed pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries it inherited from the Soviet Union. Even in Russia, where socialism was overthrown decades ago, and capitalism was chaotically and disastrously introduced, the legacy of socialism’s deep commitment to modern, science-based public health for all is still paying dividends for society.

The novel mRNA vaccines produced in capitalist societies can be of great benefit to the world’s peoples, but they will never reach their full potential as long as they are controlled by private capitalist firms. Fortunately there are countries operating under people-centered systems that can produce their own vaccines, including mRNA vaccines, which will allow them to reach herd immunity independently and without having to deal with the Mafia-like antics of Western corporations and governments.

These lifesaving vaccines are also being sent to countries under Western sanctions, providing a critical lifeline for countries with fractured health care infrastructure and shortages of basic supplies. Countries in South America now have another option for vaccines, giving them more independence from the U.S., which, from the 19th-century Monroe Doctrine to today, still considers South and Central America its exclusive sphere of influence. □

Puerto Rico

The water route is a lifeline for the people of Vieques, Culebra

By Lorraine Liriano Chávez

On April 2 while Catholics worldwide observed Good Friday, the people of Culebra and Vieques Islands took to the streets to protest the malfunctioning maritime transportation system. Their outcry for justice echoed with the chants: “We want transportation with dignity and efficiency,” “The waterway is our road — it is not luxury” and “We denounce inhumanity and unite our hands.”

The islands of Culebra and Vieques are part of the archipelago of islands that constitute Puerto Rico, which has been a colony of the United States for the past 123 years.

Residents of these islands confront daily an unpredictable and challenging ferry service. Problems include overbooked reservations and sometimes cancellation of the ferry altogether. The waterway is the main transit route connecting Vieques and Culebra to the main island, Puerto Rico. Lack of access jeopardizes employment, education and health care.

Vieques has no hospital. The most vulnerable patients — those on dialysis and those receiving treatments for cancer — are left without vital medical services. This maritime system disruption has contributed to food shortages, since most of the food on these islands is imported.

On March 28, the many residents of the two small islands, having exhausted petitions and meetings with legislators to remedy this urgent crisis, took to the sea in kayaks and small boats to block the ferries and prevent them from leaving the port.

Dolly Camareno Díaz, a candidate in the last elections for the mayor of Culebra, was one of the leaders of the protest in a kayak and one of many women who prevented the ferry service from leaving the port. Despite several arrests and fines, protesters deemed this action necessary to give visibility to and amplify their demands. They vowed to continue their fight for justice.

News outlets covered the story both within Puerto Rico and internationally. Some of the demands put forth were the designation of maritime services as an essential service, participation of residents in decision-making and the designation of representatives of the maritime transportation system to ensure accessibility of designated round trips to residents of the islands.

A top priority is the immediate cancellation of the current contract with the Authority for Public-Private



PHOTO: PEOPLEDISPATCH.ORG

Translation of banner reads: 'We demand a better maritime transport service', June 2019 protest.

Partnerships (APP), which was procured under questionable circumstances with disastrous effects for residents who rely on ferry services.

PROMESA and displacement

The passage by the U.S. Congress of the Puerto Rico Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) in 2016 has had devastating consequences on the people of Puerto Rico. Passing this law was a direct outcome of the \$72 billion debt the government of Puerto Rico has incurred as a result of its colonial relationship to the United States.

PROMESA facilitated the imposition of an unelected seven-member fiscal control board appointed by the United States Congress to administer Puerto Rico's government finances. This board's stated mission is to restructure the debt. In reality, it serves as a collection agency that seeks payment of the debt on behalf of bondholders and culture capitalists at the expense of the people of Puerto Rico.

As the megaphones sound off, chants among protesters reject the threat of displacement: “They want to gentrify, but we won't allow it.”

In January 2017, Puerto Rico's government passed legislation allowing U.S. citizens who become residents of Puerto Rico to use it as a tax haven. The tax laws — Act 20,

the Export Service Act, and Act 22, the Individual Investor Act, shield new residents of Puerto Rico from paying most federal taxes. These residents pay minimal or possibly no taxes on interest and dividends, as well as on capital gains.

In the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and María in 2017, a flood of investors have come to Puerto Rico to buy properties at an alarming rate, particularly on the islands of Vieques and Culebra. As investors exploit laws that create tax advantages for millionaires, the fiscal control board continues to implement austerity measures, further impoverishing the Puerto Rican people.

The people of Culebra, Vieques and the mainland will continue to take their struggle to the streets or the sea as they face austerity measures, privatization, school closings, reductions of essential services and the selling of land and natural resources.

At the forefront

The people of the islands of Vieques and Culebra have been at the forefront of struggles for decades.

They galvanized international solidarity and support in their historic removal of the United States Navy and its war maneuvers. Their victory resonates as one of the most outstanding people's victories.

Once again international solidarity is needed to support their struggle for essential maritime services and against gentrification and displacement. The root cause of these problems is their colonial status, which can only be resolved with the independence of Puerto Rico.

As of April 6, a series of protests have been scheduled in the streets of Puerto Rico clamoring for justice on issues of environmental racism. Some of the issues are coal ash deposits, energy privatization and the sales of public lands and beaches.

A seven-part virtual series of panels on Thursdays with English and Spanish translation will discuss the colonial complexities facing the Puerto Rican people, starting April 15 and ending May 27. These panels will be held in conjunction with the documentary “Landfall,” that explores the colonial relationship of Puerto Rico and how that relationship has unfolded in the aftermath of Hurricane María.

*Please visit the facebook page of **A Call to Action on Puerto Rico** to receive updates about the evolving situation of Puerto Rico.*

Global warming: Myanmar, Greenland and green cars

By G. Dunkel

Greenland is the largest island in the world which is not a continent. Only it and Antarctica are covered by ice sheets. With 58,000 people, 89% of whom are Inuit, it remains a “semiautonomous region” under Danish rule whose main exports are fishery products and whose budget is heavily subsidized by Denmark.

Global warming and the resulting melt of Greenland's ice sheet are exposing mineral resources with potentially vast profits.

Its recent parliamentary elections for the Inatsisartut (Greenland's Home Rule Government), won by the Inuit Ataqatigiit (Community of the People), a progressive, pro-independence party opposed

to uranium mining, were covered by the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, BBC, Financial Times, the Economist, Deutsche Welle, Le Monde, Al Jazeera, Irish Times and many business-oriented websites. (tinyurl.com/yf66okqb)

The reason for such immense interest is the IA's opposition to a mine for production of rare earth minerals at Kvanefjeld in southern Greenland. This mine would also produce uranium. This area has not been under the ice sheet.

Car manufacturers are hesitant to announce hundreds of billions of dollars of investments to make green vehicles, because the rare earths required might not be available. Renewable energy's development depends on a variety of refined rare earth minerals essential for energy transmission and storage. Rare earth minerals are needed for production of electronics, including cell phones and flat-screen monitors, and weapons.

Chinese mines presently produce 70% of these rare earth minerals, and Chinese factories

refine over 90% of the world's supply. A mine in Myanmar is a major source for these Chinese factories. According to the April 11 Wall Street Journal, China has a technological advantage that will take billions of dollars and several years for the U.S. to catch up with. Competition over rare earths is a major theater in the U.S.-China trade war.

In its campaign, IA has expressed reservations over the 45% projected increase in Greenland's carbon emissions this mine would produce, the radioactive dust that would be released and the byproducts of rare earth processing. All this threatens the food — fish, seals, whales and musk oxen — that Greenlanders harvest, consume and export.

In 2012, China needed to spend 38 billion yuan (\$5.8 billion) to repair environmental damage from rare earth processing. (Reuters, March 26)

Pressure from the U.S. on Greenland

Over 50 years ago, a B52 bomber carrying four hydrogen bombs, in violation of Danish laws, crashed on the ice in a fjord near the Thule U.S. Air Force Base in far northwest Greenland. Most of the debris and three of the bombs were recovered; the fourth is still somewhere on the seafloor. And the memory of this nuclear

accident is still alive in Greenland!

The Thule air base was opened in 1943 during World War II, when Germany was occupying Denmark. According to a U.S. Defense Department document, it was secretly expanded without public notice in 1950. It is the only U.S. military base north of the Arctic Circle; it is still used to track satellites and monitor shipping and Russian activity in the Arctic Ocean.

President Trump's offer to “buy” Greenland from Denmark in 2019 was not completely off-the-wall. Former Secretary of State William Seward, who bought Alaska from Imperial Russia in 1867, made an offer for Greenland the same year. In 1910, the U.S. ambassador to Denmark followed suit. In 1946, under Harry Truman, yet another offer was made, and it appears that a semisecret deal for the U.S. to “defend” Greenland was reached during the Cold War. Denmark has some sort of deal with Canada allowing Danish and Canadian helicopters to use the same airfield on Amassilik island in eastern Greenland.

Given Greenland's strategic position in the Arctic and North Atlantic for Western imperialism and its treasure trove of rare earth minerals, it's easy to understand why the capitalist press would closely follow elections in a big island with a small, mostly Indigenous population. □



In Narsak, Greenland, the village closest to the proposed mine, people know radioactive dust from uranium would be dangerous.

Pass the PRO Act by executive order!

April 8 was the “National Day of Action for the PRO Act.” The AFL-CIO mobilized to bombard U.S. senators with phone calls demanding they pass the Protecting the Right to Organize Act. This legislation, passed by the House in March for a second time, would go a long way to advance union success in organizing drives, collective bargaining and strikes. (See details at workers.org/2021/03/55082/)

The PRO Act bans captive audience meetings — or “classes,” as Amazon calls the mandatory propaganda sessions it used to defeat the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union’s organizing effort in Bessemer, Ala.

The PRO Act would undo major portions of the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, a union-busting law that has hamstrung organized labor for almost three-quarters of a century.

It contains many other important features. While some elements of the PRO Act warrant improvement, organized labor sorely needs it to reverse an era of setbacks that began when President Ronald Reagan broke

the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) back in 1981.

President Joe Biden has promised to sign the bill if it passes the Senate. But despite a phone blitz, hopes are not high that labor can get the 60 votes needed to overcome the filibuster — a process that makes it almost impossible to pass anything by a simple democratic majority. Nor is it likely Senate Democrats will scrap the

filibuster altogether, which they could legally do.

But are Biden’s hands tied? Absolutely not!

PRO is a go — by executive order

There are three branches of government — or so we’ve been taught since grade school: the legislative, the judicial and the executive (the president).

The Constitution gives policy-making powers to all three branches. The president’s tool kit consists of executive orders. Biden has passed 38 bills on a range of issues since his inauguration in January.

Executive orders can have far-reaching ramifications. President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued over

3,700, including the order to create the Works Progress Administration that brought masses of unemployed back to work during the Great Depression. The most famous executive order was President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation to abolish chattel slavery.

Today’s wage slaves need the PRO Act to challenge the tyranny of Taft-Hartley and misnamed “right-to-work” laws. Historically, these anti-labor laws particularly targeted unions that united Black and white workers in the Jim Crow South.

Biden — who as a candidate bragged he would be “the strongest labor president you have ever had” — has no excuse not to enact PRO by executive order. But if the class struggle does not push him, as it pushed FDR in the 1930s, he will invent any bogus justification for side-stepping the issue.

The vote against a union at Amazon was a blow, but no cause for retreat in the face of adversity. No “Biden” time — seize the moment! Let’s start a mass, struggle-oriented campaign to demand Biden enact the PRO Act by executive order.

As the United Farm Workers so bravely exclaimed years ago, ¡Sí se puede! Yes, it can be done! □

WORKERS WORLD editorial

Ramsey Clark ¡Presente!

Abridged version of a statement by the International Action Center, of which Ramsey Clark was a founder in 1992.

We salute Ramsey Clark, who died April 9 at the age of 93. Throughout the last half century he has been an outspoken defender of all forms of popular resistance to oppression, a leader always willing to challenge the crimes of U.S. militarism and global arrogance. He remained optimistic to the end that the power of people could determine history. His courageous voice will be missed.

Clark served as assistant attorney general and attorney general in the Lyndon Johnson administration between 1967 and 1969. He supervised the drafting of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and Civil Rights Act of 1968. He drafted housing legislation and enforcement of Indigenous Nations’ Treaty rights.

Unlike nearly every other Cabinet level official, who leveraged their post into a multimillion-dollar career after leaving government, Ramsey Clark used his authority as former attorney general to act for the impoverished and voiceless on a world scale.

Clark’s early belief in the U.S. role turned, through harsh experience and observation of what he considered U.S. war crimes, to a determination to challenge U.S. policy and defend the victims of U.S. aggressions, regardless of personal cost. His actions, leadership and writings showed his political development over the past 50 years.

Ramsey Clark will be remembered by peoples and struggles around the world as a prominent individual

who used his name, reputation and legal skills to defend people’s movements and leaders whom the corporate media had thoroughly demonized.

In doing this, Clark showed both physical and political courage. He traveled to Iraq and Yugoslavia, for example, while the Pentagon was bombing these countries, and he stood against the unanimous corporate opinion makers by legally defending the demonized leaders Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic against an assault by Washington and its local lackeys.

Clark also showed solidarity with whole nations and peoples that the U.S. rulers demonized and imposed murderous sanctions on. These included socialist Cuba, Bolivarian Venezuela, the Palestinian movement for liberation, and Syria since 2011, among others.

And the attorney defended those charged with crimes and unfairly tried or sentenced, including Philip and Daniel Berrigan for their antiwar protests; Lori Berenson, then imprisoned in Peru; imprisoned Indigenous activist Leonard Peltier; and Imam Jamil Al-Amin (aka H. Rap Brown), who is held in a Supermax prison. Also, Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani woman tortured in Afghanistan and serving an 86-year sentence in a U.S. federal prison.

Those who formed the International Action Center made a principled alliance. Some, like Clark, insisted on finding the U.S. government guilty for breaking laws,



Ramsey Clark speaking at the celebration for his 85th birthday and 20th anniversary of the International Action Center in January 2013.

national and international, that it had written. Others saw the U.S. government as the executive force dominating world imperialism and thus responsible for the oppression of most of humanity. Clark played an up-front role in this alliance, which served to advance the struggles of the world’s oppressed.

For this, the people of the world and their representatives are now saluting the life record of Ramsey Clark.

The IAC is collecting tributes and statements about Ramsey Clark’s contributions.

Please send your memories to: IACenter.org/RamseyClarkTribute or RamseyClarkTribute@gmail.com.

Is Workers World essential to you? Then support it now!

COVID-19 has exposed everything wrong with capitalism in the U.S.:

- No national system provides free health care for all. Inadequate access to care, including vaccines, for Black, Latinx, Indigenous, im/migrant and poor communities, results in their high rates of COVID-caused illness and death.
- No provisions to support workers and their families with childcare, housing or other necessities.
- No guaranteed jobs or livable income. The pandemic downturn hurt millions of workers; nearly 24 million are still jobless, furloughed or have experienced wage and hour cuts.*
- No mandatory paid sick time or benefits for essential workers.
- Lack of sufficient nutritious food;

hunger is widespread.

- Institutionalized racism, sexism, anti-im/migrant, anti-LGBTQ2S+ bigotry, ableism. Police brutality continues unabated.
- Incarcerated people are kept in prisons where COVID-19 is rampant.
- Class system rigged in favor of the 1%. Billionaires’ wealth increased by \$1.3 trillion since the pandemic began.
- Congress allocated \$740 billion for the Pentagon, while government programs providing for human needs are insufficient or nonexistent.

Workers World provides the theoretical and organizational ammunition needed to crush this inhumane system and create one that supports the working class and all oppressed people: socialism. The need for that becomes clearer every

day during this devastating pandemic, when everyone has been called upon to show solidarity and form a united front.

Please consider putting your money where it will really help achieve that goal.

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to Socialism?” upon request. (Or read it at workers.org/books/.)

WW articles are being posted daily at workers.org. During the pandemic, printed copies are being mailed out once a month. Issues will be printed and mailed out more frequently as soon as the crisis lifts.

Write monthly or annual checks to Workers World. Mail them to Workers World, with your name and address, to 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Or donate online at workers.org/donate/.

We are grateful for your help in building Workers World!

**Economic Policy Institute, March 2021*

After ‘Great March of Return’ Gaza still under threat

By Ted Kelly
Philadelphia

Gaza is located on the western side of occupied Palestine and has been under Israeli military control since 1967. With a population of 2 million, it is one of the most densely populated places on the planet. It is frequently referred to as an “open-air prison,” as the Israeli occupation forces have effectively blockaded it on all sides, including its shores on the Mediterranean Sea. To the south, the government of Egypt also polices a border that keeps Palestinians from fleeing the increasingly desperate conditions imposed upon them. Of the Palestinians in Gaza, 70% are officially listed as “refugees” in their own country. (Al-Jazeera, March 30, 2019)

The COVID pandemic has been weaponized by the Israeli occupiers against the people of Palestine. As Mahmoud Abu Saaman, a worker at the Palestinian Ministry of Communication, commented to Al-Jazeera, “People in Gaza had enough in their lives, moving from a crisis to another without a break. ... This is a blockade within a blockade. It’s not the coronavirus, but the ongoing blockade that has destroyed our lives.” (tinyurl.com/49wf8tsk)

As of March 15, 50% of Israel’s population had been fully vaccinated, and 60% had gotten their first dose. (tinyurl.com/3m34zmvw) But Israel is refusing to share vaccines with Palestinians and has blocked delivery of Russian vaccines designated for prisoners in Gaza. Israel’s denial of lifesaving vaccines will result in countless deaths. Yet Article 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention requires Israel, as the occupying power in the Palestinian territories, to provide medical supplies, including preventative measures, to stop the spread of contagious epidemics. The Zionist state is violating this protocol. (Workers World, March 10)

Before the pandemic

Three years ago, Palestinians met the ongoing blockade with a series of prolonged protests known as the “Great March of Return.” These first began in Gaza March 30, 2018 when Palestinians demonstrated along the boundary area between Gaza and the rest of Zionist-occupied Palestine for 18 months.

In part because the state of Israel refuses to declare its borders under international law, occupation forces regularly murder Palestinians on both sides of this

boundary zone. Electronic Intifada reports that 29,000 Palestinians were wounded by Israeli occupation forces during 2018, and nearly 300 were killed. (Dec. 27, 2018)

At least 48 of those killed by the Israeli military during this period were children. Nine of the slain protesters were people with disabilities, including 29-year-old Saber al-Ashqar, who had used a wheelchair since losing both his legs to an Israeli bombing in 2008. (Buzzfeed, May 15, 2018)

The majority of these murders were committed by military snipers targeting protesters at a distance. The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that 2018 was the most violent year of Israeli aggression against Palestinians since the agency began collecting data in 2005. (Electronic Intifada, July 28, 2020)

Protesting the blockade of Palestine

Throughout the spring of 2018, simultaneous with the Great March of Return, protesters in the U.S. and Europe picketed concerts put on by the Philadelphia Orchestra, which toured occupied Palestine at the invitation of the Israeli government, while it was murdering protesters. Demonstrators participating in the



Palestine action at Israeli arms factory, Manchester, England, Feb. 1.

“Philly Don’t Orchestrate Apartheid” campaign interrupted the orchestra’s performances in Philadelphia, Belgium, France and Germany, before they landed in occupied Palestine to give Israeli soldiers music lessons. (Workers World, April 24, 2018)

International solidarity with Palestine continues unabated in 2021. An ongoing campaign, “Shut Elbit Down,” targets an Israeli-owned weapons manufacturer. Elbit Systems is Israel’s largest privately-owned arms company, making obscene profits from Israel’s attacks on Palestinian people. Elbit’s biggest single customer is the Israeli Ministry of Defense. (Palestineaction.org)

The international campaign particularly focuses on Elbit’s ten sites within Britain including four arms factories, according to Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoners Solidarity Network. In February, activists blocked the entrance to an Elbit arms factory near Manchester, covered the building with red paint, chained themselves to the gates and temporarily shut down the factory. □

Venezuela has its strategy: Bolivarian Shield

By Sergio Rodríguez Gelfenstein

The writer was the director of international relations in Venezuela’s presidential office and the country’s ambassador to Nicaragua. Translation: John Catalinotto.

April 7—Throughout its history the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), founded in 1947, has been the main actor involved in U.S. interventions worldwide. The covert and intelligence operations of this agency provided the axis for an entire conspiratorial framework that led to armed invasions, coups d’état against democratic presidents, assassination of leaders, destabilization of countries, training of terrorists and military officers of other nations, the application of interrogations under torture plus the systematization of methods of obtaining information in violation of human rights, and all other kinds of illegal actions.

The secrecy and concealment of CIA operations set the tone for U.S. foreign policy, with the CIA in permanent conflict with the State Department and the National Security Advisor over competition to claim credit for successes fulfilling the country’s imperialist international objectives.

In this regard, the U.S. actions against Chile during the government of President Salvador Allende provided a model. First, in 1970, President Richard Nixon tried in every way to prevent Allende from being ratified by the Chilean Congress, as was required by Chilean law at that time. To this end, Nixon even resorted to ordering the assassination of the Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean Army, General René Schneider, a constitutionalist military officer.

When Schneider’s murder failed to achieve his political aim, Nixon gave instructions to destabilize the country under the directive to “crunch the economy.” The goal was to make Allende’s Popular Unity government fail and thus provoke a collapse. The U.S. would provide adequate resources and powers to create the conditions for the coup d’état of September 1973. All this was done in collusion with the Chilean armed forces, opposition political parties, business

associations and the media.

Although there were outward manifestations indicating violent preparations for the interruption of democracy, everything was planned and organized in total secrecy. Perhaps at that time the existence of a bipolar international system [U.S./USSR] prevented the United States from acting openly with impunity.

Today this is no longer the case. The world’s structure is undefined. The United States with the aid of its cronies — in particular a blurred and subordinate Europe, lacking any international cohesion — acts as if it has unipolar dominance and can impose its will. These actions clash with the majority of humanity’s desire for multipolarity.

U.S. acts with impunity

However, the majority has insufficient force to counter U.S. imperial arrogance or prevent U.S. power excesses. Washington acts with total impunity regarding its violation of international law. It has even reached the point of absurdity that the United Nations is headed by a former prime minister of a country [António Guterres of Portugal] belonging to NATO, the most aggressive and warlike military alliance in history.

In this context, the United States government is currently able to publicly unveil its plans for aggression without having to face any roadblocks whatsoever. In the case of aggression against Venezuela, this situation has been obvious.

At first, it was curious that it was U.S. diplomat James Story, accredited in Bogotá and in charge of the Venezuelan Office in Colombia, de-facto leader of terrorism, who announced in March the creation of a new political formation to group this sector of the Venezuelan opposition.

This sector, baptized the New Alliance for Free Elections, claims to be “a formation made up of civil society, several NGOs, a part of the business sector and the political parties of the G-4 opposition parties, which will work together to fight against the [Bolivarian] regime.” This new formation obviously superseded the “Frente Amplio Venezuela Unida” (United

Venezuelan Broad Front), which, like its countless predecessors, failed in the attempt to overthrow the government of President Nicolás Maduro by force.

This makes it clear that—in view of the fiasco of its attempts to overthrow the Bolivarian government, and the deception practiced by the national Venezuelan opposition leadership—the U.S. government has decided that at this stage a member of the U.S. State Department will directly take charge. Working with a renewed CIA, the Biden administration will try to form—as in Allende’s Chile—a grouping of “opposition political parties, business associations and the media,” as Washington’s intentions to break the Bolivarian National Armed Forces were frustrated. This failure is a key element that contrasts absolutely with the well-known Chilean experience.

More recently, on April 6, U.S. leaders revealed publicly another aspect of the multi-pronged war that the United States is waging against Venezuela. Secretary of State Antony Blinken telephoned President Iván Duque of Colombia to thank him for the services that Bogotá is rendering to the United States in building a “multifaceted alliance” with the aim of overthrowing the government of Venezuela and installing one of their liking. That was disguised, of course, as the “common commitment” they have “to the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela.”

U.S. backs Colombia’s illegal acts

Blinken made it clear that the United States will continue to support the Colombian regime’s violation of human rights, its disrespect for the rule of law and the multiple assassinations of social leaders and former FARC [revolutionary armed forces] combatants, as long as Colombia continues to be Washington’s aircraft carrier for its intervention in the region. That was disguised, of course, as

“Colombia’s efforts to promote democracy throughout the region.”

Likewise, Blinken assured Duque that he could count on the U.S. to ensure the continuity of his “democratic security” policy, which means the extermination of social leaders, extrajudicial executions, alliances with drug trafficking and paramilitarism. It also means an accelerated increase of Colombian cocaine exports to the United States so that young people in that country have enough drugs for their consumption, without creating dangerous short-

ages for the market. That was disguised, of course, as “Washington’s commitment to continue close cooperation on security, rural development and counter-narcotics to support peace in Colombia.” It’s said that “loose lips sink ships.” Bolivarian Venezuela’s enemies themselves have revealed their plans: to develop a new terrorist strategy that seeks to consolidate in Venezuela the social support they have failed to attract; to carry out military actions on the border in alliance with gangs of drug traffickers, paramilitaries and criminals, in addition to a blockade of Venezuelan resources so that no fuel or vaccines arrive. As terrorist leaders such as Julio Borges and Juan Guaidó have revealed, the aim is to create unrest among the people and try to blame Venezuela’s government for the situation.

It seems that the Biden administration has decided to take direct control of operations, gathering under a single command its Armed Forces, the State Department, the CIA, Colombian paramilitary organizations, drug trafficking cartels, the Colombian government and the internal terrorist sector.

To counter this new assault, Venezuela has also unveiled its strategy: Bolivarian Shield; that is, its people, army, citizen consciousness and patriotic spirit, in a civilian-military alliance with a will to fight and resist. □

Bolivarian Shield, that is, its people, army, citizen consciousness and patriotic spirit, in a civilian-military alliance with a will to fight and resist.



¡NO APAGUE! La única solución: Estados Unidos fuera de Afganistán

Por Sara Flounders

El 29 de febrero de 2020, después de rondas de negociaciones en Doha, Qatar, con los talibanes -la insurgencia que han combatido durante 20 años-, Estados Unidos firmó un acuerdo para retirar de Afganistán todas las fuerzas estadounidenses y de la OTAN en un plazo de 14 meses,--para este 1 de mayo.

A cambio, los talibanes aceptaron contener los ataques directos contra las fuerzas estadounidenses y dar tiempo a la retirada. En el acuerdo se incluyó un intercambio de 5.000 prisioneros talibanes y 1.000 cautivos del gobierno afgano.

También se acordó poner fin a más de 20 años de sanciones que habían puesto todos los envíos y transacciones, incluso de suministros humanitarios, bajo el control de la ocupación estadounidense.

De conformidad con el acuerdo de Doha, en junio de 2020, Estados Unidos redujo inicialmente su presencia militar de 12.000 a unos 8.600 efectivos, cerró varias bases y luego volvió a reducirla a 2.500 efectivos antes de que asumiera la administración Biden. Bajo el mando de Estados Unidos quedan 10.000 soldados de la OTAN de 36 países. Al menos otras 1.000 tropas estadounidenses fueron simplemente reclasificadas y desplazadas en el país. (tinyurl.com/udfmt3v)

¿Retirá Estados Unidos sus tropas?

Al igual que todos los acuerdos o tratados que el gobierno estadounidense ha firmado con cualquier tribu, país o grupo de naciones, este acuerdo de retirada con los talibanes está siendo reconsiderado. Las excusas son interminables: no hay tiempo suficiente. Es demasiado precipitado.

El gobierno corrupto que Estados Unidos puso en marcha no podrá sobrevivir sin la enorme potencia militar estadounidense. De repente se proponen varias rondas nuevas de negociaciones. ¿Hay algún plan real para que las tropas y los mercenarios estadounidenses abandonen realmente Afganistán o para que terminen las sanciones de Estados Unidos y de la ONU?

Más de 1,25 millones de tropas estadounidenses y de la OTAN al mando de Estados Unidos han pasado por Afganistán en los últimos 20 años en una guerra de terror no declarada contra los 40 millones de personas que viven en este país del tamaño de Texas. Según las cifras del Mando Central de Estados Unidos, el Pentágono emplea a más de siete contratistas mercenarios por cada miembro del servicio en Afganistán. Su número se mantiene actualmente en 18.000.

Durante 40 años, Estados Unidos

ha participado, a través de la CIA, en el armamento de las fuerzas mercenarias, que duplican el número de sus tropas. Esta ocupación imperialista y el armamento de las fuerzas mercenarias nunca

han traído democracia, progreso, desarrollo, reconciliación nacional o paz a Afganistán. Tampoco se pretendía que trajera ninguna de estas alabadas excusas para la participación de Estados Unidos.

Afganistán es potencialmente uno de los países más ricos en riqueza mineral, con reservas que incluyen oro, cobre, litio, uranio, mineral de hierro, cobalto, zinc, piedras semipreciosas y gemas, gas natural y petróleo. Los estrategas de los grupos de reflexión y los planificadores militares suelen citar como motivación para que-

darse el control de esta enorme riqueza potencial y su ubicación estratégica en Asia Central.

Afganistán es hoy más pobre

La indignación por la brutalidad de la ocupación estadounidense es la mayor ventaja para el reclutamiento de la insurgencia talibán.

Afganistán, tras dos décadas de ocupación militar masiva por parte de Estados Unidos, es más pobre, menos desarrollado. La esperanza de vida es una de las más bajas del mundo y se ha deteriorado constantemente bajo los años de ocupación. No hay una estimación precisa del número de muertes durante las décadas de guerra. Las muertes en las zonas rurales, donde viven cuatro de cada cinco personas, no se contabilizan en su mayoría.

Afganistán es uno de los países más pobres del mundo. Según los cálculos del propio gobierno afgano, entre el 42% y el 55% de la población vive por debajo del umbral de pobreza, definido como menos de un dólar al día.

El país tiene una de las tasas de analfabetismo y mortalidad infantil más altas del mundo. Casi el 55% de los niños menores de 12 años sufren de incapacidad física y mental: retraso en el crecimiento debido a la mala alimentación.

La guerra de Estados Unidos en Afganistán se publicitó como una guerra por los “derechos y la dignidad de las mujeres”. Sin embargo, las mujeres no tienen derechos que se cumplan; la violencia contra las mujeres, incluidos los abusos domésticos, no se considera un delito. La mayoría de las mujeres se casan antes de los 18 años. Y la edad media de las viudas, las más pobres de la población, es de 35 años.

La ocupación estadounidense opera jugando conscientemente con los antagonismos entre las diferentes nacionalidades y lenguas de Afganistán y exacerbándolos.

Los señores de la guerra y los mandos militares corruptos se apoderan de propiedades y tierras a su antojo.

Promesas de retirada

Todos los presidentes desde hace 20 años se han comprometido a retirar las fuerzas estadounidenses de Afganistán y de las interminables guerras y rotaciones de tropas de la llamada “Guerra contra el Terror”.

La decisión de Washington de invadir y ocupar Afganistán comenzó el 7 de octubre de 2001, bajo el presidente George W. Bush. La decisión contó con el apoyo británico, basado en la afirmación de que los talibanes eran responsables de albergar terroristas. Se culpó a Afganistán del atentado del 11 de septiembre de 2001 contra el World Trade Center, aunque el acto fue llevado a cabo por equipos de Arabia Saudí.

Los talibanes, que seguían luchando en una guerra civil y carecían de cualquier tipo de fuerza aérea, fueron derrotados fácilmente en dos meses y expulsados a las zonas rurales por un abrumador bombardeo estadounidense. Estados Unidos construyó una serie de bases militares alrededor de cada ciudad, miles de puestos de control y estableció un gobierno afgano. Nombraron presidente a Hamid Karzai, ciudadano estadounidense. La mayoría de los nombramientos del gabinete gubernamental y de los ministros eran afganos con ciudadanía estadounidense o británica.

El presidente Barack Obama fue reelegido en 2012 con la promesa de retirar todas las tropas estadounidenses de Afganistán en 16 meses. En lugar de ello, aumentó enormemente las tropas hasta más de 100.000, con muchos más contratistas mercenarios. Pero este aumento fracasó.

La administración Trump no tuvo más remedio que aceptar las conversaciones y programar la retirada. Estados Unidos se vio obligado a entablar las conversaciones por el completo deterioro de la posición militar de Estados Unidos. Un extenso artículo del NY Times del 2 de febrero confirma lo grave de la situación y lo que llevó a las negociaciones. (tinyurl.com/4dxjvy9y)

Merece la pena repasar algunos puntos de la evaluación del New York Times, que cita la captura por parte de los talibanes de bases militares y puestos de policía y su instalación de puestos de control en las carreteras cerca de las capitales en provincias como Helmand y Uruzgan en el sur y Kunduz y Baghlan en el norte.

En diciembre de 2020, casi 200 puestos de control fueron abandonados por el ejército afgano, proporcionando equipo militar y municiones adicionales a las fuerzas talibanes. Sus esfuerzos por rodear y penetrar en distritos de ciudades clave, como Kunduz en el norte, Kandahar en el sur e incluso la capital, Kabul, se han topado con poca resistencia por parte de la policía afgana.

“El deterioro de la situación en Kandahar es un reflejo más amplio de la seguridad en todo el país. ... La población

tiene más fe en los talibanes que en el gobierno”.

El artículo termina con una predicción nefasta: “Estos sentimientos son comunes en las zonas más rurales de Afganistán. Pero la incompetencia del gobierno afgano y la corrupción generalizada han llevado esa actitud a las puertas de una de las ciudades más pobladas del país. El gobierno . . ha fracasado”.

La admisión es asombrosa.

Aviones no tripulados improvisados

Parte del éxito de los talibanes radica en su nuevo uso de bombas improvisadas de bajo costo, fabricadas con botellas de plástico llenas de explosivos y acopladas a drones de venta libre, para desmoralizar aún más a las fuerzas gubernamentales afganas.

El uso por parte de los talibanes de pequeños drones armados y con visores nocturnos para atacar a comandantes, grupos de soldados, vehículos y depósitos de munición es una amenaza, porque las fuerzas de seguridad afganas están repartidas por todo el país con más de 10.000 pequeños puestos de control, muchos de ellos en zonas rurales. “El mero sonido de un dron comercial hacía que los combatientes huyeran y abandonaran su posición por miedo a ser blanco de la munición lanzada, por lo que el propio sonido del dron podía utilizarse como arma”. (tinyurl.com/37xmvk6y)

Por supuesto, un dron de \$700 dólares que lance una granada sobre un puesto de avanzada no es rival para los grandes drones Predator y Reaper pilotados a distancia del ejército estadounidense y armados con potentes misiles Hellfire. Los drones estadounidenses cuestan más de 4 millones de dólares cada uno, pueden volar hasta 740 kilómetros y permanecer en el aire hasta 14 horas.

Pero el controvertido programa de drones del Pentágono ha sido acusado de matar a civiles, disparando contra fiestas de boda, reuniones religiosas, agricultores que trabajan en sus campos, autobuses y coches civiles. La rabia que sigue a cada ataque contra civiles recluta a más combatientes de los que murieron en el ataque.

En cualquier esfuerzo por evitar una retirada total de Estados Unidos, la Administración Biden está promoviendo “conferencias internacionales inclusivas” y una Conferencia de la ONU más amplia para decidir el destino de Afganistán, una transición política y un acuerdo de reparto de poder entre el gobierno afgano y los talibanes.

Todos estos son esfuerzos desesperados para preservar la presencia de Estados Unidos. La única solución es la salida de Estados Unidos.

La Alianza Negra por la Paz ha elaborado un paquete de información que incluye una petición, gráficos para las redes sociales, una hoja informativa y un comunicado de prensa para ayudar a centrar la atención en la demanda del 1 de mayo de ¡Fuera Estados Unidos! (tinyurl.com/ttknewm2) □