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SocialistViewpoint

★ The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it. —Karl Marx ★

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Mumia Abu-Jamal Health Update

By CAROLE SELIGMAN



Mumia Abu-Jamal, June 10, 2019.

After Mumia Abu-Jamal was sickened with Covid-19 he developed blockage of arteries causing him to require open-heart surgery on April 19. A campaign ensued to stop the barbaric practice of shackling Mumia to his hospital bed while recovering from the operation. Mumia's life is on the line. He is 67-years-old. His immune system is compromised because of liver cirrhosis from years of untreated hepatitis C, and, congestive heart failure, worsened by the coronavirus.

In 2017, an international campaign succeeded in getting a judicial order that Mumia was deprived of essential health-

care and be treated with lifesaving Harvoni treatment. That has compelled the Department of Corrections (DOC) to provide the medication to Mumia and other prisoners infected with hepatitis C.

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) said it best, "The refusal of healthcare reminds us of the conditions we were put in under Apartheid prisons where sick detainees were allowed to die in very deplorable lonely conditions in solitary as part of the punishment for their role in the struggle."

We, in the Free Mumia movement, call on all to ACT NOW! Mumia must not die

in prison from COVID-19 and heart disease! He should be released, now! "Freedom is the only treatment. Free Mumia now!" is the call of activists around the world. You can join this call by emailing Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf, brunelle.michael@gmail.com; John Wetzel, Secretary Pennsylvania Department Of Corrections, jwetzel@state.pa.us and ra-crpadoc.secretary@pa.gov.

Demand: Mumia Abu-Jamal Must be Released from Prison! No State Execution by COVID-19! Prisoners 50-Years and Older Should be Released from Prison to Protect them from COVID-19!

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Income Inequality and Police Murders

By BONNIE WEINSTEIN

Throughout the history of class society (the rule of the few over the many) the ruling classes—those who own the lands and means of production—have used armed representatives to protect their accumulated wealth. The rulers do not create wealth—they rule over those who do.

They accumulate wealth by paying workers as little as they can get away with and charging those same workers as much as they can get away with for the basic necessities of life. In order to continue this colossal swindle, they have to convince workers that it is natural for the rich and powerful minority to rule the majority.

From the cop on the beat to the military brass, the commanders of capital are at the top of the chain of command. They make the laws we must abide by and they command the forces to defend those laws and punish those who disobey them.

The more resistance to the ruling class grows, the more violent they become.

Income inequality breeds resistance

Today inequality between the income of the rich and the rest of us is staggering. The multi-billionaires at the top own literally thousands-of-times more than what the average worker makes in a year.

To put a billion dollars is in perspective: if you made a million-dollars-a-year, and, didn't have to spend any of it, it would take you one thousand years to accumulate one billion.

According to an October 10, 2019 article in *Quartz* by Annalisa Merelli, titled, "The average U.S. worker would need ten-times the length of all human history to earn as much as Jeff Bezos:"¹

"The average annual income of a full-time salaried worker in the United States in 2018 was \$46,800.

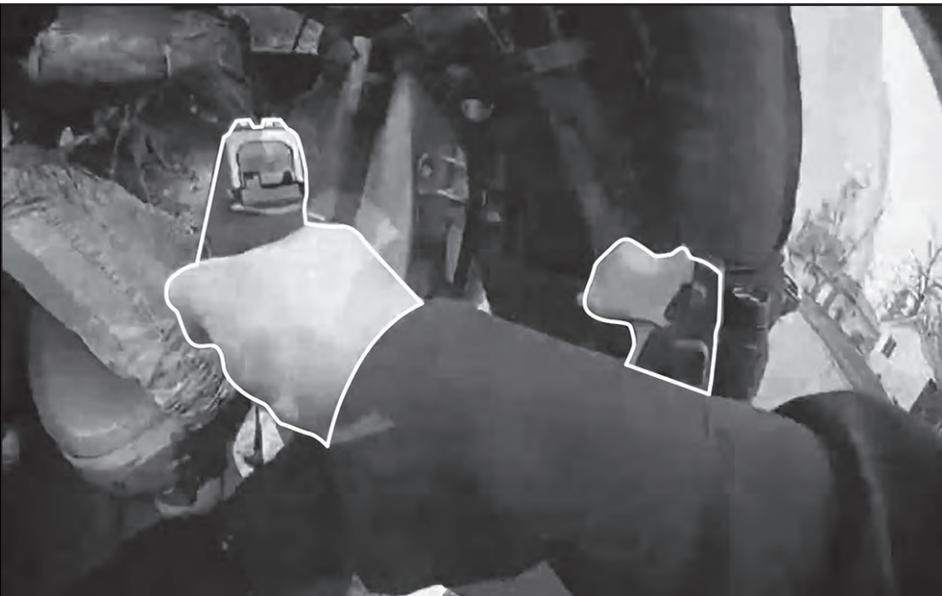
And let's assume this average worker paid no rent, no bills, no taxes, no expenses of any kind. In fact, let's pretend this person spends no money at all. They just make money. By the time their wealth amounted to \$1 billion, more than 21,000 years would have passed. That is the amount of time it has taken human civilization to evolve from cave-dwelling to where it is today. But while a billion dollars is a ludicrous amount of money for any one person, it isn't even close to the wealth of the richest of us all. In America, that is Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. His net worth is estimated to be north of \$130 billion. For America's average worker, that equates to almost 2.8-million-years-worth of work (again, without spending anything.) That is more than ten-times longer than scientists believe *Homo Sapiens* have existed on Earth."

Property vs. life

Today's police shootings are a reflection of the growing resistance to this vast and senseless economic inequality. It is more important than ever for the capitalist class to control the people, and to strongly enforce law and order to maintain the *status quo* of rule by the wealthy.

George Floyd was murdered because he was suspected of trying to spend a counterfeit twenty-dollar-bill to buy cigarettes at a convenience store. His life was worth less than that \$20.00.

No matter what the circumstances are, when the police are called, their job is to take control of the situation by any means necessary. They are there to enforce their power over the situation at the behest of the ruling class—to make it crystal clear that whomever they confront must obey them or die.



Daunte Wright, shown with his left arm up in front of his face, was shot in the driver's seat. Officer Potter, left, fired her pistol into the car with her right hand. Another officer on her right, carried his Taser in a holster on his left side, with the grip accessible to his right hand. Source: Video still from KARE 11 TV

According to an April 17, 2021 *New York Times* article by John Eligon and Shawn Hubler titled, “Throughout Trial Over George Floyd’s Death, Killings by Police Mount:”²

“Since testimony in Derek Chauvin’s trial began on March 29, more than three people a day have died at the hands of law enforcement. ... Just seven hours before prosecutors opened their case against Derek Chauvin, a former Minneapolis police officer charged with murdering George Floyd, a Chicago officer chased down a 13-year-old boy in a West Side alley and fatally shot him as he turned with his hands up. ... On every day that followed, all the way through the close of testimony, another person was killed by the police somewhere in the United States.”

Hands up! Don’t shoot!

Adam Toledo³ was the 13-year-old Mexican American boy, who was shot and killed by Chicago police officer Eric Stillman on March 29, 2021, in the Little Village neighborhood on the West Side of Chicago. He was being chased by officer Stillman who ordered Adam to turn around with his hands up. That’s exactly what Adam did, then Stillman shot him square in the chest.

On April 11, 2021, Daunte Demetrius Wright⁴, a 20-year-old unarmed African American man, was fatally shot by police officer Kimberly Ann Potter, 26-years on the force, during a traffic stop for expired tags and an attempted arrest for an outstanding arrest warrant in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota. During the arrest, Mr. Wright was shot at close range by officer Potter. She said she meant to pull out her Taser but accidentally pulled out what appeared to be a Glock revolver, which was all-black and clearly visible in the video of the shooting.

The Glock 17 is the semiautomatic pistol commonly used by the police. The Glock 17s are black and typically have a trigger safety that must be

depressed when the trigger is pulled. The standard-size grip is taller than the grips on many Tasers, and the Glock’s overall weight can be several times greater. The commonly used Taser, the Taser X26P electroshock weapon, is bright yellow (or other bright, neon color) to distinguish it from the Glock.⁵ In the video of the actual shooting, you can see that the cop who’s standing to the right of Potter as she has her gun drawn seconds before she pulls the trigger, has his Taser on his belt on his left side with the grip facing forward. It’s bright yellow.

On April 20, about 30 minutes before a jury found Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin guilty of murdering George Floyd, 16-year-old Ma’Khia Bryant⁶ was fatally shot by police officer Nicholas Reardon in Columbus, Ohio. She had called the police because she felt she was being threatened at the foster home where she and her little sister were staying. She was trying to defend herself when a scuffle broke out within the group of people who seemed to outnumber her in front of the home. Officer Reardon made no attempt to de-escalate the situation and within seconds of his arrival, shot Ma’Khia four times and killed her.

Police killings of the poor are endemic to capitalism

You don’t see the cops on Wall Street slamming a banker face-down on the ground for swindling millions of people out of their homes. You don’t see the cops handcuffing and kneeling on the neck of the pharmaceutical CEOs responsible for the deaths of millions due to overdoses of opioid pain killers that were peddled as being non-addicting in order to prescribe more and for longer periods of time so they could make more money.

Police killings are targeted at the poor

Most arrests are for crimes of poverty—thrift, turf-wars, family strife most often due to family members blaming each other for financial hardship.

Some of these arrests are directly the result of poverty. The inability to pay a traffic fine, pay to register your car, or child support, can end up in a warrant for your arrest. When the police come to arrest you, you must surrender or risk death. The fines are worth more than you are.

If you get stopped by the police while driving a stolen car, you will be approached with guns drawn. The car is worth more than you.



Screen Shot of Adam Toledo with his hands up following orders from officer Eric Stillman a split second before Stillman shot him.

These murders are not the result “of a few bad apples.” It’s systemic. The police murder because the capitalist class needs the imminent threat of lethal force foremost in the minds of the working class whenever they encounter the police. The police forces, organized during slavery to capture runaway slaves, are armed and trained to kill to uphold capitalist law and the chain of command.

The U.S. government and its military are responsible for tens-of-millions of deaths through war and economic sanctions that punish the masses for the alleged crimes of their governments. Then they make profitable business deals with the commanders of those governments once they’ve conquered them. That’s good business.

U.S. history is the history of conquer by military might under the command of the wealthy elite since the very first armed white man stepped foot on another land.

It’s the capitalist class that has its finger on the nuclear launch button that could destroy the planet—not the masses who created that wealth through their labor.

Capitalism vs. humanity

In order to maintain their command, the capitalist class has to convince the working class that the *status quo* must be maintained—that the economic structure of capitalism that places the wealth of the tiny few over the health and welfare of the entire planet is the way it has always been and will forever be.

The main underlying message they want us to believe is that we are incapable of governing ourselves peacefully, democratically, and rationally for the good of all.

They want us to believe that war between people over property, power and wealth is the natural way—and, naturally, winner takes all.

Capitalism is unnatural

We have to remind ourselves that racism and bigotry are endemic to capital-

ism and are not natural. It is the war on the poor and the whole working class that keeps the capitalist class on top. They win by dividing us every way they can—by race, sex, gender, education, income—because, divided we lose, together we win, because we are the overwhelming majority, and they know it.

Workers of the world have nothing to lose by cooperating with each other and everything to lose by fighting each other.

They are nothing without the police and military to uphold their power. That’s why, for them, property is worth more than human life. Property is sacred. Human life is but cannon fodder in pursuit of the wealth and the power it affords them.

It’s they who build the deadliest weapons. It’s they who reap billions in profits from the sale and use of weapons all over the world. They profit from selling death.

Socialism is the way to reorganize the world to benefit everyone and the planet

The overwhelming majority of us driving down the road, working on the job, or walking down the street with our dog or going to the grocery store, are unarmed and are horrified at the thought of being responsible for another’s harm or death.

Most of us like to do some kind of work both mental and physical. We, as a whole, are proud to be good at our jobs. We like to gain skills, develop our interests and talents, be productive and to contribute to the wellbeing of our family, friends, our communities and the world.

Workers of the world have nothing to lose by cooperating with each other and everything to lose by fighting each other.

War benefits no one but the wealthy elite who profit from it. War and police violence are how the capitalist class not only maintains their privileged economic position, but also their command.

A socialist world is a world of unlimited possibilities

Our solidarity and cooperation with each other can rid the world of capitalist tyranny. Because we are the majority, if we are united, we have the power to disarm the capitalists so their military and police will no longer be a threat to anyone.

The vast wealth they’ve stolen can then be used to benefit the whole of human society and repair all the damage the capitalist wars and their greedy production methods have caused to the planet.

We are the majority, we do the work, and we can change the world for the better. We can end the suffering that centuries of capitalism have inflicted upon us.

Without a dictatorship of the rich over the poor, we can build a world based upon production for the needs and wants of all, and not for weapons of death and destruction to protect the private profits of the few. Capitalism isn’t good for anybody, not even the capitalists themselves.

The most practical alternative to capitalism is socialism, where the profits from our labor are not hoarded by the few but can be devoted to making sure each person can develop to their full potential and in that way, contribute to society as a whole according to their talents and abilities.

The product of our shared labor can then be devoted to giving back to each according to needs and wants and ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone and everything on this planet.

Continued on page 7

Ten Biggest Pandemic Profiteers

BY CHUCK COLLINS

One year ago, the Institute for Policy Studies published “Billionaire Bonanza 2020: Wealth Windfalls, Tumbling Taxes and Pandemic Profiteers,” and began tracking billionaire wealth gains as unemployment surged. We teamed up with Americans for Tax Fairness (ATF) to track the wealth growth of America’s billionaires over the last year. This report summarizes the extraordinary growth in wealth of those now 657 billionaires based on real-time data from *Forbes* on March 18, 2021.

Here are highlights from the last 12 months of billionaire wealth growth:

Continued from page 6

1 “The average US worker would need 10 times the length of all human history to earn as much as Jeff Bezos”

<https://qz.com/1723454/this-is-how-long-an-average-us-worker-needs-to-become-a-billionaire/>

2 “Throughout Trial Over George Floyd’s Death, Killings by Police Mount”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/17/us/police-shootings-killings.html>

3 “Video Is Released of Chicago Police Fatally Shooting 13-Year-Old”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/15/us/adam-toledo-chicago-shooting-video.html>

4 “What to Know About the Death of Daunte Wright”

<https://www.nytimes.com/article/daunte-wright-death-minnesota.html>

5 “How Could an Officer Mistake a Gun for a Taser?”

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/04/13/us/daunte-wright-taser-gun.html>

6 “Teenage Girl Is Fatally Shot by Police in Columbus, Officials Say”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/20/us/columbus-ohio-shooting.html>

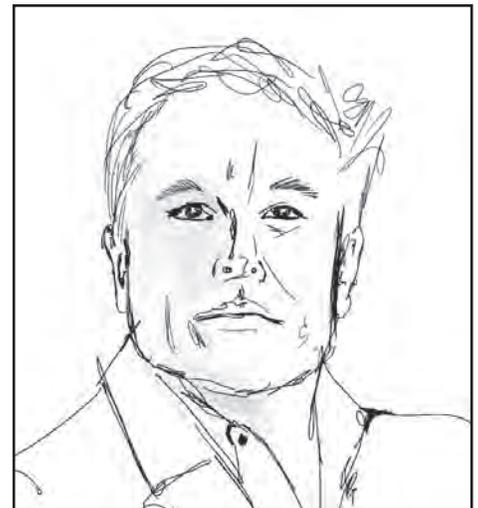
- The combined wealth of the nation’s 657 billionaires increased more than \$1.3 trillion, or 44.6 percent, since the pandemic lockdowns began. Over those same 12 months, more than 29 million Americans contracted the virus and more than 535,000 died from it. As billionaire wealth soared over, almost 80 million lost work between March 21, 2020, and February 20, 2021, and 18 million were collecting unemployment on February 27, 2021
- There are 43 newly minted billionaires since the beginning of the pandemic, when there were 614. A number of new billionaires joined the list after initial public offerings (IPOs) of stock in companies such as Airbnb, DoorDash, and Snowflake.
- The increase in the combined wealth of the 15 billionaires with the greatest growth in absolute wealth was \$563 billion or 82 percent. The wealth growth of just these 15 represents over 40 percent of the wealth growth among all billionaires. Topping the list are Elon Musk (\$137.5 billion richer, 559 percent), Jeff Bezos (\$65 billion, 58 percent) and Mark Zuckerberg (\$47 billion, 86 percent).

The ten biggest “Pandemic Profiteers” saw the greatest percentage increase in their wealth—at least 300 percent.

They mostly multiplied their fortunes in the world of online goods, services and entertainment, as forcibly homebound Americans shopped, invested and diverted themselves in isolation. They include the owners of ecommerce leaders Quicken Loans, Square, Carvana, and cryptocurrency exchange Coinbase; social media sites Snapchat and Twitter; online streaming platform Roku; and digital ad agency

Trade Desk. 19 other billionaires experienced increases of over 200 percent while 48 others more than doubled their fortunes with 100 percent+ gains.

1. Bom Kim (670 percent/\$7.7 billion): A U.S. citizen and founder of the e-commerce giant Coupang, the Amazon of South Korea. Kim’s fortune surged as high as \$11 billion after the company’s IPO in early March.
2. Dan Gilbert (642 percent/\$41.7 billion): Owner of Quicken Loans, which capitalized on cloistered citizens tapping online financing. Lives in Michigan.
3. Ernest Garcia II (567 percent/\$13.6 billion): Biggest shareholder of Carvana, the online car sales and auto-financing giant. Arizona.
4. Elon Musk (559 percent/\$137.5 billion): Musk is now the second wealthiest American—at nearly \$138 billion—as his shares in Tesla, Space-X and other companies that he owns continue to climb. Lives in Texas.
5. Brian Armstrong (550 percent/\$5.5 billion): Chief execu-



Number 4, Elon Musk (Drawing by Nathaniel St. Clair)

tive of Coinbase, the largest cryptocurrency exchange in the country. California resident.

6. Bobby Murphy (531 percent/\$10.1 billion): Co-founder of Snapchat, with his Stanford fraternity brother, Evan Spiegel. California resident.
7. Evan Spiegel (490 percent/\$9.3 billion): Co-founder of Snapchat with his other billionaire super-gainer, Bobby Murphy. California resident.
8. Jack Dorsey (396 percent/\$10.3 billion): Co-founder and CEO of both Twitter and Square, the small business payment app. Lives in California.
9. Anthony Wood (331 percent/\$5.3 billion): Founder of Roku, which enables online TV video streaming. California resident.
10. Jeff Green (300 percent/\$3 billion): Californian founder and chairman of The Trade Desk, a digital advertising firm.

Other notable billionaire wealth gains during the pandemic:

- Eric Yuan, co-founder of video-conferencing technology Zoom, saw his wealth rise by \$8.4 billion during the pandemic year, a gain of 153 percent. A year ago, Yuan had \$5.5 billion which increased to \$13.9 billion. Last year Zoom paid no federal income taxes on its \$660 million in profits, which increased by more than 4,000 percent.

- The three owners of Airbnb saw their wealth accelerate thanks to their pandemic year IPO. Brian Chesky's wealth increased from \$4.1 billion to \$14.6 billion, a gain of \$10.5 billion, an increase of 256 percent. Nathan Blecharzyk and Joe Gebbia, with equal ownership stakes valued at \$4.1 billion a year ago, each saw their wealth increase to \$13.2 billion, for gains of \$9.1 billion each, or 222 percent.

Last year Zoom paid no federal income taxes on its \$660 million in profits, which increased by more than 4,000 percent.

- Jim Koch, owner of Boston Beer Company and brewer of the Sam Adams brand, saw his wealth increase from \$1.3 billion to \$3.2 billion, a gain of \$1.9 billion over the pandemic year, or 146 percent.
- Dan and Bubba Cathy, the owners of drive-through sensation Chick-Fil-A, saw their combined wealth of \$6.8 billion rise to \$16.6 billion, a gain of \$9.8 billion over the pandemic year, or 144 percent.
- Harold Hamm, the politically connected oil and gas fracker, saw his wealth increase from \$2.4 billion to \$7.5 billion during the pandemic year, an increase of 5.1 billion, or 212.5 percent.

Of 17 industry categories, billionaires in the technology industry had the greatest collective wealth growth—\$564 billion, or nearly 68 percent.

They were worth \$1.4 trillion on March 18, 2021, or one-third of the billionaires' total. The titans of Wall Street—the Finance and Investment industries—saw their wealth grow by \$226 billion—a nearly 37 percent increase. Automotive industry billionaires had the biggest percentage point increase in wealth—317 percent based on an increase in wealth of \$172 billion. That was largely driven by the extraordinary rise in Elon Musk's wealth—\$137.5 billion or 559 percent.

All but three states saw the wealth of their billionaire residents increase.

Topping the list in total wealth growth are California at \$551 billion, Washington at \$134.6 billion, and New York at \$116.4 billion. The top three states with the greatest percentage increase in wealth are Michigan at 164 percent, Arizona at 110 percent, and Hawaii at 107 percent.

Billionaire wealth growth is calculated between March 18, 2020 and March 18, 2021, based on *Forbes* data compiled in this report by ATF and IPS. March 18 is used as the unofficial beginning of the crisis because by then most federal and state economic restrictions responding to the virus were in place. March 18 was also the date that *Forbes* picked to measure billionaire wealth for the 2020 edition of its annual billionaires' report, which provided a baseline that ATF (Americans for Tax Fairness) and IPS (Institute for Policy Studies) compare periodically with real-time data from the *Forbes* website. PolitiFact has favorably reviewed this methodology.

Chuck Collins directs the Program on Inequality and the Common Good at the Institute for Policy Studies, where he also co-edits Inequality.org.

—CounterPunch, March 25, 2021

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/03/25/who-are-the-10-biggest-pandemic-profiteers/>



Setback in Alabama

Rank-and-file workers will determine what's next

By GEOFF MIRELOWITZ

April 15, 2021—Pro-union workers suffered a setback in their effort to organize the giant Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama. They lost the vote for union representation by a margin of 738 ballots cast in favor to 1798 against. The Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Workers Union (RWDSU), which was seeking to represent them, said it plans to challenge the result and will ask federal labor officials to investigate Amazon for creating an “atmosphere of confusion, coercion and/or fear of reprisals.”

The outcome is also a setback for working people across the country, many of whom followed this battle closely—as did others around the globe—and were hopeful of a union victory. However, it is not the end of the battle to organize the second largest employer in the United States, in Bessemer or elsewhere. Nor is it a sign that other labor struggles today are inevitably headed to defeat.

At an April 11 rally in the RWDSU parking lot in Birmingham, Alabama, about 20 miles from the Bessemer warehouse, Amazon workers Jennifer Bates and Darryl Richardson shared publicly their initial reactions. “I was upset,” Richardson said, after hearing the election results the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) had announced two days earlier. “I was disappointed. I was sad. I was mad at the same time.” He described how he and Bates sat talking in his truck during a break from work. “I wanted to give up,” he added. “I ain’t gonna tell no lie.” But then he walked back into the warehouse, and he said, “I see that employees still get treated bad. I thought about it and I said, ‘We can’t give up. I got to stay strong.’ I’m gonna stay here and fight. We can’t go moping around. I’m ready to fight. Let’s go one more round.”

In a front-page article in its April 9 edition, the *New York Times* presented a different view. It asserted the vote “squash[ed] the most significant organizing drive in the internet giant’s history... dealing a crushing blow to labor.”

The organizing drive in Bessemer, however, was not “squashed.” It suffered a setback. In any working-class struggle it is necessary to recognize such a development when one occurs. But a “crushing defeat” presupposes a far greater level of struggle and working-class mobilization, smashed by a force much more daunting than a lost election.

The state of the rank-and-file leadership inside the warehouse must be the starting point in assessing the lessons of this fight. That is not easy to gauge fully and accurately from afar. Much of what has been written about the outcome of the vote in the big-business media, as well as other publi-

cations, starts elsewhere and points in the wrong direction.

A useful place to begin is with the vote totals themselves. The final tally was not close. That must be faced even while recognizing the enormous resources Amazon put into pressuring workers into either voting “no” or not voting at all. But the lopsided outcome is not the only noteworthy fact.

Pro-union workers at Amazon can start with a realistic assessment of what the 738 “yes” votes represent. If a broader rank-and-file leadership can be forged over the next weeks and months among those who voted for the union, steps forward can be taken to counter this setback.

Resistance the only answer to bold employer

A March 26 article in *World-Outlook.com* pointed to what Amazon



Protest in support of Alabama Amazon workers' drive to unionize, February 20, 2021, Asheville, North Carolina.

workers everywhere are up against: “In 2019, Amazon beat back an effort by the GMB Union to organize one of the company’s warehouses in England. ‘We know Amazon will leave no stone unturned to beat you,’ Mick Rix, a national officer of the GMB Union, told the *Washington Post* recently. ‘It was a harsh lesson to learn.’”

That is not going to change. Workers fighting for union representation and better conditions have had to face even harsher lessons throughout the history of the U.S. labor movement. In auto, steel, coal mining and other industries workers have dealt with hired thugs, cops, the National Guard and at times the U.S. Army, as well as all kinds of dirty tricks such as those Amazon used in Bessemer. There is only one answer to all these obstacles: increasing the unity of rank-and-file workers in action to defend ourselves from employer attacks, while seeking to maximize union power to do so.

The fight for union recognition is often the first step. More than once such a struggle has not been won in the first battle. Although this can best be judged accurately from within, it is possible that the decision to bring the union organizing effort in Bessemer to a vote was premature. It is possible the work by rank-and-file workers to build relations and develop mutual trust on the job and outside the warehouse—for example, in house meetings and other face-to-face discussions away from the prying eyes of managers and supervisors—needed more time and effort.

A successful union organizing campaign cannot be waged on behalf of a group of workers, no matter how well intentioned the outside help may be. The help from union staff or others not employed in the given workplace has to be an auxiliary contribution, not the other way around. It is only the rank-and-file that can lead a campaign to build unity, solidarity, and a fighting spirit among their coworkers and

develop a set of convincing reasons why workers need to organize themselves into a union.

It is up to rank-and-file workers in Bessemer to judge the record of what was done before the recent vote and draw the necessary conclusions for what to do next.

“I had to get back up. Why? Because I saw the faces of my coworkers,” said Jennifer Bates at the April 11 union rally, expressing her determination to push forward. “We’re not running away with our tails behind us.” Bates referred to Amazon’s “scare tactics done to people who didn’t have any idea about what a union could do for them.”

Here it is important to note that the Bessemer warehouse opened for the first time in April 2020. As Gary Mansbach, a *World-Outlook* reader in Alabama, said, “Everyone working there has been there less than one year.”

One result is that rank-and-file workers are just beginning to know and trust one another. That process takes time, often more than a year. The high turnover rate of employees in the warehouse is a related factor. “Young people who thought they were going to lose their jobs because the company said, ‘We’re going to shut down,’” if the union won, said Bates referring to such challenges. “Young people coming to me who said they didn’t know what to do, that they were confused now, because in the meeting ‘they told me we were going to lose our benefits.’”

In a rush to declare the fight dead, others have turned their eyes elsewhere. Some point to the ways U.S. labor law is stacked against working people and our unions. That has been true for decades, going back well before the Wagner Labor Relations Act of 1935, which, among its “accomplishments,” established the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). To this day, top union officials point to this law as a victory. The officialdom is pressing to update the law. That campaign is a

continuation of the mistaken and ineffective course the labor bureaucracy has followed for decades.

An article in the April 9 issue of *The Nation* was titled, “Blowout in Bessemer: A Postmortem on the Amazon Campaign.” Apparently, the headline was considered insufficiently discouraging, so the editors added this sub-head: “The warning signs of defeat were everywhere.”

“There is nothing new about the ruthless nature of employer campaigns to defeat unions,” wrote Jane McAlevey, who then referred to the book, *Confessions of a Union Buster*, by Martin Jay Levitt, published in 1988. We note here that the record of such “ruthless campaigns” goes back far longer than the period covered by Levitt’s confessions.

“His book, the Amazon campaign, and just about every union election since the Reagan era are proof enough that to stand any chance of reversing the diminishing fortunes of America’s workers, HR 842, the Protecting the Right to Organize [PRO] Act of 2021, which just passed the House, is desperately needed,” McAlevey said.

That view was echoed by RWDSU President Stuart Appelbaum who told the *New York Times*, “Our system is broken. Amazon took full advantage of that.” He repeated the same argument while speaking at the April 11 union rally.

Both Appelbaum and McAlevey are misleading working people by pointing to passage of this legislation as the necessary next step for workers to have a chance to win union organizing or other labor battles.

The truth about U.S. labor laws

Farrell Dobbs, a revolutionary socialist and central leader of the historic Teamster struggles of the 1930s, expressed a very different view of the Wagner Act and similar labor legislation. Dobbs was himself a rank-and-file worker with no prior union experi-

ence when he became a central leader of the 1934 Minneapolis strikes. He took the lessons of that experience into the over-the-road truck driver organizing campaign that transformed the International Brotherhood of Teamsters from a small craft association into a large and powerful industrial union. Dobbs later wrote a four-volume history of that fight.

“In 1935 President Roosevelt had signed into law the Wagner Labor Relations Act, which required employers to bargain with trade unions representing a majority of their employees,” explained Dobbs in *Teamster Politics*. “*This directive was not as altruistic as it might appear on the surface* [emphasis added by W-O]. Primarily it was designed to help assure that the insurgent masses of hitherto unorganized workers would come under the domination of AFL (and later CIO) officials with a class collaborationist outlook,” said Dobbs, using the initials for the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations.

“As a further means of curbing rank-and-file militancy,” Dobbs continued, “the law also established a National Labor Relations Board. Its key purpose was to mediate industrial conflicts, and that function was generally carried out in tricky ways that proved costly to the workers. In addition, a category termed ‘unfair labor practices’ was introduced. Ostensibly charges of that nature were to be directed only at the bosses, but it didn’t take long in practice for such charges to be leveled against organized labor as well.”

Dobbs then proceeded to the main point, one as relevant today as when he wrote it some 45 years ago: “This piece of *legerdemain* was hailed by trade-union bureaucrats throughout the country as ‘Labor’s Magna Carta.’ Like the authors of the Wagner Act, they hoped it would enable them to steer workers away from self-reliant action and toward dependence on the capitalist government.”

The Wagner Act and NLRB are only one part of the bureaucratic setup that has been in place now for over 85 years. A new rise of labor struggles will have to break through this setup, including rank-and-file workers taking back control of the trade unions. That’s a big job that can only be accomplished in the course of a widespread working-class radicalization like that of the 1930s when workers and our allies scored decisive victories through actions such as the Teamster struggles and other giant labor battles that established unions in many mass production industries.

Does that mean that no advances can be made short of such a broad radicalization? Was a defeat in Bessemer inevitable? No. If that were true it would make little difference what lessons rank-and-file workers can learn today, nor what can be done to act on them, in the Bessemer Amazon warehouse or elsewhere.

McAlevy was not wrong when she wrote: “Three factors weigh heavily in any unionization election: the outrageously vicious behavior of employers—some of it illegal, most fully legal—including harassing and intimidating workers, and telling bold lies... the strategies and tactics used in the campaign by the organizers; and the broader social-political context in which the union election is being held.”

Who are the key organizers?

However, that begs the question of who the key organizers are. Our answer is the rank-and-file workers inside the workplace seeking union representation.

The earlier *World-Outlook.com* article highlighted a key factor in the broader context: “The long-term consequences of decades of an unrelenting employer offensive—aimed at breaking or weakening the trade unions, and aided by the course of the top labor officials, tying the unions to the political parties and interests of big business—have been substantial,” we said.

The history lessons drawn so accurately by Farrell Dobbs point precisely to the obstacle of any course other than relying on the power of rank-and-file workers organizing one another to fight in an uncompromising way for what we need, whether union representation or any other demands. That misleadership is at the heart of the perspective of the top union officialdom and has undermined labor battles for decades.

Dobbs wrote an “Afterword” to the Teamster history, analyzing subsequent developments that continue to exert a strong influence today: “One of the major factors preventing effective struggle against economic and social deterioration [of working-class conditions of life and work] has been accelerated degeneration of the labor officialdom since World War II,” he said.

“These officials,” he continued, “have gone a long way toward converting the trade unions into auxiliary instruments of repression acting in collusion with the capitalist state authorities. Among the consequences has been the clamping of collective bargaining into an iron vise. One jaw consists of restrictions imposed upon organized labor by the bosses’ government. The other takes the form of bureaucratic controls within the unions themselves.”

These are the facts facing union militants today. They present a challenging situation for any workers seeking to harness and use union power. Some of those challenges are apparent in the wake of the setback in Bessemer.

Pro-union sentiment not enough

Despite the growth in pro-union sentiment across the United States, noted in more than one article commenting on the Bessemer results, such general sentiment is not the only factor in winning solid support for a union organizing drive in a given workplace. The weakness of organized labor and its inability to win much in the way of meaningful concessions from the employers—in

fact quite the opposite in industry after industry over half-a-century—also determines how workers see the unions today and how they may vote.

It is widely agreed that working conditions at Amazon are grueling as a result of speed-up and the use of automation to benefit the employer at the expense of workers' health and safety. However, working conditions in other factories and warehouses are often similarly exhausting, debilitating, and dangerous. The minimum wage in Alabama is at the federal level of \$7.25-an-hour. Amazon's wages in Bessemer—while miserly in relation to its staggering profits—are double that or more. And as Bessemer worker Lavonette Stokes told the *New York Times*, "Amazon is the only job I know where they pay your health insurance from Day 1."

The decision to support the union does not begin and end with wages and benefits. Workers also consider the possible consequences of their decision against the chances of victory. If widespread confidence in the union drive has not been won, the danger of anti-union retaliation by Amazon—including the possibility of losing one's job—

can also weigh heavily. In Bessemer the threat was not only that individuals supporting the union could be fired. As Jennifer Bates explained, Amazon management spread rumors that the Bessemer warehouse would be shut down and the work moved elsewhere, if the union won.

**There is only one answer
to all these obstacles:
increasing the unity of
rank-and-file workers in
action to defend our-
selves from employer
attacks, while seeking to
maximize union power
to do so.**

Such threats do not mean a union organizing drive cannot be won today. But only a broad rank-and-file leadership inside a workplace, known and respected by other workers, can lead the necessary discussion on these issues and judge the progress being made in overcoming such obstacles.

McAlevy pointed to an instructive example in her *Nation* article. In the early stages of the union drive, the RWDSU leadership believed 1,500 workers were employed in the Bessemer warehouse. The union filed cards expressing support for the union based on the necessary NLRB threshold of 30 percent of that workforce. It then learned from Amazon's lawyers that 5,800 workers are employed there.

"In a sign that might have seemed encouraging to the union organizers," McAlevy continued, "they were able, between late November and mid-December, to gather enough additional workers' signatures to meet the minimum 30 percent threshold to hold an election, even of the much larger number of workers Amazon said were eligible."

These facts are telling. A union leadership organizing a fight must be thoroughly familiar with the terrain of battle. Such a mistake could have served as further evidence that the demand to hold a quick election may have been premature. Even the additional signatures that were quickly gathered were apparently not a sufficient basis—still only 30 percent, and thus, well short of a majority—to judge the degree and depth of pro-union sentiment on the job, as the vote confirmed.

A similar lesson can be drawn from the response by RWDSU officials to one of the lies Amazon spread. The employer claimed that workers would be forced to pay union dues if the union won the vote. Because Alabama is a "right-to-work" state, no worker can be compelled to pay dues even in a workplace represented by a union. But a union organizing drive can hardly be won if the primary response to Amazon's propaganda is, "Don't worry you won't have to pay dues if you don't want to."

This is a clear example of "business unionism." A consequence of the labor officialdom's degeneration Dobbs draws out is that a union often appears



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to be an organization that may be “for” us, but not “of” us. The idea of union representation is not convincing or effective if presented as urging workers to hire a skilled attorney and staff. Yet that is often how top union officials make our unions appear. Any worker who has ever tried to wade through a labor contract knows that most are written in “legal language” difficult for many of us to grasp. The difficulty is intentional. It is a product of precisely the “wise” Dobbs referred to.

The fight for union representation can be successful if it is a fight for the hearts and minds of the workers who will make up the union. The top officialdom of today’s unions has long ago given up waging such a fight. The harsh truth is that even those officials who may genuinely want to win a battle like the one in Bessemer are simply not competent to do so. All analogies have limits, but they can often shed light on the situation at hand. Boxers cannot stay in shape unless they regularly get into the ring to hone and maintain their fighting skills. The sharp decline in labor struggles over the past half-century has taken a toll on the fighting capacity of the organized labor movement. Rank-and-file initiative and leadership is key to reversing this trend.

Clues for transforming labor’s potential class power

In the face of these challenges a way forward can be found. Farrell Dobbs offered a concise explanation that remains of immediate relevance to rank-and-file workers who want to fight today. “My purpose,” Dobbs wrote in his “Afterword,” concerning his intention in writing the Teamster history, “was to help find clues to ways and means of transforming labor’s potential class power into a dynamically active force in the continuing struggle against the capitalist exploiters.

“Proposals for immediate action,” he continued, “should center on problems involving the workers’ urgent

material needs and the defense of their democratic rights. It is also important that the fight around those issues be attuned to the existing levels of consciousness in the union membership.” In a union-organizing drive, that means the existing levels of consciousness of the workers who must be won to the union.

“Then,” Dobbs said, “as significant forces are set into motion through that approach, several things take place. Rank-and-file militancy rises. Increasingly sharp clashes with the bosses result, during which the workers begin to shed class-collaborationist illusions and acquire class-struggle concepts. Lessons thus learned during industrial conflicts can prepare the union ranks for an advance toward action on a political plane. In short, a foundation is laid from which to initiate transformation of the trade unions themselves into instruments capable of developing far-reaching revolutionary perspectives.”

Such an approach can only blossom fully as part of the development of a broad working-class radicalization in response to the ups and downs of a capitalist crisis breaking the backs of working people. That crisis is here today. The corresponding radicalization has not yet arrived. Its pace and development cannot be predicted. But

the initial steps Dobbs outlined—proposals for immediate action such as organizing a union in Bessemer, or any number of other locations that cannot be predicted in advance—can be taken today by savvy rank-and-file workers who learn to develop confidence in one another, over time, as they work together to meet the challenges we face.

Geoff Mirelowitz, a retired railroad switchman, was a long-time member of the United Transportation Union (now SMART, the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers).

—World-Outlook.com, April 15, 2021

<https://world-outlook.com/2021/04/15/after-setback-in-alabama-rank-and-file-workers-will-determine-whats-next/>

1. “The Fight to Organize Amazon: Workers in Alabama Set Example for All Labor” (<https://world-outlook.com/2021/03/26/the-fight-to-organize-amazon-workers-in-alabama-set-example-for-all-labor/>)

2. “The Teamster Series (four volumes)” available from Pathfinder Press (<https://www.pathfinderpress.com/collections/trade-unions-past-present-and-future/products/teamster-series>)

3. “After Setback in Alabama, Rank-and-file Workers Will Determine What’s Next” <https://world-outlook.com/2021/04/15/after-setback-in-alabama-rank-and-file-workers-will-determine-whats-next/>



Bessemer Opens the Floodgates

Amazon workers all over the country are trying to unionize

BY TATIANA COZZARELLI

Amazon really doesn't want workers to unionize.

At its warehouses around the country, Amazon hires intelligence analysts to track "labor organizing threats" and spies on employees' interactions in closed *Facebook* groups.

Only 6.3 percent of private-sector employees in the United States are currently unionized.

In Bessemer, Alabama, Amazon pulled out all the stops to thwart the unionization effort, including everything from threats of job loss, phone calls to workers, and anti-union meetings during work hours. The company successfully petitioned the city to change the amount of time at red lights near the facility so organizers have less time to talk to workers in their cars. Amazon paid consultants nearly \$10,000 a day to stop the unionization effort.

But the struggle in Bessemer seems to be opening the floodgates. Amazon workers in Baltimore, New Orleans, Portland, Denver, and Southern California have reached out to the Retail Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) about unionizing their own warehouses. RWDSU says they have heard from more than 1,000 Amazon workers around the country.

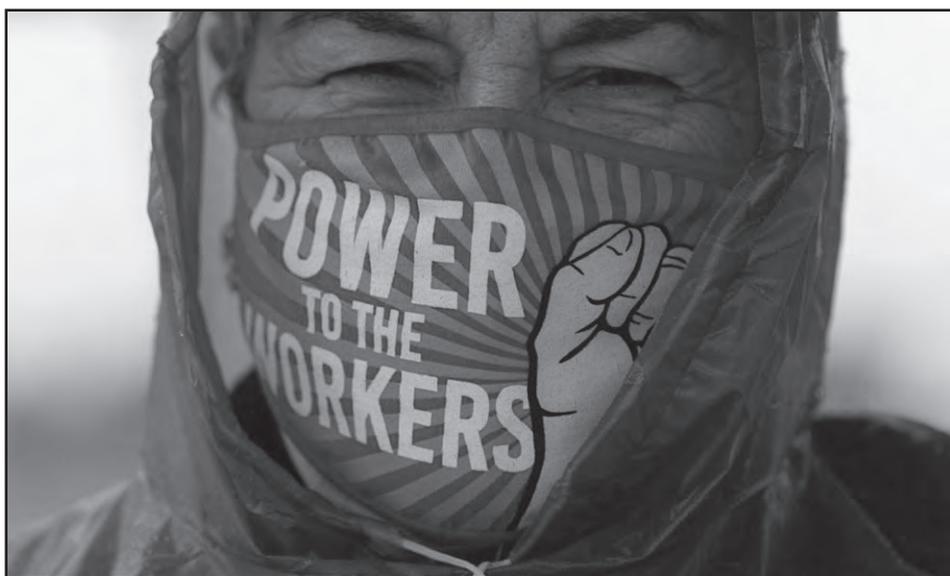
Bessemer isn't the only Amazon union push going on now. The International Brotherhood of Teamsters is pushing to unionize workers at Amazon locations in Grimes and Iowa City, Iowa. The drive's organizers have spoken to between 400 and 500 Amazon workers in the area, which includes the location of a new 1,000-employee facility in Bondurant that opened last December.

The working conditions at Amazon fulfillment centers are nothing short of abhorrent. The company tracks each warehouse worker's productivity and generates automatic warnings—without any supervisor input—if, for example, someone spends "too long"

in the bathroom. Workers find themselves sometimes forced to pee in bottles just to keep their jobs. Workers are allotted only a minimal amount of "time off-task" (TOT)—a period in which they are not mechanically scanning packages. Every move is tracked, and workers who fall below a "productivity threshold" are disciplined or fired. The result of all this is a high serious injury rate in the facilities—7.7 percent, which is about double the most recent industry average (which is already quite high).

...workers need to fight for more than just a union, but for unions run by the rank and file—to make them real fighting tools for the working class

Amazon is the second-largest private employer in the United States, and workers have yet to succeed in organizing a union in a single facility. Retaliation is a real threat. *Bloomberg News* reports, "An employee in Nashville was fired in retaliation for discussing workplace conditions, and another in Illinois was pulled off of a shift 'to discourage employees from engaging' in activism, according to complaints filed in February with the National Labor Relations Board." The company has fired "troublemakers" like Chris Smalls and countless people whose names we don't know. A 2014 attempt by Amazon technical workers to organize in the International Association of Machinists and



Caption: Pro-Union Amazon worker.

Aerospace Workers was thwarted by Amazon's rigorous anti-union campaign.

Only 6.3 percent of private-sector employees in the United States are currently unionized. Walmart, the largest U.S. private employer, engages in similar anti-union tactics. Legal and illegal union-busting tactics are commonplace, making the basic right to a union difficult to win. That's why it's essential to fight for the PRO Act, as well as even more extensive laws that bar union-busting.

Even with the drive at Bessemer's Amazon warehouse opening the floodgates for unionization efforts across the country, we've seen all too many unions function as "business unions" in a top-down manner and don't fight for their workers. That's why workers need to fight for more than just a union, but for unions run by the rank and file—to make them real fighting tools for the working class.

Unions are essential, and workers know it. Bloomberg reports on a 28-year-old New Orleans Amazon warehouse worker who drove five hours to Bessemer to support the union organizing fight. He told a rally, "If the most powerful company in the world can be unionized in an anti-union state like Alabama, it gives hope to people in Louisiana, in Mississippi, in West Virginia who are trying to do the same thing... We just have to support the fight wherever it's at because the fight is going to come to us."

—Left Voice, March 20, 2021

<https://www.leftvoice.org/bessemer-opens-the-floodgates-amazon-workers-all-over-the-country-are-trying-to-unionize>

**POWER
TO THE
WORKERS**

Staten Island Amazon Union Drive

BY CANDICE BERND

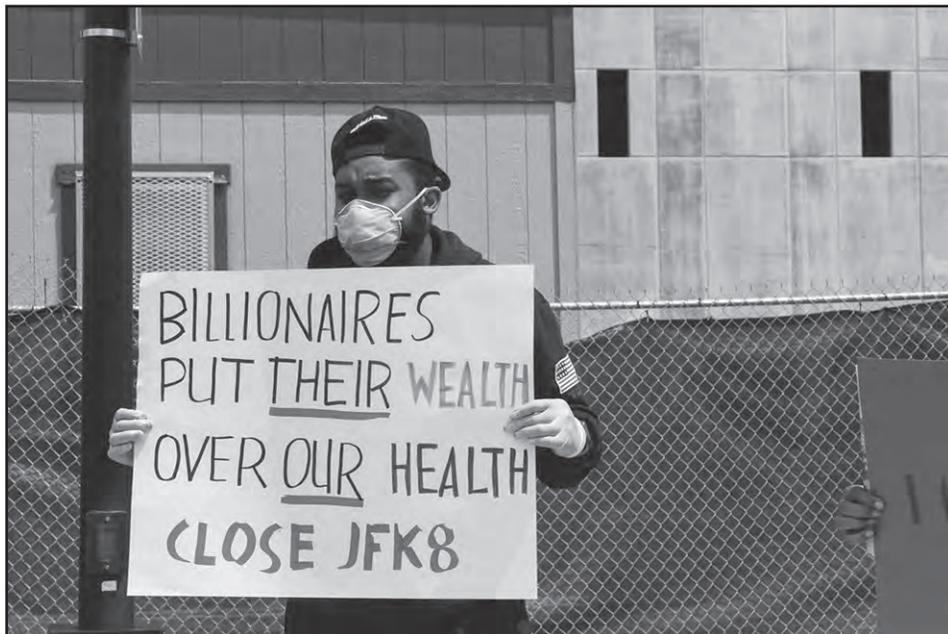
April 19, 2021—In some ways, Amazon workers' more than yearlong struggle for adequate COVID-19 protections and against corporate retaliation at the company's Staten Island facility in New York City helped pave the way for this month's unionization attempt at the Bessemer, Alabama, warehouse.

Now, as the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union (RWDSU) seeks a second election through the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), filing official objections Friday, April 16, 2021, charging Amazon with engaging in illegal interference to defeat the union, Staten Island "JFK8" warehouse workers with The Congress of Essential Workers (TCOEW) tell *Truthout* they aren't deterred by the outcome. Rather, their on-the-ground experiences in Alabama, where the unionization effort gained national attention but ultimately failed, have taught them

hard lessons that will inform their own approach to unionizing JFK8.

"We all wanted the union push to be successful in Alabama, especially with the odds being totally against them, being that Alabama is a non-union state. But the fact that they had the opportunity to vote as a facility was historic," JFK8 warehouse worker Derrick Palmer told *Truthout*. "We have to take the bruises and pick it up where they left off. If anything, it started a movement. It's going to be like a domino effect."

Palmer says the Bessemer push inspired JFK8 workers to take their labor organizing to the next level and start their own union drive. While Palmer says they've spoken with officials at a handful of allied unions, TCOEW organizers are pursuing an independent union that would be led directly by the facility's workers. The outcome in Bessemer, they say, has



People protest working conditions outside of an Amazon warehouse fulfillment center on May 1, 2020, in the Staten Island borough of New York City. Workers at the facility are beginning an independent union drive

solidified the choice as the best option for Staten Island's more than 5,000 workers, especially since other unions have tried and failed to unionize facilities in New York.

In fact, TCOEW organizers say they've already called the NLRB to ensure they're taking the proper legal steps in establishing their own local, the Amazon Labor Union (ALU). They hope ALU will eventually represent workers not just in Staten Island but at other Amazon facilities too.

"We figure,... go the independent route which is worker-led," says Christian Smalls, who was fired from JFK8 last year after organizing a walk-out to protest the company's lack of physical-distancing and COVID-19 protections. "That will build more confidence for workers that want to join because they'll be like, 'Hey look, this is something that is employee-driven, this is not a third party coming in, this is you guys creating your own

union with your own set of rules and negotiations.' I think that's more appealing to the worker."

Smalls tells *Truthout* he isn't surprised by the outcome in Bessemer, having witnessed Amazon's union-busting tactics firsthand during TCOEW organizers' visit to the Alabama facility in February. "I was disappointed like everyone else, but I wasn't discouraged," he says. "There were some missed opportunities that [RWDSU] didn't do that we learned from going down there, so we're going to try to learn from those mistakes."

TCOEW organizers say one thing they've learned is to take a slower, more cautious approach in order to build enough internal support within the large warehouse for an independent union. "We're just trying to get all the pieces in order so that we do it effectively rather than just rushing into it," Palmer says.

JFK8 has several advantages over Bessemer, they say. For one thing, the

warehouse has been around longer, and TCOEW organizers have more direct experience at the facility and a good reputation and influence among the workforce. Moreover, New York is a union-friendly state.

TCOEW organizers say they just starting to hand out union cards and pamphlets to workers at the facility. They're not just trying to build informal support for a union, they say, but are trying to build a more robust workers'

committee fully committed to the project and ready to face the company's union-busting efforts. Smalls says they hope that by emphasizing worker-to-worker relationships—instead of relying on outside union organizers—they will be able to build trust among those working at the plant.

After Smalls was fired for helping organize the March 30, 2020, walkout at JFK8, Palmer faced disciplinary action, ironically, for violating Amazon's physical-distancing rules even though he was protesting to pressure the company to enforce those very rules. On April 10, 2020, Palmer says he was given a "final write-up," typically given for repeated violations, without receiving any previous write-ups.

In November 2020, a federal judge dismissed Palmer and others' lawsuit arguing the company failed to track and prevent the spread of the COVID-19 among workers or follow proper guidelines provided by public health agencies. But in February 2021, New York Attorney General Letitia James sued Amazon for failing to protect workers at warehouses in Staten Island and Queens and accused the company of illegally retaliating against workers, including Palmer and Smalls.

Amazon maintains that it has always followed public health guidance for COVID-19 and provided employees with adequate personal protective equipment. Moreover, the company describes the New York AG's filing as failing to present an "accurate picture of Amazon's industry-leading response to the pandemic."

Amazon Spokesperson Maria Boschetti responded to the union push at JFK8, telling *Truthout* in a statement, "We respect our employees' right to join, form or not to join a labor union or other lawful organization of their own selection, without fear of retaliation, intimidation or harassment. Across Amazon, including in our fulfillment centers, we place enormous value on having daily conversations with each



Wealthy people across the world have over 32 TRILLION dollars hoarded away in tax havens. That means the wealth of the world's richest 100 people could end world poverty four times over. In other words, the wealthiest one hundred people on Earth could end world poverty and STILL be insanely rich. It's beyond mind-boggling that 99% of the world's population allows this to continue to happen. In truth, it's a crying shame.

employee and work to make sure direct engagement with our employees is a strong part of our work culture.”

Still, TCOEW organizers says management at the Staten Island warehouse has kept a watchful eye on their efforts. Palmer, for instance, tells *Truthout* that in February, he and small group of workers were told they had to attend a refresher hazmat training on potentially hazardous materials. But when the group got to an orientation room for the training, they were instead shown a video about “code of business conduct and ethics.” The video, he says, warned against employees’ discussing potential safety issues or other “sensitive” information on social media.

At this point, Palmer says, he’s not worried about further retaliation since he’s already in the public spotlight for speaking out against the company’s attempt to punish him for his organizing efforts. Smalls was already fired, and says he has nothing else to lose. “What’s the worst that can happen? We’ve already been through the fire,” he says.

The fight for COVID protections for Amazon workers has taken Smalls and other TCOEW organizers to Amazon headquarters as well as several of CEO Jeff Bezos’s mansions over the past year. The organization is still campaigning on behalf of families that lost loved ones due to the Amazon employees being exposed to COVID at its warehouses. The organization is demanding the company pay those families at least \$200,000 each, saying Amazon’s offer of two months of free counseling isn’t nearly enough.

Jordan Flowers, another a JFK8 worker, tells *Truthout* he was fired in June because he couldn’t work amid the pandemic due to his lupus nephritis. The company rehired him the following week, Flowers says, but wasn’t paying him since he couldn’t come into work, so he had to file for unemployment for several months. The company is only just now beginning to make accommodations for him, he says, potentially placing him on paid

leave. He now needs a kidney transplant and fears he could be fired again and lose his health insurance.

“I was kind of sad to talk about [my condition] at first, but that gave me the opportunity to tell the world what it is, so now it gives other people who are scared to talk about their medical issue, on the job or not, a chance to talk about it,” Flowers tells *Truthout*. “I’m giving the voice of employees with medical issues a chance to speak out, especially since Amazon’s not union, and they can do whatever they want.”

Flowers says he’s in talks with attorneys about the possibility of taking legal action against the company over what he calls a wrongful termination in the midst of the pandemic. “Amazon makes blood money. They would rather see their employees suffer but make the customers happy,” he says. Amazon Spokesperson Boschetti didn’t respond to specific questions about Flowers’s employment status.

Even if TCOEW is unable to build enough support for a union at JFK8, they’re still pursuing several legal challenges that have already forced changes at the facility. These kinds of indirect strategies are being increasingly eyed by labor and union organizers in the aftermath of the Bessemer election, with unions using protests and other forms of public pressure to get Amazon to make changes that workers want. An Amazon worker group called Amazonians United Chicagoland, for instance, has led protests and walkouts in the Chicago area throughout the pandemic.

Meanwhile, labor organizing at other Amazon facilities is also gaining steam. In Iowa, a local chapter of the Teamsters Union has been working on organizing Amazon warehouse workers and delivery drivers. Teamsters Local 238 Secretary-Treasurer Jesse Case told *The New York Times* the group is also trying to take a different route than RWDSU, saying they don’t want to rely on the union “election process to raise standards.”

Union organizers typically need to win an election at individual facilities for a large company like Amazon. Once organizers get 30 percent of workers to sign a card saying they’re interested in a union, the NLRB will hold an election. It takes a simple majority of votes to establish a union. If a majority of workers sign union cards, however, a company can voluntarily recognize the union. While it’s unlikely that Amazon would do so, a clear majority would increase public pressure and potentially force the tech giant’s hand.

RWDSU has said the organization has heard from more than 1,000 Amazon workers at other facilities who are interested in unionizing. But the union has yet to indicate whether or at which facilities they might push for an election.

Amazon’s victory in the David-versus-Goliath unionization effort in Bessemer has intensified pressure on Senate Democrats to eliminate the filibuster and pass the Protecting the Right to Organize Act, one of the most ambitious attempts to strengthen the rights of workers and unions in decades. That pressure appears to be working: Conservative Democrat Senator Joe Manchin announced he would co-sponsor the bill Monday. If passed, the legislation would ban many of the union-busting tactics Amazon used to crush the organizing drive.

The legislation would be “a step toward the right direction,” Smalls says. “It won’t solve all the issues, but at least it allows us to organize without union-busting, and if there is union-busting ... to hold the company or employers accountable. I think it’ll also help galvanize workers to begin these workplace committees and form their own unions. I think it’ll be a lot easier.”

—*Truthout*, April 19, 2021

<https://truthout.org/articles/staten-island-amazon-workers-begin-union-drive-drawing-lessons-from-bessemer/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=0c9df458-1aa8-4587-84f0-dc6e42c0efc3>

Pros and Cons of the PRO Act

BY JAMES DENNIS HOF

On March 9, the U.S. House of Representatives narrowly passed the Protecting the Right to Organize Act (PRO Act), by a vote of 225 to 206. Widely supported by organized labor, the legislation was one of the cornerstones of Biden's promises to unions on the campaign trail, and will now move on to the Senate where it faces stiff opposition. If passed by the Senate, the PRO Act would be a victory for labor unions and could possibly help reverse the decades-long decline in union density since the 1970s. Unfortunately, the bill stands little chance of passing in its current form. In fact, without a strong movement behind it, it is highly unlikely that it will pass in any form anytime before the 2022 elections. This is unfortunate, because many of the provisions in the PRO Act, particularly the sections that prohibit employers from interfering in union elections, could make it easier to organize at places like Amazon and Walmart, flashpoints in the struggle to build new unions, where union busting tactics are legion.

As a consequence of the progressive measures included in the act, many on the Left have uncritically praised the PRO Act, claiming rather hyperbolically that it is the most ambitious labor reform bill in generations. But this is simply not the case. The PRO Act would certainly make meaningful changes to the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), but not all of those changes are only in the interests of unions. Further, such laws always come with a price, one the labor bureaucracy seems more than willing to pay. The closer unions are to the state and the more they are tamed and pacified by legislation, the more they lose their ability to be fighting organizations for the whole class, becoming mere service providers for their members. While there are many reasons for the long decline of labor density and militancy in the United States over the last sixty years, laws like the NLRA and the Taft Hartley Act that followed it are an integral part of that story. For instance, the NLRA, which was passed by FDR in 1935, guaranteed certain rights for unions,

but it also helped to dramatically strengthen their bureaucratic leaderships, which have since become increasingly tied to the interests of big business and the Democratic Party.

How the Left responds in this situation is crucial. While we should most definitely support and even fight for the passage of the PRO Act in order to help build new unions, we must avoid the temptation to accept a few small crumbs for a broader peace, and recognize that such laws are never ultimately in our long term interests. If we want to win real gains, we must prioritize building militant fighting unions, unconstrained by the limits imposed upon them by the state.

The NLRA and the long decline of labor

Although often treated as a stand-alone piece of legislation by its supporters, the PRO Act is really little more than a series of amendments to the longstanding National Labor Relations Act (aka the Wagner Act), which was created in 1935. That bill, as many historians have pointed out, was a direct response to the massive labor uprisings of the early thirties, and, depending on who you ask, was either a huge concession given to labor by the government, a co-optation and pacification of the labor movement, or both. Indeed, in 1934, just one year before the passage of the Wagner Act, the United States was rocked by not one, but three massive strikes, all of which were led, in part, by radical socialists of one variety or another. The Minneapolis Teamsters strike, which lasted throughout the summer of 1934, the Auto-Lite Strike in Toledo that brought thousands of union members into fierce conflict with the national guard, and the West Coast Longshoremen Strike all posed serious challenges to the continued hegemony



Richard Trumpka, President of the AFL-CIO.

of capitalism. Afraid of the radically disruptive nature of such organized actions of the working class, proponents of the NLRA, including FDR, recognized that labor peace and commercial stability could only be achieved by establishing clear but limited guidelines for the establishment of unions and the process of collective bargaining.

Passed the very next year, The NLRA created laws to defend the right to form unions, the right to collectively bargain with employers, and, to some extent, the right to strike within certain limited circumstances. This forced employers to recognize unions and to negotiate with them, and made unionization efforts easier. Following the passage of the NLRA the number of legally recognized unions increased dramatically. However, while the act was a concession to labor unions, its inevitable impact, especially after the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, was the creation of a legalistic framework that brought labor and labor unions into the fold of the maintenance of capitalist production. No longer on the outside, labor found itself in the strange position of alternately being in conflict with and in alliance with the interests of U.S. capital. Just as bad, the passage of the Wagner Act by FDR (whom many still fallaciously revere as a champion of working people) was the beginning of what Mike Davis¹ called the “barren marriage of Labor and the Democratic Party.” Because the continued existence of unions had been made into a largely legislative issue, union nationals and their bureaucratic leaderships began to pour untold amounts of energy, money, and ideological efforts into lobbying and supporting imperialist Democratic Party politicians to maintain and increase legal rights for unions. While this is hardly the only reason for the slow downfall of labor after the war, it was certainly a contributing factor to its declining militancy, particularly in the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

What’s actually in the PRO Act

Like the NLRA, the PRO Act would provide increased protections for unions, but it would also further strengthen the bonds between organized labor and the state. Importantly, the PRO Act would make changes to the NLRA that would make unionization efforts easier. At a time of historically low union density this is nothing to sneeze at. Perhaps the most powerful change in this regard involves a redefinition of the difference between a contractor and an employee for the purposes of union organization and collective bargaining. For decades, employers have gotten around the threat of unionization by claiming that the workers who make the vast majority of profits for such companies are actually not workers at all, but independent contractors. Uber, Lyft, and DoorDash are but a few of the most egregious examples of this abuse of contractor status. By requiring three strict criteria for what defines an “independent contractor,” including, importantly, whether or not the “the service is performed outside the usual course of the business of the employer,” the PRO Act would make it harder, though hardly impossible, for companies like Uber to continue to treat its workers as independent contractors. While this could open the door to further unionization efforts at these companies, the law does nothing to change the designation with regards to unemployment insurance, workers’ compensation, overtime rules, *etc.* Additionally, the act would make illegal certain intimidation tactics, such as forcing employees to attend anti-union meetings, and would dramatically decrease the time between a unionization petition and a union vote. However, the law does not make non-mandatory anti-union meetings illegal, a door left wide open for intimidation and abuse by employers like Amazon.

In addition to making unionization easier, the PRO act also provides other important protections for unions. The

most significant of these changes includes language that could limit one of the worst aspects of right to work legislation by allowing employees to bargain for what are known as “fair share agreements.” These agreements would require all employees represented by a union to pay dues whether they are union members or not. This is an important change, but it is not automatic. Winning such agreements would not be guaranteed, would be costly to unions, and could require real contractual concessions. For instance, it is quite possible that employers and labor bureaucrats in right to work states would pressure bargaining committees to accept no strike clauses in exchange for such “fair share agreements.” More ambiguous are the provisions in the PRO Act that allow forced arbitration by either party for first contracts. On first glance this sounds like it could be a powerful tool to require employers to bargain for a fair first contract, but this provision could and would just as easily be used by the employer to squelch any attempts to win an ambitious first contract. First contracts often attempt to make up for decades of exploitation and mistreatment, but arbitration tends to find a happy medium between the parties involved relevant to prevailing wages and benefits in the industry. Forced arbitration would effectively cut out the option to strike to win a first contract, effectively tying the hands of the union to the bargaining table.

But the worst part of the PRO Act is what is missing from it. As *Left Voice* has argued before, the provisions for making unionization easier in the PRO Act are actually far less ambitious than previous proposed legislation, particularly the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), which, like the PRO Act, was promised and never delivered upon the last time Democrats controlled both houses of Congress and the executive in 2009. The EFCA, an unambiguously pro-union piece of legislation, would have made legally binding the organiz-

ing practice known as card check, which requires simply getting a majority of workers at a given workplace to sign a union card. The absence of such a fundamental democratic demand in the PRO Act reveals that, despite the wide support of the union bureaucracy, the legislation is, like the NLRA before it, more about labor peace and the false notion of a balance of power between capital and labor, than it is about really empowering working people.

Our labor is our power

Working people should use every method at their disposal to promote the passage of the PRO Act and to fight for more radical changes, such as forcing employers to recognize unions formed through card check organizing. But they must do so with open eyes. The PRO Act is not a panacea for the woes of organized labor, and labor power is never achieved by lobbying your congressperson—meaningful gains are only won in the streets and on the picket lines. The trad-

editions in this legislation could make organizing easier, but if that organizing is merely channeled back into the labor bureaucracy and the state it will have been for nothing. In order to win any meaningful gains for working people, we will need to once again build a strong and militant labor movement that rejects business unionism, is willing to break the law when needed, and is capable of eventually breaking with the legalistic framework that has contained it for decades.

This means organizing the unorganized—especially in key strategic sectors of the supply chain such as shipping and warehouse workers—but it also means rejecting the misleadership and failed strategy of the union bureaucrats who support the imperialist Democratic Party and who undermine us at each turn. It means building rank and file organizations within new and old unions in order to democratize and radicalize them, so that they might learn again how to use all methods of

working-class struggle at their disposal—including mass strikes, demonstrations, and boycotts—to fight for the true interests of the class. And, most importantly, it means linking (through action, not only resolutions) the struggles of rank-and-file union members and our unions with the struggles of all working people everywhere, including workers of color, the unemployed, and immigrants. Only by demonstrating to the unorganized the real power and value of unions, will we be able to build the kind of union density needed to rebuild a fighting labor movement.

—*Left Voice*, March 19, 2021

<https://www.leftvoice.org/the-pros-and-cons-of-the-pro-act>

1 “The Barren Marriage of American Labour and the Democratic Party,” by Mike Davis, *New Left Review*, 1/124, November/December 1980

<https://newleftreview.org/issues/i124/articles/mike-davis-the-barren-marriage-of-american-labour-and-the-democratic-party>

The Con of “Nonprofit” Hospitals

BY MERRILY MAZZA

The capitalist U.S. healthcare system, with its reliance on private, corporate-run hospitals, has failed abysmally at confronting the coronavirus pandemic. The United States has more cases and deaths than any other country in the world, even more than China, a country whose population is four times larger.

U.S. hospital systems and their corporate administrators failed to prepare for a pandemic predicted by state, federal, and international government agencies and infectious disease experts since the 2003 SARS outbreak.

These agencies and experts not only warned about likely pandemics, they wrote detailed preparedness plans and pinpointed critical failure points should healthcare systems and govern-

mental bodies fail to prepare. But in our profit-driven healthcare system, hospitals didn’t stockpile equipment or beds. Why would they? There’s no profit in stockpiled inventory. A ventilator is only useful when it’s hooked up to a paying customer. States likewise didn’t stockpile, nor did they mandate that hospitals prepare. The federal government didn’t check on states and hospital systems, and let its own stockpile diminish and degrade. The magic of the market ended in abject failure with 29 million cases, and more than half-a-million deaths and counting.

Studies show that hospitals are the largest individual contributors to U.S. healthcare costs, now at \$3.8 trillion a year, and that Americans spend more than \$1 trillion a year at hospitals.

Hospitals are the second most profitable industry in the United States, just behind commercial banking. Hospital systems have been consolidating for years, creating monopolies to control access and pricing, and giving patients fewer healthcare options (or, in rural areas, no options.) Ironically, most of these profitable hospitals are “non-profits,” a status with huge benefits for hospital executives’ compensation packages and hospitals’ bottom lines but none for patients.

U.S. hospitals: profit, nonprofit, government-run, and “charities”

The majority of the 5,141 U.S. community hospitals (57 percent) are non-profits. Just 24 percent are for-profit—that is, hospitals owned by investors like GM and Walmart and structured

to benefit these investors *via*, for example, dividends and appreciating stock prices. Only 19 percent of community hospitals are publicly owned by state and local governments. The federal government also owns and runs hospitals—for example, the VA system. In more urban areas, the biggest hospital systems are typically structured as nonprofits, as are some of the largest well-known systems like the Cleveland Clinic and the Mayo Clinic.

Many nonprofit hospitals started life as part of a church or religious order. These histories—including how nuns started the first hospital in the 1800s, typically treating working-class and indigent patients—are often hyped in hospitals’ marketing pieces. The nuns are long gone, as are the days of providing free care to the poor and suffering. These former charity institutions are now profit-generating machines staffed by well-compensated professional administrators armed with business backgrounds and capitalist ideology. Hospitals are often the biggest employer in their cities and generate revenue far exceeding that of the local municipal government. Even so, one big nonprofit hospital system in the Midwest and West continues to refer to its system as “our ministry.”

Nonprofit hospitals are structured as public charities. Their charitable mission is to provide affordable health-care and the latest medical technology to the communities they serve. Any profits they make are supposed to be invested in this mission. Unlike for-profit hospitals, nonprofits have no investors looking to make a return on their investment. That said, both nonprofit and for-profit hospitals are private corporations. They are not publicly owned like government-run hospitals, and the public has no say in how they operate, what they charge, what care they provide, and what they do with their profits.

The benefit of nonprofit status? no taxes

Nonprofit hospitals are 501(c)3 corporations under the IRS code, which allows them to save inordinate amounts of money. They don’t pay local property tax, federal or state corporate income tax, or state and local sales and use taxes. By avoiding property tax payments to the county or city where they are located, nonprofit hospitals shift the financial burden for public schools and other essential services and infrastructure onto individual citizens, who end up paying more to cover the share that the nonprofit hospitals duck.

A ventilator is only useful when it’s hooked up to a paying customer.

Additionally, nonprofit hospitals can accept charitable donations, which are tax-exempt for the donor. They can also borrow money by issuing tax-exempt bonds, allowing the hospital to pay lower interest rates. Nonprofits can also buy their pharmaceuticals at a discount through a federal program if they treat large numbers of indigent patients. Originally, hospitals received tax-

exempt status because they were affiliated with religious institutions and served some charitable purpose not necessarily related to medical care. In 1956, the IRS implemented the “charity care” standard requiring hospitals to offer free care to patients unable to pay in order to qualify as a tax-exempt entity. Nonprofit hospitals receive subsidies worth \$30 billion annually.

Profit by any other name

The IRS says that nonprofit hospitals are supposed to provide “community benefit” and charity care for the underserved, uninsured, and underinsured who would otherwise need government help. (Note that for-profit hospitals also provide charity care.)

Since 2010, as part of the Affordable Care Act, nonprofit hospitals have to list on their annual 990 tax forms how much “money-losing” care they’re dispensing to these populations and how they calculate that number. They also have to list what they’ve done, for free, to better their communities. Investigative reporters, researchers, and consumer advocates have investigated whether these nonprofit hospitals deserve their huge tax breaks. Recent research shows that many are providing nowhere near the amount of charity care and community benefit



that would justify the value of their tax exemption. One study estimated that “only 25 percent of nonprofits provide enough total charity to warrant their tax exemption, and only 20 percent of nonprofits provide enough incremental charity care beyond what for-profits provide to justify their tax exemption.”

In 2018, nearly half of the CEOs of America’s leading nonprofit health systems had compensation packages exceeding \$2.5 million. The highest paid, the top executive, at Banner Health in Phoenix, got \$21.6 million in 2017.

Even worse, when nonprofit hospitals calculate the amount of charitable healthcare they gave away in a tax year, they use so-called chargemaster prices: baseline prices that nobody actually pays and that are many times higher than what commercial insurance or Medicare would pay for the same service or procedure. These shockingly high prices make your medical bills pretty much incomprehensible. Because nonprofits can make the baseline price up, they can vastly inflate how much they “give back” to the community.

For example, suppose that doctors at a nonprofit hospital evaluate a patient with chest pain, and the allowable Medicare amount for that service is \$3600. Rather than use the same \$3,600 for an uninsured patient and list \$3,600 in charitable care, the hospital can use the chargemaster rate, say \$25,000, and then list the inflated \$25,000 in uncompensated care, almost seven times higher than actual cost of the care the hospital provided. Nonprofits are allowed to do the same for Medicaid patients and

other patients using means-tested healthcare programs. If Medicaid reimburses just \$2,500 for the same service, rather than listing \$1,000 in uncompensated (unreimbursed) charitable care (\$3,500 cost of care minus \$2,500 Medicaid reimbursement,) the hospital uses the chargemaster rate and lists an inflated \$22,500 (\$25,000-\$2,500).

The IRS reporting requirement is so lax that nonprofit hospitals can get away with inflating the amount of their “charitable” care on IRS reporting to retain their enormous tax advantage.

Because they don’t pay property taxes or corporate income taxes on money left over after paying expenses, nonprofit hospitals end up with a tax-free surplus—in other words, profit. This is possible because both nonprofit and for-profit hospital corporations don’t disclose the actual prices paid by their patients.

Hospitals are the second most profitable industry in the United States, just behind commercial banking.

Nonprofit hospitals use their “tax-free surplus”—profit—on executive and administrator pay and bonuses, in some cases paying these individuals more than for-profit hospitals do. In 2018, nearly half of the CEOs of America’s leading nonprofit health systems had compensation packages exceeding \$2.5 million. The highest paid, the top executive, at Banner Health in Phoenix, got \$21.6 million in 2017.

Nonprofit hospitals also use their profits to also buy up other hospitals and clinics to eliminate competitors and increase their market share, allowing them to raise prices. They likewise buy independent medical practices to turn independent doctors into

employed physicians (after the physicians sign a non-compete clause, of course.) They construct new facilities with marble lobbies, and use lobbyists or membership in lobbying trade organizations like the American Hospital Association to maintain the lucrative *status quo* with help from Washington.

Nonprofit hospitals also earn investment income, often millions of dollars, from their pool of charitable contributions. Surprisingly for a world-renowned healthcare system, the Mayo Clinic owns oil and gas wells in the Permian basin in Texas! The wells were a charitable bequest in the late 1990s from a deceased donor’s estate, but Mayo never divested from this ecocidal industry. Instead, along with other investors, Mayo owns Latigo Petroleum LLC to manage its oil and gas interests.

Do nonprofits warrant the hefty tax advantages they get, forcing individuals to cover the shortfall for critical public services? No. Communities and governments are being scammed by nonprofits’ tax avoidance.

Public health is a public good. Healthcare is a right for all, not a privilege for the few or “charity” for the many. Capitalist profit-based healthcare—including care administered through tax-avoiding nonprofits—cannot safeguard public health. U.S. healthcare must be nationalized, and healthcare systems put under the democratic control of healthcare workers.

—*Left Voice*, March 13, 2021

<https://www.leftvoice.org/capitalism-and-healthcare-the-con-of-nonprofit-hospitals>

Public health is a public good. Healthcare is a right for all, not a privilege for the few or “charity” for the many.

The Housing Crisis One Year After Lockdown

By DAVID ROVICS

All the folks moving to Portland from California or New York and talking about how great the real estate prices are here may not know it (note: I was once one of them,) but this city is the most rent-burdened city in the United States, and it exists within a country that, like this city, is undergoing multiple long-term crises, one of which is a housing crisis. The housing crisis, like so many other crises, got much worse one year ago this week, when the country, and much of the rest of the world, shut down.

Although this is a city that lost half of its Black population to the rise in the cost of housing between the years of 2000 and 2010 alone, according to census data, one year ago this week, if we talked about the housing crisis as one neck-deep in institutional racism, we would often be met by blank stares. One year on, the fact that there is racial discrimination in the real estate and rental markets, and the fact that housing justice is also a question of racial justice is largely accepted as self-evident in mainstream circles.

Less examined are the outrageous levels of profiteering on the backs of pretty much the whole of the society, led by a class of super-rich oligarchs, in their quest for ever more profits, as they systematically engineer a constant rise in the cost of buying or renting housing, across the country, as real wages continue to stagnate, nowhere near rising along with the cost of housing, except among corporate executives, investors, and a select strata of six-figure workers. But this entire phenomenon of sucking the wealth of society constantly upwards, towards the corporate landed gentry, is finally receiving at least a bit more widespread scrutiny than it has received in a very long time—if not nearly enough of it.

To be clear, it's easy to see that we are in the midst of an epic struggle. Several major genies have come out of their bottles, and they're not going to just go away now. How all of this unfolds is unknown, because "unknown" is the nature of the future. But it's been a year since the lockdown, and a long three months since I've written anything on the class war that we call the housing crisis (not that I wasn't thinking about it much of that time, and reposting articles about related news on anti-social media.)

Of course, a major development since I wrote about what was at the time the most recent iteration of eviction moratorium and renter assistance legislation in the state of Oregon, in late December, is the Biden administration managed to take office, and even managed to squeak in with a Democratic majority in both houses of Congress. As I write, the latest round of

stimulus checks are arriving in bank accounts across the country, unemployment assistance for gig workers like me has been extended until early September, and a new child tax credit is apparently going to lift tens-of-millions of families in this country out of poverty over the next year, including mine, with an unprecedented, almost two trillion dollar government spending package. (Unprecedented, but only equal to what we normally spend on the military during a two-year period.)

What we have seen up until now, prior to the lockdown, and more so since the lockdown, is a dramatic rise in the number of people living in tents on the sidewalk or in broken-down cars on the street, a dramatic rise in young adults moving back in with their parents, and a rise in evictions. The rise in evictions has been hugely mitigated by local, state, and federal eviction bans that have come and gone over the



Caption: Photo by Nathaniel St. Clair

past year, depending on the locality. Although caused in particular by a combination of an already burdensome cost of housing combined with low wages, when those wages were in so many cases lost entirely, eviction bans and government aid have so far prevented the “eviction tsunami” that the business press has been concerned about. Concerned, of course, for reasons of capitalism’s self-preservation in the face of this unacceptably high degree of societal chaos, if not out of empathy for the millions of people who face the horrors of eviction in a typical, non-pandemic year in this country, who are normally ignored by the corporate media.

Now, we don’t have a \$15-an-hour minimum wage, but significant amounts of aid is coming in, which will significantly affect the lives of many people. First of all, this needs to be acknowledged. Government response to the pandemic was largely a disaster, economic aid for suffering people has been too limited and badly apportioned, but now there’s a lot more of it, and it’s going to make a difference.

If we take a moment to reflect on the situation and consider the future for the still-very-much-ongoing housing crisis in the U.S., among other crises, we can wonder whether this new stimulus package would have passed if Biden and Harris had not won the election, and we can wonder whether it would have been as significant as it is if not for a year dominated by constant domestic unrest. And we can ask what forms of unrest might have been more influential than others, in inspiring such generosity from that gang of several hundred millionaires (with a nice little squad of righteous progressives) that we call the U.S. Congress.

Regardless of how we got here or why this happened—by which I mean how this society got into such a stratified mess, and how the government got inspired to spend so much money to try

to get us part of the way out of it—what we can be sure of, according to copious precedent, is that any solution to the housing crisis that just involves paying the back rent is no solution at all. Even canceling all rent and postponing all mortgages for everyone during the whole of 2020, none of which is remotely on the Congressional agenda, wouldn’t solve any long-term problems.

In other rich countries housing is a guaranteed right, rent control is widespread and practiced effectively, much housing is cooperative or government-owned, and well-maintained, and forced evictions are extremely rare.

Housing crisis predates COVID-19

This is because the housing crisis predates the COVID crisis, so getting us back to where we were in 2019 would mean returning us to the housing crisis we were in already. But were the rental and other housing assistance to be sufficient to meet the need that’s out there—and as far as I understand, even with this new spending package, it isn’t—then what the corporate landlords and their management companies would do is raise all the rents. Those who have studied history are aware that one of the biggest friends of the labor unions during the early years of the industrial revolution in New York City were the landlords who owned the buildings the workers lived in. Why? If they were paid better, the landlords could charge more rent.

Meaning, of course, that most of the extra tax money raised, most of the new government debt incurred, even if it is

ostensibly being spent in the name of keeping the housing-insecure housed, among other things, is ultimately just going to make the rich richer. And if there’s more aid, that’s just more money to be funneled upwards.

So, what’s the solution, if not aid? Control over costs. Only this can prevent the landlords from just charging more, as we earn more, or get more government aid, or institute a universal basic income, or whatever other such programs come along. A lack of good regulation of the housing market will inevitably sabotage all such efforts.

Of course, regulating the landlords means regulating the very corporate entities that spend the money that gets most of the politicians from both parties elected in the first place, in this auction that we call democracy, so changing policies around regulating what landlords can charge—or even questioning whether and to what degree anyone should be allowed to practice this particular form of business enterprise, of running little monopolies that “provide housing” for people who would otherwise have none—is inevitably going to be extremely controversial among the kleptocracy. So, getting this kind of regulation passed requires lots of resistance. Even more resistance than was required to get the \$1.9 trillion bailout passed.

Resistance needed

And what kind of resistance is that of which I speak? People will, have, and do argue about points like this endlessly. Did all the burning buildings in cities across the country inspire politicians to spend more to alleviate poverty and address institutional racism and other endemic problems, or would the politicians be even more inspired towards egalitarianism if all the protests had been permitted marches and candle-lit vigils? Unknown.

But if we are assessing the housing struggle and wondering where to go from here, I think there are some impor-

tant observations to be made about the recent past, that speak to where we might focus efforts in the future.

There are many tenants' unions and other networks cropping up all over the country that are focusing on a wide variety of issues of concern to renters, but if we were to boil their efforts down to two major demands, they would be the demand for actually affordable housing in the form of real, effective rent control legislation, and the demand for an end to the practice of forced eviction, and any threats to that effect. In other rich countries housing is a guaranteed right, rent control is widespread and practiced effectively, much housing is cooperative or government-owned, and well-maintained, and forced evictions are extremely rare.

Here in Portland, the scene around the Red House¹ on Mississippi Avenue has, overall, been a great example of the potential for eviction defense tactics to change the whole equation when it comes to whether or how often the authorities, real estate investors, landlords, *etc.*, will consider carrying out forced evictions or foreclosures. There is clear reason to believe the local authorities are far less enthusiastic about carrying out forced evictions since their failed effort to evict the residents there in north Portland, in the latter days of 2020.

While there are many clichish aspects to the elements of the autonomous scene that tend to be attracted to the history and practice of eviction defense—and that's true in the U.S. and in other countries as well—I think we can say unequivocally that when several dozen people (with the potential of quickly becoming a couple hundred people) are committed enough to risk arrest and police violence, among other things, by re-occupying a house after an eviction was carried out, and then by occupying streets in the neighborhood around the house, setting up fencing and tire spikes to prevent

vehicular assaults as people did around the Red House, then we will affect policy moving forward.

Aside from the importance of inclusiveness, and the effectiveness of the various forms of civil disobedience practiced in the course of the Red House eviction resistance, there are other things to note about how events unfolded here in Portland over the course of the past year that might help us think about the next moves.

What we have seen up until now, prior to the lockdown, and more so since the lockdown, is a dramatic rise in the number of people living in tents on the sidewalk or in broken-down cars on the street, a dramatic rise in young adults moving back in with their parents, and a rise in evictions.

There are clearly many reasons for Portland being one of the flashpoints of resistance over the past year in the U.S., and also one of those places where resistance around race and housing most naturally intertwined. I wouldn't want to under-emphasize the importance of factors like the cost of rent relative to the average wage here (what they call "rent burden,") which, as I mentioned earlier, is the nation's highest, or the long history of housing discrimination against people of color here. But I think an important psychological element on this front is that so many of the people here, activists or not, moved here after being priced out of New York City, Seattle, or California,

and this experience colors their perspective on everything. Many of them—us—feel like we have nowhere else to go, in many ways. Cornered.

Organizing resistance

Another factor that seems worth noting is the way the local movement organized itself into different blocs responsible for different activities related to maintaining a social movement, from feeding people to caring for their wounds to fixing their cars to providing legal support to providing sound at protests. This phenomenon was not limited to Portland, of course, but was more of an organized thing in some places than in others.

Especially since the January 6th Capitol siege, people, organizations and networks across the political spectrum have been losing their social media accounts. I personally know many people around the world who are solid members of the left, not the sort to be making death threats or spreading outrageous conspiracies, who have lost their *Facebook* or *Twitter* accounts in the past few months. Long before all this deplatforming was a big news item in early 2021, the movement in Portland was actively pivoting to stop relying so much on the corporate platforms. Although *Twitter* is still a very useful place to stay abreast of happenings on the street here if you follow the right accounts of grassroots activists and journalists, activists in Portland increasingly do their communicating in private Signal groups and other more protected spaces, less vulnerable to disappearing at the whim of a Silicon Valley billionaire.

One of these blocs, essentially, has been an initiative I've been very involved with called PEER—Portland Emergency Eviction Response. There are several other groups, or committees within larger organizations, involved with doing very much the same sort of thing, such as the eviction

defense committee within Portland Tenants United, which itself is part of a broader network of tenants unions that has recently formed, the Autonomous Tenants Union.

On PEER's website folks can sign up to receive text alerts about evictions that may be happening. PTU's eviction defense group has a similar setup. PEER's web and text operation is very intentionally set up independently of any major corporate platforms. Anyone who can receive a text message can sign up, anonymously. As things continue to develop with Big Tech and Big Data, along with the suspensions of so many social media accounts, it becomes more and more clear how important it is for essential communication, and lots else, to be, as much as possible, independent of corporate platforms, and at least slightly less subject to mass surveillance.

As these networks here have been growing, we have made a very conscious effort to plaster the town with stickers. Posters, too, but especially stickers. They last much longer—sometimes months, in prominent places around town. We have focused our stickering campaigns on neighborhoods and parks where protests happen often, as well as near Class C apartment complexes, which can be found all over Portland, in some parts more than others.

The focus on physical media is because we don't want to just commu-

nicate online, and we feel that the physical presence of such messages around town has a different sort of impact than a post on the web. It's also not subject to *Facebook's* insidious algorithms or censorship efforts. The slightly illegal nature of spreading the word by putting stickers on public property, such as on the otherwise blank, shiny steel backs of the many signs poking out of the sidewalks, seems to have a somewhat comforting effect on many people who may be wondering who these eviction defense people are. Whoever they are, they like to deface public property, so maybe they're OK. The medium communicates as much as the message does.

However big or well-targeted the bailout may be, in all likelihood, lasting change won't happen until we take on the corporate investor landlord class, demonstrate how much support this cause has, stop business as usual, and force the politicians to pass the kind of legislation that will control the rent, now—not in some capitalist's imagined future.

As the person responsible for answering PEER's email, I have developed the distinct impression that there are a few folks around town who identify with this nascent eviction defense squad much the same way people who feed the hungry in public parks with-

out a permit identify as Food Not Bombs. In either case, what some people are identifying with is simply a tactic, more than anything else. In the case of Food Not Bombs, you needn't have met anyone else engaged in the practice, necessarily—if you're feeding people for free in a public place and risking arrest by doing so, that's more or less the whole shtick.

And if you believe in eviction abolition, and risking arrest by trespassing or perhaps engaging in other forms of civil disobedience in order to keep people housed, rather than pitched onto the sidewalk, then you're a PEER of mine and others. It's just the basic concept of solidarity, coordinated by text mob, rather than the old tin horns of the Rent Strike Wars in the 1840's, or the telephone trees in the age of the land line.

Or, to put this whole update into one sentence:

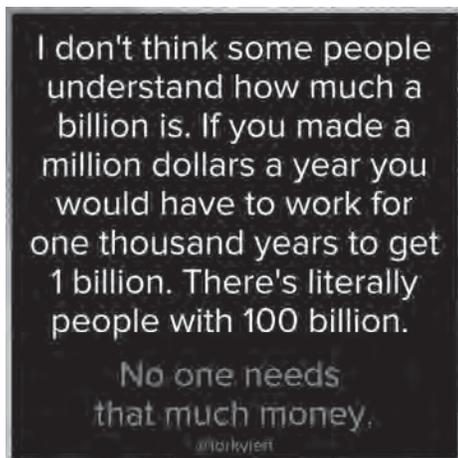
However big or well-targeted the bailout may be, in all likelihood, lasting change won't happen until we take on the corporate investor landlord class, demonstrate how much support this cause has, stop business as usual, and force the politicians to pass the kind of legislation that will control the rent, now—not in some capitalist's imagined future.

David Rovics is a songwriter, podcaster, and part of Portland Emergency Eviction Response. Go to artistsforrent-control.org to sign up to receive text notifications, so you can be part of this effort. Another Portland is possible.

—CounterPunch, March 18, 2021

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/03/18/the-housing-crisis-one-year-after-lockdown/>

¹ The Red House eviction defense is an ongoing occupation protest at a foreclosed house in an historically Black district in Portland, Oregon. (Wikipedia)



Demon Profits Come First!

By DR. NAYVIN GORDON

In the drive for profits, the World Bank in 1980 published a new health-care sector policy advocating reducing public health infrastructure, opening the door to rampant privatization of health services, and pharmaceutical supply.¹ Treatment became primary, not public health needs and disease prevention which require a robust, well-staffed national, public health infrastructure. This profit model spread to the U.S. and many other parts of the world.

Since the 1980s the U.S. Public Health System has been neglected, defunded, and privatized under both Democratic and Republican administrations, damaging the science of Public Health and the ability to protect the people from infectious disease pandemics. A massive public health system with clinics, labs and hospitals fully staffed, ready to identify infectious diseases, then test, trace and isolate, makes no short-term profits. For Wall Street and bankers, disease prevention is a waste of money; they have abandoned the science of public health.

Vaccines and treatments make money, and limiting hospital bed capacity keeps profits high. For decades, pharmaceutical companies have been the most profitable corporations in the U.S., and Wall Street private equity firms have essentially taken control of the healthcare industry—pumping in \$30 billion in 2018.²

Accumulation of profits has become the basis for socioeconomic life—most decisions are governed by Wall Street's expected profits on new investments. The U.S. government and the public, now own very little as the economy has been largely privatized.

The top ten percent of the U.S. population owns 88 percent of the value of stocks, and the top one per-

cent owns 56 percent. The U.S. Federal Reserve Bank is continuing to pour \$150 Billion a month into the stock market, while ten-million jobs disappear, and workers fall further into debt. The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer.



Enter the Covid-19 pandemic: The government is neither willing nor capable of protecting the people. A crippled, impoverished Public Health System, deliberately neglected in favor of treatments, can no longer protect the people from preventable disease and death. Witness the ongoing death toll, already over half-a-million U.S. deaths and millions more sickened from Covid-19. All of which could have been prevented with public health measures, to stop the spread of the virus. Strict public health science policy has successfully stopped transmission and eradicated the virus in several countries preventing many deaths. As of March 24, 2021, Taiwan has had ten deaths, Viet Nam 35 deaths, Singapore 30 deaths New Zealand 35 deaths, and China with a population over one billion has had 4,851 deaths. In the U.S. and many other countries, when science gets in the way of making a profit, it gets thrown out the window. Former

Vice President Mike Pence maintained that science should not stand in the way of opening schools.³

Vaccines and treatments can never prevent a new pandemic. They can only protect after millions have sickened and died, as confirmed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The *British Medical Journal* has labeled this as social murder.⁴ Vaccines and treatment make huge profits for Wall Street at the cost of massive disease and death as the virus and its deadly variants continue to sweep through the land. Politicians are doing the opposite of what science requires, by removing limited public health measures and “opening up the economy,” while over 100 million people have not been vaccinated. A new wave of death and disease will keep profits high on Wall Street.

An economic system that consciously commits mass social murder for profit must be swept away and replaced by a society driven by the health needs of the people. An independent, direct action, mobilization of millions of employed and unemployed workers can stop the economy of death and demand science for the people by building a militant egalitarian movement that fights for social, political, and economic equality for all.

1 <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/649631468138271858/pdf/40968ocr.pdf>

2 “Major U.S. Health Insurers Report Big Profits, Benefiting From the Pandemic,” *The New York Times* ([nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com))

3 <https://www.commondreams.org/news/2020/07/16/science-should-not-stand-way-reopening-us-schools-says-white-house-press-secretary>

4 <https://www.bmj.com/content/bmj/372/bmj.n314.full.pdf>

Deep American Roots of the Atlanta Shootings

The victims lived at the nexus of race, gender and class.

By MAY JEONG

Among the first things I did upon learning about the shootings at three massage parlors in the Atlanta area was to check in with a former massage parlor worker I met in 2019. At the time, I was reporting an article about a prostitution raid at a Florida massage parlor.

Unable to work during the pandemic, she was home alone when we spoke; the news from Atlanta hadn't reached her yet. "Too frightening," she said, when I sent her an article about what had happened. Robert Aaron Long, 21, who has been charged with the murder of eight people in Atlanta and nearby Acworth, six of them Asian women, had been arrested on his way to Florida—where she was—and where he planned on killing more, according to what he told the police. She worried for her colleagues. "Do you think someone will kill them? Am I in danger too?"

I didn't know how to respond, in part because I knew so little about those killed in Georgia: Hyun Jung Grant, 51; Suncha Kim, 69; Soon Chung Park, 74; Yong Ae Yu, 63. (Daoyou Feng, 44; Xiaojie Tan, 49; Paul Andre Michels, 54; and Delaina Ashley Yaun, 33, were victims identified earlier.) In some massage parlors, women, often Asian, may sometimes perform sexual services. But I did not know whether those who died this week would have identified themselves as sex workers.

I have spent the past few years researching the various ways sex work intersects with race, class and gender, routinely amazed by how it connects to such disparate issues as criminal justice, gentrification, poverty, immigration and trans rights. I have come to understand sex work rights as an overlooked civil rights issue that deserves study. I soon found myself placing the

Atlanta killings within the context of a horrific history.

In 1974, a soldier, Park Estep, 25, was convicted of a crime against two women at the Suezy Oriental Massage Parlor near Fort Carson in Colorado. According to court documents, he slashed the throat of Yon Cha Ye Lee, 32, an employee at the parlor, and stabbed her in the back. He then raped 36-year-old Sun Ok Cousin, the spa's owner, before shooting her in the right temple, killing her and then setting her on fire. In 1993, Kenneth Markle III, 20, a medic at a U.S. military base in South Korea, was convicted of murdering Yun Kum-i, a 26-year-old sex worker. Her sexually-abused corpse was found near the base.

Since the terrible events this past Tuesday, much effort has been devoted to understanding Mr. Long—an earnest inquiry that betrays a particular kind of American naïveté. He claimed to have been driven by "sexual addiction"; investigators have not yet ruled out race as a factor. For now, we do not know whether the massage parlor workers who were killed would have considered themselves sex workers, and we may never know. But the answer is less relevant to their deaths than their murderer's answer: Does it matter how one identifies oneself if a mass killer conflates any Asian woman in a massage parlor with a sex worker?

The stereotype of the Asian woman as simultaneously hypersexualized and submissive is borne of centuries of Western imperialism. An early documented instance of Asian fetishization can be found in "Madame Chrysantheme," a thinly fictionalized account of a French naval officer's time visiting 19th-century Japan. "Madame Chrysantheme" was wildly popular when it was published, and went on to

create a subgenre of Orientalizing prose. The women in such accounts were, as Edward Said wrote in "Orientalism," "creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing."

Later, an untold number of American servicemen in Korea and Vietnam had their first sexual encounter with Asian women. The U.S. military tacitly endorsed prostitution, considering it good for morale, and at times even explicitly encouraged troops to explore the local sex industry. According to the book "Sex Among Allies" by Katharine Moon, a professor of political science at Wellesley College, an ad in Stars and Stripes, the main military newspaper, read: "Picture having three or four of the loveliest creatures God ever created hovering around you, singing, dancing, feeding you, washing what they feed you down with rice wine or beer, all saying at once, 'You are the greatest.' This is the Orient you heard about and came to find."

Yuri Doolan, an assistant professor of history and of women's, gender and sexuality studies at Brandeis University, has written that the first Korean massage parlor workers most likely came to the United States in the 1950s after the United States reduced its forces in South Korea after the war there. They were unlikely to have been massage parlor workers before they came: The son of one of the victims has said his mother told him she was a teacher before coming to the United States.

These women, the first thousand or so, likely met their servicemen husbands in base towns across South Korea that sprang up during the Korean War, and the American occupation that followed.

In 1986 when the Immigration and Naturalization Service created the Korean Organized Crime Task Force to fight the scourge of its time, Korean prostitution, the authorities estimated that some 90 percent of massage parlor workers in the United States had come to the country as G.I. brides. These women followed their husbands to military bases. Once settled, some opened massage parlors, among the few opportunities for employment and financial autonomy available to immigrant women.

But beyond this specific history, structural violence against Asians in the United States has long been institutionalized. The racist, sexist nature of American society is hardly some aberrant, recent phenomenon that can be fixed through minor reform.

In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act became the first and only major federal law to exclude a specific ethnic group from entering the United States. It codified in federal law the xenophobia that had been building since the economic depression after the Civil War, in which Chinese laborers were blamed for taking jobs away from white people. The 19th and early 20th centuries saw horrific violence against Asian communities, including the 1887 Hells Canyon massacre, in which as many as 34 Chinese miners were killed, and the 1907 Bellingham riots, which drove out the entire South Asian population within three days.

Predating the Chinese Exclusion Act was the lesser-known Page Law of 1875, which was mostly applied to Chinese immigrants and allowed the barring of entry to those deemed to have agreed to services with “lewd and immoral purposes.” Immigration officials asked every female applicant, “Are you a virtuous woman?” They “apparently operated on the premise that every Chinese woman was seeking admission on false pretenses, and that each was a potential prostitute until proven otherwise,” according to “Unbound Feet” by Judy Yung, a historian and emerita

professor of American studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

In this way, the Asian woman became an object of hatred, and lust, a thing to loathe, then desire, the distance between yellow peril and yellow fever measured in flashes.

It is hard to know what motivates a person. Early reporting has pointed to the tension between Mr. Long’s religious beliefs and sexual behavior he saw as compulsive, and the way this tension may have warped him. But Mr. Long is also a white man born in 21st-century America, a country with a rich history of violence against Asians. A place where the previous president was among the first to call Covid-19 the “Kung Flu,” and the “China virus,” possibly sowing the seeds for the nearly 3,800 acts of violence against Asians—mostly women—that followed. Did this history allow Mr. Long to see murder as a way of eliminating “temptation,” as he has said—a way of viewing Asians as expendable?

The events were also informed by class: These women, some of whom were working class, almost certainly died because they were at work. As working women of color, they existed at the terrible nexus of race, gender and class. It is, of course, often women who don’t speak English or are undocumented who are locked out of traditional labor markets, or are otherwise marginalized.

Many have framed the Atlanta spa shootings as a hate crime against the Asian community. Hate crime is a legal designation that serves to justify more policing. Despite being seen as a

candidate supporting decriminalization of sex work, the New York City mayoral candidate Andrew Yang took the occasion to call for more funding of the New York Police Department’s Asian Hate Crime Task Force. The Atlanta police deployed additional patrols across the city, as did the N.Y.P.D., despite the fact that the police are the sources of instability in the massage-parlor-worker community. The irony is, of course, that had the women in Atlanta not been killed, they would have probably run the risk of being arrested by the very same law enforcement officers.

It is the instinct of the living to commemorate the dead, to make their passing not be in vain. I, too, am vulnerable to such impulses, and so I end by saying Georgia reminds us—I hope—that anti-Asian violence is also anti-women violence, anti-poor violence, and anti-sex-work violence, that our fates are entwined, that fighting oppression means fighting oppression not just in one’s own narrowly defined community, but also everywhere.

May Jeong is a writer at Vanity Fair and an Alicia Patterson fellow. She is at work on a book about sex work.

—New York Times, March 19, 2021

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/19/opinion/atlanta-shooting-massage-sex-work.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>



Women at a memorial outside the Gold Spa in Atlanta, where three Korean women were shot and killed on March 16, 2021. Chang W. Lee/The New York Times

“My Race is Not a Virus”

Spree of Anti-Asian violence has long roots—including terror in 1990s Philly

BY SCOTT KURASHIGE

In response to thousands of reported bias incidents, the call and budding movement to #StopAsianHate has fostered an unprecedented wave of Asian American solidarity that has quickly spread nationwide following the Atlanta-area shootings. This has been heavily driven by a collective sense of fear and outrage that anyone in the community might be the next target. Videos of Asian elders being attacked and—in extreme cases—killed by much younger men have gone viral, but so has the video of American-born Koreans accosted by a middle-aged socialite and daughter of former Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

This seemingly random quality of anti-Asian violence draws Asian Americans from diverse backgrounds together through a process that scholar Yen Le Espiritu has termed “reactive solidarity.”

One of the most oft-cited accounts of anti-Asian violence occurred near Detroit in 1982. Vincent Chin, a Chinese American man, died after

being beaten on the head with a baseball bat by a white man who witnesses said complained that Japanese competition was causing layoffs of American autoworkers.

Tragically, Chin’s murder is only one of many examples of Asian Americans being targeted by assailants who can’t tell us apart. In 1989, another Chinese American, Jim Ming Hai Loo, died after an attack by two white brothers who were heard railing about the Vietnam War. In 1996, Thien Minh Ly, a Vietnamese American, was stabbed to death by a neo-Nazi who proclaimed he had “killed a Jap.” Three years later, Joseph Iletto, a Filipino American postal worker, was shot and killed while delivering on his USPS postal route by a white supremacist who wanted him dead for being a Latino or Asian federal government employee. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh American, was killed by a white man seeking to “shoot some towel-heads.”

Certainly, the calls for unity that emerged in the wake of these attacks—as well as after the recent Atlanta-area murders—are important. However, it is also necessary to recognize the patterns of violence and social forces that render some members of the Asian American community far more vulnerable than others.

As we have seen with the Atlanta-area murders, the majority of the victims were Asian women, whom the shooter blamed for being sources of “temptation” whom he sought to “eliminate.” His words and actions were, in part, a product of the othering of Asian women by imperialism, heteropatriarchy, low-wage labor, and evangelical “purity culture.” Drawn from a Black feminist *critique* of how oppression operates on multiple scales, Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw’s concept of “intersectional vulnerabilities” can foster a broader understanding of systemic white supremacy, while opening our eyes to mutual interests for cross-racial solidarity. As Crenshaw wrote with the *African American Policy Forum*, “An intersectional frame allows us to surface Asian massage workers’ distinct vulnerability to violence and exploitation from non-state perpetrators as well as their criminalization at the hands of repressive laws and policing.”

To situate discussions of anti-Asian violence in proper historical and structural context, we need to recover the overlooked histories that are generally known (outside of their immediate time and place) only within small niches of Asian American scholars and activists. One such account took place in Southwest Philadelphia, when I began my graduate student research in Asian American Studies three decades ago after finishing college at the University of Pennsylvania. This story



People demonstrate against anti-Asian violence and racism on March 27, 2021, in Los Angeles, California.

cuts against the concept of the “perfect victim” caught in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In 1992, a group of white men boastfully reported of a crusade to beat up people they hatefully referred to as the “slant-eyes” in Southwest Philadelphia. They were targeting a Southeast Asian refugee community that had resettled into a city structured by redlining, anti-Blackness, biased policing, capital flight, and segregation by race and class. One of the white men described to a Philadelphia Magazine reporter in October 1992 how he and 14 others dragged Asian Americans at will off of local streetcars. “We’d kick the shit out of them,” he declared. “Really hurt them bad. When I felt the tire iron smashing his head, it really felt good.”

Those vigilantes saw themselves as shock troops in a neighborhood race war with an Asian community many simply referred to as “gooks.”

They saw themselves as delivering a collective punishment to the Asian community to avenge the death of 18-year-old David Reilly, a white youth killed in Southwest Philadelphia’s McCreesh Playground on August 4, 1991.

“I got one for David,” proclaimed the white man wielding the tire iron, in his interview with *Philadelphia Magazine*. “When I went to David’s funeral, I felt great. I thought I’d done something good.”

After Reilly’s death, local corporate media wasted no time concluding it was a “racially motivated” incident. Headlines portrayed it as a “gang slay” in a “white-Asian feud.”

The immediate framing of a so-called white-Asian feud marginalized the voices of Asian Americans and effaced a complex history. Dissecting the construction of this “feud” necessitates tracing back how white and Asian populations would up in the overlapping spaces of the neighborhood.

Tracing the roots of racial segregation and white supremacist violence

The roots of white supremacist violence and vigilantism run deep in the City of Brotherly Love. As the co-authors of the book *Philadelphia: Neighborhoods, Division, and Conflict in a Postindustrial City* wrote, fraternal bonds of whiteness constructed “ghettoes of opportunity” surrounding bustling factories during the industrial era from the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries. Meanwhile, most African Americans were left to fend for survival in “ghettoes of last resort.” The city’s Southwest side developed in the early 20th century as a streetcar suburb populated mainly by Irish and Italian Americans.

By the 1970s, however, automation and outsourcing caused multiple factories in the city’s Southwest to close, move or downsize. As Black areas of settlement expanded outward from the inner city, jobs and many white residents fled to the suburbs. Feeling left behind, some Philadelphia whites accustomed to segregation as the natural order grew resentful and violent. In 1979, two white men “looking for a [n-word] to shoot” climbed onto a factory roof and killed 13-year-old Tracey Chambers, the first African American who passed by. Some violent exchanges ensued between white and Black youths. In 1985, a mob of 400 whites demanded that a Black family vacate their home on a previously all-white block. The following month, arsonists burned it to the ground.

Refugees displaced by the Vietnam War, which also spread to Cambodia and Laos, were initially resettled in more impoverished, majority-Black sections of the city. As researcher Ellen Somekawa documented, slumlords had contracted with resettlement agencies to fill their vacant and deteriorating complexes with refugees given little to no choice in the matter. Redlining, troubled public schools and trickle-down economics led to Black and

Asian residents being pitted against each other in a fight for scarce resources and neighborhood turf.

Many of these working-class Asians saw moving to the Southwest side as a relative step up. In the 1980s, the neighborhood’s core remained nearly all white. But the unwritten rule prohibiting sales to Black buyers accelerated the fall of housing prices. Seeing a new escape hatch, dozens of white families began selling unlisted homes to Southeast Asian refugees for \$15,000 to \$20,000, circumventing fair housing policies. Shocked by the rapid turnover, some whites began harassing and intimidating their new neighbors. When reporters surveyed white men and boys in the area in the early 1990s, they found many who proudly declared they were skinheads, neo-Nazis and members of white power gangs.

A teenager killed and a community under siege

Such was the context for the events leading up to David Reilly’s untimely death. His friend said that an altercation began after two white men yelled, “Hey, there’s a couple gooks in the park.” They went to confront what was actually a group of Asians, who had been minding their own business. A prosecution witness said one of the pair threatened that his pit bull would bite them. The other warned he was carrying a loaded gun. Some of the Asians responded by leaving the park to retrieve kitchen knives.

Based on statements by Reilly’s friends, news outlets reported that he was caught in the fighting while attempting to act as a peacemaker. An autopsy concluded he died from multiple stab wounds. Before a murder weapon was determined, however, reporters repeatedly and sensationally wrote that he had been “hacked to death with a meat cleaver.” Although Reilly was justifiably the focus of the immediate tragedy, it soon became

apparent that he and others were casualties of much broader social problems.

While Reilly's parents disowned calls for violent retaliation, local reporters readily documented extreme racial tension in the days surrounding his death, starting with an aggressive grouping of white men and boys who did not hesitate to share their beliefs that Asians were an alien presence.

"This is our neighborhood," said a white teenager, according to an article published on August 10, 1991, in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. "We were here first. We're Americans."

With "Vietnam" synonymous with war in the minds of the average American, one of his peers viewed this turf war as global in scope. "They go to war with us," he argued, "and then they try to move into America."

"They should be in gook town," added another, as reported in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Linked with physical threats or attacks, such sentiments put terror in the hearts of Asians in the neighborhood.

"They've called me chink, gook," said a 14-year-old Vietnamese American, who felt trapped in his house. "My mom's scared. She wants to move."

"We were afraid this kind of thing would happen sooner or later," another Asian youth stated, according to a *Philadelphia Inquirer* article published on August 7, 1991, "but we thought it would probably be one of us killed."

When community organizers from the group Asian Americans United (AAU) investigated, Southeast Asian residents explained that they had been under siege during months of relentless racist harassment and assaults. Some believed the Asian youths accused of killing Reilly were likely acting in self-defense. According to a *Philadelphia Inquirer* article published on August 4, 1991, police acknowledged a pattern of "ethnic clashes," noting that two Asians had been shot several months prior to

Reilly's death. But the actions of the police in response to Reilly's death exhibited a pattern of racist profiling and disparate treatment.

In the early morning hours immediately following Reilly's death, restaurant worker Ty Truong was driving home from a movie theater in the suburbs. When he peeked out of his car to see what the commotion was, whites angered at Reilly's death falsely named Truong as the killer. As the police arrested him, the crowd chanted, "Gook, get the gook," according to an August 5, 1991, article in the *Philadelphia Daily News*. On the basis of nothing more than such dubious witness testimony, Truong was jailed for two months. He was only released as six other Southeast Asian refugees aged 19 to 21 were arrested in his place.

Deborah Wei, a founder of AAU, had taught five of the defendants in her English-as-a-second-language classes. These were "good kids" in her eyes. But there was no place for a "model minority" image of young Asian men when they were put on trial for an alleged gang slaying. The stereotype of faceless Viet Cong aggressors mercilessly killing Americans lurked just beneath the surface.

Police and prosecutors never determined who stabbed Reilly—only that it must have been one or more of the Asians. That didn't matter, the prosecutor told the jury, because all were guilty of conspiracy to murder. Six defendants tried together were indeed convicted of conspiracy. Three of the six were also convicted of third-degree murder. Two received seven- to 20-year sentences, and the third was sentenced to 12 to 30 years imprisonment.

How does the McCreesh Playground case challenge our understanding of anti-Asian violence?

The most repeated stories of anti-Asian violence tend to highlight the innocence of the victims. The McCreesh Playground incident, on the other hand, challenges us to scrutinize a process of

structural racism and criminalization that ended with the conviction of working-class refugees cast as "gang" members.

The campaign to build awareness to #StopAsianHate must eschew the quest for "model minority" victimhood. Some Asian Americans are stuck in situations where every choice is bad and where authority figures have exacerbated problems rather than aiding solutions. Sometimes, the best that community organizers like those in AAU can do is shine a light on the worst abuses and mitigate the worst harm.

Still, what these grassroots organizers strive to do is uplift marginalized voices and concerns in order to get at the root causes of oppression. Their commitment to confronting anti-Asian racism and violence has thus led them to struggle against gentrification and police brutality and for the rights of immigrants, youth, workers and small business owners. In so doing, they have fostered new bases for multiracial coalitions and alliances.

—*Truthout*, April 5, 2021

<https://truthout.org/articles/spree-of-anti-asian-violence-has-long-roots-including-terror-in-1990s-philly/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=3c179976-4a77-4467-8131-f339ae30878f>



Haiti's Massive Protests Against U.S. Intervention

ARVIND DILAWAR INTERVIEW WITH KIM IVES

Since February 14, thousands of Haitians have taken to the streets every weekend in the capitol of Port-au-Prince and elsewhere to protest President Jovenel Moïse's refusal to abdicate power. Moïse, who was elected with the backing of the United States in November 2016, has exploited a supposed loophole in Haiti's constitution stating that the duration of the president's term is five years. The constitution clarifies that terms must begin in February, but Moïse insists that his election in November—the delay stemming from previous U.S. meddling—entitles him to more time in office. Thousands of Haitians disagree, but their demonstrations have been met with police violence, leaving dozens dead.

The rallying call of Haitian demonstrators has been, "Where is the Petrocaribe money?" Ostensibly a simple question of accounting, it points to the depth of corruption in Haiti under Moïse and his predecessor, Michel Martelly, who have squandered or stolen billions of dollars' worth of

oil and funds provided by Venezuela as part of Petrocaribe, a program meant to support regional development.

The combination of corruption and repression has critics branding Moïse and Martelly "neo-Duvalierists," in reference to Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier and Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, the father-son dictators who ruled Haiti from 1957 to 1986. The Duvalierists stand in contrast to Fanmi Lavalas, a social-democratic party founded by Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who became Haiti's first democratically elected president in 1991—before being deposed by a U.S.-backed coup later that year.

Jacobin contributor Arvind Dilawar spoke with Kim Ives, an editor at Haiti Liberte, about the current protests, the government's brutal response, and the United States' ongoing complicity in the repression of the Haitian people. Their conversation has been edited for clarity and brevity.

Arvind Dilawar: What was the spark that set off the current protests?

Kim Ives: The latest protests stem from Moïse not stepping down on February 7, 2021, as Article 134.2 of Haiti's 1987 Constitution dictates. He had been making it clear that he was not going to step down in the months leading up to the date, but it came to pass in a very belligerent way. The people did not pour out on February 7 precisely, expecting maybe that he would step down at some point, but he did not. Every weekend since, the demonstrations are growing in size, and the tone is becoming sharper.

There is a little contradiction in Article 134, which says that the president will serve five years. But there is a clarification in 134.2 that, in fact, he will have to start his term on February 7 of the year of the election. So even though the election took place on November 20, 2016, that constitutional article insists that he start the clock on February 7.



Haitians gather in the streets of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to stage a demonstration against President Jovenel Moïse, who refuses to step down. (photo: Sabin Johnson/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images)

There have been constant demonstrations throughout the presidency of Moïse, as there were for his predecessor, Michel Martelly. There were on the order of eighty-four demonstrations per month during the end of 2020, which is saying something, given that COVID was in place. So, we could say that it wasn't exactly "the spark," but the straw that broke the camel's back.

I don't see these demonstrations subsiding as they have periodically in the past. Heightened demonstrations have been taking place since July 2018, when Moïse had to drastically hike fuel prices in the country due to the fact that Petrocaribe oil and money were no longer flowing into the country. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), who had to step in to fill the breach, said, you have to hike the gas prices or you're not going to get a loan. So, they did. And that really began the past two-and-a-half years of demonstrations on an almost weekly, if not daily, basis.

Arvind Dilawar: Are there larger structural problems that have kept the Haitian people seething?

Kim Ives: The Martelly government was shoehorned in by then secretary of state Hillary Clinton in January 2011, when she traveled to Haiti to basically read the Riot Act to then President René Préal and tell him that he had to put Martelly in the runoff. He had come in third, according to the Electoral Council, so she overrode the Electoral Council and said, no, Martelly is going to be in the runoff, and he won.

That marked the beginning of neo-Duvalier rule in the country, after twenty years of alternating Lavalas [party] and semi-Lavalas rule, between Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his sometimes-called "twin," [René] Préal. The U.S. ushered in this neo-Duvalierist group, who brought with it all the hallmarks of Duvalierism: corruption, repression, lavish excess, complete insensitivity to the people's demands,

and complete openness to U.S., French, and Canadian imperialism doing as they wish in the country. In fact, that was their slogan: "Haiti is open for business"—which, not coincidentally, was the slogan of Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier in the early 1980s, before his overthrow. The people of Haiti have essentially been demonstrating since the arrival of the Haitian Bald-Headed party, as Martelly called his party.

**This would be like
throwing a rock into a
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the Haitian people, I can
say without any
equivocation, are fed up
with foreign military
occupations...**

This is the backdrop to all the demonstrations, which have been against corruption and repression, primarily. But the demonstrations became more ferocious and larger in 2018, because the spigot that the Petrocaribe fund that Venezuela was providing Haiti was turned off. At one point, Martelly's prime minister said that 94 percent of the government's special projects were being funded by the Petrocaribe fund. When that money all disappeared, Moïse, who had made all sorts of fantastic promises to the people—that they would, in the space of eighteen months, have 24-7 electricity, *etc.*,—was left with an even more angry population.

Arvind Dilawar: How bad is corruption in Haiti?

Kim Ives: The largest part of it, which really has become the background for this movement, is the money stolen from the Petrocaribe fund. This became the call shortly after the gas hike in July 2018, which began on social media after an artist put up a

picture of himself saying, where is the Petrocaribe money?

The Venezuelans gave Haiti \$4 billion worth of cheap oil, about twenty thousand barrels a day. Haiti only had to pay 60 percent upfront, and 40 percent went into this capital fund, which was supposed to pay for clinics and hospitals and schools and roads and anything that would benefit the Haitian people.

But instead of being used for that, it was pilfered and misspent and embezzled into a myriad of fake projects—from invisible stadiums to fake food distribution programs to fake home-building programs, *etc.* On the order of \$1.7 billion disappeared in this manner, by the Martelly government. That corruption, that embezzlement of the Petrocaribe funds, is the rock that is sticking in the craw of the Haitian people.

It should be said that Haiti also reportedly received some \$13 billion worth of funds for earthquake rebuilding. Ironically, they used in Haiti the same slogan they're using [in Washington] today, "Build Back Better," but it did not go to building back better. Not only was it frittered away and intercepted by various middlemen and Non Governmental Organizational (NGOs), but what did get through to Haiti also seems to have been misspent by the Martelly government, which received the lion's share of that as well.

That, though, has not been as much in the people's consciousness as the Petrocaribe funds, which was a more appreciated solidarity fund than the earthquake fund, which was headed by Bill Clinton—which Haitians felt, almost from the get-go, was probably not going to end up doing much for them.

Arvind Dilawar: How has the Haitian government responded to the protests?

Kim Ives: Very fierce repression. Moïse, in November, returned to service Léon Charles, who was in charge of the Haitian National Police right

after the *coup d'état* against Aristide on February 29, 2004. His reign was characterized by very bloody and fierce repression against the rebellious masses of, primarily, Cité Soleil and Bel Air, Port-au-Prince's two largest slums. Moïse brought him back, and he has lived up to his past record—and has even been given new powers. Moïse, who has been ruling by decree since January 13, 2020, has also decreed a new Gestapo force, the National Intelligence Agency, which gives its agents the power not just to spy on the public, but to arrest them, and even kill them, because its agents are armed. On top of that, they cannot be prosecuted, they have complete immunity.

This is a force very similar to the Tonton Macoute of the Duvalier dictatorship. The Tonton Macoute had the same extrajudicial powers. They were the eyes, ears, and fists of the Duvalier dictatorship and allowed it to stay in power for three decades.

That repression has been on display in the past weeks. Dozens of demonstrators have been killed in the past months of demonstrations. Sometimes they're hit by tear gas grenades in the head, and others have been shot by police forces who apparently act as snipers, shooting into the demonstrators.

In addition, another decree made it an act of terrorism to carry out certain forms of demonstration and street protest. This gives the so-called legal framework for the severe police repression—even though the decrees themselves are completely illegal, because, as even the U.S. State Department has said in their dismay over the optics of this, the decrees are supposed to be used for caretaking questions and not for creating legislative initiatives of this nature.

On top of it, part of this decree mania that Moïse has exhibited has

been to not only form his own new, handpicked Electoral Council, which he proposes will hold the election in the coming year, but to rewrite the constitution. Again, these are all tactics that Francois Duvalier in the early 1960s employed to establish his presidency for life.

Arvind Dilawar: What do you think will be the results of the current protests?

Kim Ives: I will be surprised if Moïse can stay in power until February 7, 2022, as he intends to. This really is the unstoppable force meeting the immovable object right now.

The U.S. seems to be having a little bit of doubt. Julie Chung, the assistant secretary of state for Western Hemispheric Affairs, tweeted last month that she was alarmed by the authoritarian and undemocratic moves of the government. But they stopped short of saying that they were pulling any support. They seem to be keeping the same basic policy that the Trump administration had, which is to encourage Moïse to hold elections—which he was supposed to have held in 2018 and '19—and pass the sash and repopulate the parliament and the mayor's offices throughout Haiti. (There are right now only eleven elected officials in the country: Moïse and ten senators.)

The Biden government has certainly got to be seeing the size of these demonstrations. The other factor is that, as the demonstrations grow in size and ferocity, the U.S. Congress is putting increasing pressure on the Biden administration, saying that Moïse should step down and be replaced by a provisional government.

Will all that pressure push the U.S. to remove him? The reasons why they might balk are because the last time there was a civilian transition, the president elected was Aristide, a liberation

theologian priest and anti-imperialist that the U.S. did not approve of in any way and carried out a *coup d'état* against him eight months after his inauguration in 1991. Secondly, the very important role that Haiti is playing in the anti-Venezuela campaign of Washington. For those two reasons, they may feel that they should just ride out the storm, continue to pump money to him.

The other thing we have to fear, especially with the hawks and warmongers who are now populating the Biden administration, is yet a third foreign military intervention in Haiti—of course, probably dressed up as a “humanitarian” intervention. This would be like throwing a rock into a hornet's nest, because the Haitian people, I can say without any equivocation, are fed up with foreign military occupations.

—Reader Supported News, March 6, 2021

<https://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/277-75/68162-haitis-massive-protests-are-a-repudiation-of-authoritarianism-and-us-intervention>



Yemen's Blood Is on U.S. Hands

Still the U.S. lies about the war

BY WILLIAM BOARDMAN

Six years ago, on March 26, 2015, the U.S. green-lighted and provided logistical support for the Saudi bombing of Yemen that continues on a daily basis. The U.S./Saudi war, which includes as allies the several members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, is an undeclared war, illegal under international law, and an endless crime against humanity. The U.S. and the Saudis have dropped cluster bombs on Yemen since 2009. Yemen has no air force and no significant air defenses. Two years ago, even the U.S. Congress voted to end U.S. involvement in the war, but President Trump vetoed the resolution.

In 1937 the Nazis, in support of Franco in Spain, bombed the defenseless northern Spanish town of Guernica, massacring hundreds of civilians gathered in the town on market day. Pablo Picasso's painting *Guernica*, a shriek of protest against the slaughter, is one of the world's best known antiwar works of art. Yemen has had more than 2000 days of *Guernicas* at the hands of the U.S. and Saudis, but no known Picasso.

On February 4, 2021, President Biden got a whole lot of good press when he announced that the U.S. would be “stepping up our diplomacy to end the war in Yemen.” Biden also promised that the U.S. would be “ending all American support for offensive operations in the war in Yemen.” Biden gave no specific details. The six-year bombing continues. The six-year naval blockade of Yemen continues. The humanitarian crisis continues, with the threat of famine looming. In effect, Biden has participated in war crimes since January 20, with no policy in sight to end the killing.

On March 1, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken acknowledged that:

“The humanitarian crisis taking place in Yemen is the largest and most urgent in the world. Twenty million people, including millions of children, desperately need help. The United States is committed to doing our part, both to provide aid and to help address the obstacles standing in the way of humanitarian access.”

That sounds a whole lot better than it is. Blinken did not acknowledge the U.S. role in the air war on Yemen. Blinken did not acknowledge the U.S. role in the naval blockade preventing food and fuel from reaching those 20 million Yemenis. Those obstacles to humanitarian access remain unchanged. The U.S. has the power to remove either one unilaterally, just as it unilaterally chose to impose them. Blinken called on “all parties” to allow unhindered import and distribution of food and fuel, as if the U.S. played no role in blocking both.

Blinken wasn't done inventing a reality to fit U.S. policy. He pledged support for “the well-being of the Yemeni people” but singled out the Houthis for pressure, even though the Houthis represent a large proportion of the Yemeni people. He called on the Houthis “to cease their cross-border attacks,” even though those attacks are a response to the U.S./Saudi undeclared war. And then he offered an analysis that would be hilarious if it weren't so grotesque:



Guernica (Image: Pablo Picasso)

“... the Saudis and the Republic of Yemen Government are committed and eager to find a solution to the conflict. We call on the Houthis to match this commitment. A necessary first step is to stop their offensive against Marib, a city where a million internally displaced people live, and to join the Saudis and the government in Yemen in making constructive moves toward peace.”

Saudi crimes against humanity

The Saudis are so eager to find a solution to the conflict that they maintain their air war and naval blockade, effectively waging war by starvation—a crime against humanity. The “Republic of Yemen Government” is a fiction and a joke. Yemeni president Mansour Hadi, who is 75, was vice president of Yemen from 1994 to 2011, under the late authoritarian president Ali Abdullah Saleh. When Arab Spring protests erupted against Saleh, he stepped aside in favor of Hadi, who was “elected” president in 2012 with no opposition—a “democratic” result imposed by an international cabal. When you read media referring to his “internationally recognized government,” that’s the fiction they’re hiding. Hadi’s term as president ended in 2014, the international cabal extended it for a year, and that’s pretty much the extent of his legitimacy. That and U.S./Saudi firepower. By any rational calculation, Hadi is not a legitimate president. He also has no legitimate alternative. No wonder Hadi doesn’t feel safe in Yemen and remains in exile in Riyadh. The population in southern Yemen under the “government’s” control has recently attacked the government palace in Aden in protest against the government’s failure to provide sustenance and stability. A recent bomb attack aimed at a Hadi government minister reflects the reality that southern Yemen has long had a separatist movement quite independent of the Houthis in the north, in effect a second civil war. The most constructive move the Hadi

government could make toward peace is to abdicate.

Marib City, the capital of Marib Governorate, is roughly 100 miles northeast of Yemen’s capital in Sanaa. Marib City was established after the 1984 discovery of oil deposits in the region. Covering 6,720 square miles in central Yemen, the Marib Governorate is somewhat smaller than New Jersey. Marib contains much of Yemen’s oil, gas, and electric resources. Marib is the last governorate under the control of the Hadi government, but it has been under increasing attack by the Houthis since early 2020. Before that, Marib was relatively remote from the fighting in Yemen, providing refuge for a million or more Yemenis fleeing the fighting elsewhere. Marib City had a population of about 40,000 when the civil war broke out in 2014. Now the city has an estimated 1.5 million people.

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The Houthi offensive against Marib has intensified since January 2021. Their offensive has continued in spite of having no air support. For the U.S. Secretary of State to call for the Houthis to stop their offensive is an indication that it’s going their way. By March 8, Houthi forces had breached the northern gates of Marib City. Hadi government forces are supported by the Saudi coalition and local tribes, as well as elements of Al Qaeda and ISIS. (Al Qaeda also fights independently against occupying forces

of the United Arab Emirates along the Gulf of Aden coastline.)

Famine

“Famine has arrived in pockets of Yemen.

Saudi ships blocking fuel aren’t helping.”

This was *CNN’s* headline on March 11, for a story reporting with reasonable accuracy on the very real, years-old humanitarian crisis that the U.S./Saudi war has brought on the region’s poorest country. *CNN* quotes a “food insecurity” analysis by the world electronics trade association IPC that predicts that more than 16 million Yemenis (of a total population of about 30 million) are “likely to experience high levels of acute food insecurity” in the first half of 2021. “Out of these, an estimated 11 million people will likely be in Crisis, five million in Emergency, and the number of those in Catastrophe will likely increase to 47,000.”

Yemen is an atrocity from almost any perspective. Three U.S. presidents—Obama, Trump, and now Biden—have lied about Yemen while taking the U.S. into an endless nexus of war crimes and crimes against humanity. And for what? To support a Yemeni government that is a fraud? To support a Saudi ally that thought it could win a quick, dirty air war at little or no cost? This abomination never should have happened. So why did it? The formulaic answer in much of the media is usually some variation on this propagandistic patter from *Reuters*:

“A Saudi Arabia-led military coalition intervened in Yemen in 2015 after the Iran-allied Houthi group ousted the country’s government from the capital Sanaa.”

This essentially false version of reality in Yemen appears in news media across a wide spectrum, from *Al Jazeera* to *ABC News* to this version by *CNN*:

“Saudi Arabia has been targeting Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen since

2015, with the support of the U.S. and other Western allies. It had hoped to stem the Houthis' spread of power and influence in the country by backing the internationally-recognized government under President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi."

The core falsehood in most versions is "the Iran-allied" or "Iran-backed" Houthis. The grain of truth in that characterization is far outweighed by the history on the ground. The Houthis live in Yemen. They are the only combatant force that lives in Yemen, other than elements of the Hadi government and assorted insurrectionists. Yemen is in the midst of a civil war that has flared over decades. The war that is destroying Yemen is waged entirely by outside countries, primarily the U.S. and the Saudi coalition.

The Houthis, who are mostly Shia Muslims, have lived in northwest Yemen for generations and centuries. They fought a civil war against President Saleh and lost. They have long been an oppressed minority in Yemen. When the Hadi government perpetuated the oppression of the Houthis, they rebelled once again. This time, challenging an unpopular and divided government, they were more successful. In 2014 they

captured Sanaa, Yemen's capital, and captured Hadi himself. Then they released him, and he fled first to Aden, then to Saudi Arabia, where he is a puppet figurehead.

Before it could become clear what kind of governance the Houthis would provide for their part of Yemen, the U.S. and the Saudi coalition attacked the country. Their publicly stated motivation has always included the imaginary threat from Iran. But the Houthis have a long and independent history that does not rely on Iran for its coherence and force. Iranian support for the Houthis in 2014 was never shown to be significant. The U.S./Saudi war had had the perverse effect of incentivizing Iranian support for the Houthis, but there's no evidence that support comes anywhere close to the strength of the U.S. and Saudi coalition forces directed at the Houthis. The U.S. and the Saudi coalition are waging an aggressive war against a country that did none of them any harm. Iran is providing support for an ally unjustly under siege.

The war in Yemen has been brutal on all sides, according to reports by more or less neutral observers. But only the U.S. and the Saudi coalition

are invaders, only they are committing international war crimes. The Houthis, as well as all the other sides fighting in Yemen, have also committed war crimes, but on a far lesser scale. Yemeni forces are not the ones waging war by starvation and disease.

Ultimately, the Houthis are the home team, along with other Yemeni factions. The Houthis have nowhere else to go. The only military solution to the Houthis is extermination, genocide, the very course the U.S. and Saudis have been on for years, with the winking hypocrisy of most of the world.

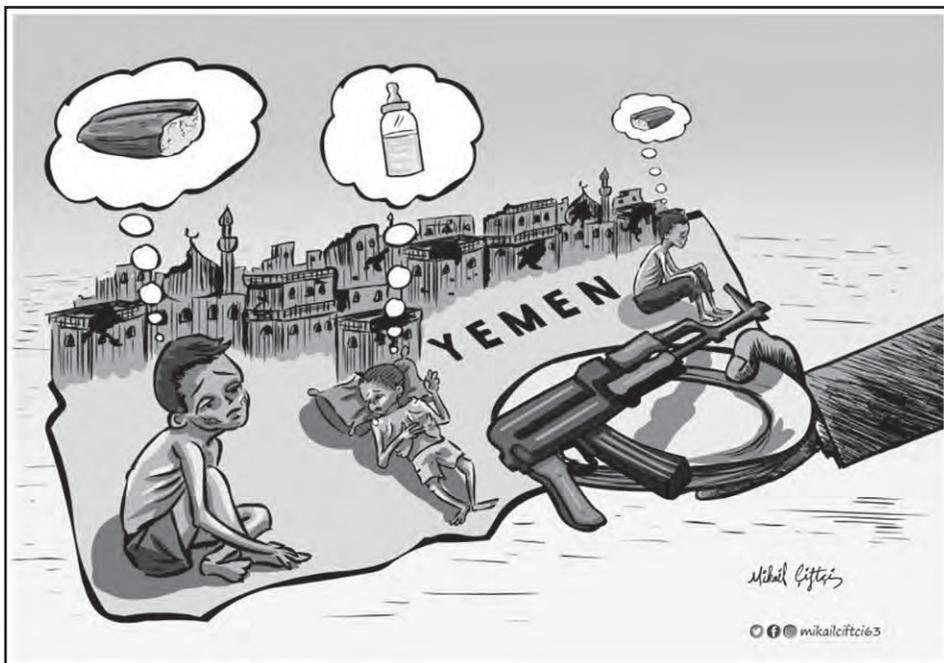
In April 2015, with the Saudis' saturation bombing already in its third week, the United Nations Security Council unanimously (14-0) passed Resolution 2216, which "Demands End to Yemen Violence." The Resolution begins with an obscene misrepresentation of reality:

"Imposing sanctions on individuals it said were undermining the stability of Yemen, the Security Council today demanded that all parties in the embattled country, in particular the Houthis, immediately and unconditionally end violence and refrain from further unilateral actions that threatened the political transition."

That is the official lie that has publicly defined the war on Yemen since 2015. The UN sees no terror bombing by foreign countries. The UN sees no invasion by foreign troops. The UN sees no terrorist groups in a country that has had little stability for decades. The UN cites only the Houthis for their sins, as if it were somehow the Houthis' fault that, having no air force and no air defenses, they weren't getting out of the way of the cluster bombs dropped on their weddings and their funerals.

—Reader Supported News, March 21, 2021

<https://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/277-75/68441-rsn-yemens-blood-is-on-us-hands-and-still-the-us-lies-about-the-war>



Anger as India Covid Crisis Surges

BY ANDREA GERMANOS

With Covid-19 cases soaring in India, acclaimed author and activist Arundhati Roy wrote Wednesday, April 28, 2021, that her country is witnessing “an outright crime against humanity” as outside observers fear the crisis could hamper global efforts to rein in the pandemic.

As of Thursday, India now has the second highest number of total cases in the world—over 18 million—since the pandemic began, but a surge in recent weeks has made it into a global hot spot for daily infections and deaths.

So far, there have been over 204,000 official Covid-19 related deaths, but the true toll is likely far higher.

“I do not know of a single family that has not seen at least one of its members infected. We are seeing hundreds-of-thousands of new cases every day and many more deaths,” Pankaj Anand, humanitarian and program

director with Oxfam India, said in a statement Thursday.

“The health infrastructure in India is bursting at the seams,” said Anand, “and there are widespread reports of shortages of oxygen and other medical supplies in large cities.”

According to the *Associated Press*: “India has set a daily global record for seven of the past eight days, with a seven-day moving average of nearly 350,000 infections. Daily deaths have nearly tripled in the past three weeks, reflecting the intensity of the latest surge.”

Headlines over the past few days—like “Round-the-clock mass cremations” and “Covid cases cross 18 million, gravediggers work round the clock”—put the crisis in bleak terms.

The crisis is clear to Jyot Jeet, chairperson of the Delhi-based organization Shaheed Bhagat Singh Sewa Dal, which

provides free medical care and has been providing cremation services amid the coronavirus pandemic.

“Day in and day out, we are surrounded by the smell of burning flesh, and the sounds of crying families,” he told *NBC News*.

The far-right government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has come under fire for its response to the pandemic.

In an op-ed published Wednesday at the *Guardian*, Roy wryly described Modi as being “busy, busy, busy” with other matters like “Destroying the last vestiges of democracy,” construction of “massive prison complexes,” and watching as “hundreds-of-thousands of farmers [were] beaten and teargassed.”

“The crisis-generating machine that we call our government is incapable of leading us out of this disaster,” she wrote. From the op-ed:



A view of mass cremation of Covid-19 victims at Gazipur crematorium on April 28, 2021 in New Delhi, India.

“The number of Covid-protocol funerals from graveyards and crematoriums in small towns and cities suggest a death toll up to 30-times higher than the official count. Doctors who are working outside the metropolitan areas can tell you how it is. [...]

“The precise numbers that make up India’s Covid graph are like the wall that was built in Ahmedabad to hide the slums [former U.S. President] Donald Trump would drive past on his way to the “Namaste Trump” event that Modi hosted for him in February 2020. Grim as those numbers are, they give you a picture of the India-that-matters, but certainly not the India that is. In the India that is, people are expected to vote as Hindus, but die as disposables.[...]

“The system hasn’t collapsed. The government has failed. Perhaps “failed” is an inaccurate word, because what we are witnessing is not criminal negligence, but an outright crime against humanity. Virologists predict that the number of cases in India will grow exponentially to more than 500,000 a day. They predict the death of many-hundreds-of-thousands in the coming months, perhaps more. My friends and I have agreed to call each other every day just to mark ourselves present, like roll call in our school classrooms. We speak to those we love in tears, and with trepidation, not knowing if we will ever see each other again. We write, we work, not knowing if we will live to finish what we started. Not knowing what horror and humiliation awaits us. The indignity of it all. That is what breaks us.”

Writing in *TIME* on Thursday, Naina Bajekal gave a similar picture of devastation.

“India’s crisis has blown well past the scale of anything seen elsewhere during the pandemic,” wrote Bajekal. “Hospitals across the country are running out of oxygen supplies, ventilators, and beds. Indians are rushing to buy

drugs like remdesivir, causing prices to surge, while labs struggle to process growing backlogs of Covid-19 tests.”

Blame was also put at the feet of the Modi government, with Bajekal noting that “experts say the current crisis could have been avoided if the government had acted earlier.”

If we don’t help in India, I worry about an explosion of cases’ around the world...

“Rather than intensifying public-health messaging and ramping up interventions like banning mass gatherings and encouraging mask wearing, Modi and his officials did the opposite. They held mass rallies ahead of elections and promoted the Kumbh Mela, a Hindu pilgrimage that drew millions of worshippers to a single town—an event Jha predicts will end up ‘one of the biggest super-spreader events in the history of humanity.’ On April 17, after India had overtaken Brazil to become the second worst-hit country in the world, Modi told a rally in West Bengal that he was ‘elated’ to see such a large crowd.”

The surging number of cases in India spells doom far beyond its own borders.

As *CNN* reports:

“The more the virus spreads, the more chances it has to mutate and create variants that could eventually resist current vaccines, threatening to undermine other countries’ progress in containing the pandemic, experts warn.

“If we don’t help in India, I worry about an explosion of cases’ around the world, said Dr. Ashish Jha, dean of the Brown University School of Public Health. That’s why India’s Covid outbreak is a global problem that needs a coordinated response. [...]

“If the Indian outbreak can’t be contained and spreads to neighboring countries with low vaccine supplies and weak health systems, experts warn the world risks replicating scenes witnessed in India—especially if newer, potentially more contagious variants are allowed to take hold.”

That possible scenario drew concern from John Nkengasong, director of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“What is happening in India cannot be ignored by our continent,” Nkengasong told reporters Thursday. “We do not have enough healthcare workers, we do not have enough oxygen.”

Despite the fact that India is the world’s top vaccine producer overall, just two percent of its population has been provided access to the Covid-19 vaccines thus far.

The Biden administration pledged this week to send India key medical aide—including oxygen, testing kits, and stockpiles of AstraZeneca vaccine supplies, but progressive U.S. lawmakers and outside groups say the White House must go further.

Public health advocates say the U.S. must stop vaccine hoarding, donate more supplies to WHO-led initiatives, and end its opposition to an India- and South Africa-led—and widely backed—push for a temporary waiver of intellectual property rules at the World Trade Organization to allow for a massive boost in the production of coronavirus vaccines.

As WHO spokesperson Dr. Margaret Harris said Thursday, “What’s happening in India can happen anywhere else,” and the virus “can rip through a population if you let it.”

—*Common Dreams*, April 29, 2021

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2021/04/29/crime-against-humanity-anguish-and-anger-india-covid-crisis-surges>

Biden's and America's Mental Illness

By DAVE LINDORFF

On February 25, 2021, our new “transformative” President Joe Biden joined that long almost unbroken list of war criminal presidents stretching back to George Washington.

Biden joined this disgraceful list by ordering a bloody aerial bombardment by U.S. warplanes in eastern Syria.

The U.S. bombs, which were reportedly dropped on a location in the city of Erbil, according to the British daily *The Independent*, killed as many as 22 people in the targeted buildings (assuming all the bombs actually landed on their intended targets.) Most if not all of the victims were Iraqis described by the U.S. as being part of two “Iranian-backed militias,” which were accused of being behind a rocket attack ten days earlier that killed a U.S. mercenary and wounded a Louisiana National Guardsman. The Pentagon called the attack, which employed seven 500-1b bombs, a “proportional response” to that earlier attack, which raises questions about the meaning of “proportional” (or about what the hell dictionary they use in the White House.)

The Oxford Dictionary defines “proportional” as meaning “corresponding in size or amount to something else,” but it seems unlikely that a rocket attack by a militia group or two could come close in explosive power to seven bombs totaling nearly two tons of explosive, and besides, 22 deaths is unarguably way out of proportion in relation to a casualty toll of one dead and one wounded.

Aside from the ludicrous misuse of that term by the Pentagon and the reporters who dutifully scribbled it down in their notes and quoted it in their reports of the briefing without comment, there is another point that was left out: That those who were killed, even if Iraqis, were there in Syria

at the behest of the Syrian government. The U.S. mercenary killed, and the U.S. soldier wounded in Syria, were in that country as invaders, in violation of both Syrian national sovereignty and international law.

That is why Biden made himself yet another U.S. war criminal president.

But Biden didn't stop there. After killing those 22 people, who could well have included innocent civilians, maybe even kids, who might have been in some of those buildings, a few weeks later he went on to label Russia's Vladimir Putin a “killer” in a classic pot-calling-the-kettle-black moment.

Ray McGovern, the former CIA analyst and Russia expert who co-founded the group Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, points out that *ABC News* talking head George Stephanopoulos provided Biden the opportunity for that name calling during an interview when he asked the stupid and pointless question: “Do you think Russian President Putin is a killer?”

Biden of course stupidly and hypocritically replied, “Yes.”

In McGovern's view, that whole incident was likely a set up deliberately by someone in the State Department or the Pentagon who wanted to further bung



Photo by Nathaniel St. Clair

up U.S.-Russia relations, and I think Ray's got a point. It's not hard to imagine that being the case, given the way ABC, like the other major TV network news programs, employs retired Pentagon and State Department officials as paid news "commentators." You can just imagine one of them saying, "Hey Steph, why don't you ask Biden whether he thinks Putin's a killer?"

Now Putin's pissed off, Biden can't back down, and we're off to the races at the start of a new term with a childish deadlock that will make any kind of serious negotiating to ease tensions between the world's two nuclear superpowers difficult if not hopeless. Nice job George, you thumb sucking imposter of a real journalist! You just gave an example of the workings of what Ray calls "MiciMatt" (that's for Military Industrial Congressional Intelligence Media Academia Think Tank.)

If the gambit of insulting Putin works, it's worth at least another \$100 billion for the Pentagon's already record large coffers for the next fiscal year.

It's just another sign of the madness of all involved—Biden, Stephanopoulos and, what the hell, Putin too.

The U.S. at least is well and truly mad. Earlier this past week we had the madness of an angry white guy in Atlanta deciding, at least as he explained it to

police, that seven Asian women in several licensed mall spas, including some old enough to be receiving Social Security benefits, had to be blown away by him because he felt they were taunting him with their beauty and making him have "bad thoughts." He had no alternative, he said, but to kill them to stop them from tormenting him like that.

**The U.S. may represent
only some 4.25 percent
of the earth's population
but it is by far the
world's primary
purveyor and inciter
of violence.**

I really can't decide who's loopier, President Joe Biden or Robert Aaron Long. Biden is crazy to be trash-talking a foreign leader with whom he surely knows he must engage in serious negotiations, at least if there is to be any hope of lowering the risks of war and the certainty of spending this nation into bankruptcy, not to mention worsening a human rights disaster in civil war-torn Syria. And Long is crazy, like a lot of Americans, for thinking a bunch of Asian women trying just to make a living

by easing people's joint and muscle pains deserve to die (along with an unfortunate young bride who was, along with her husband, getting a his-and-hers, side-by-side massage wedding gift, and happened to be in his way.)

The truth is that the whole U.S. needs mental health counselling. Half the country is celebrating at having just installed in the White House a man who

apparently is still living in the 1960s Cold War era with a foreign policy and appointees in national security posts that together seem hell-bent on creating two massive enemy nations, Russia and China, both armed to the teeth, instead of trying to achieve peaceful relations with both those countries. Meanwhile, the other half of the country are mostly white racists who want to prevent people of color from voting, and view anyone who is non-white regardless of birth or U.S. citizenship as interlopers with no right to be here, and as deserving to be being beaten up, harassed or even killed. They are also, for the most part, people caught up in a delusional fantasy that the last election was "stolen" away from their hero, Donald Trump, a huckster so preposterous that it's difficult to see how anyone—at least anyone sane—could take him seriously.

With the globe careening towards a disaster that could lead to the extinction of humanity, or at least the collapse of what we call civilization, and perhaps to the extinction of much of the earth's entire biome, this is a crisis situation.

The U.S. may represent only some 4.25 percent of the earth's population but it is by far the world's primary purveyor and inciter of violence. It's also one of the world's greatest and most unapologetic producers of pollution (particularly if you include the share of pollution produced in China, Indonesia, India and other third world countries in the making and shipping of goods purchased by U.S. residents.) For this country to be focused on such misguided issues as a wholly unnecessary arms race, military confrontations and imaginary threats, and internal affairs that are not its own business, with such an existential crisis actually facing the U.S. and all of humanity is not just depressing, it's infuriating.

—CounterPunch, March 24, 2021

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/03/24/bidens-and-americas-mental-illness-is-on-full-display/0>



Fukushima at Ten

Aftershocks, lies, and failed decontamination

By JOHN LAFORGE

It's now ten years since the catastrophic triple meltdowns of nuclear reactors at Fukushima in Japan. As Joseph Mangano of the Radiation and Public Health project put it three years ago, "Enormous amounts of radioactive chemicals, including cesium, strontium, plutonium, and iodine were emitted into the air, and releases of the same toxins into the Pacific have never stopped, as workers struggle to contain over 100 cancer-causing chemicals."

There is news of the shortage of Fukushima health studies, big earthquakes (aftershocks) and typhoons rattling nerves, reactors and waste systems, novel radioactive particles dispersed, and corporate and government dishonesty about decontamination.

Very few health studies

"So far only one single disease entity has been systematically examined in humans in Fukushima: thyroid cancer," says Dr. Alex Rosen, the German chair of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. Other diseases, such as leukemia or malformations, which are associated with increased radiation exposure, have not been investigated, Rosen told the German medical journal *Deutsches Ärzteblatt* March 2. (Five studies have focused not on disease, but on birth abnormalities in the areas most affected: three on infant mortality rates, one on underweight newborns, and one on declining birth rates nine months after March 2011.¹)

The one disease study of the population was a screening for thyroid cancer in 380,000 local children under the age 18. In January 2018, the journal *Thyroid* reported 187 cases after five years. A typical population of 380,000

children would produce 12 cases in five years, reported Joseph Mangano, director of the Radiation and Public Health Project. The increase among children is "exactly what would be expected if Fukushima were a factor, as radiation is most damaging to the fetus, infant and child," Mangano said.

New earthquakes rattle wreckage and nerves

Another large earthquake, magnitude 7.3, struck February 13, again off the coast of the Fukushima reactor complex, and the reported 30 seconds of terror was followed by 14 aftershocks up to magnitude five.

The quake was severe enough that its Tokyo Electric Power Co. (Tepco) operators and federal regulators suspect it caused additional damage to reactors one and three where cooling water levels fell sharply, the *Associated*

Press reported. The February 13 quake was felt in Tokyo 150 miles away. Japan's meteorological agency said it was believed to be an aftershock of the record 2011 quake.

At a February 15 meeting, government regulators said the quake had probably worsened existing earthquake damage in reactors one and three or broken open new cracks causing the cooling water level drop, the *AP* said.

"Because (the 2011 quake) was an enormous one with a magnitude of 9.0, it's not surprising to have an aftershock of this scale ten years later," said Kenji Satake, a professor at the University of Tokyo's Earthquake Research Institute.

There have been six major aftershocks in the Fukushima area since March 2011: April 7, 2011 (magnitude 7.1); April 11, 2011 (6.6); July 10, 2011 (7.0); October 26, 2013 (7.1);



November 26, 2016 (6.9); and February 13, 2021 (7.3). All six of these earthquakes were named Fukushima in one language or another.

Earthquake shocks are not the only recurring nightmare to haunt the survivors of the record quake that killed 19, 630. Typhoon Hagibis slammed into Tamura City in October 2019, and swept away an unknown number of bags of radioactive debris that had been stacked near a river.

Since March 2011, over 22 million cubic meters of contaminated soil, brush and other matter from areas hard hit by fallout has been collected in large black plastic bags and piled in temporary storage mounds in thousands of places. (“Fukushima residents fight state plan to build roads with radiation-tainted soil,” Koydo, *Japan Times*, April 29, 2018) Yet the volume is the tip of the iceberg: According to R. Ramachandran, in *The Hindu*, January 31, 2020, “...no decontamination activities are planned for the majority of forested areas which cover about 75 percent of the main contaminated area of 9,000 square kilometers.”

Cover-ups and disinformation

Reporting February 14 about the latest quake, the *AP* noted that Tepco “has repeatedly been criticized for cover-ups and delayed disclosures of problems.” On June 22, 2016, Tepco’s President Naomi Hirose publicly admitted that the company’s lengthy refusal to speak of the “meltdowns” it knew of at its three reactors was tantamount to a cover-up and apologized for it.

The *Washington Post* reported March 6, 2021 that, “For years, Tepco claimed that the treated water stored at the plant contained only tritium, but data deep on its website showed that the treatment process had failed.” The tanks now hold almost 1.25 million tons of highly contaminated wastewater. “In 2018, [Tepco] was forced to acknowledge that 70 percent of the water is still contaminated with dan-

gerous radioactive elements—including strontium-90, a bone-seeking radionuclide that can cause cancer—and will have to be treated again before release,” the *Post* reported.

Harvey Wasserman reported for *The Free Press* on a July 2007 earthquake that shook Japan and forced dangerous emergency shutdowns at four reactors at Kashiwazaki. “For three consecutive days [Tepco] was forced to issue public apologies for erroneous statements about the severity of the damage done to the reactors, the size and lethality of radioactive spills into the air and water, the on-going danger to the public, and much more. Once again, the only thing reactor owners can be trusted to do is to lie.”

Radioactive particles newly identified

Work just published in the journal *Science of the Total Environment* documents new, highly radioactive particles that were released from the destroyed Fukushima reactors. The study was led by Dr. Satoshi Utsunomiya and Kazuya Morooka of Kyushu University. “Two of these particles have the highest cesium radioactivity ever measured for particles from Fukushima,” the research found. The study analyzed particles that were taken from surface soils collected 3.9 kilometers from the reactor site.

Speaking with *Science Daily* February 17, Dr. Utsunomiya said, “Owing to their large size, the health effects of the new particles are likely limited to external radiation hazards during static contact with skin.” The particles were reportedly spewed by the hydrogen explosions that rocked the reactor buildings and fell within a narrow zone that stretches approximately eight kilometers north-northwest of meltdowns.

But Dr. Utsunomiya also said the long-lived radioactivity of cesium in “the newly found highly radioactive particles has not yet decayed significantly. As such, they will remain in the environment for many decades to come, and this type of particle could

occasionally still be found in radiation hot spots.”

Smaller radioactive particles of uranium, thorium, radium, cesium, strontium, polonium, tellurium and americium were found afloat throughout Northern Japan, according to a report by Arnie Gundersen and Marco Kaltofen published July 27, 2017 in *Science of the Total Environment*. The radioactively hot particles were found in dusts and soils from Northern Japan. About 180 particulate matter samples were taken from automobile or home air filters, outdoor surface dust, and vacuum cleaner bags. Some 142 of the samples (about 80 percent) contained cesium-134 and cesium-137 which emit intense beta radiation and is very dangerous if ingested or inhaled. “A majority of these samples were collected from locations in decontaminated zones cleared for habitation by the National Government of Japan,” the authors revealed.

Greenpeace reports cleanup failures and deception

Greenpeace Japan released two major reports March 4 that also contradict the country’s positive decontamination and human rights claims after 2011.

“Successive governments during the last ten years...have attempted to perpetrate a myth about the nuclear disaster. They have sought to deceive the Japanese people by misrepresenting the effectiveness of the decontamination program and ignoring radiological risks,” said Shaun Burnie, Senior Nuclear Specialist at Greenpeace East Asia and co-author of the first report.

Key findings of the radiation report Fukushima 2011-2020 are:

- Most of the 840 square kilometer Special Decontamination Area (SDA), where the government is responsible for decontamination, remains contaminated with radioactive cesium. ...an overall

DDT Dumped off California Coast

By JEFF BERARDELLI

average of only 15 percent has been decontaminated.

- No long-term decontamination target level will be achieved in many areas. Citizens will be subjected for decades to radiation exposures in excess of the...recommended maximum.
- In the areas where evacuation orders were lifted in 2017, specifically Namie and Iitate, radiation levels remain above safe limits, potentially exposing the population to increased cancer risk.

Key findings of The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station decommissioning report are:

- The current decommissioning plan in the timeframe of 30-40 years is impossible to achieve and is illusory.
- Radioactive waste created at the site should not be moved. Fukushima Daiichi is already and should remain a nuclear waste storage site for the long term.

John LaForge is a Co-director of Nukewatch, a peace and environmental justice group in Wisconsin, and edits its newsletter.

—CounterPunch, March 12, 2021

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/03/12/fukushima-at-ten-after-shocks-lies-and-failed-decontamination/>

1 On perinatal mortality:

- Scherb, H. et al. 2016:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/2766ten55/>

- Körblein, A. et al. 2017:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28632136/>

- Körblein, A. et al. 2019:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31357178/>

On underweight newborns:

- Basket, A. 2020:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33239016/>

On the decline in birth rates in Japan 9 months after Fukushima:

- Körblein, A. 2021:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33630835/>

Just ten miles off the coast of Los Angeles lurks an environmental disaster over 70 years in the making, which few have ever heard about. That is, until now, thanks to the research of a University of California marine scientist named David Valentine.

Working with little more than rumors and a hunch, curiosity guided him 3,000 feet below the ocean's surface. A few hours of research time and an autonomous robotic submersible unearthed what had been hidden since the 1940s: countless barrels of toxic waste, laced with DDT, littering the ocean floor in between Long Beach and Catalina Island.

The fact that his underwater camera spotted dozens of decaying barrels immediately in what is otherwise a barren, desert-like sea floor, Valentine says, is evidence that the number of barrels is likely immense. Although the exact number is still unknown, a historical account estimates it may be as many as a half-a-million.

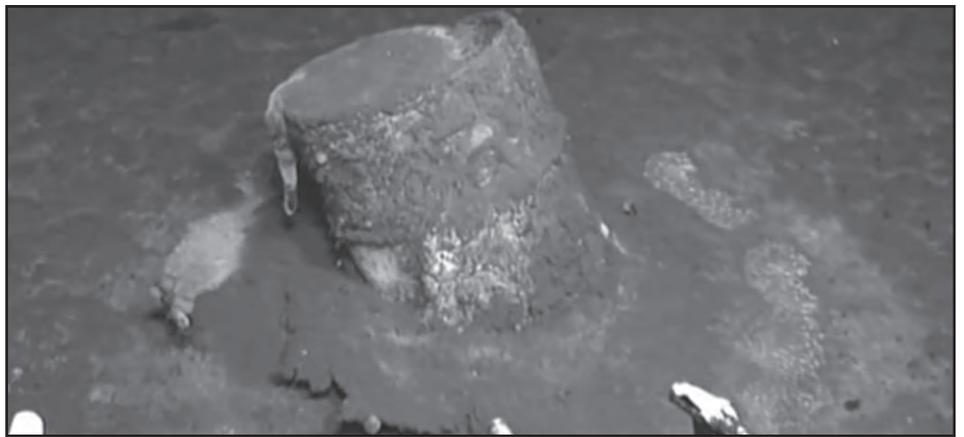
Valentine's research has finally helped initiate a huge research effort to reveal the extent of the contamination—this is after 70-plus years of inaction.

But this offshore dump site is only a part of the story of environmental damage from years of DDT discharge along the coast of Southern California—a story which likely won't be closed for decades to come because of its ongoing impact, including a recently discovered alarming and unprecedented rate of cancer in the state's sea lion population, with one-in-every-four adult sea lions plagued with the disease.

The history of DDT dumping

The chemical DDT was invented in 1939 and used during World War II as a pesticide helping to protect troops from insect-borne diseases like Malaria. After the war, production of the chemical ramped up and it became routinely used in the spraying of crops, and even over crowded beaches, to eliminate pests like mosquitos.

But in the 1960s, DDT was discovered to be toxic. Over time, eating food laced with DDT builds up inside the tissues of animals and even humans, resulting in harmful side effects. The EPA now calls it a "probable human carcinogen." In 1972, when the U.S. government started taking environmental pollution seriously with legisla-



Decaying barrels of toxic waste captured by an underwater camera. (photo: Dr. David Valentine)

tion like the Clean Air Act, DDT was banned in the United States.

The largest DDT manufacturer in the U.S., Montrose Chemical Corporation, was located along the Southern California coast in the city of Torrance. From 1947 through 1982, Montrose manufactured and distributed DDT worldwide. In doing so, a byproduct-mix of toxic sludge made up of petrochemicals, DDT and PCBs was produced.

For decades, that hazardous waste was disposed of in two ways. Some of the toxic pollution was dumped into storm drains and the sewer system, which was then pumped out to sea through outflow pipes, two miles offshore of the city of Rancho Palos Verdes.

The rest of the waste was disposed of in barrels which were loaded onto barges and floated ten to 15 miles offshore to waste dumping sites off Catalina Island and then jettisoned into the ocean.

While it may seem hard to believe, at least part of the dumping was legally permitted. Back then, Valentine says, the prevailing thought was the oceans were so huge that they could never be compromised. The mantra was “dilution is the solution to pollution”—in hindsight a *naïve* notion.

But while the designated dumping site was very deep—in 3,000 feet of water—Valentine says shortcuts were taken, with barrels being dumped much closer to shore. And, in an effort to get the barrels to sink, there is evidence that many were slashed, allowing poison to leak, as they were dropped into the ocean.

For decades, the existence of these toxic barrels was surmised only by a very small group of scientists and regulators. That’s despite a startling report produced in the 1980s by a California Regional Water Quality Control Board scientist named Allan Chartrand, which asserted there may be as many as 500,000 barrels laced with DDT sitting on the ocean floor.

The report was largely ignored. But after nearly 30 years, Valentine dusted it off as he began his quest to see if these barrels existed.

The inshore toxic waste site

Unlike the deep-water dumping sites, the shallower toxic site—called the Palos Verdes Shelf—two miles off the beaches of Rancho Palos Verdes was well-known and documented. In 1996, this zone was declared a Superfund clean-up site by the EPA, now comprising a 34-square-mile area. Montrose was sued and after a protracted legal battle ending in late 2000 the companies involved, including Montrose, settled for \$140 million.

When humans callously pollute the environment, it can have consequences for generations to come. One current example is human-caused climate change.

Over the past two decades, most of the money has been used by a program called the Montrose Settlements Restoration Program (MSRP) to try to restore the contaminated sites. Half of the funds were allocated to the EPA and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to rehabilitate ecosystems impacted by the poison.

DDT gets into the food chain when it is consumed from the contaminated ocean bottom by tiny marine creatures, which are then eaten by small fish, which are then consumed by larger fish and marine mammals, like sea lions. Over time DDT builds up in the tissues and blubber of marine animals, a process called bioaccumulation. To this day, signs all along the Southern California coast warn fishermen not to eat certain fish. Despite this, you can-

not get DDT contamination from swimming in the water.

Scientists say the contamination at this shallower water site is the most likely food chain route which leads to DDT building up in sea lion blubber. That’s because there is a much greater amount of marine life living in shallower water. But that does not rule out contamination from the much deeper site as well.

To try to remedy these pollution problems, NOAA has used its share of the funds to manage almost 20 restoration projects off the Los Angeles coast, like restoring kelp forest habitat, helping migratory seabirds and restoring 500 acres of critical coastal marsh habitat in Huntington Beach.

The last project of the effort—just completed—was the commissioning of an artificial reef just off the beaches of Rancho Palos Verdes. To accomplish this, NOAA hired a team of scientists from the Southern California Marine Science Institute and Vantuna Research Group at Occidental College to design and deploy the reef.

The reef building effort was led by Jonathan Williams, a marine biologist from Occidental College. The project involved strategically placing more than 70,000 tons of quarry rock on the ocean bottom just off the beach. Williams says that the reef was an immediate success, with thousands of fish flocking to the rocks.

This reef site is much closer to shore than the contamination site, which is two miles from land. That’s by design. Williams says the idea is to construct new habitat for fish and kelp in uncontaminated areas to build up healthy populations of fish. This helps limit the amount of toxins, like DDT, which enters the food chain.

As predators at the top of the food chain, DDT in fish is also a danger to people. Williams says this is especially true of underserved communities who are mostly likely to subsistence fish,

eating what they catch. In this way, NOAA's project addresses environmental justice by attempting to make fish safer to eat.

Two miles offshore, Williams says that after years of measuring high levels of DDT on the Palos Verdes Shelf, levels have started to drop precipitously, a sign that some of the DDT may finally be starting to break down.

Discovering the barrels

Despite the fact that the toxic barrels were dumped in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, their existence just became common knowledge this past fall when the *Los Angeles Times* published a feature on Valentine's work. But his discovery dates all the way back to 2011 when he first decided to see if the rumors of the barrels were true. In 2013 he made another short trip to the site. But his research was not published until March of 2019.

In all, his time-limited work yielded visuals of 60 barrels. Besides bringing back video of the leaking barrels, his team was also able to collect samples from the ocean floor. One of them registered a contamination 40-times greater than the highest contamination at the Superfund site, indicating that the toxins down deep are still very concentrated.

Armed with this compelling evidence, Valentine said that he "beat the drum" for years, speaking to various government agencies, trying to get some interest, but to no avail. However, when the *Los Angeles Times* story came out, interest finally followed as public outcry grew.

But before his discovery in 2011, Valentine placed part of the blame for the lack of knowledge about the barrels on the lack of technology to find it. It's only in the past couple of decades that the technology became available to make this deep-water research feasible.

Coincidentally, on the very day *CBS News* went to visit Valentine in Southern California, Scripps Institution of Oceanography began a two-week

mission to survey almost 50,000 feet of the deep ocean seafloor.

Employing a large research vessel called the Sally Ride, 31 scientists and crew members, and two high-tech autonomous robots they call Roombas, the team used sophisticated sonar to map the ocean bottom and assess how many barrels there are.

As of our last conversation with Eric Terrill, the team leader, the final number had still not been tallied. But even as early as a week into the research mission, Terrill described detecting tens-of-thousands of targets and said the number of barrels seemed "overwhelming."

The two-week mission is now complete, but the team is still putting together the pieces. They expect to have a final report published at the end of April.

Sea lions in trouble

Located right near the Golden Gate Bridge, the mission of the Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito, California is to rescue marine mammals in distress. Since 1975, the organization says they have rescued 24,000.

In December, the team published a 30-year study on sea lions, finding an alarming statistic: 25 percent of adult sea lions have cancer.

CBS News interviewed the lead veterinarian Dr. Cara Field. She called the number of sea lions with cancer both "extremely alarming" and "unprecedented in wildlife." Last year the Marine Mammal Center had to euthanize 29 sea lions because of cancer.

In the report, the research team pointed to a combination of herpesvirus and contaminants like DDT and PCBs as

the cause of cancer. In all cases of cancer, sea lions had elevated levels of DDT and PCBs in their blubber. The theory goes that the contaminants weaken the body's immune system, making the virus more effective.

Because sea lions travel up and down the California coast yearly, scientists believe they may pick up the contaminants when they are near their breeding site on the Channel Islands off the coast of Southern California.

And while it seems logical that the sea lion contamination is coming from polluted sites in shallow water, scientists do not yet know how much of the DDT from barrels in deeper water may be entering the food chain. This, they say, will require more research.

While there are still many unanswered questions, one lesson from this story of DDT contamination is clear: When humans callously pollute the environment, it can have consequences for generations to come. One current example is human-caused climate change. The question is, how much of a burden will our children and grandchildren have to bear as result of our choices?

—*Reader Supported News*, April 13, 2021

<https://readersupportednews.org/news-section2/318-66/68833-countless-barrels-of-ddt-dumped-off-california-coast>



No Illusions in “Progressive” District Attorney Larry Krasner

BY RACHEL WOLKENSTEIN, JACK HEYMAN, BOB MANDEL AND CAROLE SELIGMAN

Note: Updated, from Statement issued by the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, and slightly shortened for space, April 23, 2021. — Socialist Viewpoint editors

Mumia Abu-Jamal’s life was saved from legal lynching of state execution in 1995 and 1999 by the power of mass, international mobilization and protest, which included representatives of millions of unionized workers. Human and civil rights organizations, labor unions, and students won Mumia’s release from death row in 2012 and his medical treatment for deadly hepatitis C in 2017. Now we need to do the same to save his life from COVID-19 and heart disease.

We also must face the latest obstacle in Mumia’s pending legal appeal.

In the prosecution response to Mumia’s appeal to the Pennsylvania Superior Court, filed February 3, 2021, so-called “progressive” District Attorney Larry Krasner rubber stamped the lying, racially biased, politically motivated and corrupt conviction of Mumia for the

murder of Police Officer Daniel Faulkner on December 9, 1981 under hanging judge Albert Sabo who promised, “I’m going to help them fry the nigger.”

For decades Mumia fought racist and corrupt prosecutors in Pennsylvania state court and the U.S. federal court. “Progressive” District Attorney Krasner joined their ranks in filing the prosecution legal brief to the Superior Court stating that Mumia is guilty and should remain imprisoned for life.

There is a moment of opportunity to deepen the struggle for Mumia’s freedom. Political consciousness about the systemic racism of the U.S. injustice system and policing has reached a high level not seen in 50 years, accelerated by the police murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many others, and the massive protests that followed. Mumia’s name has been injected into struggles around Black Lives Matter, the pandemic and the economic crisis. Notably, Colin Kaepernick has called for Mumia’s freedom.

There is also a new danger. Nationally and in Philadelphia, there is a rise in the illusions of the “progressive district attorney” who will upend the entrenched repressive, racially and class-biased [in] justice system, which is integral to capitalism and rooted in the legacy of slavery.

A new legal path to Mumia’s freedom was opened by the historic ruling in December 2018 from Philadelphia Court Judge Leon Tucker, the first Black jurist to review Mumia’s case. Judge Tucker granted Mumia the right to file a new appeal of all the evidence of judicial, prosecutorial and police misconduct that had been rejected by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court from 1998-2012. That evidence was proof that Mumia is factually innocent and framed and is legally entitled to dismissal of the charges against him, or at least a new trial.

“Progressive” District Attorney Krasner blocked that path with the Response to Mumia’s new appeal to the Pennsylvania Superior Court February 3rd. Krasner opposes Mumia getting a new trial—let alone a dismissal of the charges. And Krasner calls for the appeals court to dismiss Mumia’s appeal without even considering the facts and law. Krasner follows exactly the script of the notorious, pro-cop, racist prosecutors who preceded him, notably Edward Rendell, Lynne Abraham (called “one of America’s deadliest District Attorneys”) and Ronald Castille, whose pro-cop, pro-prosecution, and pro-death penalty bias became the grounds opening up Mumia’s right to file this new appeal.

The Krasner response brief begins with the same lying “statement of facts” of the case used since Mumia’s 1982 frame-up trial by District Attorney



Philadelphia DA Larry Krasner speaks during a news conference in March 2021.

Edward Rendell. Krasner insists that Mumia's appeal should be dismissed without considering the merits because it was "not timely filed."

Krasner also denies that the newly disclosed evidence of state misconduct—"Brady claims"—from the six hidden boxes of Mumia's prosecution files found two years ago in a District Attorney storeroom are "material" and grounds for a new trial. This denial is legal jargon for saying the evidence against Mumia at trial was so overwhelming that it wouldn't have made a difference to the jury that convicted him of first-degree murder and sentenced him to death. Krasner's Response on the new evidence that the trial prosecutor purposely disqualified African-Americans as jurors is that the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has previously decided the jury selection process was fair and should not be re-examined.

As District Attorney, Krasner had the legal authority and responsibility to review Mumia's case and, as constitutionally warranted, to support overturning Mumia's conviction because of due process violations and state misconduct. Those due process violations included:

- trial and post-conviction judge Sabo was biased and racist;
- African-Americans were excluded from juries as a policy and practice of the Philadelphia District Attorney's office;
- police and prosecutorial misconduct in presenting false witness testimony that Mumia shot Faulkner, a fabricated confession and a manufactured scenario of Mumia shooting Police Officer Faulkner which is disproved by ballistics, medical, and other forensic evidence, including photographs of the crime scene; and
- the suppression of witnesses who swore that Mumia did not shoot Police Officer Faulkner, that a shooter ran away, and the confession of Arnold Beverly to fatally shooting Faulkner.

But "progressive" District Attorney Krasner argued these factors should not even be considered.

District Attorney Krasner's Response brief ends with: "For the foregoing reasons, including those set forth in the PCRA court's opinions, the Commonwealth respectfully requests that this Court affirm the orders denying post-conviction relief." This means District Attorney Krasner approved all previous court denials of Mumia's challenges to his convictions made from 1995-2012, including those of Judge Sabo!

This Response is the definitive, final statement of D.A. Attorney Krasner to the Superior and Supreme Courts of Pennsylvania. And should Mumia's case return to the U.S. federal courts, this would remain the prosecution position: that Mumia is guilty and there are no legal or factual reasons to re-consider his conviction.

Once there has been a conviction and sentence, the D.A. does not have unilateral authority or power to reverse a criminal conviction, order a new trial or dismiss the original charges. That decision rests with the post-conviction review judge or appeals court.

The D.A. does have enormous authority and credibility to argue to the courts that a case should be reversed, a new trial granted, or charges dismissed. The opinion of the D.A.s office is a persuasive authority to the reviewing court. And it was that process which resulted in overturning the convictions of 18 imprisoned men during the past three years. Those publicized reversals as well as Krasner's promises of criminal justice reform; his "no objection" to releasing on parole the surviving, imprisoned MOVE 9 men and woman; his partial ban of cash bail and de-escalation of arrests for minor, non-violent offenses, and his record as a civil rights lawyer gave him credentials as a "progressive District Attorney"

Krasner's response to Mumia's appeal is an undeniable legal blow and

has most likely blocked the judicial path to Mumia's freedom.

To any who held out hope that Krasner would "do the right thing," Krasner has never given any indication that he questioned Mumia's conviction, even when—after protest and pressure—he agreed not to oppose the appeal process.

In fact, Krasner was explicit when questioned during the proceedings to have him removed from Mumia's case on grounds he was biased in favor of Mumia. Krasner was allowed to continue prosecuting Mumia in the Supreme Court ruling on December 16, 2020. During those proceedings, Larry Krasner assured the investigating judge that, "in my opinion based upon all the facts in law [sic] that I have is that he [Abu-Jamal] is guilty." Further, the investigating judge found all prosecutors involved, including D.A. Krasner, stated, "it is their intention to defend the conviction, and that they are aware of no evidence that would support or justify a decision to the contrary or to concede any PCRA relief."

It is precisely because Larry Krasner has a profile and reputation as "a progressive District Attorney," and faces hostility from the Fraternal Order of Police, and supporters of racist "law and order" who will be supporting anti-Krasner candidates in this year's D.A. election that his total rejection of Mumia's claim is so damaging.

The rejection of Mumia's appeals by this "progressive D.S." is not just equal to those of prior D.A.s but is more damaging. The position of the "progressive District Attorney" in opposition to Mumia's appeal provides additional rationale and justification for the appeals courts to reject Mumia's appeals.

Krasner must be uncompromisingly exposed and denounced as not different from Judge Sabo and prior prosecutors. Mumia's prosecution, his conviction, death sentence and appeal denials are an indictment of the entire

racist capitalist injustice system. Opening up Mumia's case exposes the racism, rot, corruption, brutality and fundamental injustice of the whole system. "Progressive" D.A. Krasner would not and cannot go down that road and keep favor with the elements of the ruling class that seek to provide a "progressive" cover to delay and distract those who fight not only for Mumia, but for justice for all.

What is to be done to free Mumia? Continue to mobilize protest action demanding the Department of Corrections and Governor Wolf imme-

diately release Mumia—along with prisoners 50-years and older to stop death by COVID-19. In Pennsylvania the governor has the executive power to commute sentences and release prisoners who are serving life without parole.

We must expand the international campaign for Mumia's freedom, centered on the understanding that Mumia is factually innocent and framed, that he never should have been arrested and prosecuted for a murder the state knows he did not commit. International mobilization has been critical to our prior limited victories. Now more than ever, we need to grow in

strength and numbers Mumia's defenders, including labor, Black Lives Matter, human rights and civil rights organizations, and left organizations in rallies and mass demonstrations.

Rachel Wolkenstein (former attorney for Mumia Abu-Jamal); and for the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal laboractionmumia.org; Jack Heyman (International Longshore and Warehouse Union-retired); Bob Mandel (Oakland Education Association-retired; member of Adult School Teachers United); Carole Seligman (Socialist Viewpoint co-editor)

Farewell Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald

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 acknowledge historic wrongs perpetrated against Black Americans.

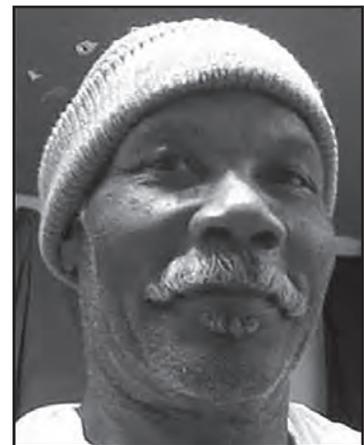
Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald was a social justice activist, and it is inhumane to imprison activists for 50-years or more, particularly while others convicted of comparable crimes have served significantly less time. A closer look reveals the only differences between those serving shorter sentences and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



Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald

Grand Jury Refuses to Indict Jalil Muntaqim

BY DAVID ANDREATTA

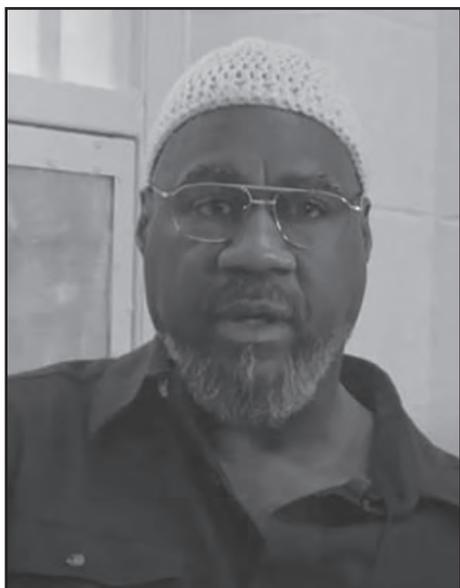
A Monroe County grand jury has declined to indict a controversial parolee who was facing felony charges for registering to vote illegally that could have sent him back to prison.

The parolee, Jalil Muntaqim, was imprisoned under his given name, Anthony Bottom, for nearly 50 years for his role in the murder of two New York City police officers in 1971 before his release in October.

The Monroe County Public Defender's Office confirmed Tuesday that the grand jury last week "no-billed" Muntaqim's case, meaning the jury declined to indict. The case is now sealed.

"I think a no-bill was the right outcome in this case," said his public defender, Jaquelyn Grippe. "Mr. Muntaqim is a truly inspirational person and I can say that it was my privilege to get to know him through this process."

Originally from San Francisco, Muntaqim, 69, settled in Brighton with a friend upon his release.



Jalil Muntaqim, also known as Anthony Bottom, in an interview prior to his release on parole.

A day after being set free, however, Muntaqim filled out paperwork given to him by the county Department of Human Services, which helps former prisoner's acclimate to civilian life. The packet included a voter registration form, despite Muntaqim not being eligible to vote.

Prosecutors alleged that when Muntaqim filed his voter registration form with the county Board of Elections, he committed two felonies—tampering with public records and offering a false instrument for filing. He was also charged with providing a false affidavit, a misdemeanor.

The Board of Elections subsequently rejected his registration, and the former chair of the county Republican party, William Napier, seized on the matter as a question of voter fraud.

District Attorney Sandra Doorley has said that the charges against Muntaqim were about answering allegations of voter fraud in the weeks before the election and that the case seemed straightforward.

"Is it a major thing?" she asked of the charges. "No."

If convicted on the charges, Muntaqim's parole status would have required him to return to prison.

Muntaqim enjoyed much public support from family, friends, and Rochester's activist community, who echoed the argument of his public defender that Muntaqim did not realize he was not eligible to vote.

Parolees are not allowed to vote in New York upon release from prison without receiving a conditional pardon to restoring voting rights from the governor.

Governor Andrew Cuomo has issued such pardons as a matter of course on a monthly basis since 2018, when he signed

an executive order directing the corrections commissioner to submit to him each month a list of every felon newly eligible for parole, with each name to be "given consideration for a conditional pardon that will restore voting rights."

Most parolees receive their pardon, which does not expunge their criminal record, within four to six weeks of their release. Cuomo denied Muntaqim a voting pardon in November, however, after news reports of Muntaqim's predicament.

A national movement to restore voting rights to formerly incarcerated people is gaining steam, and Muntaqim's case became a rallying cry for advocates.

"I certainly hope that legislation is passed in the future that expands on Governor Cuomo's executive order allowing parolees the basic right to vote," Grippe said.

Twenty states allow parolees to vote upon their release, according to the Sentencing Project, an advocacy group for criminal justice reform.

The concept of disenfranchising felons dates to colonial days, when certain criminals were stripped of rights in a practice known as "civil death." Later Americans applied a racist twist to the practice after the Civil War, when many states used it to deprive Black men of the vote they had recently gained.

Today, the impact of these laws still falls disproportionately on poor people of color.

The Supreme Court interprets the Constitution in such a way that upholds these restrictions.

—WXXI News. March 30, 2021

<https://www.wxxinews.org/post/grand-jury-refuses-indict-parolee-jalil-muntaqim-voter-fraud-charges>

Knee on the Neck of Long-term Political Prisoners

By J.B. GERALD

The line between clearly defined political prisoners and prisoners targeted to make points for the political power structure is hidden. Criminalization is a standard tool of racial supremacists. George Floyd's death is familiar a thousand times over because it restates the predominant ethic of law enforcement's historical treatment of a minority population as revealed in the examples of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Fred Hampton.

But consider the less well known and large number of former Black Panther and other community activists serving intolerable prison terms which have taken away their normal lives in trials that can't match objective standards of justice or international law. Guilty verdicts thrived on the targeting mechanisms of the FBI's COINTELPRO operation, withheld testimony, "bought" witnesses, rights violations, and obvious misidentifications suggesting that U.S. law enforcement has a difficulty telling Black people apart. At particular risk of injustice were those who converted to Islam and were targeted for destruction.

Two troubling examples: (*aka* Hubert Gerold Brown) Imam Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin was a target of CONTELPRO. It's hard to explore the facts and conviction in his case without understanding that another has confessed to the crime he was convicted of and the crime's perpetrator as described by witnesses bore little resemblance to Al-Amin. The likelihood of his innocence becomes law enforcement's shame. Serving a sentence of life without parole, afflicted after confinement with a rare form of bone cancer, an imam deprived of his community, Al Amin's most recent appeal to the Supreme Court was denied in April 2020.

Consider Jeff Fort (*aka* Abdul Malik Ka'bah) of Chicago, whose case and

168-year sentence have become so buried in history the reader may not have heard of him. Fort, a founder of Chicago's Blackstone Rangers, the Black P. Stones, and El Rukn, is considered the first American convicted on charges of terrorism. His life is the story of a community leader and gang leader, surviving under the knee of supremacist law enforcement which made its final judgement with the intentionally unbearable sentences he currently serves. *Wikipedia* notes that currently he's confined at the Florence Colorado supermax since 2006 under a "no-human contact order since his arrival." An alternative judgement to law enforcement's was his mother's, quoted here from an ancient piece ("The Making of Jeff Fort," 1988) by Tom Brune and James Ylisela, who wrote:

"Fort's mother recited parables. 'We lived on 63rd Street, and there was an alley you could go through. In those days, it wasn't dope fiends, it was old men being wineheads. I would cook [for her ten children] and when I would go into the parlor and sit down and come back, all my food is gone. I'm thinking somebody's coming in getting my food. I didn't have no dream that it was Jeff taking the food out there and feeding those people.

"He was out there, giving all of them a plate. He just couldn't stand seeing people hungry. I just sat there and tears ran down. I said, 'This child is an unusual child.'"

Former Los Angeles Black Panther Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald died March 28, 2021, shackled in hospital following his second stroke. He served over fifty years of two life sentences and was eligible for parole. There was and remains more than reasonable doubt of his guilt in the crimes he was charged with.

Sentenced to fifty years for knocking the gun out of a police officer's

hand in Texas, Xinachtli (*aka* Alvaro Luna Hernandez) is eligible for parole July 18, 2021.

Finally released from 49 years in prison after eleven denials of parole, Jalil Muntaqim, tried to register to vote but technically before he was eligible to vote again. Arrested on charges connected to voter fraud, the charges were pressed by the District Attorney which would have returned Muntaqim to prison for the rest of his life, but the county grand jury refused to indict him.

A veteran of military service in Germany and Vietnam and a former Black Panther leader in Omaha, Edward Poindexter, is serving the fiftieth year of a life sentence in Nebraska's State Penitentiary for alleged involvement in bombing a policeman. There is a strong possibility that Poindexter and Mondo we Langa, (*aka* David Rice) his co-convicted, were and are entirely innocent. Mondo we Langa has already died in prison. Poindexter, a diabetic with triple-bypass heart surgery and an eye cataract, uses a wheelchair. Petitions continue to urge the Nebraska Pardons Board to commute Poindexter's sentence to time already served.

Imprisoned since 1973, under a life sentence, a model prisoner without betraying his beliefs Sundiata Acoli (*aka* Clark Edward Squire) is still held in prison and denied the parole he was first eligible for in 1992. The mechanism of his incarceration could be one of vengeance and extra-judicial punishment to extract information. The legal system apparently considers him to have information about the escape from prison to Cuba of Assata Shakur. Marilyn Buck, considered an accomplice to Ms. Shakur's escape, was released from prison to die from a cancer which was too slow to be treated at federal Prison in California. Dr.

Mutulu Shakur, considered the escape's mastermind has been fighting cancer after repeated unjust denials of parole and release. Acoli at 84 has had COVID and suffers from dementia among other illnesses. A petition to New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy asks to commute the sentence and bring Sundiata Acoli home. It is hard enough to be an elder outside of prison.

With a judicial ruling allowing a review of previously filed appeals in his case, Mumia Abu Jamal's current attorneys have filed actions supporting his claims. Recently he was shackled during his hospitalization for COVID and congestive heart failure. He has also reported an excruciating skin condition. In a letter published in *The Jamal Journal* urging protest of medical neglect in the treatment of Mumia Abu Jamal, Ramona Africa cites medical neglect as contributing factors in the deaths of Delbert Africa, Phil Africa, and Merle Africa. (see the Move 9¹).

North Americans rarely speak of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, born in Pakistan, a Muslim mother and neuroscientist who studied at the University of Houston Texas, then transferred to take her BA from M.I.T., and PhD from Brandeis. Her field of expertise included areas of biological warfare and viruses and all information about her could be "constructed." She was a terrorist suspect wanted by the FBI for questioning when she was disappeared in Pakistan, March 2003. She was subsequently identified as prisoner 650 held at Bagram Air Force Base. Prisoner 650 was reportedly continuously raped by the prison officers at Bagram. There is strong evidence she was tortured.

She has claimed she was kidnapped by the intelligence agencies of the U.S. and Pakistan. Shortly after being reported as in American custody for four years, in 2008 she reappeared with her son at age 12 to be arrested in Afghanistan on suspicion of terrorism. In 2010 she was tried and sentenced in

New York City to eighty-six years in prison for allegedly attempting to shoot at the entourage of U.S. military and law enforcement personnel which held her prisoner under detention in 2008. U.S. personnel were untouched by bullets. Dr. Siddiqui was shot in the torso. With no powder marks from firing a weapon on her clothes or self, evidence against her is non-existent, far-fetched, and unlikely. Her family fears she has been tortured within the U.S. prison system.

She is said to have been in solitary confinement for twelve years. Incarcerated at Carswell Medical prison, she has refused to see lawyers and communicate with her family. Two of her children survived her initial arrest in 2003 and were held in criminal circumstances. Her son Muhammad, age seven at arrest in 2003, was reportedly kept in F.B.I. custody from 2003 to 2009. Her daughter Mariam, age five at arrest, was reportedly kept in a "cold dark room" at Bagram Air Force base before return to the Siddiqui family in 2010. A third child, Suleman was only

six months old when taken from his mother and was never returned and is feared dead. The facts of Dr. Siddiqui's case are so publicly outrageous that either she was pre-empted for covert uses by U.S. and allied intelligence operations or elements of the war on terror are run by Nazis.

There's an absence of mercy in unbearable sentences.

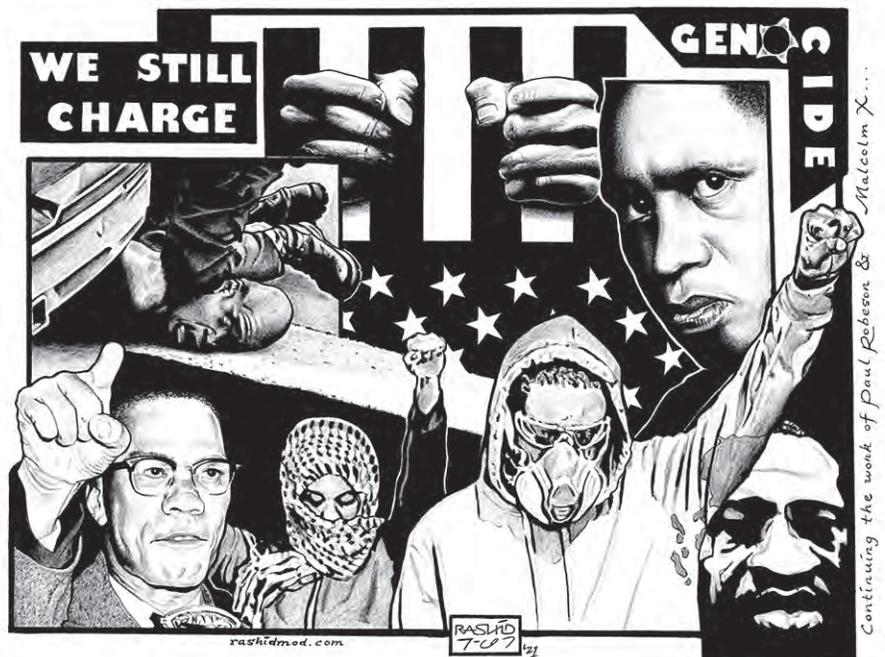
—*Dissident Voice*, April 11, 2021

<https://dissidentvoice.org/2021/04/a-knee-on-the-neck-of-long-term-political-prisoners/>

1 "Where Are The MOVE 9, Who Spent Decades In Prison For Police Officer James Rump's Death, Now?"

In the four decades since nine members of MOVE, a Black revolutionary group, were sent to prison for the shooting of Philadelphia police officer James Rump, some have died, and the rest are adjusting to life outside of prison after being released on parole.

<https://www.oxygen.com/true-crime-buzz/where-are-the-move-9-convicted-in-james-rumps-death-now>



Artwork by Kevin "Rashid" Johnson

Sundiata Acoli Denied Parole Again

After nearly half-century behind bars, elderly Black Panther denied parole

By NATASHA LENNARD

Sundiata Acoli is 84-years-old and has been in prison for nearly half-a-century. When the state of New Jersey locked him up in 1974, Acoli was not sentenced to die behind bars; he has been eligible for parole for almost three decades. The much-loved father and grandfather has an exemplary disciplinary record and a stellar history of work and academic achievement while incarcerated.

His parole bid in February was denied. Acoli will likely not live long enough to appear before the board again.

The idea that this elderly Black community leader could be a risk to society outside the prison walls is laughable. Yet Acoli's release does not appear to be on the horizon. He has been consistently denied parole since the early 1990s. His last bid, in February, was again denied. The parole board determined that he should be considered ineligible for another hearing for an extended but unspecified period of time. Acoli will likely not live long enough to appear before the board again.

He is in poor health, as you might expect at his age, after enduring 48-years of prison's effects on the body. His conditions include advancing

dementia, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, emphysema, and glaucoma. Acoli survived a serious Covid-19 infection last year, which left him 30 pounds lighter and more infirm.

Even for those who believe in the possibility of justice through carceral punishment—and I do not—Acoli's ongoing imprisonment should be deemed unacceptable. It has long been the case, however, that the criminal legal system denies individuals in Acoli's position even the dregs of earnest due process afforded incarcerated people. He is a former Black Panther, convicted for the killing of a New Jersey state trooper in the same incident that saw the revolutionary Assata Shakur wounded and captured.

The reason he has not been released, according to his longtime friend and supporter the Reverend Lukata Mjumbe, "has been politics." Nearly 50 religious leaders from across New Jersey urged Governor Phil Murphy to immediately release Acoli last year, when the incarcerated elder was rushed to hospital with Covid-19 complications.

In a recent interview with former political prisoner and Black Panther

Marshall "Eddie" Conway, Mjumbe said, "Moving forward, we're not dealing with a focus and a fixation on politics, we're calling for the compassionate release of an 84-year-old man who has been in prison for almost 48 years, who was born in 1937, incarcerated in 1973, who is a grandfather, who is a father, who is sick and who needs to come home."

New Jersey introduced one of the first bills in the country last year to reduce prison sentences during the pandemic. Around 2,600 incarcerated individuals in the state, who were nearing the end of their prison terms, have been released; those convicted of murder were unsurprisingly considered ineligible. Coronavirus-related releases around the country have consistently upheld blunt legal-criminal taxonomies in determining who should go free, but they fail to account for a number of vulnerable individuals at extremely low risk of re-offending, like Acoli, who nonetheless have been deemed "violent" in perpetuity.

Even without the context of a pandemic, the grounds for freeing the 84-year-old are abundant. It is, however, cases like Acoli's—and other long-incarcerated Black liberation leaders—that reveal the true nature of a system, in which so-called blue lives matter and Black lives do not.

Calls for Acoli's release do not focus on the extreme persecution faced by Black liberation fighters at the time of the former Panther's arrest; they don't need to. By any measure, he has more than served his time. In 2014, a New Jersey appeals court challenged Acoli's previous parole denial and ordered his release. The judges wrote, "Acoli has paid the penalty under the laws of this state for his crimes." A higher court later reversed the ruling.



Sundiata Acoli, Illustration: Clay Rodery for The Intercept

Powerful police unions fight with near-religious zeal to ensure that “cop killers” never see a day of freedom. Since 2000, eight former Black Panther Party members have died while incarcerated, all at least ten years younger than Acoli. Following changes to New York parole guidelines and parole board makeup, however, two former Panthers have been granted parole in recent years, both having served over 40 years in prison.

Like Acoli, Herman Bell and Jalil Muntaqim posed no risk to society and were regarded as mentors by numerous younger people with whom they had served time. They were also the targets of tireless racist and reactionary police union campaigns. Acoli’s fate is determined by a different state’s powers, but the grounds for his long overdue freedom are no less strong.

The same is true of Mumia Abu-Jamal, 67; Russell Maroon Shoatz, 77; and Mutulu Shakur, 70—all Black elders whose ongoing imprisonments constitute an excess of carceral cruelty. Each of the men has at some point in the last year contracted Covid-19. Shoatz has stage four colon cancer and was reportedly held for ten days in a gymnasium with 30 other coronavirus-positive detainees who all shared one toilet. Abu-Jamal tested positive for the virus earlier this month; he, too, lost 30 pounds, has congestive heart failure, and a skin condition that has flared up, leaving exposed bloody wounds all over his body.

Laura Whitehorn, co-founder of the Release Aging People in Prison campaign, and herself a former political prisoner, tweeted that Acoli, Abu-Jamal, Shoatz, and Shakur, among others, remain behind bars “while *Judas and the*

Black Messiah wins film awards”—referring to the recent Hollywood depiction of the betrayal and government execution of Black Panther Party Illinois chapter chair, Fred Hampton.

Anyone rightfully horrified on learning of the persecution Hampton faced must reckon with the fact that a number of his contemporaries remain in cages, where, without intervention, they will die. As Whitehorn wrote, “All elders, all ill, should have been released years ago.”

—*The Intercept*, March 28, 2021

<https://theintercept.com/2021/03/28/elderly-prisoner-black-panther-parole/>



Prison Mail Surveillance

BY AARON GORDON

In March 2018, the Virginia Department of Corrections (VA DOC) was trying to gain more control over the mail its approximately 30,000 incarcerated people received. Mainly, it wanted to close a loophole in which people posed as businesses so they could include color photos. A contact at the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections recommended they talk to a Florida company called Smart Communications about its product, MailGuard.

Smart Communications offered to do a whole lot more than that. It offered VA DOC a suite of products that would make it possible for prison officials to monitor and search all inmate communications with the outside world. It would create a searchable database of everything each prisoner said and received, along with who said it. And, the company claimed, it would include postal mail in this dragnet through its MailGuard product, by

scanning each mail item at a remote facility and uploading PDFs for incarcerated people to view from a tablet. The people in prisons would never receive the physical letter.

The MailGuard system works by having senders address their mail not to the prison, but to a PO box rented by Smart Communications. For state DOCs, the company offers to set up a mail receiving facility in the state, and then ship the mail to its Florida facility for processing. There, the mail is opened, scanned, and uploaded. According to the proposal, inmates would then log into a kiosk to view the PDFs of their mail remotely. After 30 days, the mail is destroyed. There is no way for incarcerated people to ever physically hold or recover their mail.

And, the company said, it would not only track incarcerated people inside the walls, but their friends, family, and anyone who sent mail to them, too.

“Investigators will have access to the postal mail sender’s Email address, physical address, IP Address, mobile cell number, GEO GPS location tracking, exact devices used when accessing system [sic], any related accounts the sender may also make or use,” Smart Communications said in a proposal for VA DOC. The proposal and other documents were obtained through a public records request.

Motherboard is posting the proposal, which was created specifically for the VA DOC, because it shows how a private company proposed a complex surveillance system that would keep tabs not just on incarcerated people but also on the people who sent mail to them, even if they were not suspected of a crime.

This system, Smart Communications boasted, “eliminates anonymity of postal mail, now postal mail has a digital fingerprint with new intelligence.” And this intelligence could be used to crack down on “gang members.”

When *Motherboard* asked Smart Communications for comment on this article, a lawyer for the company demanded that we not publish any of the documents, which were obtained using freedom of information laws that journalists regularly use to procure public documents about how taxpayer money is being spent and the general dealings of a democratic government.

“I understand you have obtained information relating to a confidential proposal that Smart Communications previously made to the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Corrections. Please be advised that this proposal and the information therein was provided pursuant to a confidentiality understanding/NDA and was clearly and prominently designated as CONFIDENTIAL, PROPRIETARY, and TRADE SECRET,” David Gann, general counsel with Smart Communications wrote in an email. “It should never have been shared with you or anyone else by the recipient. We will deal with that issue separately, but regardless, Smart Communications demands that you, *Vice Media*, *Motherboard*, and any other affiliated companies or entities immediately cease and desist all efforts to further disseminate or distribute any information obtained in that confidential proposal. Smart Communications further demands that you immediately destroy all copies of its proposal.”

In its FOI response, the VA DOC claimed that it did not have any non-

disclosure agreement with Smart Communications. The documents obtained as part of this request were automatically made available through Muckrock, the nonprofit platform *Motherboard* used to file the request on. *Motherboard* has redacted some inmate personal information and personal contact information for Smart Communications executives.

“Smart Communications’ total surveillance of every aspect of communications with incarcerated people is a chilling convergence of the expansion and privatization of the surveillance state ...”

“Smart Communications takes the protection of its intellectual property and confidential/trade secret information very seriously, and it will pursue all violations to the fullest extent of the law,” Gann continued. “Please immediately confirm receipt of this email, that you will not further violate Smart Communications’ intellectual property rights by publishing any aspect of its confidential proposal, and that you have destroyed all copies of Smart Communications’ confidential material.”

The proposal, which VA DOC did not ultimately pursue, does not explain in detail how Smart Communications’ platform works, it generally lists its capabilities and prices. VA DOC opted to spend about \$7-million-a-year on an in-house solution of photocopying and shredding all mail before delivering the copied version to people in prison. But Pennsylvania did sign a contract with Smart Communications, through an emergency procurement process, due to a controversial and contested claim of a surge in mail being laced with synthetic marijuana.

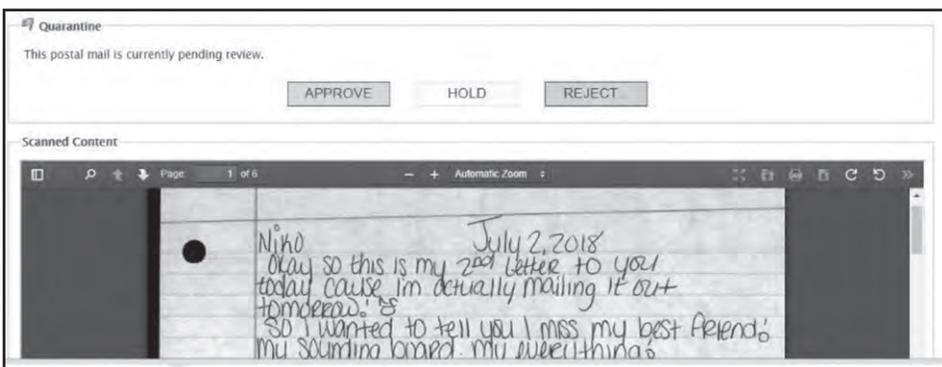
The rollout was “a mess,” according to Quinn Cozzens, staff attorney at the Pittsburgh-based Abolitionist Law Center, a public interest law firm.

“Mail was delayed for weeks or months and was regularly delivered to the wrong person. Color photos were scanned and delivered in black and white, often with portions of the picture cut off. They rejected mail and returned it to the sender without explanation for why it was rejected.” Plus, the promised kiosks never materialized, as Pennsylvania DOC staff printed out the PDFs on copy paper and handed them to incarcerated people just like VA DOC does.

While Pennsylvania’s deal with Smart Communications was widely reported at the time, the extent of the company’s capability to track people not in prison has not been previously known.

“Smart Communications has been boasting of their dystopian surveillance system at least since they were awarded a contract by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections in 2018,” said Cozzens. “Smart Communications’ total surveillance of every aspect of communications with incarcerated people is a chilling convergence of the expansion and privatization of the surveillance state on one hand, and a growing private industry that profits from holding human beings in cages on the other.”

The extent of Smart Communications’ reach across the



Letters can be approved or rejected by Department of Correction staff. (Screenshot: Virginia Department of Corrections)

U.S. mass incarceration landscape is not yet known. In communications with the Nebraska Department of Corrections in October 2018, which *Motherboard* also obtained *via* a public records request, a company representative boasted of its contract with Pennsylvania and claimed to be “under contract negotiations with Virginia, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Maryland, Utah, and Florida!”

At least in Virginia’s case, this was a bit of an exaggeration, as Virginia received a proposal but never pursued it. The majority of the company’s clients appear to be regional and county prisons.

“Written correspondence is one of the most, if not the most, important means for incarcerated people to maintain connections with family and loved ones outside of prison,” Cozzens said. “Smart Communications prevents incarcerated people from ever holding a drawing sent to them by their child, or an original photograph, or a handwritten letter from a loved one that hasn’t been scanned and reprinted on a sheet of copier paper.”

In the proposal, Smart Communications estimated it would pocket \$1.8 million in profits over a five-year period through payments from VA DOC for equipment and maintenance. At least in PA DOC’s case, incarcerated people do not have to pay to access their mail, although Smart Communications told VA DOC that if it opted for its digital communications suite, people sending messages to people in prisons would have to pay 50 cents a message or \$1 a photo.

Smart Communications offered VA DOC a system to monitor, approve, and potentially reject mail using a “management console” giving them “instant access to the entire VADOC database of inmate mail.” Investigators can receive real-time alerts *via* text or email when an inmate marked as a gang member or otherwise flagged receives an item of mail.

The company further offered VA DOC the “Smart Tracker” system, the one that tracks the people who send incarcerated people mail. The proposal doesn’t detail how the system works, but it appears to use the data people input to create an account through the “Smart Jail Mail” portal to connect them to the letters they send. The company retains all digital copies of mail for seven years, meaning if the system is used in enough prison systems, over time it could generate a considerable database about who associates with whom.

Smart Communications told VA DOC that if it opted for its digital communications suite, people sending messages to people in prisons would have to pay 50 cents a message or \$1 a photo.

This creates real privacy concerns for people whose only “crime” is trying to communicate with someone in prison, says Aaron Mackey, a staff attorney at the Electronic Frontier Foundation who has worked on prisoner privacy issues.

“People who communicate with prisoners are now going to have reduced autonomy, privacy and expression and associational rights,” Mackey said, “because now, wholly innocent individuals who are trying to just communicate with family and loved ones, members of their community and so on, are now going to be caught up in this surveillance.” Even institutions like social service organizations and religious leaders will be caught up in the dragnet, Mackey warned, potentially getting flagged as troublesome figures because they communicate with people in prisons.

But the most significant issue, both Mackey and Cozzens say, is the emotional toll not receiving physical mail takes on incarcerated people. Even before the pandemic, many prisons have gradually shifted to encourage mostly digital interactions through video visitation and similar efforts. Physical mail was a key link between people in prison and their support networks. That link is being cut.

To be sure, people in prison do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy even for physical mail. Prior to the Smart Communications contract, all postal mail in Pennsylvania state prisons was opened and physically inspected for contraband by prison staff and skimmed for contents, Cozzens said. But it was rarely scanned and preserved. Once the initial inspection was complete, the mail was delivered to the person it was addressed to.

Cozzens sees a huge difference between that approach and what Smart Communications is doing. “There is quite a difference between a prison guard potentially skimming over a letter one time before delivering it, and every person who sends mail to an incarcerated person having their letters scanned, rendered digitally searchable, stored for seven years, and on top of that their personal information is also stored and meticulously tracked.” He compared it to police agencies merely writing down a license plate when they pull someone over versus deploying license plate readers on a mass scale.

“This is just another step down that road,” Mackey said, “where prisoners increasingly have diminished rights and privacy.”

—*Motherboard Tech by Vice*, March 24, 2021

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/wx8ven/prison-mail-surveillance-company-keeps-tabs-on-those-on-the-outside-too>

Free Gaza

Statement for our Palestinian sisters and brothers!

BY KEVIN COOPER

Kevin Cooper sent this message and two paintings to an art exhibit that can be viewed online, Art Against Imprisonment,¹ a collection of art by Palestinian and international prisoners in solidarity with Palestine.

I'm writing this statement in solidarity with and support of our sisters and brothers in Palestine.

As an oppressed man and a member of a historically oppressed people, it is truly important to me to support all oppressed people in this world who are being denied their universal right to life as well as their basic human rights.

The government of Israel does not want true and lasting peace with Palestine. If it was peace that they wanted, they could have had it a very long time ago. What they want is land, the land of the Palestinian people, and they want it by any means necessary.

Like the Native Americans of this country who had their land stolen from them by oppressors here, the

same is happening to our Palestinian sisters and brothers over there.

As the oppressed African Americans over here are being shot and murdered by the police for any reason and for no reason at all, the same is being done to the people of Palestine by the police and military over there.

As the people of South Africa once lived in a state of apartheid, our sisters and brothers in Palestine are living in those same inhumane conditions. They live in a caste system built and maintained by the oppressive government of Israel—just as the people in India, called the untouchables, are living in that type of caste system.

Palestinians are forced to live, against their will, in the world's largest open prison called the Gaza strip, yet they keep their dignity, their self-respect and will to live intact. And, like the Native Americans, African Americans, people of South Africa and most oppressed people in the history of



the world—they fight back against their oppressors!

The willingness to fight and to die in order to live free from oppression is an inspiration to all oppressed people, no matter where they are.

They stood by us in Ferguson after the murder of Mike Brown and in all other times when we needed their support. One of our greatest warrior queens to ever fight for us and them and all oppressed people throughout this, Sister Angela Y. Davis, stated that “Freedom Is a Constant Struggle.” Because this is true, we all must stand with, support and help our sisters and brothers in Palestine.

As for my paintings—“Free Gaza” speaks for itself, and Bob Marley was a human rights activist who used his powerful music to fight for human rights!

Kevin Cooper is an innocent man on San Quentin's Death Row in California. He continues to struggle for exoneration and to abolish the death penalty in the whole U.S. Learn more about his case at: www.kevincooper.org

Write to:

Kevin Cooper #C-65304 4-EB-82

San Quentin State Prison

San Quentin, CA 94974

www.freekevincooper.org



Painting by Kevin Cooper

¹ Art Against Imprisonment
<https://artagainstprison.org>

Dear Socialist Viewpoint,

The reality is, neighborhoods like South Side Chicago and Hunters Point, San Francisco, are underserved, intentionally impoverished, and over policed, due to systemic racism and discrimination, and also face a much higher rate of prosecution and incarceration.

The history of this country was founded on the idea that all men are created equal but only included white land-owning males, and if you weren't you were considered less than human. Ignoring that, and just looking at statistics and your experience as a white person in America isn't giving you a full scope of what it feels like to be under the crosshairs of the entire American society your whole life because of the color of your skin.

I grew up on Third Street in San Francisco in the '80-'90s and only learned the concept of white privilege a few years ago. I could go into white neighborhoods and fit in, not be targeted by cops or adults except from other white kids who teased the way I spoke or dressed once in a while. I could walk into stores with a Black friend and be the one stealing candy or toys because the clerk followed him around like he was the criminal. I just thought "that's just the way it is" like the whole country did for over 400 years during the era of slavery, and the current state of affairs is a reflection of that.

White men have never known what it's like to be the target of systemic racism and discrimination built in by design in this country with the intention of concentrating the wealth and resources into the hands of the capitalist class by way of exploitation and oppression. What we know now as police, was originally organized to round up escaped enslaved people. The silent and hidden culture, which includes ignoring the voices of Black

peoples' experience in Western society, that goes along with it is finally coming into the light of day due to technology and it needs to end!

White people especially, can't ignore or dismiss that history and claim to be in solidarity with Black people just because we enjoy and benefit from Black culture—that's even more reason to acknowledge and take personal responsibility every day to help create a bridge out of the violent past and present by listening to the voices of marginalized communities and making change, accordingly, working towards a peaceful future together in unity.

The bottom line is that the profit motive of production is the fundamental problem with the capitalist system. That margin, the profit margin, is the space that allows room for ills like racism, oppression, and exploitation, to become profitable by pitting people against each other and makes an asset out of what is actually destroying life on Earth. Capitalism promotes and perpetuates the destructive side of humanity, so that a tiny percentage of the world's population can accumulate more wealth than could ever be spent.

The world has enough wealth and resources to be able to afford to restructure the economic and production systems to be in favor of life and the future of humanity, rather than profit. All we really need to know is what's needed, where it needs to go and the logistics to make that happen. Everything else is smoke and mirrors.

The profit motive goes against the social nature of humanity. We came millions of years through the evolutionary process cooperating and living with the earth not off the earth because a cooperative effort always produces abundance.

The amount of destruction that has happened in the last 400 years is exponentially greater than all of the prior

40,000 years combined, for their precious profit which gets hoarded by people who have more money than could ever be spent.

Capitalism is not sustainable, everyone knows that. Socialism would more evenly distribute goods and resources while at the same time cutting out built-in obsolescence, cutting down on waste, and prolonging the future of life on this planet. The destruction caused by the capitalist system to humanity and the planet outweighs its benefits, so, by the nature of its very own laws, it's become obsolete.

Capitalism takes exponentially more than it gives back. It's time we take back what's rightfully ours, the workers need to take back the means of current production. And if we don't get it, shut it down. The work force of the world is what keeps society maintained and moving forward not capital, not profit, not corporations, and definitely not the boss. All they do is take as much as they can and give as little as possible to the workers. It's the workers—the working class, who controls and operates the means of production.

Without the production for profit motive, we wouldn't even need the police at all. We wouldn't have armed police enforcing capitalist violence and systemic racism. The police could become construction workers and do something constructive instead—or doctors, you can never have too many doctors, or teachers or firefighters.

Capitalism holds the value of not only material wealth but the pursuit of material wealth over the value of life itself. So, the pursuit for more is worth more than life itself under this system, which is why there's so many needless killings overwhelmingly rooted in economic inequality and of course, the enforcement of systematic racism. And that's what the cops are here to enforce,



“Kids don’t have a little brother working in the coal mine, they don’t have a little sister coughing her lungs out in the looms of the big mill towns of the Northeast. Why? Because we organized; we broke the back of the sweatshops in this country; we have child labor laws. Those were not benevolent gifts from enlightened management. They were fought for, they were bled for, they were died for by working people, by people like us. Kids ought to know that. That’s why I sing these songs. That’s why I tell these stories, dammit. No root, no fruit!”

~UTAH PHILLIPS

and the truth is most of them are just working people that want to feed their family who bought the wolf ticket called the American dream.

I’m not saying it’s totally impossible for someone with nothing to make \$1 million but the odds are less than one-in-a-million. We can do better. Being the leader of the world, the United States could lead the world in the direction of sustainability, equality, and justice through socialist revolution—taking economic power out of the hands of the capitalist class and

putting it into the hands of the working class and general public. Working people of the world have what it takes, and it’s only a matter of time before the evidence is finally clear enough for the world to see.

—Johnny Gould, @tandino415, April 26, 2021

Dear Editors,

Regarding: Naomi Klein’s February 21, 2021 *New York Times* op-ed, “Why Texas Republicans Fear the Green New Deal”¹

Naomi Klein has been a leftwing favorite. I have read her book, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, a book that lays out how the capitalist classes of many countries have used disasters to impose more privatizations and austerity over those people thrown off kilter and reduced to survival-by-the-minute in the wake of disaster. Sound theory.

Naomi Klein wrote a scathing article against the Republicans of Texas about how they fear the “Green New Deal.” There were only two slight barbs to the Democrats, one barb very telling. She did say that some Democrats have been willing partners in the Republican privatizations. The second barb is if the Democrats have courage, they can start implementing the Green New Deal.

It is so difficult to convince people that the Democratic Party is what you folks have known all your political lives—the graveyard of social movements. Bernie Sanders dashed the hopes of young people by luring them into the camps of Hillary and Biden. It never occurs to Klein that we can take the road to power where we don’t have to beg and plead rulers to do the right thing. That is the essence of Bolshevism—a party of workers and farmers who would rule in their own name and set policies as Bonnie Weinstein tirelessly writes, that benefit the majority and moves towards saving our planet.

Comradely,

Brian Schwartz, February 22, 2021

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/21/opinion/green-new-deal-texas-blackout.html?searchResultPosition=1>

“Art for all! Science for all! Bread for all!”

Remembering Louise Michel on the 150th Anniversary of the Paris Commune

By CLIFF CONNER AND ERIK WALLENBERG

One-hundred-and-fifty years ago, on March 18, 1871, the poor and working class of Paris—referred to dismissively by contemporary French officialdom as “the vile multitude”—rose in rebellion. They disarmed the existing national guard and armed the citizens of the city instead. By March 28 they had raised the red flag over the city, declared Paris a Commune, elected a citywide government, and created a new 200,000-strong democratically-organized Parisian National Guard. They outlawed the death penalty and military conscription, and sent delegates to other cities to help establish similar governments of the people throughout France.

It was a revolt of a historically unprecedented character, which although unable to consolidate its revolutionary accomplishments, left behind an extremely rich legacy. As the first example in history of a working-class movement taking power, the Paris Commune was an inspiration for the great socialist revolutions of the twentieth century.

The Commune’s experiment in working class rule with no mayor or higher officials—just elected bodies—was recognized then and still today as a glimmer of how a different world might be organized.¹ The Parisian workers movement of 1871 showed an awareness that the workers constituted a distinct social class with interests different from and opposed to the interests of the ruling capitalist class. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels hailed the Commune as the latest innovation in workers’ control, and working class movements have looked to the Paris Commune as an example to follow ever since.²

The social crisis that produced the Paris Commune grew out of a war between France and Prussia. In August 1870, the foolhardy Emperor Napoleon III ordered the French army to invade. On September 2, the emperor himself was captured, along with 100,000 French troops, by Bismarck’s army. His abject surrender opened the door to an invasion of France by the armies of the Prussian-led German Empire.

French resistance coalesced around a provisional “Government of National Defense” headed by Adolphe Thiers and other liberal republican opponents of the disgraced Emperor, but they proved lacking in the will to resist the German onslaught. The Paris Commune arose, first of all, to defend Paris—and by extension all of France—from Bismarck’s occupying army.

The Germans besieged Paris but failed to subdue the city. When the Paris Commune made clear its intention to continue the struggle for national independence, Thiers and Bismarck

collaborated to crush the Commune. The French army had been greatly weakened by the conflict with the Germans, who held large numbers of surrendered French troops as prisoners. So, Bismarck turned the imprisoned French troops over to Thiers, who immediately sent them to attack Paris.

The Paris Commune withstood attacks from the Germans and the French ruling class for more than two months. Although the working men and women of Paris acquitted themselves with courage, dignity, and honor, they were butchered by French troops under the political and military command of odoriferous villains such as Adolphe Thiers and General Marquis Gallifet.

The Parisians did not back down, even when their assailants wore French uniforms. Thiers’ army broke through the city’s external defenses and entered Paris on May 21, 1871. The National Guard and Parisian civilians, men and women alike, fought courageously arrondissement by arrondissement and



Engraving of Louise Michel by A. Néraudan (1871)

block by block, but eventually they were overwhelmed by superior military power and were forced to put down their arms. According to the ordinary rules of war of post-Enlightenment Europe, the disarmed combatants should have been accorded humane treatment, but the “republican” Thiers and his rightwing royalist allies instead unleashed a furious, vindictive massacre of the defenseless Parisian populace. An estimated 30,000 men, women, and children were cruelly slaughtered throughout the city over the ensuing days.

Louise Michel was one of the Commune’s most outstanding leaders. She was a member of the Vigilance Committee, a fierce fighter on the barricades, a spokeswoman for the uprising, and wrote extensively about her experience. Her memoir, *The Red Virgin*, written during several terms of imprisonment after the Commune’s defeat, provides an in-depth look into her life and political ideas. The title, at once a radical political and religious reference, casts Louise Michel as the mother of the Paris uprising, of anarchism and socialism, and of radical politics more generally. And at the same time, this name given to her by her admirers and collaborators was meant to claim her as a hero, a saint even, of the uprising.

This excerpt begins with her adolescent identification with tortured and mistreated animals. Michel shows us both how this imbued her with a desire to save them and to stop their suffering, and also helped her see the larger suffering of people in the world, in this case the peasants of the French countryside. Specifically, Michel notes how her opposition to the death penalty was born of witnessing the beheading of a goose. And while she shows great contempt for those people who are cruel to animals, she also identifies the way these same people are cruelly treated as the origin and reason for their callous abuse of their fellow creatures.

Animal cruelty in the brutality of factory farms and slaughterhouses has grown to a gargantuan scale since Louise Michel’s era. Beyond the mistreatment of animals for slaughter for food, or simply out of carelessness, Michel also called for an end to needless and inhumane experimentation on animals in the name of science. These cruelties continue today and remain driven by the same profit imperatives Michel discussed in her writing. While she was hopeful, certain even, that in the near future food would be available for all, we of course know that while scientific practices and advances might have made this possible, the economic and political system has squelched the possibility. In many ways, her insights are still valid in a world far from having reached the equality and justice she fought for.

Finally, beyond the plentitude of food made possible by science, Michel connects this call for a science to serve humanity with a call for a world where art is treated the same way. The world she is fighting for is a world where genius “will be developed, not snuffed out.”³ To her, “the privilege of knowledge is worse than the privilege of wealth,” and access to the arts is “a part of human rights.” On this, the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Paris Commune, we celebrate the life of Louise Michel, a fighter for a world where food, art, and science are for all, and for the good of all.

Excerpt from “Chapter 4: The Making of a Revolutionary” from the Memoirs of Louise Michel, *The Red Virgin*

Above everything else I am taken by the Revolution.⁴ It had to be that way. The wind that blew through the ruin where I was born, the old people who brought me up, the solitude and freedom of my childhood, the legends of the Haute-Marne, the scraps of knowledge gleaned from here and there—all that opened my ear to every harmony,

my spirit to every illumination, my heart to both love and hate.⁵

Everything intermingled in a single song, a single dream, a single love: the Revolution.

As far back as I can remember, the origin of my revolt against the powerful was my horror at the tortures inflicted on animals. I used to wish animals could get revenge, that the dog could bite the man who was mercilessly beating him, that the horse bleeding under the whip could throw off the man tormenting him. But mute animals always submit to their fate.

In the Haute-Marne, the brooks and the lush fields shaded with willows are filled with frogs during summer. You can hear them in the beautiful evenings, sometimes an entire choir.

The peasants cut frogs in two, leaving the front part to creep along in the sun, eyes horribly popping out, front legs trembling as they try to flee under the ground. Able neither to live nor to die, the poor beasts try to bury themselves beneath the dust or mud. In the bright sunlight their soft, enormous eyes shine with reproach.

And geese being fattened: The peasants nail a goose’s webbed feet to the floor to keep it from moving around. Or horses, which men gore with bulls’ horns. Animals always submit, and the more ferocious a man is toward animals, the more that man cringes before the people who dominate him.

The peasants give little animals and birds to their children for playthings. In spring on the thresholds of peasants’ cottages you can see poor little birds opening their beaks to two or three-year-old urchins who stuff them innocently with dirt. They hold up fledglings by a foot to watch them flap little featherless wings trying to fly, or they drag puppies or kittens like wagons over stones and through brooks. When the beast bites the child, the father crushes it under his shoe.

When I was a child, I saved many an animal. They filled up the crumbling Tomb, but it didn't matter if I added another to the menagerie.⁶ At first, I traded things with other children to get the nests of nightingales or linnets, but then the children came to understand that I raised the little creatures. Children are less cruel than people think; people just don't bother to make them understand.

And then there are dogs and cats that have grown too old: I have seen them thrown live into crayfish holes. If the woman who was throwing the beasts in had fallen into the hole herself, I wouldn't have reached out my hand to pull her out.

All of this happens without anyone really thinking about it. Labor crushes the parents; their fate grips them the way their child grips an animal. All around the globe people moan at the machine they are caught in, and everywhere the strong overwhelm the weak.

The dominant idea of an entire life can come from some random impression. When I was very small, I saw a decapitated goose. I was very little, I know, because I remember Nanette holding me by the hand to cross the hall.⁷ The goose was walking about stiffly, and where its head had been its neck was a bruised and bloody wound. It was a white goose with its feathers spattered with blood, and it walked like a drunkard while its head, thrown into a corner, lay on the floor with its eyes closed.

The sight of the headless goose had many consequences. One result was that the sight of meat thereafter nauseated me until I was eight or ten, and I needed a strong will and my grandmother's arguments to overcome that nausea. The impression of the headless goose lies at the base of my pity for animals, and it also lies at the base of my horror at the death penalty. Some years after I saw the headless goose, a parricide [the killing of a parent or other near relative] was guillotined in a neigh-

boring village, and at the time he was to die, the sensation of horror I felt for the man's anguish was mixed with my remembrance of the goose's torment.

The impression I had gotten from seeing the decapitated goose was kept vivid by stories of sufferings I heard at *écèrègnes*. During the long winter evenings of the Haute-Marne, the women of each village met in a special house set aside for them known as the *écèrègnes*. In their sessions, also called *écèrègnes*, they would spin and knit and tell old stories like those about the Ghost-in-Flames, who dances through the fields in his fiery robe, and gossip about what was going on in various peoples' homes...

My evenings at the village *écèrègnes* added to the feeling of revolt that I have felt time and time again. The peasants sow and harvest the grain, but they do not always have bread. One woman told me how during a bad year—that is what they call a year when the monopolists starve the country—neither she, nor her husband, nor their four children were able to eat every day. Owning only the clothes on their backs, they had nothing more to sell. Merchants who had grain gave them no more credit, not even a few oats to make a little bread, and two of their children died—from hunger, they thought.

"You have to submit," she said to me. "Everybody can't eat bread every day."

Her husband had wanted to kill the man who had refused them credit at 100 percent interest while their children were dying, but she stopped him. The two children who managed to survive went to work ultimately for the man whom her husband wanted to kill. The usurer hardly gave them any wages, but poor people, she said, "should submit to that which they cannot prevent."

Her manner was calm when she told me that story. I had gone hot-eyed with rage, and I said to her, "You should have let your husband do what he wanted to do. He was right."

I could imagine the poor little ones dying of hunger. She had made that picture of misery so distressing that I could feel it myself. I saw the husband in his torn shirt, his wooden shoes chafing his bare feet, going to beg at the evil usurer's and returning sadly over the frozen roads with nothing. I saw him shaking his fists threateningly when his little ones were lying dead on a handful of straw. I saw his wife stopping him from avenging his own children and others. I saw the two surviving children growing up with this memory, and then going off to work for that man: the cowards.

I thought that if that usurer had come into the *écèrègnes* at that moment I would have leaped at his throat to bite it, and I told her that. I was indignant at her believing everybody couldn't have food every day. Such stupidity bewildered me.

"You mustn't talk like that, little one," the woman said. "It makes God cry."

Have you ever seen sheep lift their throats to the knife? That woman had the mind of a ewe...

Meanwhile, the family property was bringing in so little that neither we nor my uncle, who cultivated half of it, was succeeding in making ends meet. Many similar years would follow, I felt. People couldn't always help others, and indeed something more than charity was necessary if each person was always to have something to eat. As for the rich, I had little respect for them.

I know the full reality of heavy work on the land. I know the woes of the peasant. He is incessantly bent over land that is as harsh as a stepmother. For his labor all he gets is leftovers from his master, and he can get even less comfort from thought and dreams than we can. Heavy work bends both men and oxen over the furrows, keeping the slaughterhouse for worn-out beasts and the beggar's sack for worn-out humans.

The land. That word is at the very bottom of my life. It was in the thick,

illustrated Roman history from which my whole family on both sides had learned how to read. My grandmother had taught me to read from it, pointing out the letters with her large knitting needle. Reared in the country, I understood the agrarian revolts of old Rome, and I shed many tears on the pages of that book. The death of the Greeks oppressed me then as much as the gallows of Russia did later.

How misleading are the Georgics and Eclogues about the happiness of the fields.⁸ The descriptions of nature are true, but the description of the happiness of workers in the fields is a lie. People who know no better gaze at the flowers of the fields and the beautiful fresh grass and believe that the children who watch over the livestock play there. The little ones want grass only to stretch out in and sleep a little at noon. The shadow of the woods, the yellowing crops that the wind moves like waves—the peasant is too tired to find them beautiful. His work is heavy, his day is long, but he resigns himself, he always resigns himself, for his will is broken. Man is overworked like a beast. He is half-dead and works for his exploiter without thinking. No peasants get rich by working the land; they only make money for people who already have too much.

Many men have told me, in words that echoed what the woman told me at the *écrit*: “You must not say that, little one. It offends God.” That’s what they said to me when I told them that everyone has a right to everything there is on earth.

My pity for everything that suffers—more perhaps for the silent beast than for man—went far, and my revolt against social inequalities went still further. It grew, and it has continued to grow, through the battles and across the carnage. It dominates my grief, and it dominates my life. There was no way that I could have stopped myself from throwing my life to the Revolution.

I have often been accused of having more solicitude for animals than for

people. It is certainly true that a sadness takes hold of me when men must destroy a beast to whom mercy cannot be shown without endangering others. You hold in your hands a being that wishes to live.

**There was no way that I
could have stopped
myself from throwing
my life to the
Revolution.**

Once, near where I lived, on the hill down which vineyards sloped, men had surrounded a poor she-wolf that howled as she tried to hide her little ones within her paws. I begged mercy for her, but naturally it wasn’t granted.

The mercy that as a child I asked for the wolf, I wouldn’t ask now for the men who behave worse than wolves toward the human race. Whatever the pity that wrings the heart, harmful beings must disappear. At the death of those who, like the Russian czars, represent the slavery and death of a nation, I would now have no more emotion than I would have about removing a dangerous trap from the road. Such persons can be struck down without remorse. If the opportunity arose, I would always feel that way, as I did yesterday, as I will tomorrow.

I was accused of allowing my concern for animals to outweigh the problems of humans at the Perronnet barricade at Neuilly during the Commune, when I ran to help a cat in peril.⁹ I did that, yes, but I did not abandon my duty. The unfortunate beast was crouched in a corner that was being scoured by shells, and it was crying out like a human being. I went to find him, and it didn’t take a minute. I put him more or less in safety, and later someone even picked him up.

Another incident happened more recently. Some mice had appeared in my cell at Clermont. I had a pile of wool coverings my mother and friends had sent me, and I immediately used them to stuff up all the mouseholes. From behind one of my makeshift plugs during the night, however, I heard a poor little cry, a cry so plaintive that it would have taken a heart of stone not to open up the blocked hole. So, I did, and the beast came out.

The mouse was either imprudent or a genius in knowing how to judge her world. From that moment on she came boldly up on my bed, carrying morsels of bread. She made fun of the gestures I made to get her to leave, and she used the underside of my pillow as a pantry and even worse.

She wasn’t in my cell when I was taken away, so I wasn’t able to put her in my pocket. I asked my neighbors in nearby cells to care for her, but I don’t know what happened to the poor beast.

Why should I be so sad over brutes, when reasoning beings are so unhappy? The answer is that everything fits together, from the bird whose brood is crushed to the humans whose nests are destroyed by war. The beast dies of hunger in his hole; man dies of it far away from his home. A beast’s heart is like a human heart, its brain like a human brain. It feels and understands. The heat and spark will always rise up. It can’t be crushed out.

Even in a gutter like a laboratory, a beast is sensitive both to caresses and to brutalities. More often it feels brutalities. People find it interesting to torture a poor animal to study mechanisms which are already well-known and which fresh tortures cannot make known any better, because the pain being inflicted causes the animal’s organs to function abnormally. When one of its sides is dug into, someone turns it over to dig into the other. Sometimes, in spite of the bonds that immobilize it, the animal in its pain

moves the delicate flesh on which someone is working. Then a threat or a blow teaches it that man is the king of animals. I have heard that during an eloquent demonstration a professor stuck his scalpel into the living animal as he would have into a pincushion, because he couldn't gesture holding the scalpel in his hand. The animal was already being sacrificed, so additional pain made little difference. At Alfort, people did sixty-some operations on the same horse, operations that did no good, but made the beast suffer as it stood there trembling on its bloody hooves with their torn-off shoes.

All this useless suffering perpetrated in the name of science must end. It is as barren as the blood of the little children whose throats were cut by Gilles de Retz and other madmen at the beginning of modern chemistry.¹⁰ Ultimately, a science, not gold, came out of their crucibles and their search for the philosopher's stone, but science came from the nature of the elements and not from the cruelties of experimenters.

New wonders will come from science, and change must come. Time raises up volcanoes under old continents, and time allows new feelings to grow. Soon there will be neither cruelty nor exploitation, and science will provide all humanity with enough food, with nourishing food.

I dream of the time when science will give everyone enough to eat. Instead of the putrefied flesh which we are accustomed to eating, perhaps science will give us chemical mixtures containing more iron and nutrients than the blood and meat we now absorb. The first bite might not flatter the palate as much as the food we now eat, but it will not be trichinated or rotten, and it will build stronger and purer bodies for men weakened by generations of famine or the excesses of their ancestors.

With the abundance of nourishing food in that future world, there must be

art, too. In that coming era, the arts will be for everyone. The power of harmonious colors, the grandeur of sculpted marble—they will belong to the entire human race. Genius will be developed, not snuffed out. Ignorance has done enough harm. The privilege of knowledge is worse than the privilege of wealth. The arts are a part of human rights, and everyone needs them.

**Everyone must take up a
torch to let the coming
era walk in light.**

**Art for all!
Science for all!
Bread for all!**

Neither music, nor marble, nor color, can by itself proclaim the Marseillaise of the new world. Who will sing out the Marseillaise of art? Who will tell of the thirst for knowledge, of the ecstasy of musical harmonies, of marble made flesh, of canvas palpitating like life? Art, like science and liberty, must be no less available than food.

Everyone must take up a torch to let the coming era walk in light. Art for all! Science for all! Bread for all!

Clifford D. Conner taught history of science at the School of Professional Studies, CUNY Graduate Center. He is the author of The Tragedy of American Science (Haymarket Books, 2020), A People's History of Science (Bold Type Books, 2005), and Jean Paul Marat: Tribune of the French Revolution (Pluto Press, 2012).

Erik Wallenberg is a PhD candidate in the History Program at CUNY Graduate Center. His research is focused on the portrayal of environmental crises, politics, and science in activist theater. He has taught classes in environmental history, global history, and environmental justice at Brooklyn College and the

University of Vermont and is Acquisitions Editor at Science for the People.

—*Science for the People*, March 29, 2021

<https://magazine.scienceforthepeople.org/web-extras/art-science-louise-michel-paris-commune/>

1 A major weakness of the Commune's revolutionary legacy was the exclusion of women from its elected leadership. Women could not vote or hold office. That did not, however, prevent women from playing crucial de facto leadership roles, or Louise Michel from becoming the Commune's most iconic leader.

2 In retrospect, the leadership of the Paris Commune is often associated with Marxism, but in fact Marxists were a distinct minority within it. Among the Commune's leaders, including Louise Michel, far more were admirers of Louis-Auguste Blanqui, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and Mikhail Bakunin than were partisans of Karl Marx.

3 Nearly 100 years later, evolutionary biologist and Science for the People member Dr. Stephen Jay Gould uttered a similar sentiment: "I am, somehow, less interested in the weight and convolutions of Einstein's brain than in the near certainty that people of equal talent have lived and died in cotton fields and sweatshops."

4 Translation from The Anarchist Library. Translated by Bullitt Lowry and Elizabeth Ellington Gunter. <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/louise-michel-the-red-virgin?v=1563328039#toc5>. Footnotes added by Cliff Conner and Erik Wallenberg for clarity and context.

5 The Haute-Marne is the department in northeastern France where Louise Michel was born and grew up.

6 Tomb is Michel's nickname for the half-ruined manor house where she had grown up: "the ruin where I was born."

7 Nanette was one of two close childhood friends whom Michel describes as "two remarkably intelligent young women who had never left the district." She deliberately avoids giving the family names "of persons whom I lost sight of long ago, to spare them the disagreeable surprise of being accused of conniving with revolutionaries."

8 Georgics and Eclogues: Poems about rural life by the Roman poet Virgil.

9 The Commune's defenders built many barricades to slow their enemies' advance. This one blocked rue Perronet in Neuilly-sur-Seine in Paris's 17th arrondissement.

10 a.k.a. Gilles de Rais, also, "the original Bluebeard," a fifteenth-century French alchemist tried and convicted of Satanism and murdering children.

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

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Note to Readers:

Socialist Viewpoint magazine has been edited and distributed by revolutionaries who share a common political outlook stemming from the old Socialist Workers Party of James P. Cannon, and Socialist Action from 1984 through 1999.

After being expelled from Socialist Action in 1999, we formed Socialist Workers Organization in an attempt to carry on the project of building a nucleus of a revolutionary party true to the historic teachings and program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

What we have found is that our numbers are insufficient for this crucial project of party building. This problem is not ours alone; it is a problem flowing from the division and fragmentation that has plagued the revolutionary movement in capitalist America and the world since the 1980s.

What we intend to do is to continue to promote the idea of building a revolutionary Marxist working class political party through the pages of Socialist Viewpoint magazine. We continue to have an optimistic outlook about the revolutionary potential of the world working class to rule society in its own name—socialism. We are optimistic that the working class, united across borders, and acting in its own class interests can solve the devastating crises of war, poverty, oppression, racism, sexism and environmental destruction that capitalism is responsible for.

We expect that revolutionaries from many different organizations, traditions, and backgrounds will respond to the opportunities that will arise, as workers resist the attacks of the capitalist system and government, to build a new revolutionary political party. Just as we join with others to build every response to war and oppression, we look forward to joining with others in the most important work of building a new mass revolutionary socialist workers' party as it becomes possible to do so.

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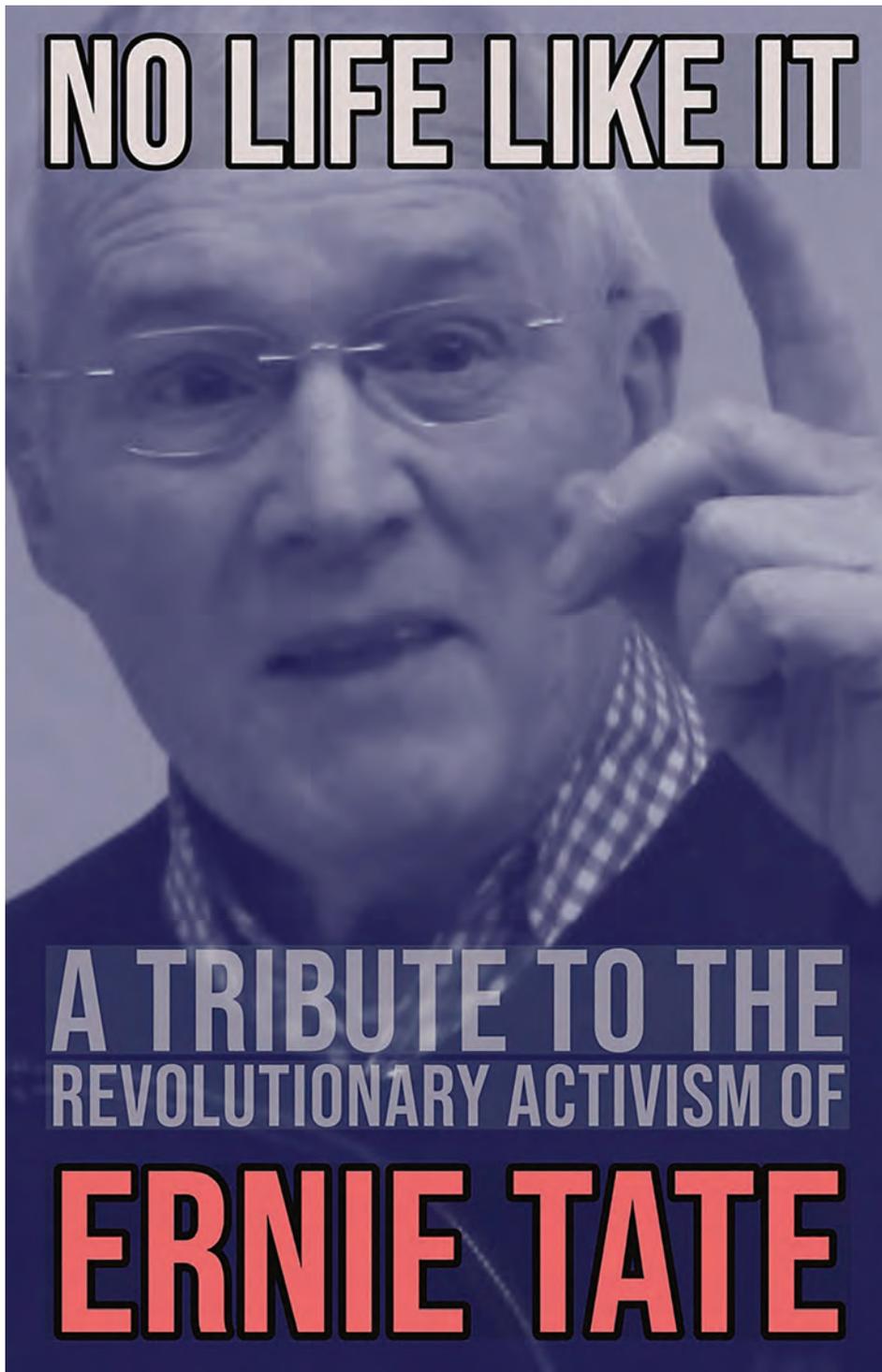
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A Tribute to the Life, Activism, and Legacy of Ernie Tate



We warmly welcome you to join us for a tribute to the life, activism and legacy of Ernie Tate (1934-2021).

Ernie Tate believed capitalism is a cruel and unjust system that has to be

changed. Ernie was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland in 1934 and emigrated to Canada in 1955. As a Marxist, union activist and revolutionary, Ernie spent his life organizing against the war

in Vietnam, in union struggles at Toronto Hydro, for protecting universal healthcare and living wages, and much else. Ernie, along with Tariq Ali, was a leading organizer of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign in Britain, worked for Bertrand Russell's International War Crimes Tribunal and was a founding member of the International Marxist Group in Britain. In 2014, Ernie published a memoir of his life on the far left in Canada and Great Britain called *Revolutionary Activism in the 1950s and 1960s*. This two-volume memoir is an important resource for anyone interested in a gritty account of mid-20th century revolutionary movements. It has been a source of information for the 2020-2021 Undercover Policing Inquiry hearings, taking place in England, in which the illegal and immoral activities of police agents in infiltrating the left have been laid bare.

Ernie died on February 5th this year. Please join us to reflect upon and celebrate Ernie's life, activism and legacy with many of his comrades and friends from around the world, including: Tariq Ali and Phil Hearse (England), Riche Venton (Scotland), Barry Sheppard and Suzanne Weiss (USA), Pam Frache, Judy Rebeck, Caroline Egan, Sam Gindin, Bryan Palmer, Rob Fairley, and John Riddell (Canada), and Patrick Bond (South Africa).

The event will be online, on ZOOM. Please register for your free ticket on Eventbrite. A link to the ZOOM room will be sent to you.

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/no-life-like-it-a-tribute-to-the-revolutionary-activism-of-ernie-tate-tickets-150849684467>

Hosted by Socialist Project, Centre for Social Justice, Spring, Resistance, Green Left Weekly, Socialist Viewpoint.

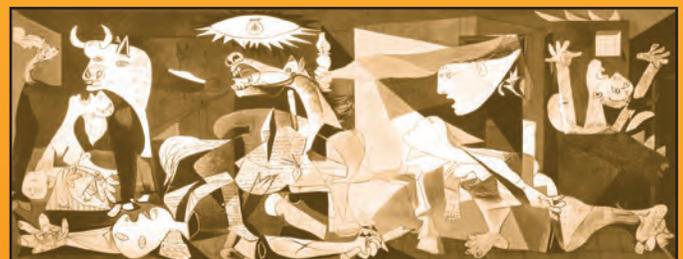


Haitians gather in the streets of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to stage a demonstration against President Jovenel Moïse, who refuses to step down. Read *Haiti's Massive Protests Against U.S. Intervention* on page 33.

On the Front Cover: Demonstrators marched along West Diversey Avenue in Chicago, IL on April 16 in protest of the police shooting of 13-year-old Adam Toledo by officer Eric Stillman in the Little Village neighborhood of the West Side of Chicago on March 29, 2021. Following Stillman's instructions, Adam was facing Stillman with his hands up when Stillman shot him in the chest. Read *Income Inequality and Police Murders* on page 4.



Don't forget Fukushima. Read *Fukushima at Ten* on page 43.



Guernica (Image: Pablo Picasso). Read *Yemen's Blood on U.S. Hands* on page 36.



Attention Prison Mail Room:



Prisoners retain their free speech rights under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. That means you cannot legally suppress the expression and consideration of ideas. Prison walls do not form a barrier separating prisoners from the protection of the Constitution, according to the *Turner v. Safley* ruling. [482 U.S. 78, 107 Sct 2245 (1987)] If you exclude printed matter on an improper basis, or give a false pretext or rationale for its exclusion, because of the ideas expressed in it, you are breaking the law. The prisoner denied access to material he wants to read can bring a civil rights lawsuit against you with cause for seeking punitive damages. In the case of *Police Department Chicago v. Mosley*, 408 U.S. 92, 95, 92 Sct 2286, 2290 (1972) the court found that “[A]bove all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, subject matter or content.”