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SocialistViewpoint

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

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2020 VOL. 20 NO. 6



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CEO Incomes Balloon

As wages stagnate top CEOs now make 320 times more than typical worker

By JAKE JOHNSON

New research published Tuesday, August 18, 2020, by the *Economic Policy Institute* shows that the top executives at the largest corporations in the United States now make 320 times more than what their typical employees earn in wages and benefits.

EPI's latest annual analysis of executive compensation finds that the CEOs of the top 350 firms in the U.S. raked in an average of \$21.3 million in 2019, a 14 percent increase from 2018. The 320-1 ratio of CEO-to-worker pay in 2019 is more than five times higher than the 61-1 ratio reported in 1989.

The think tank's research comes amid a global pandemic that is likely to exacerbate the decades-long trend of surging income and wealth inequality in the U.S.—a trend that, according to *EPI*, won't be reversed by CEOs opting to take salary cuts during a public health crisis that has left tens of millions of Americans jobless.

EPI's new report shows that CEO compensation grew by 1,167 percent from 1978 to 2019, “far outstripping” the growth of the stock market.

“CEOs who volunteer to take salary cuts aren't giving up a lot given how much of their pay comes from stock awards and options,” *EPI* said.

Lawrence Mishel, a distinguished fellow at *EPI* and co-author of the new report, said in a statement that “while wage growth for the majority of Americans has remained relatively stagnant for decades, CEO compensation continues to balloon.”

“This has fueled the spectacular income growth of the top 0.1 percent and 1.0 percent and the growth of income inequality overall,” said Mishel, who told the *Washington Post* that CEO pay could rise again in 2020 despite the nationwide economic collapse caused by the Covid-19 crisis.

“CEOs offering salary cuts during the coronavirus pandemic yield press releases,” Mishel added, “but no real progress toward reducing inequality and raising workers' wages.”

As a substantive alternative to CEO public relations stunts, *EPI* proposed several policy changes that would significantly reduce the yawning gap

between CEO compensation and typical worker pay:

- Reinstating higher marginal income tax rates at the very top of the income ladder;
- Setting corporate tax rates higher for firms that have higher ratios of CEO-to-worker compensation;
- Capping compensation and tax anything over the cap; and
- Allowing greater use of “say on pay,” which allows a firm's shareholders to vote on top executives' compensation.

Jori Kandra, research assistant at *EPI* and co-author of the new report, said the “huge growth in CEO pay” over the past four decades “is not a reflection of the market for talent.”

“We know this because CEO compensation has grown more than three times faster than the growth of earnings for the top 0.1 percent of earners, which was 337 percent over the same period,” said Kandra. “This means that CEO pay can be curbed to reduce the growing gap between the highest earners and everyone else with little, if any, impact on the output of the economy or firm performance.”

—*Common Dreams*, August 18, 2020

<https://www.common-dreams.org/news/2020/08/18/wages-stagnate-and-executive-pay-continues-to-balloon-report-shows-top-ceos-now-make?cd->



A demonstrator holds a “Tax the Rich” sign during a protest in New York on June 27, 2020.

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www.socialistviewpoint.org

email: info@socialistviewpoint.org

(415) 824-8730

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Cruelty of Capitalism

By BONNIE WEINSTEIN

The human condition

Friedrich Engels (November 28, 1820-August 5, 1895), a German philosopher, historian and political scientist developed the ideas of scientific socialism together with Karl Marx (May 5, 1818-March 14, 1883). The two were lifelong friends. In fact, Engels, born to a wealthy family who owned a textile mill, gave financial support to Marx so that Marx was free to do the necessary research to write

Das Kapital. The two co-authored *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848 and in 1884. A year after Marx died, Engels published a very important little book, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* based on Marx's scientific research on people, their environment and the structure and origins of human social organization and culture.

Before his death Engels was working on a book about scientific thought pro-

cess, *The Dialectics of Nature*, which he left unfinished but was compiled and published in the USSR in 1925. In chapter IX titled "The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man" he wrote about human interaction with nature:

"Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first. The people who, in Mesopotamia, Greece, Asia Minor and elsewhere, destroyed the forest to obtain cultivable land, never dreamed that by removing along with the forests the collecting centers and reservoirs of moisture they were laying the basis for the present forlorn state of those countries. . . Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature—but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly."¹

These words sum up the fundamental relationship between our species and all life on earth. Marxism—socialism—is a guide to living on the earth without destroying it—by creating an economic system of equality based upon production for the needs and wants of all instead of production for the private profit of the few.

Socialism is a system that does not waste labor and resources on producing



things built to destroy life or self-destruct—but on creating useful things of the highest quality—and still be able to provide the necessities for a comfortable, bountiful, enriching and creative life free to all. It is a system that is a protector of the diversity of life, not in competition with it.

War, poverty and racism—the products of capitalism

Racist and class-based police murders, mass incarceration, vast economic inequality, healthcare and educational inequality and the degradation of our environment from wars and polluting industries are just a few examples of the cruelty of the capitalist private profit system.

Capitalist production for private profit syphons wealth from the masses of the working class into the coffers of the elite .01 percent of the worlds' population who are the owners of the means of production. They pay workers as little as they can get away with, and sell the products workers produce at a cost significantly higher than the cost to produce them—making themselves a tidy profit.

Every decision made by business interests is designed to exploit workers in order to increase their own rate of profit and to do all they can to inhibit workers' ability to unite and fight in their own common interests.

Any and everything to make a buck

The extent to which the capitalist class carries out cruel injustices to make a profit boggles the mind.

In a September 29, 2020 *New York Times* article by Caitlin Dickerson, Seth Freed Wessler and Miriam Jordan titled, “Immigrants Say They Were Pressured into Unneeded Surgeries,” about unnecessary invasive gynecological procedures performed at the Irwin County Detention Center in Ocilla, Georgia—a private Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center for immigrant women:

“The Irwin County Detention Center in Ocilla, Ga., drew national attention this month after a nurse, Dawn Wooten, filed a whistle-blower complaint claiming that detainees had told her they had had their uterus removed without their full understanding or consent. Since then, both ICE and the hospital in Irwin County have released data that show that two full hysterectomies have been performed on women detained at Irwin in the past three years. But firsthand accounts are now emerging from detainees...who underwent other invasive gynecological procedures that they did not fully understand and, in some cases, may not have been medically necessary. ...The *Times* interviewed 16

Marxism—socialism—is a guide to living on the earth without destroying it—by creating an economic system of equality based upon production for the needs and wants of all instead of production for the private profit of the few.

women who were concerned about the gynecological care they received while at the center, and conducted a detailed review of the medical files of seven women who were able to obtain their records. All 16 were treated by Dr. Mahendra Amin, who practices gynecology in the nearby town of Douglas and has been described by ICE officials as the detention center's ‘primary gynecologist.’ ...Independent doctors that provide treatment for ICE detainees are paid for the procedures they perform with Department of Homeland Security funds. Procedures like the ones that Dr. Amin performed are normally billed at thousands-of-dollars-each. ...Data from

ICE inspection reports show that the center, which is operated by a private prison company, Lasalle Corrections, refers more than 1,000 detainees a year for outside medical care, far more than most other immigration detention centers of the same size.”

Further, in an October 6, 2020 *New York Times* article by Amol S. Navathe and Harald Schmidt titled, “Why a Hospital Might Shun a Black Patient,” the authors noted:

“Research shows that doctors are more likely to choose procedures and treatments that are more profitable for them, whether these are better for patients or not. For example, cancer doctors frequently recommend higher-cost chemotherapy because they profit handsomely from it. And hospitals do more of the kinds of surgeries that come with high profit margins, like hip and knee replacements and heart valve procedures... in the 1990s, the New York State Department of Health began grading surgeons who performed coronary bypass surgery and making their report cards available to the general public. The aim was to make outcomes more transparent and to help surgeons improve. But to this day, the initiative makes it harder for Black patients to get surgery. Why? Because statistically, outcomes are generally worse for Black patients because of larger issues of systemic racism. So, surgeons avoid them to protect their scores. ...since people with worse living and working conditions are readmitted more frequently, hospitals that serve more worse-off racial and ethnic minorities were more frequently penalized.”

These two examples illustrate how the profit motive works to the financial advantage of the capitalist class and to the outright detriment to the lives of workers—including performing dangerous, debilitating and unnecessary surgery and dangerous treatments on people just to make money—whether the patient is harmed or not.

Competing for the basic necessities of life

Under capitalism, everyone is in competition with each other. Even families will compete with each other for the last few grains of rice if there is not enough to go around.

We must compete for jobs, food, housing, healthcare, quality education, because capitalism sees to it that there is not enough to go around and that it is expensive.

They lay waste to vast amounts of resources through industrial carelessness, and intentional wars. They profit most off of the sale of weapons of mass destruction.

The U.S. war industry is the most profitable of all industries on the planet and it costs the capitalist owners of these corporations little to nothing to run it. And it serves three purposes—to make lots of money for capitalists, to exploit and control the world's resources, and to divide and thus control the masses of workers of the world.

The capitalists do not pay for the manufacture of these weapons—workers pay for this industry through taxation that capitalists themselves, are able to avoid by creating tax laws that benefit them at workers' expense.

The whole economic system of capitalism is designed to keep the wealthy in power by keeping the working class in competition with one another for the basic necessities of life.

Racism and bigotry serve the rule of capital not the needs of humanity. Every human being needs the same things—healthy food, comfortable housing, good, quality education and healthcare. We need a clean and healthy environment in which all can thrive—a society where the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all—a world of cooperation, careful planning and conservation, not plunder and war.

What humanity is capable of

In his book, *The Revolution Betrayed* published in 1937 Leon Trotsky wrote of socialism:

“The hypocrisy of prevailing opinion develops everywhere and always as the square, or cube, of the social contradictions. Such approximately is the historic law of ideology translated into the language of mathematics. Socialism, if it is worthy of the name, means human relations without greed, friendship without envy and intrigue, love without base calculation.”²

Socialism—an economic system based upon production for human needs and wants instead of profit—changes the whole dynamic of human interaction both between each other and nature.

Socialism is in the interests of everyone. It eliminates competition for survival, and in its place, encourages cooperation and democratic planning to create the best possible conditions for the full development of each individual—to each based upon need and want and from each based upon individual talents and skills. Socialism is necessarily a non-competitive, cooperative system that benefits everyone and the planet.

Socialism is necessary—not only to survive—but to flourish.

1 <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1883/don/ch09.htm>

2 Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 155, Pathfinder, 1972 (Chapter VII, Family, Youth and Culture)



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Imperialist Attacks on Africa

And the genocide you never heard of

By CHRIS KINDER

The Holocaust was born at the meeting point of two traditions that marked modern Western Civilization: the anti-Semitic tradition, and the tradition of genocide of colonial people. —Mahmood Mamdani, Good Muslim, Bad Muslim, New York 2004

In January of 2020, a conference called by Angela Merkel of Germany was held in Berlin to promote a cease fire in the on-going civil war in Libya, and an embargo on arms shipments to the combatants. Germany, Russia, France, Italy, Turkey, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) all signed on. But this was a big joke and they all knew it. On the very day that these “leaders” took their photo op at the conference, planes full of arms were heading to Libya from the UAE—backed by Russia and Egypt—to Khalifa Hifter’s forces in Benghazi, Libya. Turkey and Qatar were also deeply into arms shipments, including by sea, to the “UN recognized” government in Tripoli.¹

Imperialist domination of Africa, and its oil wealth, is what is at the core of this. The overthrow, and murder, of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 is only the most recent event in this miserable saga today. This was done to protect U.S. and EU interests, and prevent Libya from using its oil proceeds to establish an African currency. The prosperous North African country was torn to pieces and divided up by gangs of Islamic extremists at the behest of European and U.S. imperialist powers.

In order to fully understand this, we must examine Libyan history, including the virtually unknown genocide, from the beginning. It starts with Italy.

Genocide in Libya began with Italy

The claims of Italy over the Libyan portion of North Africa date back to the 19th Century. In the first Congress of Berlin (1878), France and Britain claimed Tunisia and Cyprus respectively. Later, in a series of secret treaties, these two powers supported Italy’s claims on Libya, as a way to weaken that country’s connection to its Triple Alliance with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. These agreements

paved the way for Italy’s switch to the British-French-Russian Entente in the middle of the Great War. It was the only power ever to change sides in a major inter-imperialist conflict.

Imperialist contest for colonies in Africa

By the early 1900s, the imperialist regimes of Europe were on a move to prepare for what they knew was coming, a war for imperialist domination



Libyan President Moammar Gaddafi (1942-2011). Portrait from Libya 50 Dinars 2008 Banknotes. (Shutterstock)

of the world. That meant the struggle for colonies, largely for possessions in Africa. Italy—like Germany—only fully united as a country in 1870, was behind on asserting its colonial ambitions in Africa compared to Britain and France...that is, until its war with Ottoman Turkey in 1911-12.

This short war—a prelude to both the Balkan Wars and World War I—represented the beginning of the dismantlement of the Turkish-controlled Ottoman Empire, which at the time was still in control of North Africa.² In it, Italy conducted a brutal massacre of thousands of civilians in Tripoli, systematically moving through neighborhoods with murders and destruction. It has been called the 1911 Tripoli Massacre. One of many such atrocities which accompanied European expansion into Africa for many decades, this slaughter included the burning alive of 100 refugees sheltering in a Mosque.³

Libyan resistance of colonization emerges

Italy won that war, and came into control of Libya...sort of. Libyans of differing ethnic groups united to oppose Italian occupation. The Kingdom of Italy never managed to conquer the resistance, and was forced to make agreements over territorial control with local groups. Groups such as the Sanusi, a Sufi-inspired reformist organization had developed into a social force, in the wake of the departure of Ottoman control in North Africa. While based on Islamic tradition and culture, the Sanusi, or Sanusiyya movement, organized social structure based on modernizing ideas such as education, promoting trade, and anti-colonial resistance.

The Italians shifted gears, organized Italian immigration to the colony, promoted cultural links with natives, including schools to teach Italian to locals and other cultural exchanges. But Italy directly controlled no more than the urban areas in the narrow

coastal areas of Libya up to and during World War I.

Fascists defeat the Italian working class

After the war, the Italian ruling class renewed their colonizing efforts, but to little avail. Largely, this was due to the Russian Revolution. The Revolution of 1917 inspired and created communist parties throughout Europe, and 1919 saw more rebellious movements throughout the world than any year before or since. Italy's Communist Party was the biggest in Europe.

Workers were rebelling in strike waves throughout Italy, and colonial ambitions were on the back burner. But the communist leadership failed to mount a sufficient defense against Mussolini's Black Shirts. These gangs of fascist thugs broke up strikes in their march across Italy, attacked communists and unions, and soon brought Mussolini to power in 1922.

Once in power, the Italian fascists moved to remake Italy, and that included an aggressive colonial policy. Mussolini declared that he was creating a "New Roman Empire" in North Africa.⁴ Mussolini ramped up Italian settlement in Libya, but was still frustrated by local resistance. He ordered the abolition of the former policies of cultural interchange with local groups, and imposed a violent conquest policy. Schools to teach Italian to natives and other cultural contacts were dropped, and education for natives was banned above the sixth grade. Based on an ideology of racist supremacy in which Arab Muslims were seen as sub-human, Mussolini's military used tactics unmatched in brutality at any other time during colonial wars in Africa.

Fascist tactics target native resisters

By 1930, Barqa's (Eastern Libya's) tribesmen were well organized under tribal leadership, including that of Umar al-Mukhtar, who was a leading

fighter for many years. Mukhtar was captured and publicly hanged in 1931 before a coerced crowd of witnesses. He is still recognized in Libya today as a hero.

Italian tactics also included using tanks, closing borders, and dropping rebels to their deaths from airplanes. The fascists especially targeted civilians who provided food and other aid to the resistance fighters.

The worst of this violent repression among civilians occurred in the Eastern region of Barqa, where the Sanusiyya movement had posed the biggest threat to Italian troops. The rebels had developed a network of spies in Italian controlled cities, and they conducted hundreds of guerrilla raids. The fascists engineered a forced march of 110,000 civilian families over three months from Barqa across desert lands to 16 horrifying concentration camps in the desert of Sirte. There, most in six of these camps were starved to death; by 1934, only about one third of these victims were still alive.

Mussolini's crimes in Africa impressed the Nazis

The Nazis were very impressed by this barbaric Italian repression, and looked at these genocidal policies as a model for success. The Nazis took in the lessons about forced transfer to concentration camps, and even the use of gas to kill people. The Italians mainly committed genocide by starvation, but they did develop the lethal gas method which the Nazis soon used massively in the Holocaust.

Nazi leaders like Heinrich Himmler (head of the SS) and others also used Italian fascism as a model for moving about 15 million Germans into conquered territory in East Europe. They sent SS officers to Italian colonial schools for trainings, and accompanied boatloads of Italian immigrants with great fanfare, as they headed to Libya to occupy the stolen land of the natives.⁵

U.S. and European imperialism are complicit

The condemnation of the German Holocaust after the war was of course justified, but it was hypocritical at the same time. The U.S. made no serious effort to stop the Holocaust during the war. U.S. President Roosevelt, for instance, refused pleas to order the bombing of the rail lines in Germany known to be used for transporting Jews and other victims to the camps in Germany and occupied Poland.

The U.S. itself was also guilty of genocide in the atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, and with the UK, in the fire bombings of Hamburg and Dresden in Germany. All of these bombings took place very late in the war, when both adversaries were already clearly defeated (Japan had been appealing for peace as early as 1943); and all of these bombings were aimed at civilians, not war production.

U.S. and UK genocidal atrocities

Before and during the war, there were financial and industrial connections in the 1920s with Germany by U.S. ruling-class elements, which continued right through the war. And under the guise of loans to help Italy pay its debts incurred under the Versailles Treaty of 1919 after World War I, J.P. Morgan bankers in the U.S., along with the Bank of England, decided in 1925 to help financially stabilize Mussolini's regime in Italy. This was accomplished by the establishment of single central Italian bank, the Bank of Italy, in 1926.⁶

Italian fascism was minimized in western propaganda

In 1935, after the repression of Libyan resistance had mostly been completed, Mussolini expanded his imperial fantasies with the invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia). This invasion also included crimes against humanity, though not on the same scale. It got much more international recognition than the genocide in Libya, contribut-

ed to the demise of the League of Nations, and was an immediate prelude to the Second World War.

At first, the lack of attention to the Libyan experience was due to the banning of all journalists except Nazis in Libya by the Italians during 1929-34. During this time, many public figures such as Henry Ford, Charles Lindbergh, and poet Ezra Pound willingly added to that by expressing open support for Mussolini and Italian fascism.

Imperialist powers cover-up genocide...

After the war, U.S.-led Western attitudes toward Italian fascism was that it was moderate compared to German Nazism, and not capable of horrific genocidal crimes. These lies—a myth, actually—portrayed Italian fascism as not a serious problem. The post-war government of Italy went along with this. As late as 1981, a movie by Mustafa Akkad about the genocide in Libya made with real documentary footage—*Lion of the Desert*—was banned by Italy.

A 1989 documentary made in the UK on the same subject—*A Fascist Legacy*—was given a similar treatment by the “democratic” Italian government: they bought it and shelved it. This film was based on the work American historian Michael Palumbo, who had discovered classified files showing a post-war cover-up of war crimes by both Italian fascist generals and officials of the war-time allies.⁷

...and pursue colonialism

Just as the U.S. in 1945 wanted to recruit German scientists for the next war against the USSR—despite the horrific mass murder of Jews and others in Nazi concentration camps—it also wanted to recruit Italian rightists into the new war against communism. From 1943, Libya was under British and French war-time occupations, followed by an imposed Sanusi Monarchy in 1951; and all of these regimes were willing partners in the cold war.

This anti-communist entanglement helped prevent any exposure of the Libyan genocide. When post-war Libya demanded reparations from Italy for the genocide, Italy refused, arguing that Libya was part of Italy, and so ineligible for compensation. But Italy had earlier released all claims to Libya in a 1947 peace treaty with the Allies! The Italian denial of compensation was reinforced however, when the Allies allowed Italy to refuse demands for a war crimes trial by the Ethiopian and Yugoslav governments at the UN. The Libyan government formally maintained its claims due to pressure from the Shura (parliament), but didn't push it because it needed financial support from the Allies.⁸

The occupying Allies also did little to stop the persecution—including quite a few murders—of Jews in Libya after the war. The Jewish population had mainly come from or aligned with Italy during the colonization; and many had remained there after the enactment of fascist anti-Semitic laws under Mussolini. Most of them fled to the new state of Israel in 1949-51 due to this pressure.⁹

U.S. domination of the world ramps up

After World War II, the U.S.—the only major nation in the war that escaped massive deaths and destruction—quickly moved to establish “the American Century” of world imperialist dominance. In an era of anti-colonial nationalist uprisings, particularly in Africa, the U.S. focused on capital penetration backed up with military support rather than outright colonial occupation. As Lenin explained in his seminal *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), the exportation of capital is at the core of imperialism.

Africa was at the stage in which the U.S. taught a lesson of its dominance to its allies. In 1956, Gamal Abdul Nasser—the head of a military coup which toppled the British-backed King

Farouk of Egypt in 1952—nationalized the Suez Canal. British and French troops, soon invaded Egyptian territory in an attempt to reverse this affront to imperialist interests. The Soviet Union offered military aid to Egypt, but the U.S. stepped in to support Egyptian ownership of the Canal, keep it open to trade, and provide military support to Nasser. There was a new cap in town.

In the years since, this pattern of U.S. control of formerly colonial regimes expanded globally. NATO has been established as an instrument of U.S. control world-wide, first to threaten the USSR, and then to assert U.S. power everywhere on the globe. In 2006-08, AFRICOM was established to solidify that control in Africa.¹⁰

The regime of Muammar Gaddafi

Meanwhile, in Libya, the formal “independence” of that country was established with the imposition of the Sanusi King Idris under a UN-drafted democratic constitution in 1951. Idris kept Libya tied with Western imperialist powers by signing a 20-year treaty of friendship and alliance with Britain. This agreement allowed the U.S. and UK to establish military bases in Libya. Meanwhile, the monarchy rapidly chipped away at the democratic aspects of the constitution.

All this began to change with the bloodless military *coup* under the leadership of then Captain Muammar Gaddafi, in 1969. Gaddafi began as an anti-colonialist populist, who was not loyal to the Western connections of the Idris regime. He told the imperialist military bases to get out, banished Italian colonials, and returned the land seizures to original owners. He established free education and healthcare, provided clean drinking water and basic foods with state subsidies, and built roads.¹¹

In 1971-72, Gaddafi’s regime passed laws to reverse the previous regime’s reactionary Islamist oppression of women. Laws affirming equality of the

sexes, and insisting on wage parity, as well as banning forced marriage of under-age women were passed. Libyan women soon took many professional positions, and outnumbered men in institutions of higher learning.

Well before the overthrow of his government in 2011, standards of living were much improved, and Libya was the most literate and most prosperous country in Africa.

**Now, Libya is a disaster.
Its infrastructure is
bombed to oblivion, and
it is dominated by various
cliques and militias,
all in the service of various
imperialist providers
of weapons.**

Libya’s oil and world politics

Massive oil reserves had been discovered and developed in Libya by U.S. and European companies in the late 1950s. Libya’s oil attracted European companies particularly, due to its closeness to the European market, and its “light sweet” crude. The Idris Kingdom benefitted and began to grow rich, but the masses only felt the effect under Gaddafi, and the oil nationalization was key to that.

Gaddafi nationalized much of the imperialist companies’ oil holdings; and required production-sharing ventures with others. The Libyan nationalizations were, predictably, a slap in the face to the “seven sisters” of big oil. Libya “had let in the independents to challenge the sisters; and it was aloof from the cautious attitudes of the rest of OPEC. It was the outsider at both ends and by ignoring the rules it changed them.”¹²

In the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, most Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia and Libya, imposed an embargo on oil

exports to any countries that supported Israel, especially the U.S. In March of 1974, the embargo was lifted by all except Libya. And by 1979, the example of oil nationalization set by Libya had been followed by Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. Again, the sisters were taking notes. The U.S. had already declared Libya a potential enemy of the U.S. in 1977.

Libya in the cross hairs

While imperialist powers saw North Africa as part of the Middle East, Gaddafi was trying to Africanize it. He promoted formation of the African Union, and he proposed to create an African currency using Libya’s oil surplus capital to set up an African Bank. This was yet another threat to the imperialists: it meant that African resources might come to be sold to the world market in African currency. The U.S., European Union and the French particularly—still the holders of many interests in Africa if not actual colonies—saw a serious threat to the Euro and the dollar in this project.

The imperialist nations were also threatened by Gaddafi’s aid to pan-Arab, pan-African and third world national liberation movements.

Accusing Libya of “terrorism,” and fearing its close relations with the Soviet Union, the U.S. under Reagan slapped an oil embargo on Libya in 1982, froze Libyan assets in the U.S. in 1984, and bombed Libya with a clear intent to liquidate Gaddafi personally in 1986. Two years later, while Reagan was still in office, Gaddafi struck back with a bombing of a U.S. airliner, which crashed in Lockerbie Scotland. Although Gaddafi had been targeted for death by the U.S., this was clearly an error for Libya. When proof of responsibility came out, the UN imposed a new round of sanctions.

Libya in decline and under attack

With its oil boom, Libya had a radical transformation from rural to urban.

High-paying jobs in the oil industries attracted thousands to the urbanized coastal regions, flipping Libya from a primarily rural nation to primarily urban. But Gaddafi's regime remained based on its tribal allies in the South. Furthermore, with the decline in oil prices on the world market, the regime became corrupt. Gaddafi made himself "Leader Brother" and president for life, while healthcare, education, and democratic institutions such as courts suffered. All of this weakened Libya's response to the crisis in 2011. But the main problem was still imperialism.

In January 2011 there were uprisings in both Tunisia and Egypt. As the self-declared gendarme of Europe in Africa, France—under Sarkozy—moved first, planning, too late, to intervene in Tunisia. In March, the "Arab Spring" came to Libya, with mainly Islamic groups in Benghazi and other Eastern cities rebelling. France took the initiative for an intervention in Libya, by lining up Lebanon and the Saudis to support a no-fly zone over Libya in the Arab League. The U.S./NATO did the rest, with a devastating bombing campaign.

The U.S. war on Libya

In the U.S., a war on Libya was primarily promoted by Wall Street. This reflected the increased financialization of the energy markets under the Reagan administration. Financial control of the capitalist market is the determining feature of the imperialist stage of capitalism. With regard to Libya, this involved imperialist alarm at Libya's use of its capital in promoting Africanization of North Africa.

Very few reports have linked the Libyan dominance in the Arab Banking Corporation to the seismic events in Libya. Those writers and analysts from Wall Street with links to the think tanks that Wall Street financed were front and center in the call for war.¹³

It was Hillary Clinton and other officials in the Obama administration—all

with Wall Street connections—who primarily pushed for this war. The Pentagon generals were much more cautious, but the attack was launched on March 19th nevertheless. The seven-month U.S.-NATO bombing campaign demolished the most prosperous nation in Africa, and was the deciding factor in the elimination of Gaddafi's regime. His brutal murder at the hands of Islamic rebels was the final note. Clinton said, "We came, we saw, he died," in a disgusting rehash of an ancient Roman conqueror's arrogant brag.

Now, Libya is a disaster. Its infrastructure is bombed to oblivion, and it is dominated by various *cliques* and militias, all in the service of various imperialist providers of weapons.

The U.S. is the new Roman Empire, the driving force of capitalist imperialism—this time of the whole world.

1 "Waves of Russian and Emirati Flights Fuel War in Libya," *New York Times*, September 4, 2020.

2 Islamic domination in North Africa dates back to the expansion of Mohammedanism by armies coming out of Arabia in the late 600s and 70's CE. The Turkish Ottoman Empire, beginning in the 15th Century, became the early-modern manifestation of the Muslim caliphates. The demise of this empire occurred with World War I, after which Turkey emerged as a modern nation, and Libya emerged out of two provinces of the Ottoman Empire: Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.

3 Italy's lame excuse for this slaughter was the death of some of its troops at the hands of rebels fighting against Italian colonization. The Italian government ineffectively tried to keep it a secret.

4 Mussolini wasn't the first to make this "Roman Empire" claim: The Kingdom of Italy had mouthed it first. The ancient Roman Empire encompassed most of North Africa after the defeat of Carthage, its main North African rival.

5 Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, *Genocide In Libya, Shar, A Hidden Colonial History*, Routledge, New York, August 2020. Ahmida is a professor at the University of New England, and the grandson of Libyan militants who fought in the resistance against Italian colonists. The book is very useful on research of this little-known history, and the Eurocentrism of political leaders,

academics and others who have white-washed Italian fascism as "moderate." The term "shar" in the title refers to the "evil, starvation, death and depression" of the Italian colonial concentration camps.

6 F. William Engdahl, *A Century of War, Anglo-American Oil Politics and the New World Order*, Wiesbaden Germany, 2011, p.93

7 Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, *op cit*, page 54. The author says he tried to obtain a copy of *A Fascist Legacy* through his university's inter-library loan office, but was told he could not have it due to "legal arrangements."

8 Eventually, Italy made a settlement for its genocidal actions, but it was little more than one fifth of what the Libyan government wanted, and it was mostly tied to Libyan purchases of Italian products. (see Ahmida, note 5, page 128).

9 Harvey E. Goldberg, "Rites and Riots: The Tripolitanian Pogrom of 1945," *Plural Societies 8* (Spring 1977): 35-56, referenced in "1945 Anti-Jewish riots in Tripolitania," *Wikipedia*. (Goldberg was an ex-Communist Party socialist.)

10 Horace Campbell, *Global NATO and the Catastrophic Failure in Libya*, Monthly Review Press, 2013

11 Libya could tap into the North African aquifer, which is the largest water resource in Africa. The Gaddafi regime built the infrastructure to do it.

12 Anthony Samson, *The Seven Sisters: The Great Oil Companies and the World They Made*, quoted in Horace Campbell, *op.cit*, p.86.

13 Horace Campbell, *op.cit*, p.115. See this and following pages for more on the financialization of the U.S. energy industries.

**The U.S. is the new
Roman Empire,
the driving force
of capitalist
imperialism—this
time of the
whole world.**

Revolutionary Program for Latin America and the U.S.

Position paper of Partido Obrero (Argentina), Grupo Acción Revolucionaria (México), Juventud Obrera (Costa Rica), Agrupación Vilcapaza (Perú), Fuerza 18 de Octubre (Chile), Agrupación León Trotsky (Uruguay) and Agrupación Trabajadores Bolivianos presented to the Virtual Conference of Latin America and the United States.

(Extracted for publication in Socialist Viewpoint)

The emergence of popular rebellion in the United States represents a blow to Donald Trump's government, and—as agents or tributaries of U.S. imperialism—to all Latin American governments. For this same reason, it also represents a spur to workers' popular and anti-imperialist struggles of the peoples of the subcontinent and a call to retake the path of popular rebellions of 2019.

The pandemic has altered the political scenario in Latin America, but it is far from having closed the cycle of popular rebellions. The contradictions that gave rise to these outbreaks not only remain, but have been enhanced by the spread of these outbreaks. The arrival of COVID-19 occurs at the same time that the popular rebellion in Chile was taking a new impulse, with the gigantic and combative mobilizations in March, and a few months after the great popular rebellions of Ecuador, Puerto Rico, the resistance of the Bolivian people against the *coup*, the general strikes in Colombia, the great educational strikes in Costa Rica and, further back, the rebellion in Nicaragua. The coronavirus pandemic has put these processes on hold, although it has in no way canceled them. With the arrival of COVID-19, the subcontinent has been plunged into a true sanitary storm, and has been plunged even further into an economic, social and political crisis.

This perspective that has developed—that of renewed clashes between the ruling classes and their governments, on the one hand, and the working and oppressed masses, on the other—presents the revolutionary left with the need to address the great problem of the processes of the 2019 popular rebellions—overcoming the crisis of leadership of the labor movement and the oppressed masses of Latin America. Addressing this crisis of leadership necessitates, first, to adjust a characterization of the moment and, secondly, the formulation of the program and the strategy that the revolutionary left must raise.

The pandemic in Latin America

In mid-June, Latin America became the epicenter of the pandemic crisis, Brazil was positioned as the main infectious focus of the subcontinent and the second country affected by the pandemic worldwide (only surpassed by U.S.) There is no doubt that the health catastrophe that harasses Latin America is the responsibility of the capitalist social class of the subcontinent and the different governments that, in one way or another, represent it. The pandemic exposed the serious crisis in housing, general job insecurity, the fall in access to health. The denialist policy about the pandemic, which especially characterized the government of the fascistizing Jair Bolsonaro and initially also the “neoliberal” Sebastián Piñera and “national and popular” presidents Manuel López Obrador and Daniel Ortega, is nothing more than the expression of the enormous lobby exercised by the capitalist classes in their respective countries. These capitalist classes, from the very beginning of the pandemic crisis, pressed for the continuity of all productive and economic activity and systematically acted

against the establishment of preventive quarantines. Denialism, which in the case of Brazil remains to this day as the government's guiding line, has wreaked havoc, enabling a sweeping spread of the virus and infecting the fascistizing Bolsonaro himself.

(...)

The fight for the centralization of the health systems of each country, under the leadership of the health workers, is presented as a program with common characteristics for all Latin America. It is a fight in which nothing less than the life of the working masses is at stake. Similarly, the fight for the duplication of health budgets and for the nationalization without compensation of the pharmaceutical industries. The fight to defend or impose quarantines, against the employer's need to continue production at any cost, and by workers' safety and hygiene committees in every factory, company and workplace, are issues and demands that occupy a leading position today—an order that the revolutionary left must raise.

Economic collapse

A historic economic collapse is also developing in connection with the health catastrophe. The Latin American collapse occurs in the context of the international capitalist bankruptcy, which was accelerated and deepened hand in hand with the pandemic contingency, inaugurating a period of economic depression that can only be compared to the Great Depression of the 1930s. This global economic collapse and the recessive trends were already clearly present long before the health contingency broke out, and this was corroborated by the monetary policy of the U.S. Federal Reserve throughout 2019, which repeatedly reduced the interest rate with the aim of propping

up the corporate profit rate and promote a productive investment plan. Likewise, overproduction led to a marked decline in investments, of such magnitude that it did not even compensate for the process of wear and tear on fixed capital. With the transformation of COVID-19 into a pandemic, the consequent border closings and the declaration of quarantines in many countries, a deep economic standstill and an unprecedented capitalist collapse were completed.

(...)

The crisis has once again shown that the capitalist world collapse can only be faced with anti-capitalist and socialist measures. The fight for non-payment of external debts, for the rupture with the IMF and with imperialism, for extraordinary taxes on large incomes and fortunes, for the nationalization without compensation of banking systems, foreign trade and natural resources, such as oil, gas, mining and energy resources, *etc.*, and general workers' control has a continental scope. In all of Latin America, the agitation and the fight for this workers' program to solve the crisis is a fundamental task of the revolutionary left. The fight for this program is inextricably linked to the fight for workers' governments and for the reconstruction of an international revolutionary political leadership—the Fourth International.

The hand of imperialism, its agents and the *coups*

The Donald Trump government spares no effort to achieve greater interference in Latin America. This is what explains Trump's demand for it to be an American, Claver Carone, who presides over the IADB (Inter-American Development Bank) for the next five years, contradicting an "unwritten law" that establishes that its presidency corresponds to a Latin American country. Trump wants to ensure full control of this institution to reinforce a policy of blocking Chinese

contractors and financial companies in the subcontinent.

(...)

Imperialism wants to put an end to the Bolivarian regime headed by Maduro, and that this be the fulcrum to deliver a final *coup de grace* to the Cuban regime. Precisely, the Lima Group, which gathers the main Latin American leaders and was born under the auspices of Yankee imperialism, was born with the explicit objective of condemning the Venezuelan government. After the successive failures of Juan Guaidó, the puppet of the Yankees in Venezuela, to seize political power, imperialism has implemented various avenues with the aim of breaking the Maduro regime.

(...)

The fight for non-payment of external debts, for the rupture with the IMF and with imperialism, for extraordinary taxes on large incomes and fortunes, for the nationalization without compensation of banking systems, foreign trade and natural resources, such as oil, gas, mining and energy resources, *etc.*, and general workers' control has a continental scope.

The attempt by his government to sweep out the right sector of the parliament and reestablish full dominance of the regime he leads, is being carried out at a moment when, protected by the economic sanctions of imperialism, he is executing a strong adjustment

against the workers and the Venezuelan people, initiating a process of dollarization of fuel prices and decisively advancing in the scrapping and privatization of PDVSA (the state oil company). The adjustment of the Maduro government is what has begun to arouse reactions from the working class, which also rejects the government's persecution of union activists. In particular, the struggle of the oil workers in defense of wages and collective labor agreements stand out.

The revolutionary left must be placed in the first line of combat against reactionary and pro-imperialist *coups*. Only from this field, the one of a decided battle against the reactionary, the left will be able to seize the necessary political authority to uproot the workers' vanguard and the working masses from the influence of the capitalist's nationalism, and to lead a workers' and popular movement under the flags of socialism. With these objectives, we face the *coup* in Bolivia and denounce the blockade and the imperialist attacks against Venezuela, with complete independence from the nationalist leaderships.

From São Paulo to Puebla

The response of Latin American "progressives" to the alignment of the continental right in the Lima Group was the creation of the Puebla Group in July 2019. The Puebla Group appears as the devalued version of what was once the São Paulo Forum, which emerged as a regrouping of Latin American nationalist and leftist forces against "neoliberal" regimes. Largely, the forces that make up the Forum became government throughout Latin America, on the basis of becoming the left custodians of the capitalist regime in the face of the crises and rebellions emerging in the beginning of the century (Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, *etc.*) The experience of the São Paulo Forum ended in a tragedy. The failures of Unasur and Mercosur were the concrete expression of the impossibility of

a Latin American integration (the so-called “Patria Grande” or the Greater Homeland) on a capitalist basis. With the world crisis, starting in 2008, the weakness of the merely rentier survival plan of the “national and popular” governments of Latin America became evident. They sank with the fall of the prices of raw materials: they were unable to overcome the semi-colonial status and the production of only raw materials. The “national bourgeoisies” ended up mired in the corruption cases of the Odebrechts or the Lópezes (which the right exploited to promote political change.) The anti-worker character of governments such as that of Lula or Cristina was revealed in their maintenance of job insecurity, intervention against numerous strikes and the strengthening of the nationalization of union organizations against any attempt at independent organization. Their budget adjustment policies gave rise to a long process of political decline, which ended up encouraging the *coup*, to which they did not respond, and the electoral rise of new right-wing governments on a continental level, such as the ones of Bolsonaro, Piñera, Macri, Lacalle Pou, *etc.*

Formally, outside the setup of the Puebla Group there is another benchmark of the “progressive” or “national and popular” field—the Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO). Since taking possession of the Mexican presidency on December 1, 2018, AMLO did not make any trips abroad until July 2020. His first international tour was to visit Donald Trump, under the pretext of celebrating the signing of the neocolonial Free Trade Agreement, signed by Mexico, the USA and Canada a year ago. AMLO mobilized, objectively propping up Trump’s candidacy...In summary, AMLO starred in an act of colonialism with little precedent.

The so-called “fight against the right-wing” proclaimed by Latin American “progressivism” is nothing

more than a mere story. The revolutionary left must distinguish the real existent *coup* offensives from the nationalist crowing, which only seeks to muzzle the workers’ organizations and the left, and thus deprive them of their action and their criticism with the aim of subordinating them to the nationalist or populist-front government. Nationalism must be opposed by promoting the direct action of the working class for its immediate demands and an economic and political program of the workers so that the crisis is paid by the capitalists. Latin American unity can only be achieved by workers’ governments at a subcontinent level. That is to say, on a socialist basis.

Anti-worker offensive, program and the fight for unions

Latin America is also the continent most affected by the social crisis. The capitalist class and the different governments are unloading the crisis on the backs of the workers.

(...)

This context of a phenomenal attack against the living conditions of the working masses, further highlights the paralysis and collaborationism on the part of the bureaucracies of the workers’ unions in all countries. The union bureaucracies were decisive in containing the open and determined intervention of the labor movement in the course of the 2019 popular rebellions. In this way, they managed to avoid the fall of the governments backed by the struggle of the masses. ...The fight for the political independence of the workers’ organizations is, above all, a method to accelerate the process of separating the workers’ bases from their bureaucratic and capitalist leadership, not to correct the capitalist course of that leadership or for its self-regeneration.

It is imperative to respond to this social attack with a program of the working-class’ immediate demands and an action plan. Facing mass unemployment means raising the demand

for an unemployment insurance that is equivalent to the cost of living in each country, and fighting for the general distribution of working hours without reducing wages. Putting a limit to the layoffs poses the question of promoting the occupation of any factory or company that closes or dismisses employees. And confronting famine entails organizing the fight for minimum wages and pensions that are equivalent to the cost of living in each Latin American country. In order to foster these minimum demands, together with the fight to end job insecurity and informality, to repeal the labor and pension reforms and to end private pension systems, we promote the united front of workers and workers’ organizations. We carry out this promotion for a united fight front, understood as a practical agreement with all the participant currents to promote a mass struggle, without ever sacrificing the Party agitation for the independent structuring of the working class, the workers’ government and socialism. The fight for the workers’ immediate demands puts on the agenda the fight to kick out the sellout union bureaucracies, the promotion of worker congresses in each Latin American country and the plans to fight until a general strike is reached to impose these congresses.

(...)

Mass movements and revolutionary politics

The great rebellions in Latin America and the United States were preceded and led, to a large extent, by mass movements with a strongly combative dynamic, which have made the historical methods of the working class their own despite not having a defined class anchor. In recent years, the women’s and diversities movement has stood out, like no other, for its confrontation with right-wing governments, which have misogyny and discrimination against diversities as a

common feature. Both the “Ele Não” against Bolsonaro and the “Me too” in the United States staged mass mobilizations. In the same way, it is necessary to highlight the enormous fight waged in Argentina for the right to abortion. In Chile, the massive women’s movement struggle anticipated largely the outbreak of the October 18th rebellion.

(...)

A workers’ vanguard can only claim its place in the fighting ranks of the international industrial proletariat by participating in the struggles against all kinds of oppression.

The popular rebellion in the U.S. has the Black community as the central protagonist. However, it has a massive multiracial character, joining in the solidarity demonstrations with radicalized white sectors and advancing in a true common struggle. The scope of the ongoing struggle stands out for its connection with the growing labor conflict and for the severity of the country’s crisis, in health, economic, social and political matters. Strikes and worker’s protests over working conditions have multiplied with the worsening pandemic, marking a tendency for the organized working class to converge with the rebellion led by the Black community. Most of the American left, particularly the one that has colluded with Bernie Sanders, as the powerful organization of Socialist Democrats (Democratic Socialists of America), does not support the claim for autonomy of sectors of the Black community. The “leftist” criticism of the centrality of racial demands, with a classist language, hides that DSA is lagging behind the most combative sectors of the Black movement, that have identified the imperialist state of the United States as its main enemy and anti-imperialist fighters of the world as their allies. Any principle of autonomy for the Black community equals a declaration of hostility to the U.S. imperialist state. It is not a matter of imposing

national separation on the Black community. A revolutionary victory would have to be the foundation of a larger unity. But that unity cannot avoid the historical oppression suffered, it must recognize and defeat it. Only by unconditionally claiming the rights of the Black population, including the right to their autonomy, can the foundations be laid and advance in the unity of every American worker and the exploited against the current capitalist social order. The agitation and defense of this right for the Black community must be accompanied by a whole program of universal characteristics, which includes the immediate demands of the entire North American working class and an economic and political program of all the workers.

Revolutionary strategy

For nine years, the Left Front (FIT-U), with its contradictions and limits, held high the banner of class independence and the fight for workers’ government in Argentina. However, it is clear that this independence has been sustained against solvent tendencies that emanate, on many occasions, from the Front parties themselves. These trends have had a privileged scenario in Brazil, where the sister organizations of the Socialist Left and the MST (Landless Workers’ Movement), the CST (Socialist Workers’ Current) and AS (Socialism of the 21st Century), respectively, are integrated into the PSOL, (Socialism and Liberty Party) a “broad party” with center-left characteristics and class collaboration. The MRT, sister organization of the Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas (PTS), in turn asked for their PSOL membership, and although that membership was denied, this was not an impediment to integrate the PSOL lists in 2018, when it proclaimed as its fundamental orientation to promote “a parliamentary front committed to the reconstruction and development of Brazil” along with the PT (Workers’ Party), the PCdoB

(Communist Party of Brazil), PDT (Democratic Labor Party) and PSB (Brazilian Socialist Party). The PSOL has not gone beyond an electoral seal, based on a superstructural agreement on trends. Indeed, the PSOL has not endeavored to be the engine of the class struggle, and it has been tailing Lulism. Currently, PSOL integrates an “anti-Bolsonaro” front together with parties from the bourgeoisie, many of which played a leading role in the parliamentary *coup* against Dilma. IS (International Socialists) also integrates the Broad Front of Peru, a democratizing front opposed to the strategy of the workers’ government. The 2019 electoral campaign of “UNIOS en el Frente Amplio” (Unite in the Broad Front), the sister organization of IS in Peru, had as its two main axes “the fight against corruption” and “against insecurity,” even demanding that “the police comply with their job.” These facts reveal the tendencies to electoralism that nest on the left. The parliamentary expectation and appetites for a position is the lure to sacrifice the fight for the workers’ political independence. Before and after, the electoral tendencies had been strongly expressed, as evidenced by the PTS’ use of all the workers’ struggle tribunes for the mere projection of their electoral candidates.

The dissolution of the left into “broad” fronts or parties with a center-left hue, which regroup organizations with contradictory policies under the same hallmark and are led by *cliques* with mere electoral appetites that advocate class collaboration, undermined the fight for the workers’ independent political structuring. In opposition to the political dissolution, the preparation of the new round of popular rebellion incubations demands to fully unfold the struggle to set up revolutionary workers’ parties throughout Latin America. In opposition to the construction of electoral apparatus to thrive through parliamentary seats

under the shadow of “broad” parties or fronts, on the one hand, or the withdrawal of left groups to messianic and “spotless” propaganda, on the other, we propose the setting up of combat parties of the working class to fight for workers’ governments. In opposition to the projection of mere referents or electoral candidates, we promote the formation of political leaders of the working class, who are the organizers and socialist tribunes of the workers. In opposition to the publication of mere “left news,” we promote the establishment of a party’s political tools, newspapers that are the instrument to centrally develop the agitation and revolutionary propaganda, the organization of the class and the revolutionary party. The next stage calls for a political party struggle, that is, a struggle that must be waged through agitation, propaganda, and the organization of the workers and youth vanguard.

The revolutionary left—that promotes a united front of workers’ organizations to enforce the workers’ struggle and subordinates the parliamentary roles to the urgency of the working class direct action—also works for the workers’ political independence with a clear strategic proposal that is summarized in the following slogans: “Out with Trump and his agents from Latin America;” “Out with the Bolsonaros, the Piñeras, the Añezes and the Lenin Morenos;” “Down with the governments of national sellout, austerity and repression against workers, enough with capitalist governments;” “Let the crisis be paid by the capitalists, for a workers’ solution to the crisis;” “For workers’ governments, for the Socialist Unity of Latin America including Puerto Rico.”

Read the full program at:

PrensaObrera.com, July 30, 2020

<https://prensaobrero.com/english/a-revolutionary-strategy-and-a-revolutionary-program-to-intervene-in-latin-america-and-the-us/>

Year of the Plague: Danger of Fascism

BY CHRIS KINDER

October 11, 2020—As you read this, the 2020 election day in the U.S. will have already passed, but is that the end of the story? All the signs say, no. During the delay between election day and the December 14th date for the electoral college to vote, many things can and will happen, and most of them are not good. States, for instance, will be inundated with mail-in ballots to count, and many of them are very poorly prepared for this task. And there will be sinister problems.

Enter Donald Trump and Co. The current unelected U.S. president has planned for months to stay in power without actually being re-elected. He has openly proclaimed that he will refuse to leave office. He has even projected the possibility of 12 more years, not just four. And he has ways to outflank the popular vote completely.

Trump is arranging a *coup*

Trump’s poll numbers have increasingly been dropping as of this writing.

It is becoming more and more likely that Biden will win the popular vote, perhaps even in a landslide. Trump is getting more and more desperate. Yet he continues to insist that his reelection is a forgone conclusion.

In order to make this prediction come true, he and Republican allies have used a deep treasure chest of deceptive tricks to suppress the vote, especially in districts with a high percentage of Black, Brown and Asian voters. Trump also rants endlessly against mail-in voting, claiming that there will be thousands of fraudulent ballots, for which there is practically no evidence whatsoever.

He has also ramped up war-mongering against China, accusing it of interfering with fraudulent ballots. There is no evidence or likelihood for this, just as there is not for Russia, for that matter. Repeat a lie often enough, and some fools will believe it. In this case, that means his numerous white-supremacist allies.



Portland, Oregon / USA - August 4th, 2018: Proud Boys and Alt Right protesters at a Patriot Prayer rally in Portland Oregon. (Shutterstock)

Gangs of thugs

Trump is openly urging far-right vigilantes like the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, Wolverine Watchmen, Three Percenters and others to intimidate voters *en masse*, and invade vote-counting centers to “challenge” (*ie.*, reject) ballots from Black and Brown communities; and to cause enough chaos and violence in the vote-counting process to convince swing states and courts that the voting-counting process has been invalidated.

These fascistic militias have already been prepared with events such as the “unite-the-right” torchlight mobilization in Charlottesville which killed one protestor, and set an example for violent attacks on demonstrations against police brutality and murders of Black people. These groups are egged on by Trump’s falsely blaming the left for the violence, refusing to denounce white supremacists, and asking the Proud Boys to “stand back and stand by” in the debate with Biden. The Proud Boys promptly took that slogan as their marching orders, and put it on their t-shirts.

Many rightists are also mobilized to oppose anti-virus measures, also urged on by Trump. Most of these have been rallies, but the potential for dangerous violence was blatant when the Wolverine Watchers and others conspired to kidnap, and possibly kill, the governor of Michigan over her virus shutdown orders. This plot was exposed by the FBI in early October.

Crimes cloaked in a fraudulent legality

It is important to understand that the U.S. is not a democracy, and never has been. A court decision that the vote count is invalid could throw the election to state legislatures. In the Constitution, the state legislatures choose the electors, whose vote alone elects the president. The popular vote is never mentioned in the Constitution. In the early days, the legislature-appointed Electoral College was it. In

modern times, the electors have generally followed the popular vote, but if that vote was invalidated, legislatures could pick whoever they want for electors. If enough Republican-dominated states do this, it could lock-up the “election” for Trump.

And Trump could declare a national emergency, which his loyal Attorney General Barr will support. This could send the decision to the Supreme Court, which Trump and his co-dictator in the Senate have stacked with rightist constitutionalists. The Court could send the decision to the House of Representatives, which is allowed one single vote for each state’s representatives, where Republican controlled states outnumber Democratic states by 26 to 23, thus electing Trump. Either way, Trump’s *coup* would be “legal,” according to the constitution.

How Adolf Hitler came to power

All this is remarkably similar to the way Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany. Hitler’s party, the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP-Nazi) never won a majority in an election, as Trump has not and will not. In Hitler’s case, this includes even the election that was held shortly after Hitler was made chancellor, in 1933. In the 1932 elections, the Nazis actually lost a few seats in the Reichstag (parliament), though they remained the largest single party. Hermann Göring became the Reichstag president, but Hitler refused an appointment as vice-chancellor, saying he didn’t want to “play second fiddle.”

Deadly clashes in the streets between Nazi Brownshirts and Communists were ramping up, as a severe depression was sweeping away jobs in Germany, as in the rest of the world. Göring promoted a bill in the Reichstag to strengthen penalties against “acts of political violence,” hoping that Communists could be rounded up. Instead, a major case was made against five Sturmabteilung¹ (SA) Brownshirts

for killings of Communists (who were the majority of victims of the violence.) Hitler served as a defense witness, but the Brownshirts were convicted and sentenced to death. Though Hitler’s dictatorship would soon change this scenario, it was not secure yet.

Hitler’s cloak of fraudulent legality

Hitler’s chancellorship in January 1933 was an appointment by the German President Hindenburg, based on the Nazi coalition with two small parties, which gave him a majority in the Reichstag. Nazis staged torchlight parades throughout Berlin. But Hindenburg was still in charge of the military as long as he remained alive (about one year,) and Hitler was unable to pass an “enabling act” to make him the supreme leader until he established a stronger majority in the Reichstag.

The bombing of the Reichstag, planned and organized by the Nazis and blamed on the Communists, was key. Hitler got Hindenburg to sign off on a “Reichstag Fire Decree,” which declared an emergency that allowed Hitler to suspend most civil liberties, including *habeas corpus*, freedom of the press, and the right of free association and public assembly. Mass arrests of Communists, and the banning of non-Nazi political parties soon followed.

The “Night of the Long Knives,” which murderously beheaded the SA, the leadership of which had threatened the leadership of the military, was the final act. This, and the death of Hindenburg in August of 1934 solidified Hitler’s full dictatorship.

“Don’t forget how people laughed at me”

In 1934, Hitler was quoted saying, “Don’t forget how people laughed at me 15 years ago when I declared that one day, I would govern Germany. They laugh now, just as foolishly, when I declare that I will remain in power!”² Does this remind you of anything?

Even though Trump himself is a little short of being an actual fascist—he is more accurately a self-serving arrogant racist white supremacist, nationalist, opportunist, and know-nothing moron (one easily runs out of adjectives)—his actions are certainly moving the U.S. in the direction that Hitler mapped out. He has declared he will stay in power whatever the outcome. Although they are not centrally organized as were the Brownshirts, the hard-right militias and vigilante groups in the U.S. are coming together in a common cause to wreak havoc on the election process in support of Trump.

Trump will probably not be able to fire-bomb Congress as the Nazis did the Reichstag. But he can foment violence, and is able to declare an emergency which would pretend to invalidate the election result. He and his thugs could possibly manufacture other atrocities to blame on the left. He has already gone overboard on blaming Black Lives Matter protestors for the violence which is actually caused by white rightists. This poses the question of, how ready is the U.S. for fascism?

QAnon, a hard-right threat

While this question is hard to answer, we see clear indications of a growing hard-right threat. Take the QAnon conspiracy theory. Starting as an obscure and totally bizarre internet discussion just a few years ago, it has exploded into a rapidly spreading Nazi-like cult. It claims there is a secret intelligence agent, Q, who is exposing a secret Satan-worshipping “deep state” cult which kidnaps white children, keeps them in secret prisons run by pedophiles, who slaughter and eat them to gain power from the essence in their blood. This cabal, Q claims, is financed by Jews, particularly George Soros, and Jews in the media.

Trump’s mission, according to QAnon is to expose and destroy this horrific deep state cabal. Trump’s comment, so far? He said he doesn’t know much (no surprise there), but they “like me,” and this pleases him!

The QAnon “ideology” is not new. It is based squarely on an anti-Semitic tirade known as The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. These “protocols” were a forgery, probably written in the early

19th Century in Russia by elements in the Russian Orthodox Church, in response to the influx of Jews into Russia from its conquests in Poland and the Ottoman Empire. Central to its mythology was the “Blood Libel,” which claimed that Jews kidnapped and slaughtered Christian children, and drained their blood for use in the dough used to make matzos for Jewish holidays.

Pogroms against Jews

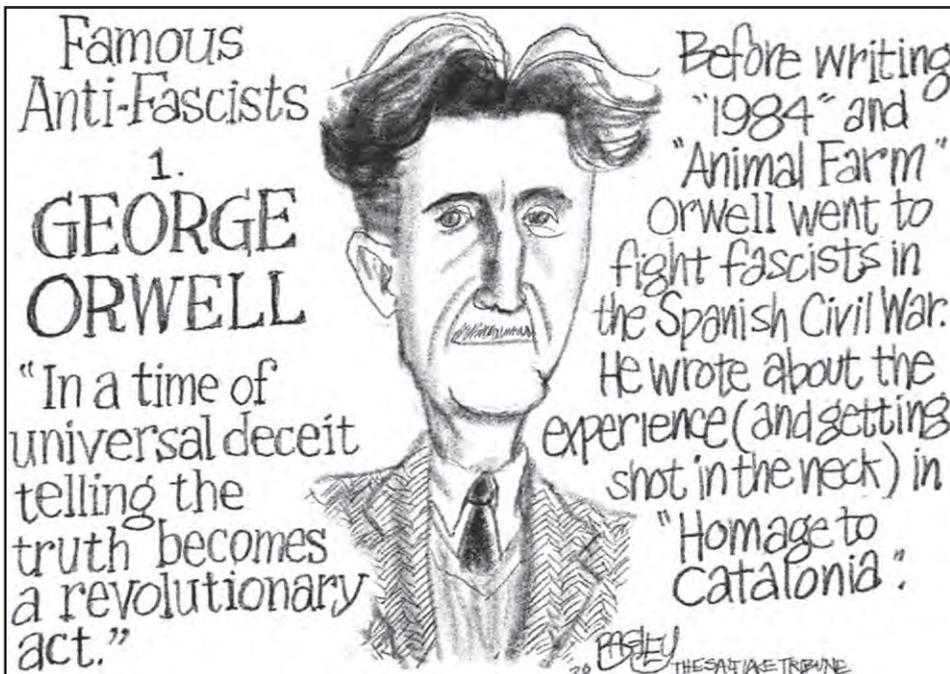
Jews in Russia were confined to special villages called “pales,” and subjected to periodic deadly pogroms, or raids, carried out by Czarist military. The Czarist secret police may have had a hand in the Protocols as well, all used to justify the pogroms. The Protocols were published in the early 20th Century, translated and spread throughout Europe, including in Germany, which also had a long history of confining Jews to ghettos, and to certain occupations as well.

The Protocols were a gift to the Nazis. It was used in Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, and it was promoted in the Nazi newspaper, *Der Sturmer* (The Storm). It was also made into a children’s book, which was required in the curriculum of all primary schools!

QAnon’s source material in the Protocols is also not that new in the U.S. Fascist lovers and supporters of Mussolini and Hitler’s Germany abounded in this country. Henry Ford echoed Nazi hatred of Jews, and had 500,000 copies of the Protocols printed and distributed in the U.S. The infamous Catholic priest, Father Coughlin, preached the Protocols on his national radio programs in the 1930s—one of the first mass uses of radio. And the Ku Klux Klan combined anti-Semitism with its white supremacist hate message.³

U.S. corporations supported Nazis

Many large U.S. corporations were also complicit in supporting Mussolini and the German Nazis, both before and during World War II. This included financial investment, supplying of



resources, and industrial production. Oil supplies were critical to both Japan and Germany, and U.S. companies, chiefly Standard Oil, supplied both throughout the war, using round-about routes through South Asia, Central and South America, and Spain, which was a neutral power friendly to Hitler. U.S. directors of SKF—a huge trust financed chiefly by a Swedish bank—made sure that SKF’s production of ball bearings, critical for airplanes, were delivered to Germany during the war. Fifteen months after Pearl Harbor, U.S. aircraft production lacked a supply of new ball bearings, with the result that worn-out bearings caused crashes of U.S. fighter planes. This is just one example in a detailed ten-page story.⁴

After the war, fascism was an anathema throughout most of the world, but now it is out of the bottle again. Rightist populism and outright fascism is spreading. But what is the likelihood of fascism’s victory in the U.S. today?

Will Trump’s *coup* work?

Both Mussolini and Hitler came to power because they had ruling class support in the context of mass working class revolutionary movements which threatened to overthrow capitalism. Both fascist movements were based on violent organized bands, controlled from the top, and able to combat the workers movements and parties. Today’s fascists in the U.S. are a collection of dangerous armed bands who are capable of murderous attacks, and have the support of the right-populist president, but they lack a unifying national organization.

The ruling class’ power is not significantly threatened today. While still having many isolated struggles, and while ideas of socialism have been spreading, workers lack a revolutionary party, are not organized as a class, and so are not currently threatening the ruling class. Also, the bourgeoisie is showing serious doubts about Trump, as seen by the large increase of Wall Street

financing for Biden rather than Trump. They liked the tax break, but did not really need it. What else do they have to gain from Trump? More chaos?

Only the development of a revolutionary workers party, determined to overthrow capitalism, can solve the many problems we face.

Democrats can’t solve anything

Biden will win the popular vote, and Trump and his thugs will try to disrupt it, that much is certain. But despite Trump’s legal resources in the undemocratic U.S. Constitution, and despite the surge in fascist mobilization in the U.S., I think that Trump’s *coup* attempt will not succeed—this time. Trump will wind up in defeat, one way or another, but that will not be the end of it. While this prediction is tenuous, one thing is certain: a Biden victory will solve nothing.

The fascist mobilization is not going to go away, nor are the many problems

of capitalist/imperialist rule in the U.S. and the world. The Democrats will not and cannot solve problems caused by the extreme wealth gap in the U.S., the unchallenged advance of climate change, the coronavirus pandemic, or the threats of fascistic gangs. Only the development of a revolutionary workers party, determined to overthrow capitalism, can solve the many problems we face.

1 The Sturmabteilung (SA) literally “Storm Detachment,” was the Nazi Party’s original paramilitary wing. It played a significant role in Adolf Hitler’s rise to power in the 1920s and 1930s.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sturmabteilung>

2 It was at this time that Hitler declared that the “National Socialist movement will go on for 1,000 years!” “Germany: Second Revolution?” *Time Magazine*, July 2, 1934; quoted in “Hitler’s Seizure of Power, Seizure of Control (1931-1933),” wikipedia.org.

3 “QAnon is a Nazi Cult, Rebranded,” by Gregory Stanton, September 9, 2020.

<https://www.justsecurity.org/72339/qanon-is-a-nazi-cult-rebranded/>

(Stanton works with Genocide Watch, and the Alliance Against Genocide)

4 Anthony Gronowicz, “The history tells another story about the role of the U.S. in World War II,” on the action greens list. Professor Gronowicz teaches at the City University of New York, and is the author of several books.



How the Pigs Abuse “Gang” Labels

BY KEVIN “RASHID” JOHNSON

Using racism to create political bogey men

Socially and politically charged labels have long been used (or misused) by officials as a cover for abusing and discriminating against Black and Brown people, and suppressing political views that challenge or question the *status quo*.

During the Cold War, when the U.S. and its Western allies, were engaged in a propaganda war against Communism, the “Communist” label was used to discredit, and as a pretext to justify attacking, people and political views that officials disliked or opposed. During the Civil Rights era, anyone (especially whites) who opposed Jim Crow segregation, lynching and the many overt abuses faced by Blacks was labeled a Communist.

In fact, the FBI targeted Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcolm X under its COMINFIL (Communist Infiltration) program using the pretext of investigating them for supposed backing from Communist countries, as cover for surveilling, harassing and ultimately murdering them, to counter their leading struggles against white supremacy and capitalism in Amerika.

The real basis and method that officials used to incite anti-Communist sentiment across the U.S. white population wasn’t political, it was racial. They did this by linking Communism with white fears of Black integration and Civil Rights in the public mind.

Officials openly advanced these views. As the chairman of the Washington State Investigative Committee expressed, “If someone insists that there is discrimination against Negroes in this country, or that there is inequality in wealth, there is every reason to believe that person is a communist.” Also, the head of the board

of the Federal Department of Loyalty expressed, “of course, the fact that a person believes in racial equality doesn’t prove that he’s a Communist, but it certainly does make you look twice.”¹

The FBI perpetuated the same views and targeted people accordingly. “FBI agents spotted white communists by their ease and politeness around Negroes, or by the simple fact that they socialized with Negroes at all.”²

In 1948 president Harry Truman aimed, according to his own political strategist, “to identify [presidential candidate Henry Wallace who promoted liberal views on race] and isolate him in the public mind with the Communists.”³ As a result of these policies linking anti-Communism with race, when Wallace toured the South during the 1948 election campaign, violent white mobs screamed charges against him and his entourage as a “Communist” and “nigger lover!” This in the South was the “Communist Menace.”⁴

Officially manipulated racism formed the basis of the mass hysteria that fueled the Red Scare and McCarthyism of the Cold War.

The pigs even tried to use the Communist bogey man to turn Black communities against the Black Panther Party. Of course, it didn’t work, because Blacks had no racist basis upon which to manipulate them to fear Communism, while they whole-heartedly supported the BPP’s community service programs like the Free Breakfast for Schoolchildren program. Fred Hampton, Jr., the Chairman of the Illinois chapter of the BPP described the pigs’ failed attempts. How they tried to turn the community matrons against the Party by describing the BPP and its programs as Communist—although the BPP actually was a Communist organization. Here’s Fred

in his speech, “Power Anywhere There’s People!”:

“[Y]ou ain’t seen nothin’ till you see one them beautiful sisters with their hair kinda’ start gettin’ grey, and they ain’t got many teeth, and they were tearing them police up! They were tearin’ ‘em up! The pigs would come come up to them and say, “You scared of communism?” And the Sisters would say, “No—scared of it? I ain’t never heard of it.”

“You like socialism?”

“No, I ain’t never heard of it.”

The pigs, they be crackin’ up, because they enjoyed seeing these people frightened of these words.

“You like capitalism?”

“Yeah, well, that’s what I live with—I like it.”

“You like the Breakfast for Children program, ni**er?”

“Yeah, I like it.”

And the pigs say “Uh oh.” The pigs say, “Well, the Breakfast for Children program is a socialistic program. It’s a communistic program.”

And the women said, “Well I tell you what, boy. I’ve been knowing you since you was knee-high to a grasshopper, ni**a. And I don’t know if I like communism and I don’t know if I like socialism. But I know that that Breakfast for Children program feeds my kids ni**a. And if you put your hands on that Breakfast for Children program, I’m gonna come off this can and I’m gonna beat your ass like a....”

Inventing new bogey men—terrorism and gangs

As the late historian Howard Zinn observed, when the Soviet Union collapsed at the turn of the 1990s, U.S. officials had to create a new racially charged bogey man with which to incite “majority” public opinion

against those countries, people and ideas they opposed. This time they used Arab terrorism. But this label didn't readily apply to whipping up fear within the U.S., using people of color who remained marginalized and whom the establishment desired to continue to hold back socially, politically and economically. So, another racially charged bogey man had to be created and used that could be readily applied to people of color within the U.S. This was the "gang" label.

During the 1960s and '70s U.S. officials systematically targeted for destruction independent Black political leadership like Malcolm X and the BPP, that was winning and influencing large numbers of Black youth to take up the fight against segregation, racism, endemic poverty, and the myriad abuses that are inherent to the capitalist system.

In turn, through blackploitation films and other entertainment media, hustlers, drug dealers, pimps and especially the mafia were glamorized to poor urban youth as the images of social rebels whom they should emulate and imitate, while outright government terrorism was used to discourage them from identifying with and joining groups like the BPP.

At the same time the government flooded the poor Black communities with narcotics and assault weapons that destabilized the communities and gave rise to the growth of, and violent conflicts between, youth street gangs. The resulting drug epidemics and gang wars were used to bolster the bogey man image of gangs by officials bent on continuing to marginalize, exploit and repress Black people. I discuss and extensively document the government-engineered process of dumping drugs in the Black communities and generating the violent rise of gangs and gang conflicts in my article, "Kill Yourself or Liberate Yourself: The Real U.S. Imperialist Policy on Gang Violence vs. the Revolutionary Alternative" (2010).⁵

With gangs as the new bogey man with which to demonize and justify repressive policies against the Black community at large, officials maneuvered to label any and every young Black male and view they opposed as gang related. Indeed, they labeled Black youth who didn't even exist as gang members, to inflate gang databases created to stigmatize entire Black communities as gang affiliated.

In all prison systems, the STG label is used to suppress and censor literature that expresses views and teaches histories from critical Black and Brown perspectives. Often, it's used to censor media that criticizes racism and racist groups.

Officials used the drug infestation and gang proliferation that they created themselves to carry out this agenda. As one report explained:

"Operation Hammer [a campaign created by the LAPD targeted at the Black communities of Los Angeles] was a counterinsurgency program that sometimes resembled the Phoenix program in Vietnam. There were hundreds of commando-style raids on 'gang houses.' More than 50,000 suspected gang members were swept up for interrogation based on factors such as style of dress and whether the suspect was a young Black male on the street past curfew. Of those caught up in such Hammer sweeps, 90 percent were later released without charge, but their names were held in a computer database of gang members that was later shown to have included twice as many names as

there were Black youths in Los Angeles. [LAPD chief Darryl] Gates sealed off large areas of South Central as 'narcotics enforcement zones.' There was a strict curfew, constant police presence and on-the-spot strip searches for those caught outside after curfew."⁶

Alongside these attacks on the Black communities, a parallel program was occurring inside U.S. prisons and jails, where officials were also engineering the growth of gangs, while purging them of leaders who might lead them in positive directions and replacing them with ones who could be controlled through their own self-interest and desire for power and money into cycles of violent conflict and drug proliferation and addiction. The pigs use these elements to control prisons, target non-affiliated politically conscious and otherwise "problematic" prisoners, and to justify increasingly draconian measures and calls for increased funding and resources for "gang intelligence" measures and staff, and the construction of more prisons, especially supermax and solitary confinement units.

The security threat group label

To allow the gang label to be applied more generally and broadly to any prisoner or prisoner group that officials wish to target, prison officials have created the term Security Threat Group (STG), which is a more broadly inclusive euphemism for gang.

As with the cops on the outside, everyone and every idea prison officials wish to suppress, they label as STG related. More often than not, the STG label is used to target things in manners that are facially absurd and in no way relate to any STG matter. Often the motives are blatantly racist.

Indeed, most STG investigators and their staff are white and have no connection to communities or cultures of people of color. Yet, the vast majority of prisoners targeted as STG affiliated are Black and Brown. The few excep-

tions in cases of more racially diverse STG officials occurs in prisons that are located in areas where there is a more diverse local population. But in many of such cases the STG staff are still white officials shipped in from other places to run the STG operations.

Overall the entire STG corps is trained into a hostile doctrinaire view of the so-called gang culture, which stereotypes Black and Brown communities, culture, people and history and is blatantly ignorant of and prejudiced toward them. In all prison systems, the STG label is used to suppress and cen-

sor literature that expresses views and teaches histories from critical Black and Brown perspectives. Often, it's used to censor media that criticizes racism and racist groups.

Florida prisons, where I was confined from 2017-2018, routinely banned publications as "STG material," citing articles that criticized racially discriminatory government practices or the actions of white supremacist groups in society.

I've witnessed over and over again, STG officials endorsing and permitting the spread of white supremacist groups

and their teachings while targeting and repressing Blacks and Browns.

As an example of how absurdly the STG label is abused and used as an illegal tool of censorship by so-called "expert" gang officials and investigators, a recent issue of *Socialist Viewpoint* magazine was banned by STG investigators here at Indiana's Wabash Valley prison, where I'm confined. They claimed the magazine violates the prison system's STG policy (policy # 02-03-105, which can be read on the Indiana Department of Correction's [IDOC] website.) The magazine, they claimed, had "hand signals" in it. People from all walks of life are routinely seen using hand signals, presidents using the "V" for victory, which among others is a general peace sign, and even clenched fist. Sports people and rock stars are commonly seen with thumb and pinky finger extended, or thumb, pinky and index fingers extended, and so on.

But in the fevered minds of prison gang "experts," any and every hand sign in a publication coming into a Black or Brown person is problematic. Aren't these "expert" gang investigators supposed to know how to distinguish between gang communications and everyday people using everyday body language? Of course, they are, which is what demonstrates the foul motives behind what they do. This case is telling.

The IDOC's STG policy which was cited as banning the magazine in no way applies. As a threshold matter, the policy defines an STG. Here's what it says:

"Security Threat Group (STG): A group of offenders that set themselves apart from others; pose a threat to the security or safety of staff or offenders; or are disruptive to programs or the orderly management of the facility."

By this policy's own definition, the magazine has no connection to any STG. *Socialist Viewpoint*, which can be also be viewed online, is a Socialist



magazine published and edited by two elderly white women, with obvious Jewish last names, who are not prisoners and have never been to prison. They are obviously not a “group of offenders.”

We already know that officials don't like socialist and Communist views, and have linked suppressing those views with racist opposition to equality for Black people. Indeed, they've used racially charged labels to suppress those views, which is exactly what is occurring in this case...the racially charged STG label is being deliberately misused to suppress a socialist magazine.

From “Communism” to “terrorism” to “gangs,” the agenda of using racially charged labels to suppress people of color and ideas that officials dislike continues. It's the same racist imperialist shit in the same racist imperialist toilet.

Dare to Struggle Dare to Win!

All Power to the People!

Write to Kevin “Rashid” Johnson:
Kevin Johnson #264847
Wabash Valley Correctional Facility
6908 S. Old U.S. HWY 41, P.O. Box 500
Carlisle, IN 47838
www.rashidmod.com

1 David Coute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1978) p. 168

2 Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1988) pp. 209-10

3 Robert Griffin, et al., Athen Theoharis, “The Politics of Scholarship: Liberalism, Anti-Communism and McCarthyism,” *The Spectre: Original Essays on the Cold War and the Origins of McCarthyism* (NY: New Viewpoints, 1974) p. 278

4 Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1996) pp. 260-63

5 <http://rashidmod.com/?p=626>

6 Alexander Cockburn, et al., *Whiteout: the CIA, Drugs and the Press* (NY: Verso, 1999)

Future Focused in Black August 2020

BY JALIL MUNTAQIM

By 2023, the U.S. will be 40 percent “minority,” and 50 percent of the entire population will be under 40 years old. These are the demographics that cannot be ignored as progressives move forward building opposition to institutional racism and plutocratic governing.

In my thinking, it is incumbent on today's Black activist academic community to take into account what America will look like in ten years to better position Black people in opposition to the deniers of change. In this regard, I am raising dialogue toward the building of a national Coalition for a Changed America (NCCA), comprising Black historians, social and political scientists, demographers, economists and statisticians along with political activists who are prepared to build a future focused America.

It is in preparation for the inevitable that we will better control and forge our common destiny with the necessary ideological, socio-economic and political determination to preserve our existence in a changed America.

It is extremely important progressives seek the means to organize greater unity and uniformity in ideological and political objectives that build and sustain a mass and popular determination

that is currently evolving with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) “anti-racism social consciousness movement.” Similar to the moral civil rights consciousness movement, the BLM “anti-racism social consciousness movement” has challenged the symbols and social character of America's racial divide.

It has placed front and center the inequities of racial division in America's social order, demanding the demilitarization and defunding of the police and a more equitable diversified inclusion in the capitalist-imperialist system, among other perfunctory systemic demands. In its platform it has called for the ending of mass incarceration and the criminalization of poverty, to support climate change initiatives, and to stop the gentrification of communities of color and housing displacement, demanding debt relief for students and challenging dysfunctional and racist school systems and curriculums.

In each of these and other demands are racial and economic implications that may ultimately create social conflicts and confrontations, since change will not come easily in a socio-economic and political order that for centuries has existed under the delusionary cloud of white supremacy.



“Capitalism is the virus” is painted on an abandoned factory in New Orleans.

Racialized, unequal wealth distribution

However, the most pervasive and devastating cause for all these issues is the racialized unequal distribution of wealth in this country. It is well researched and recorded the wealth disparity and income gap between whites and Blacks is 40 percent greater today than in 1967, with the average Black household net worth of \$6,314 compared to the average white household net worth of \$119,500, according to the *New York Times* seven-part series by Nicholas Kristof, “When Whites Just Don’t Get It,” published 2014-2016, now compiled by *ImpactAmerica*.

When such economic disparity is accounted toward the lack of educational opportunities and criminal behavior in the Black community, we are better able to identify the pernicious problem. The Brookings Institute reported three years ago: “As poverty increases and spreads during the 2000s, the number of distressed neighborhoods in the United States—defined as census tracts with poverty rates of 40 percent or more—climbed nearly three quarters.”

The report continued: “The populations living in such neighborhoods grew by similar margins (76 percent, or five million people) to reach 11.2 million by 2008-2012” (*New York Times*, “Crime and Punishment” by Charles M. Blow).

Today, with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the rate disparity of Black deaths compared to white deaths, lends to a greater understanding how unequal distribution of wealth presents a genocidal dynamic to poor and oppressed peoples, especially Black people.

With the country in increasing economic crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to take into account reports on the rise of wealth: “According to a recent paper by the economists Emmanuel Saez of

the University of California, Berkeley, and Gabriel Zucman of the London School of Economics, almost all of the increases in American inequality over the last 30 years is attributable to the ‘rise of the share of wealth owned by the 0.1 percent richest families.’” (*New York Times*, “Another Widening Gap: The Haves vs. The Have Mores” by Robert Frank). And much of that rise is driven by the top 0.01 percent.

Today, with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the rate disparity of Black deaths compared to white deaths, lends to a greater understanding how unequal distribution of wealth presents a genocidal dynamic to poor and oppressed peoples, especially Black people.

It further states: “The wealth of the top one percent grew an average of 3.9 percent a year from 1986 to 2012, though the top one-hundredth of that one percent saw its wealth grow about twice as fast. Sixteen thousand families in the tiptop category—those with fortunes of at least \$111 million—have seen their share of national wealth nearly double since 2002, to 11.2 percent.”

When consideration is given to the fact just one individual, the head of Amazon, Jeff Bezos, can make \$13 billion in a day, this obscene wealth hoarding must have a devastating impact on America’s social order. This is especially disconcerting when 16,000 families out of approximately 350 million Americans control 99 percent of the country’s wealth—which demands structural and institutional change.

Can there be any serious opposition to this reality when the American populace is under the delusion of being governed in a democracy inasmuch as they are permitted to vote for a millionaire to govern them, when in truth the corporate government is a plutocracy? The American populace has no understanding that the U.S. corporate government is in fact a corporation established by law in 28 U.S.C.A. §3002(15)(a) which states: “(15) ‘United States’ means—(A) a Federal corporation.”

Controlling the means of production

Hence, the majority of the American populace as wage earners hustle and scrape for the crumbs off the plutocracy table, demanding increase in minimum wage, when they should be demanding control of the means of production. It is this inequitable distribution of wealth, and the amalgamation of disparity as the middle and lower classes becomes less distinct, that requires the progressive academic community to persistently address this issue to raise consciousness and to direct attention to the real culprit of peoples’ suffering.

Most recently Congress held hearings on the monopolies of Amazon, Facebook and Apple, discussing whether they were “too big.”

The U.S. capitalist socio-economic order demands the capacity to exploit and profit from people’s labor. Thusly, American workers consciously or unconsciously are complicit in their exploitation, abiding the social rules of wage earners, which limits participatory democracy to oppose their oppression.

Labor unions and other representatives of worker’s rights are themselves, for the most part, instruments of the capitalist system. They have not demanded workers’ ownership of the means of production on behalf of the wage earners they represent.

Rather, they ensure the viability of the corporation by preserving the interest of the wage earner-worker in cooperation with the corporate interest of profitability. They do not prohibit the exploitation of the worker but make it more palatable for the worker to be exploited in a less egregious manner and for the corporation to continue to reap exorbitant profits from workers' labor.

The union's hard-fought concessions from a reluctant corporate entity generally amount to pennies (or a percentage of a penny) to a dollar of the corporation's largesse. How can this be explained and presented to the American wage earners in order to persuade them to oppose American capitalism as it currently exists?

"The system"

While it is heartening to see young people, especially Black Lives Matter (BLM) advocates, protest in the streets challenging the impunity of police repression and racist violence, demanding the tearing down of symbols of white supremacy, it should be noted these demands are readily adopted by the system of oppression to preserve its existence and capacity to exploit the American worker. These demands are not a threat to the system of capitalism, although they expose the socio-cultural institutions of racism, and how racism is utilized to forge divisions among white workers and workers of color.

I believe we can define the BLM as an "anti-racism social consciousness movement" and not an anti-capitalist workers' movement. I am not confident these struggles by young people will result in substantial institutional changes or concrete changes in the corporate culture and reality of capitalist profiteering.

Occupy Wall Street (OWS) created similar national attention, but devoid of a national organization, leadership and agenda, their demands for change

were ignored, held in abeyance or whittled down to cosmetic acts of appeasement until the struggle was annihilated as a public nuisance and disappeared. The removing of Confederate statues and allowing the Black Lives Matter's name to be painted in the streets has little bearing on how the corporate government operates.

...the majority of the American populace as wage earners hustle and scrape for the crumbs off the plutocracy table, demanding increase in minimum wage, when they should be demanding control of the means of production...

It, in essence, appeases the protesters and presents a false sense of achievement. While challenging the socio-cultural dynamics of white supremacy may have liberatory psycho-social value, it does not change the conditions of worker exploitation and capitalist profiteering, especially concerning Black workers who are generally super-exploited and vulnerable as the pandemic has exposed and made explicitly obvious.

So, I pose this question to the Black academic intelligentsia: How do you perceive your continued contribution to an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist movement being developed in this historic time of turmoil in the United States? How will the progressive community of Black erudite activists support this generation of Black protesters and dissenters and challenge their engagement in this protracted (r)evolution for a changed America?

Again, in three years, this country's minority community will be 40 percent of the population, 50 percent of which will be under 40 years old. It is incumbent on Black academic intelligentsia to consider the idea of the development of the National Coalition for a Changed America (NCCA), specifically functioning as a think-tank and policy development apparatus offering position papers that are future focused and that provide strategic guidance in the development of the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist movement.

—San Francisco Bay View, August 29, 2020

<https://sfbayview.com/2020/08/jalilmuntaqim-future-focused-in-black-august-2020/>

Labor unions and other representatives of worker's rights are themselves, for the most part, instruments of the capitalist system. They have not demanded workers' ownership of the means of production on behalf of the wage earners they represent.

Rushing for a Vaccine

Trump administration is paying big pharma billions in rush for vaccine

By MARJORIE COHN

Desperate to distract the national discourse from his criminal mishandling of the coronavirus pandemic, Donald Trump is promising that a vaccine will be available before Election Day. His vaccine campaign is named “Operation Warp Speed” and there is a real danger that its speed will warp the results. Ironically, the Trump administration is comparing this effort to the Manhattan Project, the highly secret government program to develop the first atomic bomb. “This isn’t a secret government weapon we’re trying to keep from an enemy,” said David Mitchell, founder of Patients for Affordable Drugs. “The enemy is the virus. This is actually a rescue mission to save Americans and humanity from the virus.”

Vaccines generally take ten years to develop, test and distribute. The shortest time it has taken to develop a vaccine is four years. Yet four pharmaceutical companies are in late stages of clinical trials. Pfizer, apparently the front-runner in the vaccine race, says it

won’t have results before mid-November. Moderna, AstraZeneca, and Johnson & Johnson say they hope to have results by the end of the year.

“Trying to produce a vaccine at ‘Warp Speed’ is a terrible gamble with public health,” Clifford Conner, a science historian and author of the new book, *The Tragedy of American Science: From Truman to Trump*, said in an interview with Jeff Mackler of Socialist Action USA. “If none of the inadequately tested trial vaccines kill anybody—and if one of them should actually prove therapeutically worthwhile—it will be a matter of dumb luck, and dumb luck is never a good plan in a deadly crisis.”

In July, AstraZeneca halted its clinical trials because a participant became seriously ill. Although AstraZeneca refused to identify the malady, citing privacy concerns, the patient’s symptoms were consistent with transverse myelitis, or inflammation of the spinal cord. Several researchers decried AstraZeneca’s lack of transparency.

Last week, Johnson & Johnson announced it had paused its clinical trial due to an unexplained illness in one of its volunteers. The company refused to provide details, claiming the need to protect the patient’s privacy.

Robert R. Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told a Senate panel on September 16 that a vaccine wouldn’t be readily available until mid-2021. A few hours later, Trump declared, without evidence, that Redfield “made a mistake” and a vaccine would be widely available in weeks.

Shortly before Trump contradicted Redfield, four senior physicians directing the national coronavirus response team endorsed the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) new stricter safety rules. Those requirements mandate the approval of outside experts before the FDA will pronounce a vaccine safe and effective.

The new FDA emergency rules also require that participants in clinical trials be followed for two months after administration of the immunizations before final authorization, in order to identify possible side effects.

But desperate to win an electoral advantage in the face of Trump’s falling poll numbers, the administration stalled its approval of the FDA’s new policies for two weeks. Trump accused the FDA of preventing authorization of a vaccine before Election Day, calling it a “political hit job.” The day after *The New York Times* reported that White House officials were blocking the FDA’s new guidelines, the administration did an about-face and approved them.

“I have tremendous trust in these massive companies that are so brilliantly organized in terms of what they’ve been doing with the tests,”



Trump said at a press briefing. “I don’t know that a government as big as we are could do tests like this.”

In the race to develop a vaccine as quickly as possible, Operation Warp Speed is “paying out billions of dollars to Big Pharma corporations in advance of any results whatsoever,” Conner told *Truthout*. They are not complying with regulatory oversight and traditional federal contracting mechanisms that create transparency, he noted. “Before any of the companies had done any research or developed any products, they were already reaping windfall profits from their association with Operation Warp Speed.” What that demonstrates, Conner adds, is that, “Warp Speed is not so much a scientific ‘race for a vaccine’ among competing research laboratories as it is a speculative frenzy among competing hedge funds.”

Three of the pharmaceutical companies that have contracted with Warp Speed to develop a vaccine have never successfully brought any vaccine to market, Conner said. Novavax has a Warp Speed contract for \$1.6 billion, Moderna has a \$1.5 billion Warp Speed contract, and Vaxart’s stock prices have soared, its owners realizing huge profits. Pfizer also has a Warp Speed contract worth \$1.95 billion.

The Trump administration is pressuring the FDA to rebrand its emergency authorization of a vaccine as a “pre-licensure.” But, concerned it would appear to be politicizing scientific determinations, the FDA is pushing back. An FDA spokesperson cited “important substantive differences” between the emergency use authorization and the more rigorous process to license a vaccine. “There is no such thing as ‘pre-licensure’ or ‘pre-approval’ under the laws FDA administers,” the spokesperson said.

A data and safety monitoring board has been established to review information about the safety and effective-

ness of COVID-19 vaccines. The board has the authority to fast-track or halt a clinical trial. This small panel of ten to 15 outside scientists and statistical experts works in secret, ostensibly to shield them from company pressure. The secrecy, however, may also lead to undue influence by drug companies. “We want to know they’re truly independent,” Eric Topol, a clinical trial expert at San Diego’s Scripps Research, said. “The lack of transparency is exasperating.” The safety board is overseeing trials by Moderna, Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca. But Pfizer, which is funding its clinical trials, has its own five-member safety panel.

“Warp Speed is not so much a scientific ‘race for a vaccine’ among competing research laboratories as it is a speculative frenzy among competing hedge funds.”

Topol criticized Moderna and Pfizer for including in their data people who had fairly mild cases of COVID-19. Topol said evidence of the effectiveness of a vaccine would be more solid if only moderate and severe cases were included. In addition, Topol faulted Pfizer and Moderna for their willingness to halt their clinical trials early, which could prove detrimental later when the vaccine is administered to millions of people.

“Take the time, the extra weeks. No shortcuts. Nobody will regret it,” Topol cautioned. “I’ve been doing clinical trials for decades. I don’t know if there’s ever been a more important one than this one. I’d like to see it done right, and not stopped early.”

Congress members, advocacy organizations and a former administration official are calling for Operation Warp Speed to release its vaccine contracts with the pharmaceutical companies. “The administration really just seems to be playing a game of hide-and-seek,” Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-Texas) told *NPR*.

The Trump administration has ignored requests by the House of Representatives for information on COVID-19 spending. “[R]ight now, the entire process is riddled with political interference and a lack of transparency,” Senator Patty Murray, (D-Washington), ranking member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, wrote in a statement to *NPR*. “These contracts need to be made public, so Congress and the American people are not left in the dark—there is too much at stake.”

Rick Bright, who was fired as director of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, filed a whistleblower complaint, charging that some federal COVID-19 contracts were awarded based on “political connections and cronyism” instead of scientific evidence. Bright said there’s no reason to hide the contracts, which causes him to suspect “that there’s something interesting in there they don’t want discovered.”

Trump’s stubborn insistence on having a vaccine by Election Day does not comport with reality. Neither do Big Pharma’s predictions. The shortcuts they threaten to take for political gain and mega-profits endanger the public safety. That should frighten us all.

—*Truthout*, October 19, 2020

<https://truthout.org/articles/trump-administration-is-paying-big-pharma-billions-in-rush-for-vaccine/>

General Strike to Stop COVID-19

BY DR. NAYVIN GORDON

The Federal Government issued advisory guidelines, August 18, 2020 adding teachers to the list of “essential workers.” These workers can be allowed to continue working and not quarantine after they have been exposed to COVID-19.¹

These guidelines directly contradict the science of public health pandemic control and will further spread disease and death to students, staff, teachers and their families across the nation. Following an outbreak in Camden County Georgia in early August, Deputy Superintendent Jon Miller is reported to have sent a district-wide email to administrators, writing, “Staff who test positive are not to notify any other staff members, parents of their students or any other person/entity that they may have exposed them.” Furthermore, some states are already concealing the true number of COVID-19 infections.

All this is part of the systematic attack on science for the people. The recent passage of the Cares Act gave trillions of dollars to the rich corporations and Wall Street while pennies went to mass COVID-19 testing to protect the people.



July 2020 the White House Press Secretary said, “We will not let science stand in the way of opening schools.”² Vice President Mike Pence also said, “we don’t want the guidance of the

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to be a reason schools don’t open.”

These murderous policies of deliberately accelerating the spread of the pandemic must be stopped. A strike of teachers, students and parents can be the spark that ignites a general strike for mass testing, tracing and isolation to end this epidemic. It is up to us. Only a mass movement of workers can force the government to meet the needs of the people.

Our lives depend on sharpening the class struggle.

—August 24, 2020

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/08/21/trump-administration-declared-teachers-essential-workers-heres-what-that-means/>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/live/2020/jul/16/coronavirus-us-covid-donald-trump-anthony-fauci-joe-biden-live-updates>

A Very English Theft

How the countryside was taken from the public, using profits from slavery

BY NICK HAYES

A couple of years ago, I approached the longest wall in England. I put my hands on its ledge, lifted myself up and climbed into 7,000 acres of private land belonging to the representative of South Dorset, Richard Drax MP (Member of Parliament.)

It was a work trip. I was researching my new book, *The Book of Trespass*, a history of how the English countryside was partitioned. I spent an entire year hopping the walls of the dukes, lords, media magnates and private corporations that own England, looking for the origin of trespass and tracing the history of the privatization of land—or in other words, the public’s exclusion from nature.

This wall, surrounding the grounds of Charborough House, was of particular interest to me. It was built by Richard Drax’s ancestor, John Sawbridge, who married into the Drax dynasty, and who was able to finance the build following a recent windfall from his sugar-cane estates in the Caribbean—although the money came not from his sugar, but from his slaves.

James Drax first landed in Barbados in 1627. He cleared the land for farming, planted tobacco, watched it repeatedly fail, then looked to the Dutch colonies in Brazil for a better idea: sugar. His estates were first worked by the indentured servants rounded up as

vagrants or “sturdy beggars” in England and Ireland and sent to the colonies as punishment. But within a decade he was importing even cheaper labor—free, in fact—in the form of enslaved people from West Africa.

As more and more Englishmen landed on the Caribbean, cut down the trees, ploughed the land and began sugar production, the countryside back home in England also began to change. The slave traders and colonialists were making quick money in the Caribbean and heading home to translate this wealth into landed property.

Property legitimized their wealth: not only did they ape the architecture

of aristocratic castles and mansions, their deer parks and sculpted gardens, but their newly purchased land also bought them seats in an unreformed parliament, whose votes were directly linked to the amount of land you possessed. As foreign land was claimed by the colonialists, so more common land of England was claimed by their profits.

All across the west coast of England, new estates were built, or old ones bought and remodeled, as a direct result of slavery. From the late 1600s to the early 1900s, it is estimated that one-sixth of Britain's country houses were bought by businessmen whose fortunes were sourced from colonial trade. The sugar barons made the most money, but it was also the moneylenders, the investors, the chain-makers and the shipbuilders that boomed.

The Drax family were surrounded by other wealthy dynasties in the Caribbean just as they were surrounded in England. The Beckfords, owners of massive estates in the Caribbean, settled in Fonthill, just 20 miles up from Charborough; the Codringtons bought up land just outside of Bristol, in Dodington Park, now home to entrepreneur James Dyson.

Land and profit accumulation

The interior of the Drax estate tells a silent story of what the colonialists did with their property. The purchase of land secured a firmer grip on power, not just in one lifetime, but for many generations to come. Farming, forestry, pleasure gardens, hunting, shooting—all of these became reliable sources of income, an accumulation of private profit in direct proportion to the dispossession of the commonwealth. In fact, what happened abroad—the mining of minerals, the rent on land, the dispossession of the locals—were colonial methods first practiced on English soil, as the landlords colonized the commons at home.

At Charborough, my friend and I wandered for several miles across the

estate. (For an MP who once stood up during an immigration debate in Parliament to declare “this country is full,” there’s certainly a lot of empty space behind Drax’s walls.) Eventually, while making our way through planted pines, we were discovered by a gamekeeper. There’s no way through here, he said, evidently expecting my friend and I to ignore the path on which all three of us were standing. Very politely, and in no uncertain terms, we were chucked off the land.

“Racism,” according to Land in Our Names, “is a structural and systemic problem that needs reparative justice in order to stop the unnecessary violence that people of color experience.”

While the stray rambler knows what it feels like to be unwelcome in the countryside, for Black and minority people there are greater barriers than just brick

walls and barbed wire. In 2011, a report from the University of Leicester, titled *Rural Racism*, said: “Minority ethnic incomers were often treated with suspicion, as many white rural residents felt that they belonged only in the city, with all its concomitant ‘negative’ attributes of noise, pollution, crime and, crucially for some, multiculturalism.”

And people of color may feel unwelcome in the countryside in part because English rural estates are walled by the profits of colonialism, littered with monuments to the subjugation of their ancestors. Until recently, this perspective on the landscape of England has been largely overlooked. During the 2010 election campaign, when asked about his own family’s connection to slavery, Richard Drax replied: “I ignore it.” Blunt, but effective, especially since the education system and institutions of England have followed the same approach.

Links to slavery and colonialism

But now the National Trust are leading the way in exposing the cultural legacy of slavery and colonialism in the countryside, using the buildings for which they care to retell the story of our colonial past. Their forthcoming report (co-authored with Professor Corinne



The famous wall dividing Charborough House and its estate from the open countryside beyond. CREDIT: John Palmer/CC

Fowler at the University of Leicester) highlights that a third of their properties have links to slavery and colonialism. The Trust is integrating this colonial history into its online and on-site narratives, as well as removing, re-interpreting and redisplaying relevant objects in their collections.

The concept of race itself was a quasi-scientific lie, concocted on the sugar farms of the Caribbean as a way of dividing the solidarity between white indentured servants and the enslaved Africans.

Many groups across England are spearheading a drive towards a more inclusive countryside. Black Girls Hiking, Righttoroam.org.uk, Wild in the City and CPRE are all organizations concerned with overcoming the myth that “Black” automatically means “urban,” promoting the bizarrely radical notion that a love of nature, a need for open air, is not contingent on the color of one’s skin.

Other groups, such as The Land Workers Alliance and Land in Our Names, campaign for greater access to land for the growing of food. They believe that facilitating Black and ethnic minority groups to grow their own food—to farm in the English countryside—should effectively be seen as reparations for slavery.

Reparation is about parity, the active enabling of equality: re-telling the story is not enough; apologizing for colonialism is not enough; pragmatic steps must be taken to reverse the iniquity and psychic damage done to the English citizens who are the descendants of enslaved people. “Racism,” according to Land in Our Names, “is a structural and systemic

problem that needs reparative justice in order to stop the unnecessary violence that people of color experience.”

Here’s a radical idea: racism is more alive today than it ever was in the slavery era. In the words of Eric Williams, the first prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, and author of the 1944 book *Capitalism and Slavery*: “The reason (for slavery) was economic, not racial. It had to do not with the color of the laborer, but the cheapness of the labor. Slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery.”

The concept of race itself was a quasi-scientific lie, concocted on the sugar farms of the Caribbean as a way of dividing the solidarity between white indentured servants and the enslaved Africans. In 1661, the English authorities passed The Act of Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes on Barbados. By banning miscegenation (sex between races) and giving privileges to the white workers, it gave race a salience it never had before.

Even so, the white workers, both in the Caribbean and back in England, took a long time to fall for the ruse. The 1661 Act didn’t work; the Irish and Africans together plotted two major slave uprisings in 1686 and 1692, and to this day there are many Murphys, McDonnoughs and McGanns in the Caribbean phone book. Likewise, at home, racism took a long time to take off. The Anti-Corn Law League saw slavery as a violent, extreme extrapolation of what was happening to the white workers of England. To them, the divide between Black and white was a smokescreen to mask the fundamental issue: the exploitation of labor and land, the idea that certain sectors of society should have a greater share of the world than others.

The slave “compensation” act

Which brings us back to Charborough, and the wall around the estate of Richard Drax MP. If you’re looking for a date when racism became

officially institutionalized in England, December 23 1837 would be a good start. On that day, the Slave Compensation Act was passed, and enslaved Africans were officially defined by law as the “inalienable property of their masters.” Of course, the slaves themselves weren’t paid a penny; the funds were designated to compensate the “property” owners for their losses, funded by the British taxpayer.

Richard Drax’s wall, in other words, constructed in 1841–2, was built by the commoners it excluded, and paid for by a nation who subsequently lost the value of the land it enclosed. The story of the English countryside is a history of the interests of a few men overriding the interests of everyone else, using their power to legitimize their exploitation. While we continue to accept the legitimacy of widespread public exclusion from the countryside, we continue to nourish the lie of just and natural white supremacy—because as history tells us, they are one and the same thing.

—*The Telegraph*, August 19, 2020

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/non-fiction/english-theft-countryside-taken-public-using-profits-slavery/>

The 1661 Act didn’t work; the Irish and Africans together plotted two major slave uprisings in 1686 and 1692, and to this day there are many Murphys, McDonnoughs and McGanns in the Caribbean phone book.

Military Recruiters Don't Belong in High Schools

Recruiters deliberately exploit the financial and social insecurities of teenagers to enlist more soldiers.

By SIDNEY MIRALAO

Schools have become contested territory.

For years, getting police officers out of schools has been a central goal of racial justice campaigns. Recently, they've won victories in Denver, Minneapolis, Portland, Charlottesville, and even on many university campuses.

However, there's another group of outsiders in schools we should be wary of—the U.S. military.

Since the end of the draft in 1973, the U.S. has relied on an all-volunteer service to maintain its 1.3 million-member global police force. Over the years the military has used a number of different recruitment methods, but the target audience has always been the same: high schoolers.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 significantly changed how military recruiters reach teenagers. Section 9528 mandates public high schools give military recruiters the same access to students that college recruiters get, including their personal contact information. Schools became gold mines for recruiting “future soldiers.”

Recruiters at my high school in Fairfax County, Virginia always set up shop in the cafeteria. For the next two hours, they would sit through the four different lunch periods and give their spiel to whoever was curious enough to stop at their station.

Recruiters use their omnipresence on campus to build relationships and trust in all kinds of different ways. They may offer to chaperone homecoming events, time-keep at football games, or even give lectures on history or government in classrooms.

All the while, they paint a glamorous picture of life in the military. Promises of scholarships and a chance

to earn honor and respect serving around the world are very compelling to 17-year-olds, especially those without a lot of other options.

That's key. Recruiters deliberately exploit the financial and social insecurities of teenagers to enlist more soldiers.

...the U.S. spends more on its military than the next ten countries combined...

A RAND Corporation study, for example, found that nearly 57 percent of students at public high schools with JROTC programs relied on free or reduced-price lunch—about ten percent more than schools without them.

Sometimes the disparity is even starker. *Education Week* reporters in Connecticut found that recruiters made ten-times as many visits to one largely low-income school as they did to a nearby affluent school.

Finally, four years of studies by the Resistance Center in western Massachusetts found that Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, and low-income students were overrepresented among the enlistees most often put in harm's way.

Schools aren't the only place the military targets young people. As early as 2002, recruiters had already begun using e-sports as a platform. Today this effort has transformed into an official

Army e-sports team and an Army video game streaming channel, all designed to reach vulnerable youth at an even younger age.

These practices are nothing less than predatory. Research reveals numerous physical and mental health risks from joining the military at a young age—including higher rates of substance abuse, depression, PTSD, and suicide.

Students' rights to healthcare, education, housing, and citizenship, among other military “perks,” should not have to be earned by putting their life on the line.

Far more effective jobs guarantees could exist if we invested in them: Education, healthcare, and clean energy all create more jobs per-dollar than Pentagon spending. Yet the U.S. spends more on its military than the next ten countries combined.

Pentagon recruiters don't belong in schools—or anywhere vulnerable kids gather. And getting them out should be part of a bigger effort to right-size our military and invest in the things that actually keep us secure.

—*Common Dreams*. August 16, 2020

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2020/08/16/military-recruiters-dont-belong-high-schools?cd->



There's a group of outsiders in schools we should be wary of: the U.S. military.

Railroad Strike of 1877 and Modern Policing

BY ROBERT OVETZ

The months-long uprising that has followed George Floyd's murder at the hands of the Minneapolis police on May 25 has once again brought the function of the police as an institution of control and domination into focus. From a historical perspective, this violence is not surprising.

The earliest police forces in the United States have their origins in militias that were used as a weapon to enforce racialized capitalism by suppressing rebellious slaves and native peoples. These early iterations of the police were often informal, privately funded and sporadically trained. The police as we understand them today—a state-sanctioned and publicly funded instrument of racial and class subjugation—however, can be traced very precisely to the nationwide railroad strike of 1877.

The history of how the police were reorganized, managed and equipped with newly designed technology in response to the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 is critical to today's struggle to

defund—and eventually abolish—the police. Any efforts to pursue these ends without taking into account the policing's historical role in suppressing class struggle is likely to leave this role firmly in place.

The police did not exist to police the elite.

An investigation of the historic railroad strike reveals a simple truth: a struggle against the police must be a struggle against capitalism.

The 1877 railroad strike and the modern police

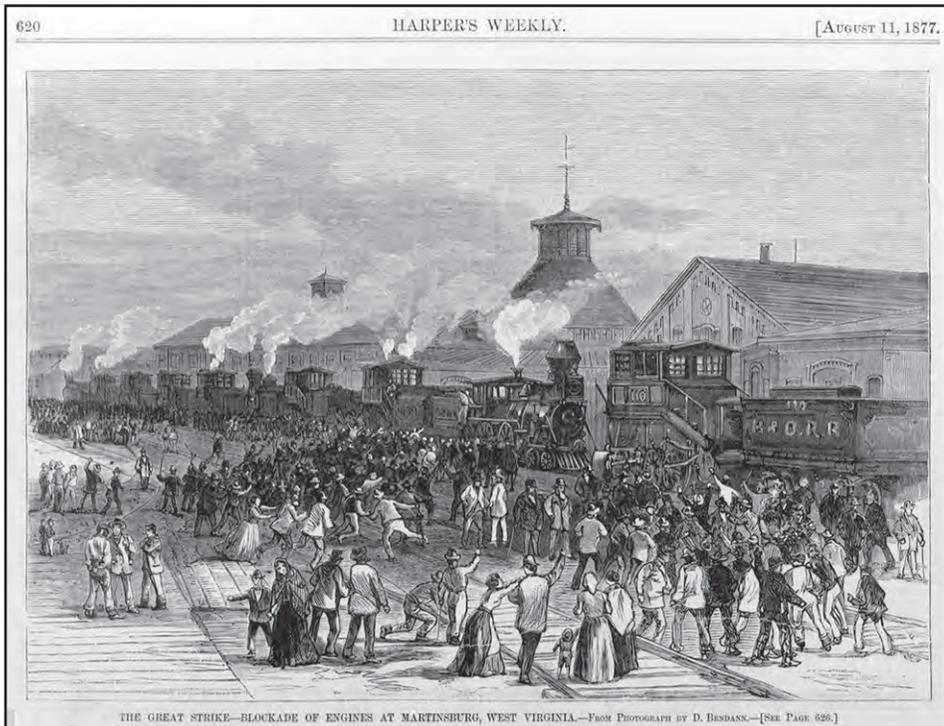
The nearly two-week-long strike in the summer of 1877 brought much of the country to a standstill. Triggered by wage and staffing cuts, self-organized workers without a formal union to represent them spread their struggle to many railroad companies across the

entire country. In response to brutal attacks by local police and elite-run militias, the workers launched an armed struggle, evoking comparisons to the 1871 Paris Commune and expectations of revolution.

For a time, the workers seemed to be winning and even controlled the cities of St. Louis and East St. Louis. Ultimately, however, their inability to expand and sustain the strike, take over and run the railroads themselves and adequately defend themselves against state repression resulted in their defeat. Even so, the railroads backed off on pay cuts and planned changes to working conditions that would have endangered the workers.

The initial successes of the strike threatened to inspire widespread worker rebellions and shook U.S. capital to the core, prompting a complete overhaul of local police and the transformation of militias into the state-run-and-funded National Guard we have today. Howls from the newspapers and elites about the “mob,” “communism,” and the armed “rabble” provoked the reorganization of the police, transformation of both volunteer and state militias into the National Guard, the reorganization of railroad work and the consolidation of the railroads into integrated industrial corporations to be better prepared for the next general strike.

What is most relevant for us today is how police work was Taylorized by establishing a clear chain of command, assigning patrolmen to rationalized beats and police wagons to be used as weapons used to break up crowds and carry off arrestees. According to Sidney Haring's classic book *Policing a Class Society*, “Police professionalization is properly understood as simply one small part of the total process of rationalization under advanced capitalism.”



To protect and serve

Class and racial tensions had been growing in the decades prior to the 1877 railroad strike. Throughout the 1840s and '50s, there was a wave of ethnic and racial riots precipitated by the anti-Catholic, anti-immigration and xenophobic Know Nothing movement's control over local cities and police departments, which they used to stoke ethnic and racial hatred and terrorize immigrant communities.

Between 1830–65, close to 100 riots took place across major U.S. cities. Although the riots stoked a wave of fear among the ruling class that the current police systems were unprepared to control or repress a growing working class, there was no firm consensus on the need to support and fund the police. One exception was Boston, where police were organized into a full-time office of professionals in 1837 after three earlier riots and criticism from the city's elites. According to Bruce Johnson, it was not until they were placed under state control in 1885 that the police were forced to protect property during strikes.

As a result, cuts to the Chicago and Pittsburgh police departments, for example, during the depressions of 1870s and 1890s left them incapable of defending property and elite neighborhoods during the strikes. The 1877 railroad strike resulted in a new emphasis on legitimizing and expanding the police. Changes to policing coincided with the reorganization of the militia into the National Guard. In St. Louis, the police force was enlarged, a National Guard armory was built and the Lucas Market, where strikers had assembled, was demolished as part of the process of reorganizing public space to facilitate the deployment of police and military force.

There was a substantial growth in the size of forces, as much as seven-fold in some cities across the Great Lakes region. Harring observed that because

“class struggle is at the core of the police function,” the growth and reorganization of police forces was intended to meet the need for changing tactics and strategy of class conflict. He concurs with Marx's observation in *Capital* Volume I that the state “employed the police to accelerate the accumulation of capital by increasing the degree of exploitation of labor.”

The industrialization of policing corresponded to the prerogatives of industrial capital to control workers by preventing disruption and restoring control. Harring reminds us that “As capitalism developed, individual capitalists' adaptations to the class struggle needed to be rationally organized and disciplined, a function beyond any individual capitalist but appropriate for the capitalist state.” The police did not exist to police the elite.

“class struggle is at the core of the police function,”

The takeover of policing by local city and state governments socialized policing as a public function of government paid for by public expense rather than by elites alone. In effect, the wage and property taxes levied on workers paid for their own domination by the police. The industrialization and transformation of policing into a governmental function in which officers and constables were hired or appointed made it more efficient and legitimate.

Between the 1880s and '90s police departments were restructured with a new division of labor that mimicked the military. They followed a centralized bureaucratic structure, standardized recruitment, training, professionalism, discipline and specialized units. In the 1890s police were trained as public employees and their 12-hour workdays and seven-day workweeks,

during which they slept at the station, were shortened and they received days off, pensions and benefits.

The 1877 and 1886–7 eight-hour-day and railroad strikes reinforced the emphasis on local police over militias. In Pittsburgh, the defeat of the Philadelphia militia during the 1877 strike prompted elites to focus on improving the local police force. There were several advantages to using police rather than militia for local crowd control. They were more flexible and mobile because they did not move in military formation, had experience with crowd control, operated under local political control, were locals familiar with the local terrain, worked full-time and belonged to an institution that emphasized obedience and loyalty to capital despite their recruitment from the working class.

Technology of control

Several critical new technologies made the police a more effective force for social control in the rapidly growing cities. New city police departments were established, expanded rapidly and transformed themselves from working for bribes and tips to professionally trained public workers. To ensure accountability, police were organized according to innovative management techniques that allowed them to be monitored with the newly invented telegraph and telephone in 1880 as well as new hiring and training procedures. While city-wide coordination ensured the police could be mobilized rapidly and in large numbers.

The police call box was invented in 1880 in Chicago, modeled after the fire alarm telegraph installed in the homes and businesses of the rich. It had three mechanisms to sign a simple short message—riot, robbery, send help—with the pull of a lever, an alarm bell that would ring each box to alert men on the beat to call in for a message, and a two-way conversation between the officer and switchboard.

Call boxes were installed by the rich for \$25 in 1881, the equivalent of two weeks' pay for a worker. As Haring observed, this "clearly shows the class basis of the innovation: the public police apparatus was merged with a private system of mobilizing officers" transforming every member of the elite thereby into a policeman. Police box systems were estimated to increase force productivity by the equivalent of 200 men at a reduced cost, a dramatic increase in the production of variable surplus value.

The combination of these new technologies and management strategies had a tremendous impact on the ability of the police to control mass action. The signal system and new horse-drawn patrol wagons now allowed a dozen or more officers to be put on the scene in a few minutes compared to one hour under the previous system which required running about town to round up a force before marching on the scene. The increase in the number of wagons from one to seven in Buffalo between 1887–96 resulted in an exponential growth in calls, responses and arrests. In Pittsburgh, police estimated that a wagon had the impact of a dozen policemen. The patrol wagon became a symbol of intimidation and power, making unruly crowds give way at their approach.

Much like gas and flash bang grenades today, the wagon allowed a small number of police to defeat immense crowds which had been previously impossible. Wagons were used as weapons, slamming them into crowds to break them up, make mass arrests and to take away large numbers of people. Such technologies made policing a productive industry in the service of the ruling class.

An effective and efficiently-managed police force provided a potent weapon for raising the costs of organizing and striking. Police not only protected property but also carried out the social control functions that intimi-

dated and coerced burgeoning urban populations and dampened collective action. At times of class unrest, the police could be used to protect strike-breakers, break up meetings, marches and pickets, keep workplaces open, deploy special agents to supplement their forces and provided the bulk of the forces of repression.

**An investigation of the
historic railroad strike
reveals a simple truth: a
struggle against the
police must be a struggle
against capitalism.**

As a branch of local government, the police legitimated and sanctioned the official use of violence to protect capital, in turn fueling the tactical escalation of strikes. This spiraled into armed conflict that redirected focus away from capital and onto the police. Sympathetic local officials might delay their use of police but they rarely kept them on the sidelines. Toledo Mayors Jones and Whitlock were unique in that they did not allow local police to protect scabs. As a result, the 1906 Pope-Toledo Motor Car Company strike led to an arbitrated settlement favorable to the workers. Otherwise, cases in which workers influenced, let alone controlled, police during strikes are rare. Police who appeared sympathetic were quickly reassigned or disciplined.

States also designed new types of police forces to protect specific industries. The Pennsylvania governor, who oversaw both the suppression of the Molly Maguire miners and the railroad strike, had just recently set up the Coal and Iron Police in the summer of 1877, amassing 100 men by June 1878. The Coal and Iron Police were used to replace local police in strikes where the latter might be too sympathetic to

strikers. Portrayed in the 1970 film *The Molly Maguires*, the Coal and Iron Police were mercenaries on the state payroll whose only purpose was to protect mining companies and their capital from organized workers.

Nevertheless, the reorganization of the police alone failed to realize the necessary discipline and control that would prevent further insurgencies. Policing must be understood within a larger context of intra-class conflicts over tactics and strategy of class domination and control that was paired with the courts, military, welfarism, arbitration and the new division of labor. According to Haring, "Class violence was not as well controlled by the police as the bourgeoisie originally expected or hoped that it might be, and this failure can be seen as one reason for the turn toward 'progressive' or 'reformist' methods of controlling the class struggle, now identified with the welfare state."

As a result, the size of local and state government grew dramatically while shifting the costs for education, training, public services and policing onto the working class. This necessitated new sources of tax revenue that corresponded with the permanent establishment of the federal income tax in the Sixteenth Amendment.

Reform or abolition?

Calls to defund, abolish, or hold the police more accountable with civil penalties and criminal punishment for excessive use of force are not new. Racism of individual police officers or the institutional rules that govern them are not the only reasons why people of color are disproportionately more likely to be oppressed, injured or killed by the police. Racial supremacy plays a central role in policing the working class in order to impose, maintain and restore control when the racial hierarchy of class power is threatened.

We should be vigilant about the efforts of non-profit advocacy groups

to co-opt and redirect the struggle against the police into reforming the police. Efforts to make the police less discriminatory in their application of their oppressive power will leave the institution as a tool of class domination firmly in place. These groups have failed to achieve even the most non-threatening changes to police policies and practices, such as banning choke and carotid holds or simply enforcing the laws against police violence that already exist.

Previous efforts to “diversify” the police and require that they wear cameras have clearly not blunted their power. And as the aftermath of the 1877 strike shows, reorganizing the police to make them more accountable will also likely result in making them a more effective force of repression.

To abolish the police we need to understand its role as a weapon in the class struggle. Because the police are essential to control and suppress class struggle, efforts to abolish it are inseparable from the struggle to abolish capitalism. By refusing to drive anti-police violence protesters to jail, the Minneapolis and New York City bus drivers demonstrated how demands to defund and abolish the police are integral to a larger class struggle. Without further similar efforts such demands will only succeed in putting a friendlier face on the end of the club wielded against the working class.

Robert Ovetz is a precarious university lecturer and the author of When Workers Shot Back: Class Conflict from 1877 to 1921 (Haymarket 2019) and editor of Workers’ Inquiry and Global Class Struggle: Tactics, Strategies, Objectives (Pluto Press, 2020).

—ROAR, September 9, 2020

<https://roarmag.org/essays/1877-rail-road-strike-modern-police/>

Cops: Racists and Strike Breakers

BY WILLIAM LEWIS

With the uprising in Minneapolis after the police murdered George Floyd, and the backlash from the capitalists’ media and the Right, there is bound to be a lot of bewilderment as to who our friends are and who are our enemies.

I know some union members are confused about the nature of the police and might take the wrong side on this issue. After all, aren’t there police unions? Correctional officers are one of the most heavily unionized sectors in the country. Aren’t they just public sector workers like firefighters or teachers? The differences stem from their functions.

Like the motto, the police do “protect and serve”—they protect property and serve the rich. That is their role. The origins of the police go back to slave catchers and strike breakers.

The first modern police force was formed when British merchants pooled money to hire professional guards to deter theft and control the tens-of-thousands of workers on the docks. In the United States, Southern slave owners needed a force to track down “property” that had escaped North—a

force that would later be used on workers as they started to organize and strike after the Civil War.

Policing appeared during the industrial revolution because capitalism requires a body of armed people to make sure that the growing number of have-nots don’t just take what they need from the haves. In the racist capitalist system of the United States, the bottom-most layer of the have-nots are Black workers. This is a consequence of the hundreds of years of chattel slavery, the use of the Thirteenth Amendment to maintain slave-like conditions through the prison-industrial complex, the use of Klan terror *etc.* Police terror against Black people is nothing new—it is a function of the system.

Police against pickets

The confusion of some union members might stem from their own experience. With decades of docility in the labor movement, the experience of the average picket line—usually something called an informational picket where the goal is only to raise awareness and not physically stop people—involves a few officers overseeing the protest



from a distance. Sometimes, if it gets a little rowdy, they might intervene to move the line to another part of the sidewalk or they'll direct traffic. But for the most part they play the role of keeping things safe and harmless. Sometimes, they even support the demands of the workers—albeit they'll say so in hushed tones to the staff organizer or whoever is designated to speak to the police. During the 2011 Wisconsin protests against attacks on collective bargaining, there were no arrests and a whole lot of fraternizing, since police technically “work” in the public sector too.

All this obscures their repressive nature.

If we go back a few decades, few workers had these illusions. During the height of the labor movement in the United States, the police killed workers with impunity. Just this week, eighty-three years ago, was the Memorial Day Massacre.

On May 30, 1937, Chicago Police fired into a crowd of strikers and supporters of the Little Steel strike. And they continued firing into the fleeing masses until they had killed ten people, permanently disabled nine, and injured another 28. Many of the casualties were shot in the back. The killings were declared “justifiable homicide.” President Roosevelt, who many reformist socialists today see as a model, said a “Plague on both your houses” in response to the massacre. No officer was ever arrested.

A few years before, in July of 1934, there were two bloody days: “Bloody Thursday” on the San Francisco waterfront and “Bloody Friday” in Minneapolis. In San Francisco, after police utilized tear gas and mounted charges, they turned shotguns onto the crowd. At the intersection of Steuart and Mission streets, Howard Sperry and Nick Bordoise were murdered. That evening, the police continued their offensive by firing into the union hall full of injured strikers and sup-

porters. Again, no officer was ever arrested.

During the Minneapolis Teamsters Strike in 1934, workers employed flying pickets where they would pile into a truck and rush to anywhere there might be scabbing. On July 20, police baited workers with two scab trucks unloading merchandise. When a picket truck appeared, they fired their shotguns into it, wounding 67 and killing John Belor and Henry Ness. An investigation ordered by the Minnesota governor determined that “police took direct aim at the pickets and fired to kill. Physical safety of police was at no time endangered.” Yet again, no officer was arrested.

**Like the motto,
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and serve”—they protect
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rich.**

In more recent times—only 20-years-ago—the police of Charleston, South Carolina, baton charged picketing longshoremen, arrested the majority Black union leadership, and threatened them with up to ten years in prison. The video is shocking with the sheer amount of repression against striking workers. Only a sustained international movement was able to defend the Charleston Five from years of prison time.

As recently as 2011, when police were fraternizing with demonstrators in Madison, police and longshoremen of the ILWU battled it out in Longview, Washington. The police not only brought in turreted armored cars and armored boats, they also took to arresting union leaders about town and not even at the picket lines.

These are just some examples of the real history between police and union

workers. Knowing this, shouldn't we be fighting alongside our Black sisters, brothers, and siblings who are being murdered in the streets by the armed thugs of the state?

As a final example: Philando Castile, a Teamster brother, was shot and killed in front of his girlfriend and daughter by a cop who had pulled him over. This murder was livestreamed on *Facebook* for all to see. Yet the murderer was acquitted of all charges. The best the Teamsters could do was write a letter. They never mobilized their membership into any kind of action, and how could they when they organize police into their affiliated Teamsters Law Enforcement League?

After all of these murders, the least we could do is fight to kick the police out of the union movement. Beyond that, we should be organizing within our unions to take a lead in the struggle against police violence. We can stop racist terror with mass workers' actions like strikes, but only if we organize to do that.

—*Left Voice*, May 28, 2020

<https://www.leftvoice.org/the-cops-racists-and-strike-breakers>

**Policing appeared
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Arming the Planet

The USA as the world's leading weapons dealer

BY MELVIN GOODMAN

For the past several decades, the United States has been the world's leading producer of major weapons systems and the leader in global arms sales. More of these sales have taken place in the globe's most volatile region, the Middle East, than in any other region of the world. The so-called peace deals between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, which were brokered by the United States, were business deals designed to expand U.S. arms sales in the Persian Gulf. The Trump administration has made arms sales to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other Middle East countries the focus of its foreign policy in the region.

No sooner had the ink dried on these agreements than disputes emerged over whether Israel had agreed to permit the sale of U.S. F-35 fighter aircraft—the most expensive weapons system in the U.S. arsenal and the most sophisticated jet fighter in the world—to the United Arab Emirates. Israel has 20 F-35s, which it has flown over Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. Until now, no Arab country had been allowed access to this aircraft.

As part of an U.S.-Israeli arms agreement in 2008, the United States agreed to make sure that Israel would maintain a “qualitative military edge” in the Middle East, which gave it a virtual veto power over arms deals with Arab states. For example, when Egypt was permitted to buy the U.S. F-16 jet fighter, it had to agree to basing arrangements that the Israelis imposed.

U.S. arms sales generally have contributed to tensions in some of the world's most sensitive arenas. Saudi Arabia's misuse of U.S.-supplied fighter aircraft in Yemen, the world's worst humanitarian nightmare, has contributed to the rising civilian death toll there. For the past five years, the United States

has earned billions-of-dollars in sales to the Saudis, whose coalition has considerable responsibility for many of the deaths of more than 127,000 Yemenis, including more than 15,000 civilians.

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Arms sales as war crimes

In 2016, the Department of State's legal office concluded, in fact, that U.S. officials could be charged with war crimes for approving bomb sales to the Saudis and their partners. As a result, in his last month in office, President Barack Obama blocked a shipment of

precision-guided bombs that he had agreed to sell to the Saudis. Recently, investigators from the United Nations asked the Security Council to refer actions by all parties to an international tribunal for potential war crimes prosecution, according to the *New York Times*.

The Trump administration is currently taking on a great risk in proposing seven large weapons packages to Taiwan. This would violate agreements with China that require the sale of only defensive weaponry to the self-governing island. The weapons would represent one of the largest sales to Taiwan, and would include long-range missiles—Boeing's AGM-84H—that would allow Taiwanese fighter aircraft—Lockheed Martin's F-16—to hit distant targets in China. Last year's sale of 66 F-16s for \$8 billion represented one of the largest arms packages to Taiwan in history,

There have already been consequences. Beijing has sent two anti-submarine aircraft into Taiwan's air defense identification zone, which led the Taiwanese air force to scramble



F-35A. Photo: Staff Sgt. Madelyn Brown/U.S. Air Force.

against them. Chinese fighter jets have crossed the median line in the Taiwan Straits, and a Chinese military exercise conducted a series of anti-ship ballistic missile tests, which were intended as a signal to the United States. The risk of an accidental military clash has increased. China has also threatened sanctions against both Lockheed Martin and Boeing; Lockheed Martin does little business in China and is not vulnerable to sanctions, but Boeing sells commercial jets to China and would definitely suffer.

The increased militarization of national security policy over the past decade has found the Department of Defense taking much of the turf of the Department of State in engaging allied nations regarding security assistance. Recent defense authorization bills have given the Pentagon control of certain aid programs as well as greater flexibility in supporting counterterrorism activities overseas. Pentagon military aid programs, moreover, ignore key human rights or governance concerns that once upon a time drew scrutiny from the State Department. The Pentagon has always held an advantage over the State Department, a much more cumbersome and slower-moving bureaucracy than the Defense Department. Also, the State Department has never been aggressive in protecting its equities, unlike the Pentagon.

Military assistance, as opposed to military sales, has created problems and disappointments as well. The top six recipients of U.S. military assistance in recent years (Israel, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Iraq, and Turkey) provide little return, let alone leverage, to the United States. Israel has military dominance in the Middle East, and shouldn't be receiving military assistance. President Barack Obama instituted record levels of assistance, but the Benjamin Netanyahu government typically timed announcements of settlement expansion on the West Bank to

do the most harm to U.S. interests. Settlement activity was announced during a visit by then vice president Joe Biden in 2010, then secretary of state Hillary Clinton in 2011, and even on the eve of a summit meeting between Obama and Netanyahu in 2011.

Pentagon speakers at the National War College, where I taught for 18 years, argued that U.S. military assistance programs “suffused Third World armies with U.S. values.” This would be difficult to ascertain in Egypt, Turkey, and Afghanistan. A retired commandant of the U.S. Army War College argued that “they learn our way of war...but they also learn our philosophies of civil-military relations.” There's a particular conceit in that statement in view of the growing imbalance in U.S. civil-military relations in recent years as well as the dominant role of the military in Egypt and Pakistan.

The Trump administration launched what Donald Trump calls a “great rebuilding of the Armed Forces” as well as politicizing the military bureaucracy and enhancement of the role of the Pentagon in state-to-state diplomacy. The current dialogue between civilian officials and general officers on international security has become unequal. The fact that Mark Esper, the former vice president for government relations at Raytheon, one of the largest weapons manufacturers, is Secretary of Defense provides added heft to Pentagon arguments for greater weapons sales. Meanwhile, the Department of State must deal with the greater points of friction in the global community created by increased sales of sophisticated weaponry.

U.S. is first in arms transfers

The Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress published an annual review of conventional arms transfers until 2017, when the Trump administration blocked such information from the general public. The last

CRS summary appeared in 2018 and recorded that the United States ranked first in arms transfer agreements (nearly half the global total) and first in value of arms deliveries (more than one-third of global sales). Deliveries to Egypt, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia dominated U.S. sales.

Israel does not even appear on the list of weapons recipients in view of U.S. largesse, which includes President Obama's 2016 record-breaking \$38 billion deal over a ten-year period. The deal with Israel was followed by the sale of 36 Boeing F-15 fighters to Qatar and 24 Boeing F/A18 Super Hornets to Kuwait.

There has never been a more important time to debate President Dwight D. Eisenhower's warning about the insidious economic, political, and even spiritual effects of what he called the “military-industrial-congressional complex.” For the past twenty years, the United States has been in a permanent state of war with a government, an economy, and a global system of military bases that virtually ensures conflict. The fact that this important issue is not part of the presidential debate of 2020 is particularly regrettable. It's long past time for congressional leadership to take on this “complex.”

Melvin A. Goodman is a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy and a professor of government at Johns Hopkins University. A former CIA analyst, Goodman's most recent book is American Carnage: The Wars of Donald Trump (Opus Publishing), and he is the author of the forthcoming The Dangerous National Security State (2020). Goodman is the national security columnist for counterpunch.org.

—CounterPunch, September 23, 2020

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/09/23/arming-the-planet-the-usa-as-the-worlds-leading-weapons-dealer/>

Power of Labor Solidarity

Professional athletes are showing America just how powerful labor really is

By DAVE ZIRIN

August 27, 2020—The wave of strikes by athletes against racist police violence is not ebbing. On Thursday night, the New York Mets and Miami Marlins took the field, held a 42-second moment of silence (in honor of Jackie Robinson,) and then walked off. They left behind a shirt that read “Black Lives Matter” on home plate.

Numerous NFL teams have canceled their practices, with the Baltimore Ravens, after a four-hour team meeting, putting out a remarkable action statement. NBA referees even organized a march in the Orlando Bubble, wearing T-shirts that read, “Everyone Against Racism.” Even the National Hockey League, after first ignoring what was happening, to the chagrin of many players, canceled a slate of games in solidarity with the events swirling around the sports world.

Pro athletes have shown themselves willing to fight and be heard. Black athletes are saying that they no longer will be a repository of adulation with their uniforms on but a risk to be killed by police when the uniform comes off. It is a historic moment by any measure, and one without a blueprint. We don’t know where this is going, or how long it will last. But folks are already asking what this can actually accomplish beyond raising awareness about the shooting of Jacob Blake.

For now, it’s centering the conversation in this country on racist police violence and not the gaslighting “law and order” bombast coming out of the RNC, and inspiring people to violence during a time of relentless darkness. Frankly, if nothing else came out of it, it would still be important. But the players want more. Supporters want more. Everyone strangled by the absence of political oxygen in this broken country wants more.

NBA player leaders want the franchise owners to put some “skin in the game.” They want the billionaire owners—who are not only wealthy but politically connected to every municipality where they have a publicly funded stadium—to push for legislation and using their influence to fight back. As NBA insider Shams Charania from *The Athletic* reported on *Twitter* from a meeting between players and owners, “Players challenged owners to be proactive, not reactive, to social justice changes; create actions, not simply financial commitments.”

**What these players
are doing is nothing less
than striking for
Black lives.**

I’m all for extracting concessions from billionaires. But there is another avenue the movement can take. What

these players are doing is nothing less than striking for Black lives. They are using their power as workers to protest not only the police shooting of Blake and the white supremacist terrorism in Kenosha, but also the fact that, as one player put it, “nothing is changing.” After a summer of marches, uprisings, and occupations, scant legislation has moved and police still act with impunity.

By exercising their power as workers, the players are inspiring an incredibly dormant part of the resistance to racism and Trumpism: the labor movement. If the NBA can shut down in protest of racist police violence, why not other industries? Why not cities? Why not entire sectors of the country’s economy? Strikes do not have to be about wages and benefits. There is a long, hidden history in this country of striking for human rights—“not just bread but roses.” It’s a history the players could help revive.

That may sound far-fetched, but I can say that I received half a dozen calls



MCiti Field after the New York Mets and the Miami Marlins walk off the field prior to the start of the game on August 27, 2020.

from unionists or union officials last night telling me that they and their members felt like they had been hit with an electric prod. The idea that everyone in the country was talking about this “strike” taking place was making so many of these workers feel like they also had power.

This isn’t just about solidarity. This is about results. If the players want the results they crave, and if the country is as broken as they believe it to be, this is an actual solution: to strike against racist police violence, to strike against Trumpism, to strike for Black lives. Nothing else has worked. But by withdrawing their labor, the players in the NBA have immediately brought their bosses to the table and launched a national conversation. If that message blares across the land—and if labor leaders rise to the occasion and respond with equal courage—we could finally see solutions and not feel like we are all poised with bated breath, just waiting for the next hashtag.

—*The Nation*, August 27, 2020

<https://www.thenation.com/article/society/mets-marlins-strike/>

...by withdrawing their labor, the players in the NBA have immediately brought their bosses to the table and launched a national conversation...

“Herd Immunity”—Deadly Anti-Science Policy

BY DR. NAYVIN GORDON

If COVID-19 was as lethal as Ebola, the six-million U.S. infections registered on September 1, 2020, would have already resulted in three million COVID-19 deaths. This is the reality of the murderous; let them die “herd immunity” policy the administration is intentionally following. How many deaths will they accept with this abuse and misuse of science?¹

“Herd immunity” is a concept primarily used for the science of vaccinations to protect the people from dangerous infectious diseases such as measles and smallpox. Greater percentage of vaccinations (90 percent plus), mean greater protection for the population, or herd immunity.

If no vaccine is available, we use the science of Public Health to protect the people with testing, contact tracing and isolation. For a hundred years this science has been used to treat and prevent infectious disease such as sexually transmitted diseases and tuberculosis. The robust public health system in Taiwan has been able to suppress and eradicate COVID-19.

“Herd immunity” that follows as a result of deliberately allowing an infection to spread through the community does not protect the people, it allows them to sicken and die. This policy is responsible for the deaths from COVID-19 in the U.S. now approaching a-quarter-of-a-million. Only those who survive may have herd immunity. This is the horror people faced in the 1800s before the development of the science of Public Health. This is not science but a deadly return to the Dark Ages.

Over the last 40 years the politicians have closed public hospitals and massively defunded and cut back on the people’s public health facilities to privatize the health system. Now that the for-profit system is clearly unable to protect the people, the government has abused and misused the science of “herd immunity” by intentionally promoting this homicidal policy as a legitimate scientific approach to the pandemic. It is simply eugenics, homicidal criminal negligence, and a crime against humanity.

The government did not spend trillions on the people’s Public Health System.

The government did not spend trillions on a massive national strategy to test, trace and isolate infected individuals.

The government did give trillions to bail out the financial elite of Wall Street.

How many preventable deaths are we willing to accept?

Time for a radical change, towards a society built on the people’s health needs and an egalitarian world.

—September 9, 2020

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-coronavirus-scott-atlas-herd-immunity/2020/08/30/925e68fe-e93b-11ea-970a-64c73a1c2392_story.html



Shutterstock

Denver Black Lives Matter Activists Arrested

BY LEFT VOICE

On September 17, six protest leaders, including four members of the Party of Socialism and Liberation, were arrested in Denver, Colorado in a coordinated police action. Those arrested and since released on bail, are now being threatened with a litany of bogus felony charges, including “kidnapping.” Four of the arrested individuals—Russel Ruch, Lillian House, Joel Northam, and Eliza Lucero—are protest leaders who have denounced the crimes of the Colorado police, most notably the racist murder of Elijah McClain. The repression against these activists, and many others, is nothing short of police-state retribution. As a PSL statement noted,

“This attack on the Denver anti-racist movement and the PSL is part of a concerted national assault on the Black Lives Matter movement, an attack driven directly from the White House, from Governors’ mansions, and from local police chiefs and police departments around the country.”

It is clear from the manner of the arrests that the Denver area police are trying to punish and intimidate activists. Russel Ruch, for instance, was followed to Home Depot and arrested in the parking lot; Lillian House was surrounded by five police cars as she was driving; and a S.W.A.T. team was sent to Joel Northam’s home. According to the 30-page long arrest affidavits, the police used livestream footage, call transcripts, and social media posts to

build a case against those arrested. These coordinated arrests, which utilized both surveillance and brute force, aim to instill fear in every Denver area activist. “Protest, and you could be next” is the message being sent. And the absurd list of felony charges, known as “charge stacking,” means the arrested activists could be facing years, if not decades, in prison.

The arrest of these protest leaders in Denver are part of a larger nationwide crack-down on the Black Lives Matter movement. Across the country, protesters have been snatched off the streets by the police or federal forces in unmarked vehicles. In New York City, the NYPD used facial-recognition software to find and harass a Black Lives Matter activist. And earlier this month, in Washington, federal marshals gunned down Portland activist Michael Reinoehl without warning as he walked to his car.

Left Voice denounces the attempts to repress or otherwise intimidate anti-racist, anti-police activists. It is unacceptable that the state, under direction

from both Republican and Democratic Party leaders, targets and intimidates activists fighting for racial justice, while the murderers of Elijah McClain, Breonna Taylor and many more walk free. The real threat to public safety can be found in every police precinct, every city hall, and every seat of political power.

Drop the charges against Denver PSL activists—Free all the arrested protesters!

To sign the PSL’s petition to have the charges dropped, click here:

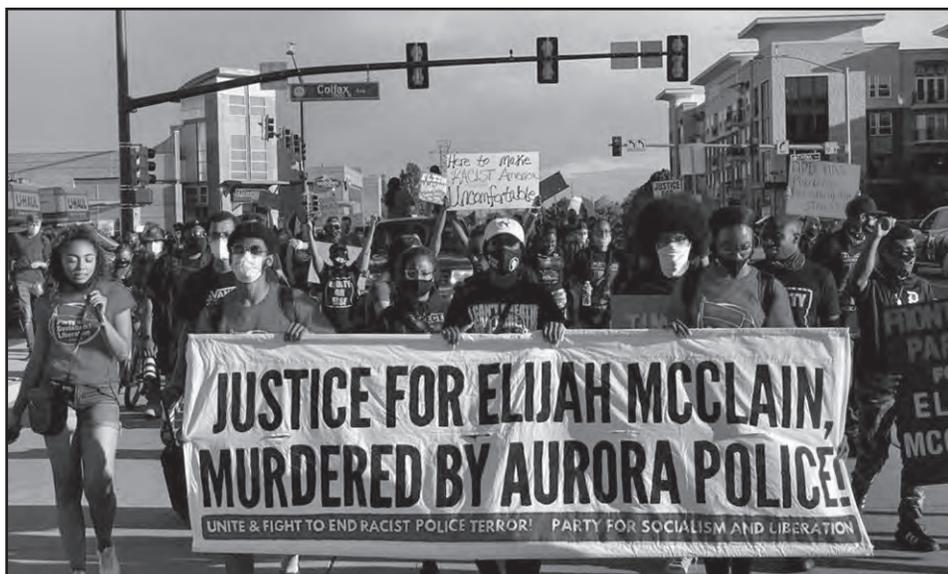
<https://www.pslweb.org/drop-thecharges>

To donate to the PSL’s legal defense, click here:

https://www.pslweb.org/donate4denver?utm_campaign=drop-the_charges_on_denver&utm_medium=email&utm_source=psl

— *Left Voice*, September 18, 2020

<https://www.leftvoice.org/denver-blm-activists-and-psl-members-arrested-charged-with-multiple-felonies>



Above: Party of Socialism and Liberation activists marching in Colorado anti-racist protest.

Socialists in Stamford Attacked

BY ERWIN FREED

On Friday, Aug. 28, Socialist Resurgence's weekly "Pop Up Revolutionary Bookstore" in Stamford, Connecticut, was attacked by a man shouting, "Not in my country!"

The man flipped over the book table and began tearing down banners and flags. Fortunately, no one was hurt. For several weeks prior to the attack, members of Socialist Resurgence have been selling books, buttons, and pamphlets in Stamford, and have had a great response from the community. Kim, walking with her grandchild, donated \$20 and pinned a trans liberation Socialist Resurgence button on her grandson. David, a veteran of the struggle for Black liberation, bought a book on Malcolm X and Leon Trotsky's *Fascism: What it is and how to fight it*.

Lupe Agrado, a furloughed hotel banquet server and member of Local 217 Unite Here, said after hearing news of the attack, "I'm really angry that this person fears the truth and felt the need

to try and silence it by destroying a book table." She continued, "I'll be there at the bookstore next week standing in solidarity. I hope others join me."

The attack in Stamford is a reflection of the broader violence done to Black, Latinx, immigrant, and women workers and youth in the city by police, big business, and vigilantes. Recently, on August 8, police brutally assaulted activists who were marching for justice for Steven Barrier, a 23-year-old who died at the hands of police in October 2019. The police attack took place in the same location as the Socialist Resurgence pop-up bookstore.

This reflects a nationwide wave of attacks on activists by far-right vigilantes. The latest incidents include the actions of an armed militia group in Kenosha, Wisconsin, which included in its ranks Kyle Rittenhouse, who murdered two activists and severely wounded another. Armed groups of vigilantes have harassed, and some-

times violently attacked, Black Lives Matter demonstrators in Portland, Philadelphia, New York City, and many other cities and towns. At least 60 incidents have taken place in which people have used cars to slam into protesters at Black Lives Matter rallies.

Overall, this is a reflection of the violence perpetrated by the federal government, in actions ranging from bombing workers in foreign countries to sending in federal agents to U.S. cities to repress and kidnap protesters. In some areas, local police have given support and expressed their "thanks" to the armed rightists, and elected politicians have sometimes appeared at their events. Representatives of both major capitalist parties have unleashed the police on protesters standing for racial justice. The attack on Socialist Resurgence is part of a national attack on all workers' rights to organize.

We call for an end to police terror, vigilante violence, and state repression. We refuse to give an inch to right-wing vigilantism; we immediately set up a new book table. The August 28 incident shows that the workers' movement needs to defend itself, through large solidarity contingents and by making sure to spread the message of workers' power.

Donating to Socialist Resurgence will help send a message, and will help recover the costs of damaged materials. See:

<https://socialistresurgence.org/2020/06/02/please-contribute-to-the-socialist-resurgence-fund-drive/>

—Socialist Resurgence, August 29, 2020

<https://socialistresurgence.org/2020/08/29/right-winger-attacks-socialists-in-stamford/>



Socialist Resurgence table immediately after attack on Friday, August 28, 2020.

U.S. Military Police and “Heat Rays”

U.S. military police “sought use of heat ray” to disperse White House Black Lives Matter protesters

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

September 17, 2020—A military whistleblower has said federal officials sought to use some controversial crowd control devices, including a so-called heat ray, to disperse protesters outside the White House in June.

In written responses to questions from a House committee, the national guard major Adam DeMarco said the defense department’s lead military police officer for the national capital region sent an email asking if the Washington, DC national guard possessed a long-range acoustic device used to transmit loud noises or an Active Denial System (ADS), the heat ray.

DeMarco said he responded that the guard was not in possession of either device. *National Public Radio* and the *Washington Post* first reported DeMarco’s testimony.

Use of either the acoustic device or the ADS would have been a significant escalation of crowd control for the guard, particularly since the defense officials ordered that troops not be armed when they went into the area. Law enforcement personnel were armed.

Although active-duty military troops were sent to the region, they remained at bases outside the district in case they were needed.

The ADS was developed by the military nearly two decades ago and was unveiled to the public around 2007. It is not clear if it has ever been used in combat, although reports suggest it has been deployed.

The system, which emits a directed beam of energy that causes a burning sensation, was considered a non-lethal way to control crowds, particularly when it may be difficult to tell the enemy from innocent civilians in war zones.

Use of the device appeared to stall amid questions about whether it actually caused more serious injuries or burns than initially thought.

The long-range acoustic device, also called a sound cannon, sends out loud messages or sounds and has been used by law enforcement to disperse crowds.

The U.S. military has, in recent years, ordered the cannon for the navy’s Military Sealift Command to be used by ships to hail or warn other vessels.

DeMarco testified in late July before the House natural resources committee, which is investigating the use of force against crowds in Lafayette Square. His remarks on the crowd-control devices came in response to follow-up questions from the committee.

DeMarco’s lawyer sent his answers to the committee on August 28; *NPR* posted the document online Wednesday.

The Trump administration has claimed vicious attacks by protesters

led federal forces to turn on what appeared to be a largely peaceful crowd on June 1 in the square in front of the White House.

Law enforcement and security officers that night clubbed and punched demonstrators and set mounted officers and chemical agents against them in one of the most controversial confrontations at the height of this year’s nationwide protests over the killing of Black people at the hands of police.

The forceful clearing of Lafayette Square, long one of the country’s most prominent venues for demonstrations, came minutes before Donald Trump arrived in the area, *en route* to stage a photo event in front of a historic church nearby.

—*The Guardian*, September 17, 2020

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/sep/17/us-military-police-heat-ray-blm-protesters-white-house-protesters>



Protesters and police gather at Lafayette Square, in front of the White House in Washington DC, on June 22, 2020.

The Ocean is Losing Its Breath

By IAN ANGUS

“Ocean deoxygenation is the third but less-reported member of an evil climate change trinity, along with global warming and ocean acidification. It is not so much another shoe dropping out of our CO2 emissions as it is a large boot-kicking ocean ecosystem, with significant knock-on impacts for hundreds-of-millions of people who depend on the oceans for a living, and with feedbacks on climate.”

—*Skeptical Science*¹

The ocean is losing its breath, with deadly effects on marine life and the biogeochemical cycles that shape the entire biosphere.

Since 1960, low-oxygen areas in the open ocean have expanded by 4.5 million square kilometers, an area the size of the European Union. Some regions have lost 40 percent of their oxygen, and the volume of water containing zero oxygen has more than quadrupled. The ocean is losing about a billion metric tons of oxygen every year. At present rates, the decline in life-giving ocean oxygen will triple by 2100. Add that to the rapidly growing number of coastal dead zones, and we have a life support emergency.

Overall, the ocean’s oxygen content has fallen just two percent, but the decline has occurred almost entirely in parts of the ocean where marine life is usually most abundant, so its impact is far greater than that percentage suggests.

Previous articles published in *Climate and Capitalism*², in this extended series on metabolic rifts have examined two ecological gluts created by capitalism’s inherent drive to expand at all costs: the nitrogen glut created by industrial agriculture’s dependence on synthetic chemical fertilizers, and the carbon dioxide glut

created by capitalism’s dependence on fossil fuels. Both are disrupting biogeochemical cycles that have shaped the biosphere for hundreds-of-millions of years, causing unprecedented rifts in the Earth System’s metabolism.

The ocean oxygen crisis is driven by the nitrogen and carbon dioxide gluts, in different parts of the ocean.

In coastal areas and estuaries, millions-of-tons of synthetic nitrogen fertilizer carried by rivers are creating seasonal dead zones in coastal areas around the world. About 900 such zones have been identified, and there are undoubtedly hundreds more. Scientists have been studying coastal dead zones since the 1980s, and there is broad agreement about their causes and effects.³

This article focuses on a parallel development that has only been studied in the past 15 years or so—the growth of hypoxic (low-oxygen) and anoxic (zero-oxygen) areas in the open ocean, caused by global warming. They are not always physically separate from coastal dead zones—in the Baltic and Arabian Seas, for example, they overlap—but they develop and are expanding differently.

All of the oxygen dissolved in seawater, no matter how deep, originated at or near the surface, in one of two processes.

There is a constant exchange of oxygen molecules (O₂) between the atmosphere and the ocean, at the air-sea interface. In simple terms, O₂ from the air dissolves in the water and O₂ from the water bubbles into the air.

Considerably more O₂ is produced by plants, especially phytoplankton, that grow on and in the water. Photosynthesis requires sunlight, and

even in very clear water, light penetrates less than 200 meters down. That euphotic zone (euphotic is Greek for well-lit) is the origin of nearly half of the world’s oxygen, and most of the ocean’s supply.

In most of the ocean, the upper 200 meters or so is called the surface or mixed layer. Waves, wind-driven currents and convection constantly stir its contents, making its temperature, salinity and dissolved gas content roughly uniform. Dissolved oxygen spreads through the mixed layer relatively quickly and evenly.

The mixed layer is warmed directly by sunlight and is constantly replenished by fresh water from rivers, rain and melting ice, so it is lighter (less dense) than the water below it, where a sudden temperature drop defines the thermocline, a colder and denser layer that separates the mixed layer from the cold and very slow moving deep layer that comprises about 90 percent of the ocean’s volume and mass. The thickness of the thermocline varies with seasons and latitude—in polar seas, it and the mixed layer scarcely exist—but in most of the ocean it extends from 200 to 1000 meters below the surface.

A variety of processes known collectively as ventilation move some of the mixed water, and the oxygen it contains, into the thermocline. The distribution of oxygen depends on local, regional and global currents, tides, local topography, unpredictable turbulence and other factors, so it is uneven. Most notably, in some parts of the thermocline a combination of weak ventilation and oxygen-consuming microorganisms results in pockets called Oxygen Minimum Zones. Most

of the thermocline at that depth is teeming with fish, but life in an OMZ is largely limited to microbes that can survive with very little or no O₂.

A different and much slower process plays a major role in distributing oxygen in the deep ocean. When water freezes in the North Atlantic, it leaves salt behind, creating a layer of dense brine that sinks to the bottom and slowly moves south, bringing along any oxygen it absorbed at the surface. Thus begins the Global Conveyor Belt, a slow deep-sea current that carries almost 20 million cubic meters of water-per-second—100 times more than the Amazon River—distributing oxygen and nutrients through the deep ocean.⁴ A full circuit takes about 1000 years. By the time water from near Greenland reaches the North Pacific, most of the oxygen is gone. This contributes to the formation of an OMZ in the West Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska.

Climate change versus oxygen

Ocean acidification is a direct result of skyrocketing CO₂ emissions. Ocean deoxygenation has the same cause: greenhouse gases are heating the world, and over 90 percent of that additional heat has been absorbed by the surface layer of the ocean, reducing the ocean's total oxygen and expanding Oxygen Minimum Zones.

Research into the details of deoxygenation is ongoing, but it is clear that climate change is responsible for most oxygen depletion in the open ocean. Three temperature-dependent processes—solubility, stratification and circulation, and aerobic metabolisms—are stealing the ocean's breath.

Solubility. Basic physics: when water gets warmer, it can hold less dissolved oxygen. A given volume of water in the Arctic can absorb more oxygen than the same volume at the equator. If the water's temperature increases from 4°C to 6°C, the amount of oxygen it can hold decreases five percent.

For many millennia, the two-way gas transfer across the air-sea interface was balanced, so the amount of dissolved oxygen in the ocean remained roughly constant. At some time in the past half-century, that balance was broken: the warming ocean began releasing more oxygen than it absorbed. A recent study estimates that between 1975 and 2005 the net loss of oxygen from the ocean to the atmosphere averaged more than a-billion-tons-a-year. If warming continues, that out-gassing could nearly triple by 2100.⁵

Stratification and circulation

As we've seen, the ocean is divided by temperature and salinity into three sharply defined layers, with the least dense layer on top. Climate change has further reduced the density of the top layer, by warming the water, increasing rainfall, and melting glaciers. That makes it still more difficult for oxygen-rich waters to move into the thermocline.

Reduced solubility means that there is less oxygen in total, and increased stratification reduces the portion of the oxygen that circulates below the mixed layer. Since 1960, Oxygen Minimum Zones in the thermocline have grown 20 percent, from just over 25 million square kilometers to 30.4 million—to eight percent of the ocean's total area, and seven percent of its volume.⁶

Global warming is also weakening the Great Conveyor Belt: the north Atlantic portion now carries 15 percent less water than it did in 1960. So far, no effect has been measured on deep ocean oxygen levels; that may reflect the current's slow speed, or limited sampling of deepsea water. It has been estimated that at present warming rates, deep sea circulation will fall as much as 45 percent by 2100.⁷

Metabolic rates. When temperature increases, almost all chemical processes speed up, including the complex biochemical reactions that maintain life in all organisms. Metabolic rates increase in proportion to temperature—organ-

isms need more oxygen to maintain the same level of activity. The effect is barely noticeable in warm-blooded animals such as us, because our bodies always use a great deal of energy to maintain a stable condition. But the respiration rates of cold-blooded organisms, which includes almost all marine life, increase substantially when the water gets warmer.⁸

So, while lower solubility and stronger stratification are reducing the supply of dissolved oxygen in seawater, aerobic respiration is increasing the consumption.

It is difficult to quantify the relative impacts of each of the three processes, but so far solubility and stratification seem to have caused greater oxygen reductions than increased respiration. That is likely to change as global temperatures rise, because heat's impact on metabolic rates is exponential. According to a recent study, "for 2°C warming, there will be a 29 percent increase in ocean oxygen consumption rates, and for 3°C warming, a 50 percent increase, leading to large-scale ocean hypoxia."⁹

Consequences

"Oxygen is fundamental to life in the oceans. The decline in ocean oxygen ranks among the most serious effects of human activities on the Earth's environment." —Denise Breitburg, Senior Scientist, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center¹⁰

An Ocean Anoxic Event (OAE) is a period when the level of dissolved oxygen in a large part of the ocean plunges to (or near) zero. That has happened many times in Earth's long history, most recently about 94 million years ago, when loss of oxygen wiped out a large proportion of marine life. As scientists associated with the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution point out, ocean conditions today are similar to those that prevailed before that crisis and are rapidly getting worse.

“More widespread perturbation seems realistic under currently projected carbon emissions. Without positive human intervention, ancient OAE studies are destined to become uncomfortably applicable in the not-so-distant future.”¹¹

We are not yet in an OAE, but if oxygen loss continues to accelerate, large-scale extinctions of marine species are virtually certain. Even at present levels of deoxygenation, the damage is extensive.

“The vast body of evidence from temperate marine ecosystems and a few studies from tropical marine ecosystems demonstrate that hypoxia stress often results in catastrophic ecosystem simplification through loss of biodiversity, trophic complexity and fisheries.”¹²

In fact, any reduction in available oxygen, not just hypoxia, is problematic for most ocean life. Although some marine animals, jellyfish for example, are little affected by oxygen reduction, others go into decline when the level falls even slightly.¹³ As a result, the population balance in areas where oxygen levels are falling tilts quickly towards hypoxia-tolerant species. Others flee or die.

As well as directly threatening the lives and habitats of marine organisms, oxygen depletion is disrupting the global nitrogen cycle. For hundreds-of-millions of years, naturally occur-

ring Oxygen Minimum Zones have played a key role in the nitrogen cycle, because the bacteria that convert reactive nitrogen (Nr) compounds into inert nitrogen gas (N₂) are triggered to do so only in the absence of oxygen. The expansion of OMZs means that growing numbers microbes are removing reactive nitrogen from the ocean, unbalancing the cycle and reducing the availability of essential nutrients for marine life.

What’s more, when bacteria convert Nr to N₂ in the presence of small amounts of oxygen—that’s the case in most parts of OMZs—they also produce nitrous oxide (N₂O), a greenhouse gas that is about 300-times more powerful than carbon dioxide and also depletes the ozone layer. Multiple studies have found large amounts of N₂O rising from the ocean surface above OMZs. This is a classic positive feedback—global warming accelerates production of nitrous oxide, which in turn accelerates global warming.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that oxygen depletion does not happen in isolation—for example, organisms that consume more oxygen also increase acidification by exhaling more carbon dioxide, and fish trying to escape oxygen-starved water find that alternative locations are too acidic.

—*Climate and Capitalism*,
September 20, 2020

<https://climateandcapitalism.com/2020/09/20/triple-crisis-in-the-anthropocene-ocean-part-two-running-low-on-oxygen/>

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2 <https://climateandcapitalism.com>

3 Ian Angus, “Dead Zones: Industrial Agriculture versus Ocean Life,” *Climate & Capitalism*, August 12, 2020.

4 Cold water also joins the conveyor near Antarctica, and the return path carries warm water from the tropics to the north. Any selected “beginning” on this vast metabolic cycle is arbitrary.

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8 Historical sidelight: the formula for calculating the effect of increased heat on the speed of chemical reactions was discovered by Svante Arrhenius, the Swedish scientist who was the first to show, in 1896, that CO₂ emissions from burning fossil fuels could cause global warming.

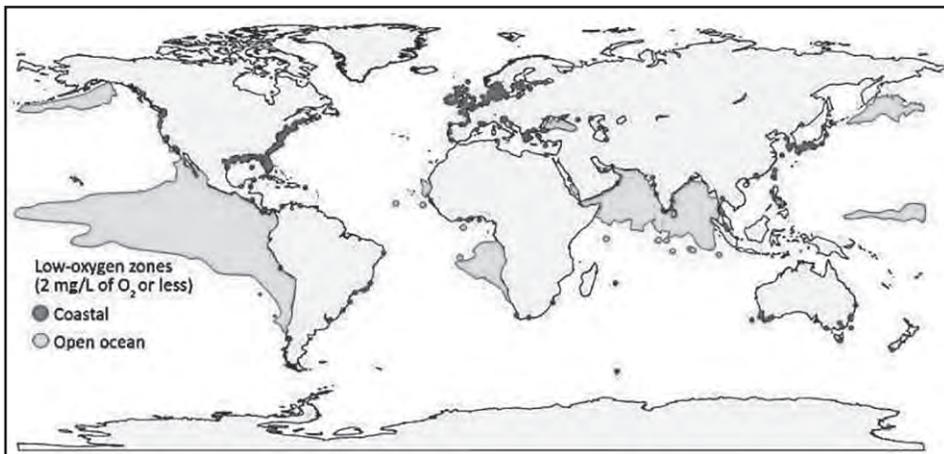
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Dots mark coastal “dead zones” where oxygen has plummeted to two milligrams per liter or less. Shaded areas in the open ocean have the same low-oxygen levels. Source: GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel.

Capitalism—“Not Humanity”—is Killing Wildlife

BY ANNA PIGOTT

The latest Living Planet report from the WWF (World Wildlife Fund) makes for grim reading: a 60 percent decline in wild animal populations since 1970, collapsing ecosystems, and a distinct possibility that the human species will not be far behind. The report repeatedly stresses that humanity’s consumption is to blame for this mass extinction, and journalists have been quick to amplify the message. The *Guardian* headline reads “Humanity has wiped out 60 percent of animal populations,” while the *BBC* runs with “Mass wildlife loss caused by human consumption.” No wonder: in the 148-page report, the word “humanity” appears 14 times, and “consumption” an impressive 54 times.

There is one word, however, that fails to make a single appearance: capitalism. It might seem, when 83 percent of the world’s freshwater ecosystems are collapsing (another horrifying statistic from the report,) that this is no time to quibble over semantics. And yet, as the ecologist Robin Wall Kimmerer has written, “finding the words is another step in learning to see.”

Although the WWF report comes close to finding the words by identifying culture, economics, and unsustainable production models as the key problems, it fails to name capitalism as the crucial (and often causal) link between these things. It therefore prevents us from seeing the true nature of the problem. If we don’t name it, we can’t tackle it: it’s like aiming at an invisible target.

Why capitalism?

The WWF report is right to highlight “exploding human consumption,” not population growth, as the main cause of mass extinction, and it goes to great lengths to illustrate the link between levels of consumption

and biodiversity loss. But it stops short of pointing out that capitalism is what compels such reckless consumption. Capitalism—particularly in its neoliberal form—is an ideology founded on a principle of endless economic growth driven by consumption, a proposition that is simply impossible.

From carbon emissions to ecological footprints, the richest ten percent of people are having the greatest impact.

Industrial agriculture, an activity that the report identifies as the biggest single contributor to species loss, is profoundly shaped by capitalism, not least because only a handful of “commodity” species are deemed to have any value, and because, in the sole pursuit of profit and growth, “externalities” such as pollution and biodiversity loss are ignored. And yet instead of calling the irrationality of capitalism out for the ways in which it renders most of life worthless, the WWF report actually extends a capitalist logic by using terms such as “natural assets” and “ecosystem services” to refer to the living world.

By obscuring capitalism with a term that is merely one of its symptoms—consumption—there is also a risk that blame and responsibility for species loss is disproportionately shifted onto individual lifestyle choices, while the larger and more powerful systems and institutions that are compelling individuals to consume are, worryingly, let off the hook.

Who is “humanity,” anyway?

The WWF report chooses “humanity” as its unit of analysis, and this totalizing language is eagerly picked up by

the press. The *Guardian*, for example, reports that “the global population is destroying the web of life.” This is grossly misleading. The WWF report itself illustrates that it is far from all of humanity doing the consuming, but it does not go as far as revealing that only a small minority of the human population are causing the vast majority of the damage.

From carbon emissions to ecological footprints, the richest ten percent of people are having the greatest impact. Furthermore, there is no recognition that the effects of climate and biodiversity collapse are overwhelmingly felt by the poorest people first—the very people who are contributing least to the problem. Identifying these inequalities matters because it is this—not “humanity” *per se*—that is the problem, and because inequality is endemic to, you guessed it, capitalist systems (and particularly their racist and colonial legacies.)

The catch-all word “humanity” papers over all of these cracks, preventing us from seeing the situation as it is. It also perpetuates a sense that humans are inherently “bad,” and that it is somehow “in our nature” to consume until there is nothing left. One tweet, posted in response to the WWF publication, retorted that “we are a virus



Orangutang

with shoes,” an attitude that hints at growing public apathy.

But what would it mean to redirect such self-loathing towards capitalism? Not only would this be a more accurate target, but it might also empower us to see our humanity as a force for good.

Breaking the story

Words do so much more than simply assign blame to different causes. Words are makers and breakers of the deep stories that we construct about the world, and these stories are especially important for helping us to navigate environmental crises. Using generalized references to “humanity” and “consumption” as drivers of ecological loss is not only inaccurate, it also per-

petuates a distorted view of who we are and what we are capable of becoming.

By naming capitalism as a root cause, on the other hand, we identify a particular set of practices and ideas that are by no means permanent nor inherent to the condition of being human. In doing so, we learn to see that things could be otherwise. There is a power to naming something in order to expose it. As the writer and environmentalist Rebecca Solnit puts it:

“Calling things by their true names cuts through the lies that excuse, buffer, muddle, disguise, avoid, or encourage inaction, indifference, obliviousness. It’s not all there is to changing the world, but it’s a key step.”

The WWF report urges that a “collective voice is crucial if we are to reverse the trend of biodiversity loss,” but a collective voice is useless if it cannot find the right words. As long as we—and influential organizations such as the WWF, in particular—fail to name capitalism as a key cause of mass extinction, we will remain powerless to break its tragic story.

—*Climate and Capitalism*, October 1, 2020

<https://climateandcapitalism.com/2020/10/01/capitalism-is-killing-the-worlds-wildlife-not-humanity/>

INCARCERATION NATION

Free All Political Prisoners

And say their names!

BY GLEN FORD

Black Agenda Report executive editor Glen Ford made the following remarks on August 15, 2020, to the Black Is Back Coalition for Social Justice, Peace and Reparations, which was holding a virtual national conference under the theme, “Fight for Black Power: Free All political prisoners.”

Power to the People... and good morning.

We’re going to talk about political prisoners, of which the United States has many—despite the fact that the United States claims it does not, and never has, imprisoned people for political reasons.

Scores of these prisoners are listed by the Jericho Movement. They have been incarcerated for many decades, some for half-a-century.

Many more have died in prison, and others have been released after endur-

ing years of torture and attempts to break and humiliate them.

That includes esteemed members of the Black Is Back Coalition, who continue their work in the struggle, as do the brothers and sisters that remain behind bars. They have never left the struggle.

Of course, some people and institutions are totally immune from imprisonment—like banking executives, who are considered too big to jail.

But that’s because they are the state—or rather, the state works for people like them. They are part of the ruling class.

The ruling classes have shaped the state to protect their interests. The capitalist state exists for the purpose of making the nation and the world safe for the rule of capital. These people will never be prisoners of any kind—until they are overthrown and removed from power, by the people.

That’s why we say, power to the people.

But the rest of us are subject to become prisoners, whether our offenses are overtly political, or not. Lots of folks who were politically opposed to the laws and practices of the U.S. state have spent some time in jail.

Some of them are eventually exonerated in the eyes of the state, and even venerated—and held up as political icons and paragons of virtue. People like the late John Lewis, who bragged incessantly that he’s been arrested 40 times, in addition to having his head bashed in by police on a bridge that will likely be named after him, now that he’s dead.

But John Lewis’s many periods of incarceration were brief, for a number of reasons. The most important reason is that Lewis was part of a broad movement, the Civil Rights movement, that

had actively engaged many tens-of-thousands of people and was supported by many millions more in the United States and around the world.

However, it is very important to understand that this “Civil Rights” movement was supported—at least tacitly—by a segment of the U.S. ruling class, and by large sections of the U.S. state, in various regions of the country and in the federal government.

Northern Democrats and many Republicans were opposed to Jim Crow. These politicians opposed segregation laws because many of their bosses in the ruling class were against legal segregation.

Many big capitalists opposed segregation laws, because Jim Crow put limits on the uses of capital. Legal Jim Crow prevented the southern states from becoming fully integrated into the national U.S. economy. Segregation limited how investment money could be spent in the south, and the kinds of projects that could be developed.

You can’t have a project like Peachtree Plaza, in Atlanta, if you have to have two sets of escalators, one for whites and one for Blacks. And you can’t make Atlanta or Charlotte or New Orleans an international city, and still keep Jim Crow segregation.

Creating space for the Civil Rights movement

So, much of the U.S. ruling class wanted Jim Crow to go. And this created political space for the Civil Rights movement in the south—because powerful sectors of the ruling class saw their own interest in ending legal segregation and denial of Black voting rights.

That’s why John Kennedy made that call to Coretta Scott King when her husband was serving time in a Georgia jail, in 1960. Martin Luther King was a political prisoner of the state of Georgia, but elements of the national ruling class intervened, to voice their disapproval.

So, during that period in history, in the early sixties, big capital and many of their political servants were at times allies of the Civil Rights movement. And they fully expected that Civil Rights activists, and Black folks in general, would repay them by becoming allies of big capital and the U.S. imperial state.

John Lewis totally fulfilled those expectations. He became a loyal servant of the Democratic Party, and a beloved spokesman for U.S. exceptionalism and Washington’s right to rule over the planet.

the same forces that targeted Dr. King, in order to neutralize him, politically—those same forces put all of our surviving political prisoners behind bars

John Lewis was an imperialist, ruling class success story—and they’re very glad that they didn’t keep him in jail, and that those cops didn’t kill him on the bridge.

Dr. King was a different story.

Even before he began to publicly oppose the Vietnam War and U.S. imperial policy, before he publicly indicted the U.S. state and society for, what he called, the three evils of racism, poverty, and war, Dr. King had become the most important Black leader in the country.

And although, in the first half of the sixties, King had not yet begun denouncing American imperialism or the capitalist system, King was still made a target of the FBI’s COINTELPRO program.

He was to be neutralized, along with communists and Black radicals, especially Black nationalists. Dr. King was on the same FBI list as the young

Stokely Carmichael, later known as Kwame Ture.

J. Edgar Hoover feared that Dr. King might become a “Black Messiah” that could unify the Black Nationalist Movement. Hoover admitted that King was no Black nationalist, but Hoover feared that he might become a Messiah of the Black nationalists in the future. So, King had to be neutralized, along with the actual Black radicals and revolutionary Black nationalists on the COINTELPRO list. And Dr. King did become more radical. He did break with U.S. imperialism. He did start speaking out more forcefully against capitalism.

But the U.S. secret police had a problem with eliminating Dr. King. King was famous for his Gandhian nonviolence. He had a Nobel Peace Prize.

So, how do you criminalize that kind of man, and make him a political prisoner? What kind of pretext could they use to discredit and incarcerate Reverend Dr. King or run him out of the country—like they did Robert Williams, the former NAACP leader from North Carolina who found asylum in Cuba in 1961.

But Robert Williams advocated, and practiced, armed self-defense. Dr. King didn’t mess with guns.

The secret police couldn’t set King up, and King refused to commit suicide, as they strongly suggested. So, since they couldn’t make him a prisoner, they made him a martyr.

Now, the reason I spent so much time on Dr. King, who was not a long-time political prisoner, is to point up the fact that the same forces that targeted Dr. King, in order to neutralize him, politically—those same forces put all of our surviving political prisoners behind bars.

Even if the U.S. secret police were NOT responsible for the death of Malcolm X in 1965, they would have killed or imprisoned Malcolm later on in the decade.

If you threaten to lead Black people on an independent political path, the U.S. state will attempt to neutralize you, imprison you, or kill you.

If you exercise your right to defend yourself, and your people, from the oppressive arms of the state, they make you into an outlaw, and hunt you down.

And if you somehow escape from their clutches and find asylum in a comradely country, they will put a bounty on your head—as they have Assata Shakur.

When Malcolm's political children formed the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, in late 1966, they were exercising their right under California law to bear arms on the street.

The Black Panther Party

In the beginning, the Party was a kind of armed cop-watch. The idea was that the cops would be less likely to casually kill people in the Black community if they knew they were being watched by armed Black people.

The Party was the white settler state's worst nightmare: Black revolutionary nationalists with guns—real Black revolutionaries, not figments of J. Edgar Hoover's imagination.

They didn't hide their socialism, and they actively sought fraternal relations with revolutionary movements and socialist governments around the world.

The Panthers characterized the police as an army of occupation in the Black community.

An occupation army. Those words were carefully chosen.

Malcolm X told us that we should stop talking about "Civil Rights"—which are the rights that the government chooses to give you—and instead demand our "human rights," as spelled out in United Nations documents.

Oppressed people should not have to appeal to their oppressor for justice. They have the human right to resist oppression, by any means necessary.

No matter what the oppressor says.

Brother Malcolm had done his homework. He knew that back in 1949 the Geneva Convention had declared that occupied people have a human right to resist that occupation. The Black Panther Party put that right into practice, in response to the blue army of occupation in our communities.

When Dr. King was murdered in 1968, rebellions erupted in virtually every heavily Black city in the country. And thousands of sisters and brothers were soon knocking on the doors of Panther Party offices across the country, volunteering to join the resistance.

The U.S. state answered this resistance with the mother of all counterinsurgency programs: mass Black incarceration.

When Brother Yeshitela¹ talks about revolution being "in the air" in 1968, that's no exaggeration. The numbers of Panther volunteers were, in fact, far too large for the Party to handle.

The state set COINTELPRO on war mode. Infiltration was even more pervasive than folks ever imagined. The SWAT team was invented, and the Party was soon on the defensive, everywhere.

The bodies were piling up, and much of the Party was facing charges of one kind or another. Many were already in prison.

And then, in June of 1969, J. Edgar Hoover made the declaration of war official. He said the Black Panther Party was, "without question, the greatest threat to the internal national security of the United states." Hoover vowed to put the party out of existence by the end of the year.

The U.S. state was handing down an ultimatum: Give up the struggle, or become a prisoner, or a corpse.

Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were among those killed before the year was out.

Many of the brothers and sisters who rejected Hoover's ultimatum became political prisoners—and the survivors' pictures are on the Black Is Back Coalition poster that we prepared for this conference.

The latter part of the Black Liberation Movement was marked by calls to "Free Huey," "Free Bobby," and "Free Angela."

These particular prisoners were freed. But ultimately, the revolutionary Black movement was smashed by the raw, murderous power of the state

However, the U.S. state had an even bigger plan.

COINTELPRO and related secret police programs are designed to target and neutralize the leadership of revolutionary movements. But Black people were feeling rebellious all over the country in the late sixties. Federal troops were called in to occupy Detroit in 1967, and to occupy Washington, DC and other cities in 1968, when over a hundred cities burned.

The U.S. state answered this resistance with the mother of all counterinsurgency programs: mass Black incarceration.

Mass Black incarceration

A mass Black incarceration regime requires the criminalization of a whole people. Black neighborhoods were placed under the most intense surveillance.

It was in the last days of Lyndon Johnson's presidency that Congress created the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, which vastly increased federal spending on local police. Essentially, the federal government was massively reinforcing the Blue Occupation Army in Black America.

The mission was to create a vastly larger prison infrastructure: The black prison gulag. In just over a generation, the U.S. prison population would swell from only 200,000, in 1970, to well over two million—half of them Black.

One out of every eight prison inmates in the world is a Black American. And one out of every three Black male children will go to prison sometime in their lives.

That was the U.S. state's answer to the Black liberation movement of the sixties. It was as if the rulers said: Since you Black folks won't stay in your place; we've got another place for you: prison.

But the advent of the mass Black incarceration regime raises the question: If the state makes a political decision to criminalize Blackness, aren't all Black prisoners of the state political prisoners?

That's a question that is wrestled with, inside and outside the prison walls. But we do know for certain who went to prison in the service of our movement in the struggle to free our people—whether they were armed or unarmed.

And we embrace our duty and our obligation to these political prisoners—not just during Black August, but in the totality of our political work.

The state had help in eradicating the threat of Black revolution.

The struggle against Jim Crow apartheid engaged all classes of Black people. But not all Black people want-

ed a total transformation of society. Some just wanted to get rid of the impediments to their own ability to get rich, or to become a General in the Armed Forces, or to climb the corporate ladder.

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They didn't want to overthrow the ruling class—they wanted to join it.

For them, the Movement was about Black representation at all levels of the capitalist structure—not self-determination for the mass of Black people.

It definitely was not about revolution. That would spoil everything for the aspiring Black bourgeoisie—the people we at *Black Agenda Report* call “The Black Misperformance Class.”

They didn't hate the Democratic Party—even though it was the Democrats who created Jim Crow in the south. Instead, they wanted to join the Democratic Party, and to rise within the Party ranks.

And they opposed independent Black politics. They wanted to shut down the mass movement as soon as possible, so that it would not continue to disrupt the rich white man's political order—an order that they wanted to become a part of.

They had a slogan, back then: “Taking it from the streets, to the suites.”

We saw early on what this black misleadership class was up to—and it had nothing to do with Black liberation.

The first Black big city mayor was Carl Stokes, of Cleveland. He was elected in 1967. Among his first acts was to appoint a Black general as the city's police commissioner. And the first thing his general did was issue dum-dum bullets to the cops, so that they could kill more Black people.

Atlanta's first Black mayor, Maynard Jackson, quickly moved to break the overwhelmingly Black sanitation workers union—the same union that Martin



All these men, and more, except Jalil Muntaqim, are still incarcerated.

Luther King was supporting in Memphis when he was assassinated. Maynard Jackson said his main mission was to create a new class of Black millionaires.

Long before McFadden and Whitehead composed their hit record, “Ain’t No Stoppin’ Us Now,” the Black Liberation Movement was brought to a stop by the state, with the collaboration of this rising Black political class.

We would not see even a glimmer of a mass Black grassroots movement for two generations.

When we still had a movement that demanded “Free Huey,” “Free Bobby” and “Free Angela,” those particular political prisoners were released. But after the movement was shut down, scores of other political prisoners were left to die in the gulag.

Meanwhile, the new class of Black Democratic leaders became the managers of the mass black incarceration regime. Instead of defending Black people’s interests and Black human rights, this class defended the system that criminalized Black people as a group.

They were proud to serve the infernal machinery that condemned the best and brightest of our activists and thinkers to die in America’s dungeons.

For two generations, there was no Black grassroots mass movement in the United States. But the Black street never stopped resisting, even without a radical political leadership.

The Los Angeles rebellion of 1992—the “Rodney King” rebellion—registered a higher death toll and more property damage than any urban uprising of the sixties.

And, a generation after Rodney King, our young people rebelled again in the wake of Michael Brown’s murder in Ferguson.

And this year they scared the hell out of the state in cities across the country, in response to COVID 19 and economic depression. Unprecedented numbers of people were in the streets, with young Black folks in the leadership.

But in those protests, we don’t hear demands for the release of our political prisoners. They call for “abolition” of prisons. But that’s a long-term goal. But many of our political prisoners have already died, and the rest are old. They can’t wait for abolition.

The failure of Black Lives Matter demonstrations to demand freedom for all political prisoners is unacceptable and must be criticized.

The current movement makes a ritual of saying the names of the recent dead—the victims of police violence. And that is righteous, and correct: “Say their names!”

Say names of political prisoners

But also, we must “Say the names!” of our political prisoners who still live.

So, we’re gonna say their names, from the list published by the Jericho Movement:

- Abdul Azeez, Virgin Islands five
- Mumia Abu Jamal, Black Panther Party
- Sundiata Acoli, Black Panther Party and Republic of New Africa
- Imam Jamil Al-Amin, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee
- Jalil Muntaqim², Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army
- Joseph Bowen, a U.S. political prisoner
- Veronza Bowers, Black Panther Party
- Kojo Bomani Sababu, Black Liberation Army
- Fred “Mohammad” Burton, a U.S. political prisoner
- Byron Shane Chubbuck, First Nation political prisoner
- Bill Dunne, a class war prisoner
- Romaine “Chip” Fitzgerald, a U.S. political prisoner

- David Gilbert, anti-imperialist political prisoner
- Jeremy Hammond, anarchist and computer hacker political prisoner
- Hanif Shabazz Bey, Virgin Islands five
- Alvaro Lunes Hernandez, Chicano political prisoner
- Kamau Sadiki, Black Panther Party

And that’s only a partial listing. Political prisoners are being created all the time, because wherever there is political struggle, there will be political prisoners, and political casualties.

We must Say Their Names while they are still alive to hear us.

Say their names, while it can still do some good for the living.

Say their names, because we owe them a debt that can only be repaid by a lifetime of service to the people—as our political prisoners have already done.

Free them All!

Power to the People.

—*Black Agenda Report*, August 18, 2020

<https://blackagendareport.com/free-all-political-prisoners-and-say-their-names>

1 Omali Yeshitella, founder of the Uhuru Movement and leader of the African People’s Party

2 Won parole October 7, 2020.

Why the Police Reform Bill is Doomed to Fail

BY COMRADE PITT

“The supporters of reforms and improvements will always be fooled by defenders of the old order until they realize that every old institution, however barbarous and rotten it may appear to be, is maintained by the forces of some ruling class.” —V.I. Lenin

This quote by Vladimir Lenin essentially sums up what this essay is about however I’ll explain further as to why the recently enacted police reform bill by congress is doomed to fail. We all witnessed George Floyd choked to death and Breonna Taylor was shot eight times as she slept while police raided her home unannounced and without knocking. On this police reform bill choke holds and no knock warrants have been banned but this bill fails to acknowledge or address the systemic racism which exists and is deeply entrenched in police departments across the country. This bill will most likely prevent a few unnecessary deaths but its overall purpose will more likely than not prove inauspicious.

Subsequent to the murder of Mike Brown, calls for police reforms echoed around the country and the reaction was to implement and mandate body cameras on police in most states. However that response failed to prevent further unjustifiable murders of Black men and women, in many cases, including the murder of George Floyd. Cameras played a role in capturing it, yet did not deter former officer Derek Chauvin from killing George Floyd. In fact, at one point he even looked directly at the camera unfazed.

Another example is from the 2019 killing of Elijah McClain, a unarmed young Black man who was murdered by Colorado police using the same chokehold tactic as was used on Eric Garner. His last words were “I can’t breathe!” Sentiments we’ve heard far

too often. This murder was captured on police body cameras yet nothing ever came from it. In fact, this case went under the radar and only resurfaced after the death of George Floyd.

In essence, every police reform that has been instituted has fallen flat on its face and this new police reform bill will also face the same outcome. To understand the reason why you cannot reform the police system and receive the intended results it’s important to take a look at the history of police structure and how it emerged.

Following real, even rumored slave revolts or slave runaways, the institution of slave patrol emerged. In response armed white militia men were hired by slave owners to take shifts riding around between plantations breaking up slave gatherings, apprehending slave runaways, protecting white lives and property.

This system of policing gradually evolved into an actual professional job and “public safety” was no longer in the hands of amateur night watchmen or plantation overseer. It had been transferred to a full-time professional body built on the core ideology and foundation of white supremacy. After slavery was abolished, during the Post-Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras this very system was employed to deter and terrorize Afrikan Americans from participation in public life—especially voting. Those who attempted to vote were subject to public lynching which would send a message to other Blacks. The “white League brotherhood,” “KKK” and “The Pale Face” paramilitary organizations also assisted this newly formed police system in the reign of terror. In fact, most of them were also employed as police officers. In response, in 1870 congress enacted the “Enforcement Act” which estab-

lished *de facto* quasi-penalties for voter suppression by anyone including police who attempted to keep people from registering to vote based on race, but this reform failed to produce the intended result. To this very day voter suppression remains a major issue in many states.

It has been sickening watching how some Black prominent politicians are under some illusion that this newly enacted police reform bill will change how police police Black men and women. Just as the 1870 Congress “Enforcement Act” bill failed, and every one after that, this too is bound to fail. This is pure political theatre and empty moralization by playing games with the same system that is and has been hell bent by the ruling class to terrorize and murder Blacks. I have heard far too often that the “System is broken.” This is a poor and lame response to a problem larger than the system being broken when the system actually works like a well-oiled machine as it was intended to.

Contrary to the optics and narrative, the core issue here is of white police unjustifiably killing unarmed Black men and women. Though in some cases the killings have been undoubtedly race motivated, we have to take into account that overall Black police officers compose a small percentage of police officers nationwide, which increases the likelihood of white police interacting with Black communities. Therefore, as difficult as it may be, it’s important to not get caught up in race and see this issue as solely white police killing unarmed Blacks because, make no mistake, Black police officers also brutalize and murder other unarmed Black civilians just as viciously as any white cop. The issue isn’t a “few bad apples” or “training.” They don’t need to be “trained” not to kill unarmed

white civilians at the same rate as they kill unarmed Blacks. The issue here is the system and until we all wake up and recognize that capitalist-imperialism is at the root of all our problems, we will continue to suffer tragic losses and be manipulated by political opportunists with empty chicanery rhetoric and enactment of useless bills which will not end the reign of white supremacy but merely perpetuate it.

In the 1960s urban uprisings in Los Angeles, Oakland, Watts, Benton Harbor, Michigan, Toledo, Ohio, Ferguson, MO, Baltimore, MD., Minneapolis, MN, *etc.*, people have protested. Uprisings seem to have occurred simultaneously and more often. In the wake of many of these unprecedented revolts and protests came obvious political awakening and organizing that has genuinely threatened the system and calls to defund, even dismantle, the police continue to

echo. They have intensified the pressure on the need for social change and social justice. However we cannot afford to be complacent and be appeased by mere reforms only to end up protesting and outraged at yet more killings of unarmed Black men and women weeks or months later.

Imagine if police policed white communities with the same violence and militarized approach as they do Black communities, or if they murdered unarmed whites at the same rate as they do Blacks. Reforms would've been the last thing on the minds of white Americans, revolution would've occurred long ago. The bottom line is that the solution to this issue is to dismantle and abolish the entire Police System. No amount of reforms, defunding or training is enough to change it. This is a rotten system built on the foundation of white supremacy ideology and sheer hate. There is no

reforming it. Attempts to do so are synonymous with attempting to cure cancer with Tylenol. Abolition is the sole logical solution and policing needs to be re-imagined but this also implies getting rid of capitalism/imperialism and paving the way to socialism and eventual transition to communism. Until then it's merely a matter of time before we're right back in the streets chanting "Hands up, Don't shoot," "I can't breathe" or "no justice, no..." You know the rest by now.

Write to Comrade Pitt, New Afrikan Black Panther party

United Panther Movement Minister of education:

Peter Kamau Mukuria 1197165

Red Onion State Prison

PO Box 1900

Pound, VA 24279

Instagram@PittPanther_art

JPAY.com/email

COVID-19, Lockdown, and Mental Illness

BY SHAKABOONA

The COVID-19 lockdown of the Pennsylvania Department Of Corrections (PADOC) has transformed the state prisons into one massive solitary confinement system, a prisoncrat's dream come true, yet a nightmare for incarcerated prisoners who are fighting to maintain their mental sanity and emotional stability.

Solitary confinement is proven to cause mental illness and emotional trauma in human beings, who are social beings by nature, which makes solitary confinement the antithesis to human nature. Here, in the state prisons, incarcerated people are fighting just to keep their heads above water under the COVID-19 lockdown of prisons. Incarcerated persons can be seen in a constant agitated state, very

stressed, on an emotional rollercoaster of mood swings, outbursts of anger, aggression, severe depression, and suicidal. Were it not for the free Zoom visits, phone calls, and emails to maintain communication with family and friends, were it not for the yard periods to socialize with other incarcerated people, and were it not for incarcerated people's understanding of the need to keep safe under the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, there would be massive prison rebellions against the inhumane treatment that incarcerated people are receiving in the name of "COVID-19 Safety Measures."

National newspapers recently have reported that tens-of-millions of Americans are suffering mental health issues as a result of the COVID-19, and

former First Lady Michelle Obama has stated she too is battling depression from the COVID-19, and they are people who are in the free world. Then how much more are incarcerated people whom are locked down, locked under, locked out, and locked away from society and placed in solitary confinement conditions suffering mental illnesses? More pointedly, how many people in society even care?

—*PrisonRadio.org*, September 2020

Write to Shakaboona:

Smart Communications/PA DOC

Kerry Shakaboona Marshall #BE7826

SCI Rockview

P.O. Box 33028

St. Petersburg, FL 33733

Military Torture in Indiana Prisons

BY KEVIN “RASHID” JOHNSON

The Gitmo torture lab

A lot of people may not remember the torture scandal that exposed the U.S. military back in 2004, when, during the illegal invasion of Iraq, photos surfaced of soldiers humiliating and torturing civilians detained at Iraq’s Abu Ghraib prison.

As the story unfolded, it was revealed that the abuses at Abu Ghraib were not the isolated actions of a handful of rogue soldiers as originally portrayed by the media and military, but were instead techniques that had been systematically developed and refined by the CIA and military on detainees at the U.S. military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Gitmo, as it is commonly known, had actually served for years as a U.S. torture laboratory.¹

Among the U.S. soldiers captured in those torture photos, were Americans who worked as prison guards in their civilian lives. Which linked the culture of abuse that pervades U.S. prisons with the sociopathic mindset of military officials trained to deliberately torture other humans.

The interplay between U.S. military-to-prison torture is still very much alive today.

New Pendleton warden a Gitmo student

Just over a month ago a new warden was appointed at Indiana’s Pendleton Correctional Facility (PCF) where I was imprisoned from November 2018 until September 3, 2020.

This warden, Dennis Reagle, is a U.S. military veteran who was stationed at Gitmo. What’s problematic is what he’s been doing at PCF since assuming the position of warden.

Inhumane conditions in PCF solitary

Before detailing these measures, I should give some context in terms of

PCF’s pre-existing inhumane conditions, especially in its solitary confinement unit, G-cell house (GCH), that make Reagle’s actions all the more depraved.

Pendleton is an old prison structure. GCH houses nearly 300 people in four separate wings. Each wing contains three tiers of open-front cells with bars that face onto a wall. Each tier contains between 21 and 24 cells. The tiers are closed in with a narrow walkway running their length between the cell fronts and a caged-in barrier in front of them.

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To observe or communicate with a given prisoner, guards must walk down the narrow tiers and stand directly in front of the prisoner’s cell. There is no internal cooling system in PCF’s cell-blocks.

By policy, guards are supposed to make security rounds every 30 minutes to ensure each prisoner is well. These rounds are almost never made in GCH. The only time prisoners usually see guards is during the four to five daily counts conducted in the unit, and at meal and medication delivery. Often, they don’t come around at count times, but instead, use unit log records to take count.

The authorized method for prisoners to summon guards in an emergency situation such as a medical crisis, a suicide attempt (over half GCH’s pris-

oners have documented mental illnesses) is for prisoners to yell, “medical emergency!” until guards come. Most times the guards won’t respond for fifteen minutes or more. Often, they don’t respond at all.

While housed in GCH, I’d been on the phone in my cell many times with people on the outside who heard and themselves remarked on prisoners yelling “medical emergency!” for an hour or more in the background, and guards never responded.

A number of prisoners have died as a result of guards not responding to emergency calls. One such death occurred with a man housed in a cell just above me on March 20, 2019.

Prisoners have died like this and been left undiscovered for hours, as occurred this year.

In many cases, to summon guards, prisoners have to create a disturbance and act out by, for example, flooding their cells and the tiers, setting paper fires outside their cells, and so on. In a number of cases prisoners have physically lashed out at guards out of frustration at having their and other’s serious needs and cries for help ignored.

Gitmo torture used at PCF

Reagle’s response has been to heap abuse on top of abuse. Upon becoming warden, he established several protocols which smack of torture techniques exposed in 2004 as applied at Abu Ghraib and refined at Gitmo: sensory deprivation, unprotected exposure to extreme temperatures, and water torture being key among them.

Today it is generally recognized, and even acknowledged by the United Nations, that solitary confinement is torture. As a result, many prison systems across the country have been rolling back the practice. Access to small

in-cell amenities like television and commissary food items also allow some small level of insulation from the sensory deprivation of solitary.

Reagle, however, is increasing the use of intensified solitary and is removing even these small diversions. He's banned all prisoners housed in disciplinary segregation in GCH from commissary purchases and held many who are detained from general population (GP) under these conditions although they have not been found guilty of any disciplinary infractions, and Indiana prison policy specifically forbids this.

He also allows guards to use high-pressure water hoses to indiscriminately hose down multiple prisoners and their cells on tiers where small isolated paper fires have been set by a single prisoner to summon guards. Victims report the experience as feeling like they're being drowned, just like being waterboarded. Also, all their personal property is destroyed, and many now keep plastic garbage bags on hand to cover themselves and store their property in for fear of these indiscriminate attacks.

Reagle has also established a protocol that any prisoner who even attempts to lash out physically at guards will be automatically placed on a "strip cell" status for up to a month. On this status, for which there is no policy authorization, the prisoner may have no property except bedding and underwear. The cell will have no electrical outlet or lighting. Essentially, he will be held in total idleness in a dark cell, which is outright illegal.

This is particularly torturing in the sweltering cells during summer and fall where the prisoner is denied his electric fan, and during winter where there is often no operating heating in GCH and the windows to the outside are left open. It requires no stretch of the imagination to recognize the literal torture of confining someone to an empty dark cell in sweltering heat or icy cold for a month.

In fact, Reagle's staff had me placed on this very status and attempted to move me into one of the unlit cells on August 25, 2020 (cell #9 on 4-D tier), when I was moved to GCH after an altercation in GP during which a guard was allegedly injured (ironically the disciplinary report I received admitted I was the one attacked, yet I was accused of assault.) I resisted going into the cell and was, after several hours, placed into a regular segregation cell, but was still put on strip cell with no property until after I was transferred to another prison on September 3, 2020.

It should be noted that during the time that I was held on strip cell numerous people on the outside complained to Indiana DOC officials that I was being denied my personal property, including some of my blood pressure meds. Many received responses that I had all my property and was making up these claims.

However, PCF officials admitted in response to a grievance I filed on September 1st about my denied property and inability to prepare a defense against the disciplinary report without it, that I was indeed on strip cell since August 25, (PCF grievance log #117257). The response, made on September 3rd after I'd been transferred that same day from PCF and signed by the PCF grievance specialist, Christina Conyers, stated:

"You were moved to GCH pending a DHB (Disciplinary Hearing Body) hearing for an alleged assault with a weapon. Due to the assault on staff and offender this resulted in strip cell status. You have been removed from strip cell status and will be allowed his (sic) property. A claim of violation of due process rights as it pertains to the DHB process must be addressed through a DHB appeal and is not subject to the grievance process."

We don't allow such cruelty to animals

What is ironic is it's readily seen as the meanest cruelty to treat animals in

the manner that human beings are being treated in U.S. prisons. There are well-funded animal humane societies, rescue organizations, fundraisers, and television shows dedicated to protecting domestic animals from confinement in unlighted idle pens, being water hosed, and exposed to extreme temperatures.

But it's fine for government officials to do the same to imprisoned human beings who are disproportionately people of color.

In fact, the U.S. military refined such abuses at its secret bases and one of its students (certainly not its only one) has obviously brought these sadistic mindsets and methods home to employ against defenseless people caged in U.S. prisons.

Where indeed are the well-funded prisoner humane societies, rescue organizations, fundraisers, and television shows dedicated to exposing and stopping these abuses of people caged like animals in U.S. prisons?

Write to Kevin "Rashid" Johnson:

Kevin Johnson #264847

Wabash Valley Correctional Facility

6908 S. Old U.S. HWY 41, P.O. Box 500

Carlisle, IN 47838

1 This history of torture and the use of Gitmo as a torture lab, and methods developed there being employed at Abu Ghraib was exposed and extensively documented by professor Alfred McCoy in his book, *A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation from the Cold War to the War on Terror*.

Psychological Impact of Solitary Confinement

BY BRYANT ARROYO

The following is a slightly edited commentary recorded for “Voices From the Inside” by PrisonRadio.org.

The brain and nervous system, or “the mind,” cannot function normally without stimulation. Neither can it function normally when given too much stimulus. The brain and the nervous system must be maintained in a “steady state.” A healthy mind is a product of interaction between itself and other organisms.

Along with intellectual impairment, perceptual deprivation results in psychotic-like hallucinations and effective changes in extreme behavior—including extreme boredom, restlessness, irritability, anger, unrealistic fears, anxieties, depression, physical complaints and “development of a childish sense of humor, exaggerated emotional reactions, and excessive irritation by small things.”

Prisoners become “dulled from monotonous prison experiences during confinement.” (D. Schultz, *Sensory Restriction: Effects on Behavior*, 1965)

As prisoners are subjected to the newly imposed restrictions of confinement under COVID-19, it has become more difficult for us to engage in educational programs effectively. On August 13, I witnessed a prisoner packing up his property to be on parole the next day. But the effects of sensory and perceptual deprivation this prisoner exhibited remained with him even after his release.

It will be extremely difficult to adjust to the “new-norm” because our emotional and mental mechanisms are being adjusted to deprivation circumstances. Then there will be little tolerance for the myriad of sensory input in

normal environments. The prisoner’s anxiety becomes so great that he/she will seek a means to return to prison with its decreased input and routine experiences.

In the psychological sphere, cruel treatment and its results are not so obviously flagrant because mental destruction is less apparent than physical destruction. Damage to the mind is not as visible as a withered hand.

But the reality is the same: human impairment as a result of destructive treatment while in prison. When treatment in prison leads to a person’s mental impairment, by definition that treatment must be seen as cruel—truly barbaric!

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC) Administrative imposition of solitary confinement undoubtedly constitutes a form of cruel and unusual punishment under the Eighth Amendment. The distinction between “segregation” and “solitary” is often no more than mere semantics.

The detrimental effects of isolation and idleness are just as apparent in both. Isolation as a treatment is punitive, destructive, defeats the purpose of any kind of rehabilitation efforts and harkens back to medieval times. There is no justification for such treatment unless your purpose is to dehumanize and destroy my mind.

Prisoners are entitled—as a constitutional right—to fresh air, outdoor exercise, recreation and educational programs while in solitary confinement. Now, PADOC Secretary John Wetzel has minimized the five weekly phone calls to once a week and five free email vouchers to zero a week.

The underlying reason Secretary Wetzel previously provided us with both five phone calls and five free email vouchers was due to the restriction of the prison population from having contact visits.

We prisoners are being denied meaningful educational and work programs under the PADOC’s imposed Administrative Isolation Confinement.

As a result, prisoners are spending a substantial amount of time inside their cells/dormitories in absolute idleness. Such unbroken inactivity increases boredom, tension and frustration, which in turn promotes incidents of violence. The evidence reflects that idleness of this magnitude destroys the human element, internally escalating suicides, a host of medical problems, and hurts people, in turn hurting other people.

In conclusion, I’ll depart with this final thought by philosopher James Allen: “They themselves are makers of themselves by virtue of the thoughts which they choose and encourage: that the mind is the master weaver, both of the inner garment of character and the outer garment of circumstances and that, as they may have hitherto woven ignorance and pain, they may know to weave enlightenment.”

—*Workers World*, August 21, 2020

<https://www.workers.org/2020/08/50743/>



My COVID Prison

By Christopher Dye

A quarter-century in prison and this decade past now in solitary confinement is part of my integrity. As responsibility for the serious transgressions of my past, prison is not a good place no matter how well a fellow strives to do his time here.

COVID-19 is a weird, weird nemesis once it invades your body. This is the saga of my battle with a virus and a plea to friends in closing. From Coffield Prison in Texas.

As COVID-19 overwhelmed the prison where I live, I observed that guards and prisoners alike disregarded wearing masks as often as not. Even nurses wouldn't wear masks, complaining that they were "too hot" and made it difficult to talk. Prisonocracy provided everyone with masks, including two cloth versions for each prisoner. I'd "modified" my masks to better fit my face and added a big happy face to each one. I was the only prisoner who always wore a mask outside the cell on my housing line of forty-two fellows. I'm also older than most pris-

oners and respiratory illness frightens me. I trot eight kilometers a few times a week and do a daily exercise program to maintain better-than-average physical conditioning, because prison is not a place to expect much help if one gets sick. That physical conditioning is a thing of the past now.

Every prisoner was offered two COVID-19 tests. June 4 and July 6 were my test dates. Most prisoners did the testing, although some refused. No housing changes or other repercussions came with refusal.

Coffield has done two separate precautionary lockdowns. The first was from May 5 until May 10 after a prisoner had tested positive at an outside hospital. The second, started on June 17, has "restarted" with each new case confirmed numerous times, and remains in effect as I write this on July 21—with no end in sight.

Lockdown is the best way a prison administration can try minimizing a communicable disease outbreak in an unsafe environment that doesn't allow

for social distancing. A lockdown nonetheless creates challenges of its own after a certain amount of time.

July 12: I had an earache, sore throat, and slight fever. Since cells here are triple-digit incubators all summer long, I don't recognize a fever as such unless it lingers once the cell cools in the evening. This fever didn't fade, but it wasn't too bad for a few days in the beginning.

July 14: A prisoner three cells away from me was one of several notified that their July 6 tests had been confirmed positive.

July 15: Coffield had 752 confirmed positive cases, according to the *Texas Tribune*. Almost 20 percent of the prison population in Texas' largest prison. I wasn't nor would I ever be included in the numbers since my tests had both been negative.

July 16: COVID-19 and I went to war. An old killer stumbling through a practice of non-violence for years now and a new killer with hundreds-of-thousands of bodies already on the sidewalk in its campaign of mass destruction. Even as I engaged the battle, I wondered what would winning really be? A virus isn't a living entity. The only thing we could fight over was my life. In that regard, ultimate stakes.

Flaring symptoms

The fever flared suddenly and raged like a wildfire for the duration of the conflict. My body burned constantly and yet I never produced even a drop of perspiration. I'd drink sixty ounces of water several times each day and neither sweat nor pee. Gallons of water intake wouldn't relieve my feeling dehydrated. Weird, weird scenario. (I remain convinced the water ultimately saved my life.)

My senses of taste and smell disappeared completely. Eyesight, hearing, and equilibrium crashed soon thereaf-



ter. I couldn't breathe except in desperate gasps as my lungs largely ceased to function. Something like a vise under my sternum tightened and locked until I was no longer fighting as much as I was just waiting for the end. COVID-19 winning every round in every way. Decisively!

Death would have been a relief. I lingered in misery. A Quaker prays. A stubborn fool refuses to surrender. Those would remain my battle strategy. As COVID-19 continued to torture me, every joint and muscle in my body hurt. Standing up became a precarious exercise far beyond the vertigo I've lived with for a lifetime. Falling down in a cage on concrete and steel soon left me battered and bruised. A few attempts would at least land me on the toilet facing the sink to fill and drain a water bottle a few times. Otherwise, I existed entirely on the floor as COVID-19 kicked the life out of me.

Two sick call requests I'd submitted early into the ordeal haven't garnered a reply. Nurses had stopped coming onto the housing lines except to deliver medications ordered and abruptly leave. Or when a medical emergency broadcast on the radios required them to show up somewhere. Guards started doing counts by tapping on cell doors, and if a fellow showed any sign of movement the guard moved to the next cell. A few prisoners died, including one on the housing line next to mine.

Fever deliriums became a source of relief and amusement from my miserable state. For a while, my cell was a spacecraft orbiting too close to the sun. I couldn't steer the capsule away from the heat.

Guards I enjoy good rapport with would offer encouragement. "Hang in there, Quaker," "Fight, brother, you can beat this." One peered into my cell and queried, "Man, are you going to live?" I laughed. "Do I look like I have any f-ing answers right now?" COVID-19 couldn't beat my dark sense of

humor, at least. It might sound crazy, but that became an important encouragement for me in a war I was clearly losing. Laughing at COVID-19 and how it was wreaking havoc on me became an actual weapon. If this virus was going to kill me, I became determined to laugh in its face until the Elders came for me.

Amazon delivers anything, anywhere to anyone, but it can't get a steering gear repair kit to the hot side of the sun. Maybe the drones melt trying to get there. Or else they're intelligent enough to avoid this burn zone entirely. I'd sure like to try rebuilding the steering gear, though. As Doris Day would say, "*Que sera, sera.*"

**Coffield had 752
confirmed positive cases,
according to the *Texas
Tribune*. Almost 20
percent of the prison
population in Texas'
largest prison.**

The steering wheel wobbled completely loose in my hands. I held it momentarily. A sense of doom settled in, I released it and watched it drift casually around the capsule.

"Okay, God, I'm done. I'm a Quaker. I don't even know how to be a warrior anymore. COVID-19 wins. Whatever, you drive. I'm just going to stare out the window and enjoy the scenery. You let me rejoin humanity after I'd been a monster, God. Creation and evolution are both beautiful! It's been a wild ride. Thank you!"

The spacecraft crashed or melted. It's nowhere to be seen. I wake up in a swamp. On Mercury. Science can figure that out eventually. My body feels like it took the full impact of the crash. I'm sprawled face down in a swamp.

That really stinks! Wait a minute, a swamp on Mercury looks just like a prison cell in Texas.

July 26: I'm sweating! Both the sheet that I sleep on and the concrete beneath it are soaked in a small lake of perspiration. My equilibrium is still off, but I stand and stagger my way to the sink. I drink 60 ounces of water like a famished camel on a desert odyssey. I turn back towards the front of the cell. Time out! I steer to the toilet and stand there peeing like a stallion.

I'm quite ill, but I feel much better than I did. The fever is essentially where it was in the beginning and I have a few commissary aspirin packets left. My taste, smell, eyesight, hearing, carpal tunnel, cognition, and equilibrium remain noticeably affected. For how long? Sweating and peeing are nice, though.

Did COVID-19 win? No. Did I win? I'm just glad to be alive.

Plea one. COVID-19 is serious! It can hurt you to a point where you'd accept death just for relief. It can kill you.

Please wear your masks, wash your hands, and practice all reasonable precautions. Any alleged leader who says precautions are unnecessary is a fool, a selfish soul, or worse. Ignore that nonsense! Be blessed, be safe.

Plea two. We stand at the precipice of advancing the light of equality in many ways right now. Us versus them is not how we win, it's the problem itself. We must stand together and demand systemic change in the interest of equality for one and all. We must stand together until that change happens. Now is the time, friends. Stand as one humanity, please.

Write to:

Christopher Dye, 805217

2661 FM 2054

Tennessee Colony, Texas 75884

(No adhesive labels, white stationary only.)

History, Great Britain, and Julian Assange

BY CLIFFORD D. CONNER

Below are comments made at a September 8, 2020 press conference in front of the British consulate in New York City. Conner is an historian and author of Jean Paul Marat: Tribune of the French Revolution and The Tragedy of American Science: From Truman to Trump. The court in Britain is holding hearings on the Trump administration's request to have Julian Assange, the Australian editor, publisher and founder of WikiLeaks, extradited. Assange would be tried in a Virginia court on 17 counts of espionage and one count of conspiracy to commit a computer crime. If convicted, he could face up to 175 years in prison.

In 2010 Assange had the audacity to post a video showing a U.S. Apache helicopter indiscriminately murdering a dozen civilians and two Reuters' journalists in the streets of Baghdad.

Daniel Ellsberg, the Pentagon Papers whistleblower, testified in court on September 16 that Assange could not receive a fair trial in the United States. When he pointed out that the Collateral Murder video was clearly a war crime, the prosecution maintained that Assange was not wanted by Washington for it but for publishing documents without redact-

ing names. Ellsberg pointed out that when he leaked the Pentagon Papers, he did not redact a single name.

Assange's lawyer has since informed the London court that in 2017 former Republican U.S. Representative Dana Rohrabacher and Charles Johnson, a far-right political activist, relayed Trump's offer to pardon Assange if he provided the source for the hacking of Democratic National Committee emails. This was described to Assange as a "win-win" situation for all involved.

History will certainly absolve Julian Assange, and it certainly will not absolve his persecutors.

A National Committee to Defend Assange and Civil Liberties, chaired by Noam Chomsky, Daniel Ellsberg, and Alice Walker has been set up. For further information, go to: www.facebook.com/CommitteeToDefendJulianAssange. The press conference was organized by the New York City Free Assange Committee: NYCFreeAssange.org

—Dianne Feeley for *The Editors*,
Against the Current

Comments by Clifford D. Conner

I am here at the British Consulate today to protest the incarceration and mistreatment of Julian Assange in Belmarsh Prison in Great Britain, to demand that you immediately release him, and above all, to demand that you NOT extradite Julian Assange to the United States.

As a historian who has written extensively on the case of the most persecuted journalist of the 18th century, Jean Paul Marat, I am in a position to make historical comparisons, and in my judgment, Julian Assange is both the most unjustly persecuted journalist of the 21st century and arguably the most important journalist of the 21st century.

Julian Assange is being hounded and harassed and threatened with life in prison by the United States government because he dared to publish the truth about American war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan for the whole world to see. This persecution of Julian Assange is an assault on the fundamental principles of journalistic freedom.

The sociopathic Donald Trump and his accomplice, Attorney General William Barr, are demanding that you deliver Assange to them to face false charges of espionage. Every honest observer in the world recognizes Trump and Barr as utterly incapable of acting in good faith. If they succeed in suppressing Julian Assange's right to publish, it will be a devastating precedent for journalists and publishers of news everywhere—and above all, for the general public, who will lose access to the information necessary to maintaining a democratic society.

If you allow yourselves to become co-conspirators in this crime, History will not look kindly on Great Britain for that.



Julian Assange



Last November, more than 60 doctors from all over the world wrote an open letter to the British government saying that Julian Assange’s health was so bad that he could die if he weren’t moved from Belmarsh Prison, where he was being held, to a hospital, immediately. Your government chose to ignore that letter and he was not hospitalized, then or later. History will not look kindly on Great Britain for that.

Of all crimes against humanity, the most unforgivable is torture. No nation that perpetrates torture has the right to call itself civilized. United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, Nils Melzer, has unequivocally characterized Julian Assange’s treatment in Belmarsh Prison as torture. History will neither forget nor forgive that terrible moral transgression.

Furthermore, the exposure of the widespread use of torture by the United States military and the CIA at Abu Ghraib in Iraq, at Guantánamo Bay, and at so-called “black sites” all over the world, absolutely disqualifies the United States from sitting in moral judgement of anybody. If you deliver Julian Assange into the hands of torturers, history will not look kindly on Great Britain for that.

So, I join together today with human rights advocates and advocates of journalistic freedom around the world.

I stand with the Committee to Protect Journalists, which declared: “For the sake of press freedom, Julian Assange must be defended.”

I stand with the Center for Constitutional Rights, which said that the attempt to prosecute Julian Assange is “a worrying step on the slippery

slope to punishing any journalist the Trump administration chooses to deride as ‘fake news’.”

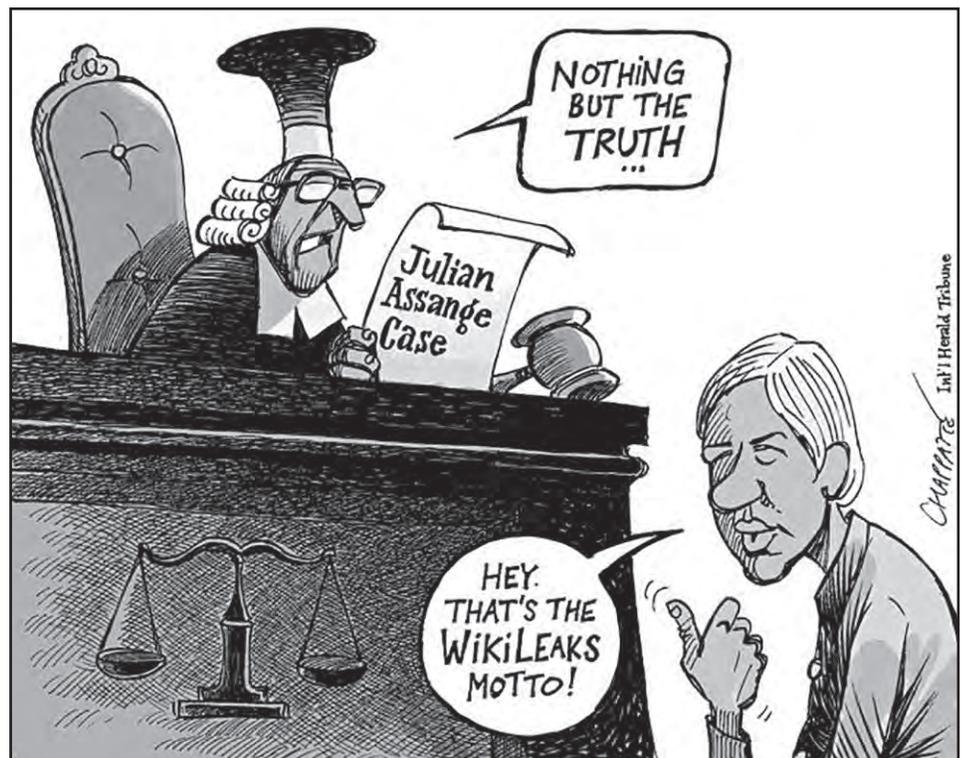
And I stand with the ACLU, which said: “Any prosecution by the United States of Mr. Assange for *WikiLeaks*’ publishing operations would be unprecedented and unconstitutional and would open the door to criminal investigations of other news organizations.”

History will not only record the names of the countries that collaborate in this travesty of justice, but also the names of the individuals—the judges, the prosecutors, the diplomats, and the politicians—who aid and abet the crime. If you, as individuals, choose to ally yourselves with the likes of Donald Trump and William Barr, be prepared for your names to be chained to theirs in infamy, in perpetuity.

History will certainly absolve Julian Assange, and it certainly will not absolve his persecutors.

—Against the Current, November/December 2020

<https://againstthecurrent.org/history-great-britain-and-julian-assange/>



Julian's Run

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL



Mumia Abu-Jamal

First things first: Who is Julian Assange? And secondarily, why is his struggle of import to any of us?

Assange, born in Townsville, Queensland, Australia in 1971, is the founder of the global online media service, known as *WikiLeaks*. As such, Assange is a journalist. His group has been a blockbuster, capturing and passing on files and internal memos of governments all around the world.

For this, he has been hounded, targeted and jailed, now serving over 50 weeks for allegedly jumping bail in Britain, to avoid extradition to the U.S., which seeks to imprison him for violating the U.S. Espionage Act.

As shown earlier, Assange, born into a British Commonwealth State (Australia) is not an American, and owes it no fealty. But the U.S. Empire rules the world, not just U.S. territory.

On July 25, 2010, *WikiLeaks* published on its website some 75,000 documents on the Afghanistan War. These documents presented a damning portrait of the U.S. Empire at work. But when you attack the Empire, the Empire strikes back.

For publishing documents that embarrassed the United States, Assange, if convicted, faces over a century, in fact 175 years in prison. And, as a foreign national, the First Amendment to the Constitution does not provide a defense.

So, wait: The U.S. can invoke its criminal law for use worldwide; but the Bill of Rights doesn't obtain to foreigners? That sounds fair...

The Iraq and Afghanistan wars are now widely considered the biggest blunders in U.S. foreign policy. For the wars of regime change floated into being on a raft of lies and misinformation. (Quick! Remember "weapons of mass destruction?") How many thousands—and tens-of-thousands—died based on an American mirage.

Julian Assange is a prisoner of a political vendetta. Is he thus a political prisoner? You damn betcha.

Assange, through his journalistic revelations, helped awaken generations to the elements of Imperial wars. He wasn't spying. Spies work for governments and militaries. Journalists work to inform people; to broaden the reaches of democracy.

In the not-so-recent past, the U.S. Empire used its tools of repression to silence its opponents—even when they were allegedly U.S. citizens.

The targeting of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg comes to mind; they were called spies, and subsequently electrocuted. The cases for Sacco and Venzetti, immigrants from Italy, comes to mind. The targeting of the New York branch

of the Black Panther Party and the trial of the Panther 21, on trumped-up charges, also comes to memory.

Julian Assange is a prisoner of a political vendetta. Is he thus a political prisoner? You damn betcha.

—*Prisonradio.org*, September 28, 2020

The "Populism" of Pandemics

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

For months now, the nation has been battered by the ravages of Covid19: the coronavirus.

With millions of people infected, and over 190,000 people now dead, it now turns out that from the very start, the U.S. President knew a great deal about Covid19.

How?

China's leader, XI Jinping, told him everything—in February 2020.

For months now, President Trump called the emerging pandemic a "hoax," and heatedly blamed China and its leader, for not informing Americans about the disease.

He called it "Kung Flu"—remember?

Instead, it burned across the country like wildfire, leaving sickness and death in its wake.

Not since the influenza epidemic of 1918 has the nation seen such loss of life.

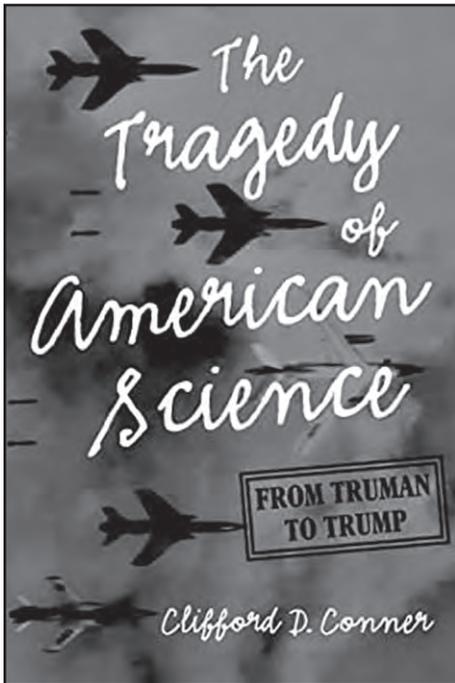
And it's not over; COVID-19 continues to stalk the land, causing death and destruction all over the world.

Sad to say, it ain't over—by a long shot.

Write to Mumia at:
Smart Communications/PADOC
Mumia Abu-Jamal #AM-8335
SCI Mahanoy
P.O. Box 33028
St. Petersburg, FL 33733

The Tragedy of American Science

A REVIEW BY NAYVIN GORDON, M.D.



The Tragedy of American Science: From Truman to Trump, By Clifford D. Conner

I highly recommend this short book, *The Tragedy of American Science: From Truman to Trump*, by Clifford D. Conner, 2020. This is an easy to read, concise and well documented analysis of how U.S. science has been affected by the capitalist economy since World War Two. The author does not hold back from placing the origin of the tragedy at the feet of U.S. Imperialism. This is a must read for everyone starting with high school students. The book is broken into three major sections.

Section one: the privatization of science

This section clearly demonstrates that the corporatization and privatization of science is designed to serve private profit not public interests. The profit driven system involves scientific denial, deception, manipulation, fraud and collusion. Clear documentation is

presented on how the financial elite, the one percent, fund and create front groups, and think tanks. For example, the Koch brothers, in their need to deny the science of global warming, spent over \$100 million on such groups as the Cato Institute and the Heritage Foundation. The book is rich with clear well documented examples from the food industry to the pharmaceutical industry, from tobacco to lead, from nuclear power to contaminated water.

Replacing the market economy with a socialist planned economy must be accompanied by democratic control of production and political life.

The author presents excellent documentation of crimes against the working class and the environment. An important part of the book clearly reveals how the billionaires' money has also corrupted academic research to create "the Academic Industrial Complex." The billionaires have given millions of dollars to think tanks whose propaganda floods the mass media and academia with science deniers to deceive and manipulate the people.

Corporate money creates mass propaganda, "founded on dishonesty and ignoble lies." In the words of the famous scientist Naomi Oreskes, "we have broad evidence that the interests of funders often influence the work done" by scientists.¹ Furthermore, this influence of money combined with

conflicts of interest has a corrupting effect on governmental agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In the words of a recent *New York Times* editorial, "The Food and Drug Administration is no stranger to political interference. Special interests have played as much of a role as actual data in the approval of questionable cancer drugs and faulty medical devices for almost as long as the agency has existed."²

Section two: the militarization of science

Here the author details the "militarization of American science." After World War Two the U.S. secretly hired Nazi scientists to help build a permanent military economy, assisted both overtly and covertly by the RAND think tank. The U.S. government subsidizes the military industrial complex by providing more than half of all discretionary federal spending on a war machine, which amounts to over \$1 Trillion a year, or \$40,000 a second. This massive spending is designed to maintain U.S. imperialism's domination over the planet. This deadly spending is described in the book as "science harnessed to the Chariot of Destruction." An exhaustive presentation of the ways in which science has been militarized to increase its ability to cause death and destruction is detailed: From Hydrogen Bombs, to missiles, from non-nuclear technologies of death, to the latest developments in autonomous weapons, and cyber warfare.

This section concludes with the history of the post-World War II CIA's continued involvement in Nazi torture experimentation on humans. Evidence of complicity in torture by the American

Psychology Association (APA) is revealed in a 2015 report. International geopolitical tensions and conflicts are increasing the possibility for war. The U.S. Empire is encountering more competition from countries around the world. In response the U.S. military is expanding its ability to militarize space, and use newer nuclear weapons.

Section three: science for human needs

The final section concerns the important question: “Is a science for human needs possible?” Here is a discussion regarding replacing capitalism with a system motivated by human needs rather than private profits. The author discusses the Russian, Chinese and Cuban Socialist revolutions and their effects on science and social needs. The strengths and weaknesses of these revolutions are analyzed. I would have preferred more examples of the health and scientific successes resulting from these revolutions, particularly during the first few decades after the takeover of power, when the working and peasant classes had a dominant influence over political and economic decisions. For example, China was the first country in the world to conquer

syphilis and synthesize human insulin. China also eliminated the widespread parasitic disease schistosomiasis, and freed millions from drug addiction. As a result of socialist health science, Cuba has the lowest infant mortality rate in the Western Hemisphere. More examples of the success of these revolutions would have made this section richer.

We face “Socialism or Dystopia”—science for life and public health or for war and destruction.

The chapter ends with a list of essential elements the author believes are needed for the public to control and regain scientific integrity. Replacing the market economy with a socialist planned economy must be accompanied by democratic control of production and political life. The historical experience of post capitalist societies gives relevant historical evidence which “indicates that science motivated by human needs rather than private profit is not a utopian fantasy but a demonstrable reality.”

The concluding chapter concerning the Covid-19 pandemic explains how “the assault on science has put us all at risk.” Failure to heed the years of warnings from the World Health Organization (WHO) and scientific experts about the increasing risk for a new pandemic threatens us all.

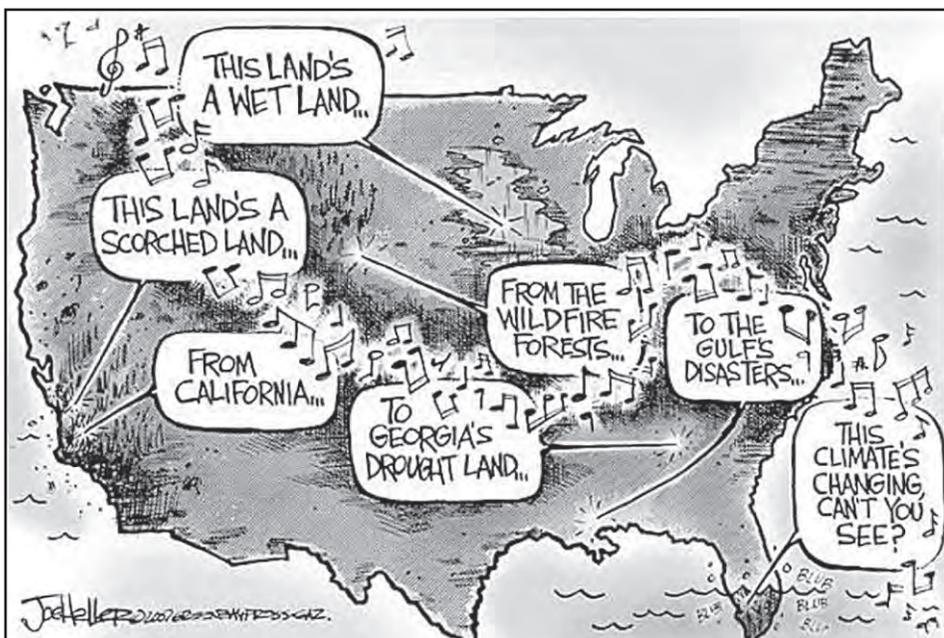
The author explains how the economic system created the breeding ground for new viral epidemics, and how the for-profit healthcare system has resulted in massive cuts and collapse of the public health infrastructure over the last four decades.

The greed of the capitalist system set the stage for the Covid-19 pandemic. The lies and persistent attacks on the science of infectious disease is part of the deliberate plan to allow the virus to spread through the country, sickening and killing millions. The relentless defunding of oversight and regulations of the CDC, EPA and FDA is also detailed.

The capitalist system is at the root of all our social problems. We face “Socialism or Dystopia”—science for life and public health or for war and destruction.

The need to replace the global economic system of competition and exploitation that serves private interest with one that is cooperative and serves the public interest, the common good, and social needs is more urgent than ever. Our lives depend on taking action now to fight for an egalitarian world. This book is an excellent reference and a must read for all.

—September 23, 2020



1 “Tainted Money Taints Research,” *Scientific American*, September 2020,

2 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/24/opinion/trump-fda-coronavirus.html?auth=linked-google>

Dear *Socialist Viewpoint*,

I really want to say, I'm very grateful to be alive, and have 'hella love in my heart and soul for people in general and appreciate the community here and recognize respect and acknowledge the revolutionary communities and community activists fighting for change and justice.

I wish I could participate in every action and movement to uplift people and tear down oppression. Also, being considered an essential worker I'm exposed to a lot, between COVID-19 and toxic materials at work there's a lot of days I don't feel well, not having a spleen makes me high risk.

I still haven't received any unemployment insurance for the month-and-a-half I was off, so I have no choice but to get up every day before sunrise and hit the ground running. This makes it very difficult for me to relax because I live in survival mode. And today I feel sick. I hope it's not this shit going around, it could be from the toxic materials at work, either way on the day I could either be relaxing or demonstrating, instead, I'm inside trying to recoup to do it all again next week.

This is just another example of how the system of capitalism forces people to place the value of material wealth over the value of life itself. I'm just venting and appreciating people for the work and sacrifices it takes to take care of ourselves and families. I just wish some day we, as a society, could learn to cooperate and build each other up instead of competing and tearing each other down.

The reason it's this way is to keep the people from realizing the power in unity so we will keep participating in our own exploitation/destruction under the illusion that we can't do anything about it.

Together we are not powerless. We are the driving force of society.

Recognize that we control the means of production and deserve to live fruitfully not just merely exist.

We don't need a ruling class exploiting and oppressing us. What we need is liberation from capitalism. When we work towards a real solution, symptoms of a false sense of power like racism, sexism, child exploitation, pollution and poverty will be under light of exposure to properly address.

It's all tied together and derives from the capitalist quest for more. This is what we addicts refer to as the disease of addiction. And we do recover.

Peace and Power to the People!

—Johnny Gould, Follow @tandi-no415 on Instagram

Dear Editors,

The making of the virus named Pharaoh Trump

Let's make America white again. Oh! I mean great again. Black people, whether they admit it or not, believe they don't deserve to be treated equal with whites.

The proof: Look how many years we have accepted being treated like shit, begging for people to recognize our humanity. The truth is, no one can take that humanity from us. You have to give that up. But first you have to recognize that you deserve respect like any other human being. But white people—not all—

but enough to sell the sickness, have been taught to equate success with money or their status in life, the need to feel you are top human in life.

I know they will put this off on being racist. But, how else can anyone explain the election of the "virus" named Trump? And now, like all plagues, the virus has white-Black and other—no special color and all of us are infected now.

One of the hardest things to admit when you make a mistake as big as this one is to look inward and say, "I fucked up!" Everyone around this "virus" Trump has lost their self-respect. Look at them! Everyone around this virus has lost any and all credibility, if they had any to begin with. Even religious leaders bow to the virus like it's God. The virus Trump has made cowards out of most of Americans and even worse, the scab has been pulled off for all to see, and they still bow down to Pharaoh Trump, the virus.

—Major Tillery

Write to Major Tillery at:
Smart Communications/PADOC
Major Tillery AM-9786
SCI Chester
P.O. Box 33028
St. Petersburg, FL 33733



SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

Where to find us:

www.socialistviewpoint.org

info@socialistviewpoint.org

(415) 824-8730

EDITORS

Carole Seligman, Bonnie Weinstein

GRAPHIC & WEB DESIGN

Mykael

BUSINESS MANAGER

Carole Seligman

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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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Jalil Muntaqim Released

Former Black Panther, Jalil Muntaqim, had been in prison for more than 50 years

BY ED PILKINGTON

We are thrilled to announce that former Black Panther and respected and beloved elder, Jalil Muntaqim, was released on October 7, 2020 surpassing fifty years in prison since this article was written.

A former Black Panther who has been in prison for almost half-a-century has finally won his decades-long battle for freedom after a New York parole board ordered his release.

Jalil Muntaqim, AKA Anthony Bottom, has been in unbroken custody for more than 49 years having been arrested and later convicted of the 1971 murders of two police officers in Harlem. Under the terms of his parole he must be released from the maximum-security Sullivan correctional facility in upstate New York by October 20.

At a hearing earlier this month—at least his tenth such panel appearance since he became eligible for parole in 1998—Muntaqim expressed his remorse for the killings of Joseph Piagentini and Waverly Jones. The officers had answered what they believed was a domestic dispute call but were then ambushed and shot.

The two parole commissioners on the panel accepted his expression of remorse as genuine.

Muntaqim, 68, was the subject of a *Guardian* profile in 2018 as part of a series that looked at Black liberation radicals incarcerated for decades in the wake of political and racial turbulence in the late 1960s and '70s. At the time of the Harlem incident he was a clandestine member of the underground wing of the Panthers, the Black Liberation Army.

In the course of a three-hour filmed interview with the *Guardian* in Sullivan, Muntaqim described how he was only 18-years-old when he signed up for the

Panthers, quickly going on to join the armed and clandestine BLA. He said that in his many years behind bars he had matured from the revolutionary position that he adopted in 1971, though he remained committed to the cause of racial equality and justice.

“I now take the ‘r’ off the word and make it ‘evolutionary,’” he said. “Revolution for me is the evolutionary process of building a higher level of consciousness in society at large. I’m an evolutionary revolutionary.”

Muntaqim’s release has been virulently opposed by the New York police union, the PBA, and by the widow of one of the murdered police officers, Diane Piagentini. In a statement she said: “We are heartbroken to see another of Joe’s killer set free by politics. But more than anything else, we are angry.”

Muntaqim was one of a dwindling number of Black liberation radicals who were incarcerated during the heyday of the Black Panthers and who have been locked up ever since. Edward Poindexter,

convicted of the killing of a police officer in Omaha, Nebraska, marked his 50 years in a prison cell in August.

Others have been released on parole in recent months. The surviving seven members of the Move 9, Black liberation and environmental radicals from Philadelphia who were arrested following a police siege of their communal home in 1978, were all released on parole over the past two years.

One of the seven, Delbert Africa, died in June just five months after he was set free.

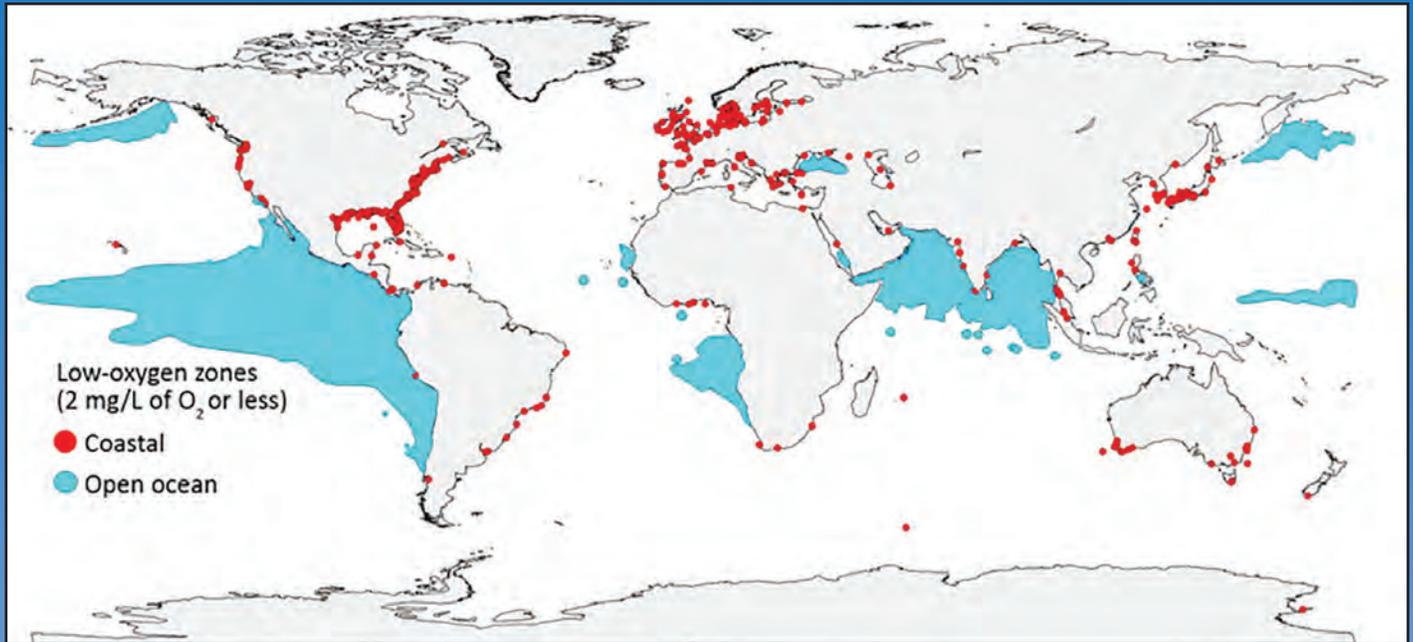
Muntaqim had two co-defendants at trial for the killings of the police officers in Harlem, when they each received sentences of 25 years to life. Albert “Nuh” Washington died in prison in 2000, and Herman Bell was released on parole in April 2018.

—*The Guardian*, September 24, 2020

<https://news.yahoo.com/former-Black-panther-released-more-122912231.html>



Jalil Muntaqim, AKA Anthony Bottom was in prison for more than 50 years.



Red dots mark coastal “dead zones” where oxygen has plummeted to two milligrams per liter or less. Blue areas in the open ocean have the same low-oxygen levels. Source: GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel. Read *The Ocean is Losing Its Breath* on page 44.



Artwork by Kevin “Rashid” Johnson Read *How the Pigs Abuse “Gang” Labels* on page 20.

On the Front Cover: Climate protest in Australia, 2020. ►
Read *Cruelty of Capitalism* on page 4.



The famous wall dividing Charborough House and its estate from the open countryside beyond. CREDIT: John Palmer/CC
Read *A Very English Theft* on page 28.



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.”