

# Nobody's Fooled by Big Pharma!

Pharmaceutical Corporations Targeted World Wide



poster art by Ralfka Gonzalez

## Activists around the world

demonstrated against the devastations of Big Pharma

• April 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 •

In the corporate backwater of Foster City California,  
the **Oasis Clinic of Oakland** and the  
**Labor Action Committee To Free Mumia Abu-Jamal**  
joined them to protest the outrageous price gouging  
of Gilead Sciences, manufacturer of the cure for Hepatitis-C...



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## Pharmaceutical Corporations Targeted World Wide

The Oasis Clinic, a Hepatitis-C facility in Oakland CA, and the Labor Action Committee To Free Mumia Abu-Jamal (LAC) staged a demonstration on Gilead Sciences' front doorstep, at its headquarters in the Silicon Valley corporate haven of Foster City California, at 12 noon on April 1st, 2016.

### This was no "April Fools" event!

Big Pharma corporations have been raising prices of essential medications to outrageous levels in recent years, and Gilead Sciences is right down there with the worst of them. Gilead is the manufacturer--but not the original developer--of the drug Harvoni, which is a vast improvement over previous treatments for Hepatitis-C (HCV). One pill per day for 8 to 12 or so weeks is a cure (in 95 percent of cases) for the potentially deadly HCV virus. But Gilead charges \$1,000 per pill, or \$75,000 to \$84,000 or more for a full course of treatment!

A report on our Foster City demonstration appears in the April 7th edition of the Bay Area Reporter, a San Francisco-based weekly. See: <http://ebar.com/news/article.php?sec=news&article=71446>.

### A Die-In At Gilead's Door



Die-in at Gilead HQ: "Gilead's stocks are rising,-- Hep-C patients are dying"



US: Protestors at Gilead's Corporate HQ, April 1st.  
- Photo by Jane Cleland, Bay Area Reporter

This price-gouging--at least 100 times above the actual cost of production--has threatened death to prisoners, veterans and other poor and working people who cannot afford it, or whose insurers deny it due to its high cost. Gilead's price is exacerbating a financial crisis in Medicare and Medicaid, as well as a funding logjam at the Veterans' Administration, and prison administrations across the US. Several of our number--their faces painted yellow to denote the deadly effects of untreated Hep-C--conducted a die-in in front of Gilead's HQ. We

chanted “Public Health, Not Corporate Wealth,” and “Gilead’s Stocks are Rising--Hep-C Patients are Dying!”

### Demonstrations Around the World

Our demonstration was timed to join up with actions by Act-Up affiliates and other LGBT activists against Big Pharma in Paris, London, New York and numerous other cities around the world on the same date.

The Labor Action Committee was joined in this effort by Doro Chiba, the militant Japanese railway workers union, which demonstrated against these sky-high prices at Gilead’s sky-scraper offices in Tokyo.

#### Gilead’s Concern Is Their Profits

Gilead’s profits topped \$18 Billion in 2015, and it’s stock is now considered an “undervalued” investment by some analysts; so, from a capitalist viewpoint, Gilead’s pricing extravaganza is a smashing success. Not so much for the rest of us, however. The interests of big capital inevitably conflict with those of the working masses. This should come as no surprise to anyone.



Tokyo: Responding to a call from the LAC, Doro Chiba, a militant Japanese railway union, demonstrated at Gilead offices on April 1st, against high drug prices, and for health care for prisoners such as Mumia Abu-Jamal

As Jack Heyman of the LAC and ILWU (retired), and the chief organizer of our protest mentioned, Gilead purchased the company Pharmasett in order to obtain the rights to what is now known as Harvoni, the signature cure for HCV. Harvoni was originally developed under the name Sofosbuvir by

Dr. Michael J Sofia. Having purchased his company and the rights to the drug, Gilead in true capitalist practice more than doubled the projected price, in order to re-coup their 11 billion dollar investment. This alone is a devastating crime of capitalism: the financial interests always have the upper hand.

But having paid off their initial investment, Gilead now continues their pay or die policy, why? Because they can. The US is the only developed capitalist country that has no price controls on



Demonstrators march up to Gilead Science’s front door in Foster City

essential medications. In this capitalist paradise, their bottom line comes first, and everyone else can just get in line.

Gilead tries to lay the blame on insurers for the lack of accessibility of the drug, but, as Dr Diana Sylvestre of the Oasis Clinic points out, “insurers do not print money.” Corporate suppliers like Gilead, together with insurance companies and government agencies such as prison and veteran administrations are all pointing their fingers at each other while increasing numbers of working people and poor are being forced to go without adequate treatment for this deadly disease.

### **Prisoners Are Denied Treatment**

We called attention to the plight of the growing number of prisoners in the US with Hepatitis-C, such as innocent political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, who are being denied the curative treatment Harvoni. According to the US Center for Disease Control (CDC), of the 2.2 million inmates of jails and prisons in the US, some one third, or over 730,000 prisoners are infected with Hepatitis-C! This is an important part of a now exploding epidemic, which derives from the fact that the Hepatitis-C virus has a long incubation period.

All those who used dirty needles in the 1970’s or 80’s, or who got tattoos back then, or who had blood transfusions which were tainted with the virus, are just now coming down with this dreadful disease. This clearly effects a huge proportion of prisoners, mostly people of color, as well as veterans and other working and poor people.



Mumia Abu-Jamal is an internationally renowned political prisoner and journalist. Like most other Hep-C infected prisoners in the US, he is being denied medically-recognized treatment for the disease.

### **Mumia Abu-Jamal: Framed, Infected and Mistreated**

Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther and award-winning journalist who writes social/political commentaries from behind bars, was framed for a crime he didn’t commit. He is one of the foremost political prisoners in the world. He was infected with HCV in a blood transfusion he received in a hospital in 1981 after having been shot by a cop at a crime scene in which a cop was shot by someone before Mumia arrived on the scene. Another man, Arnold Beverly, confessed to the crime, but his evidence, like so many other indications which prove Mumia’s innocence, has been ignored or summarily dismissed by the courts. Having served years on death row, Mumia is now doing life without the possibility of parole at a super-max prison in Western Pennsylvania.

Having been infected by the blood transfusion, Mumia now, like so many others, has come down with several serious symptoms derived from HCV, such as diabetes and a horrific skin malady. While being treated for some of these symptoms--and that only after mass protests had insisted on it--Mumia is still

refused the medically recognized treatment for Hep-C, even though his HCV infection has now been diagnosed and is known to be the root cause of all the afflictions from which he suffers.

The LAC has organized protest letters from trade unions around the world to be sent to Pennsylvania state officials demanding treatment by Harvoni, as well as his immediate release from prison.

### **Mumia's Case, and the Secret Protocol**

Mumia's court case demanding proper treatment brought to light a hitherto secret protocol by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) which prohibits treatment for HCV for prisoners until they are at death's door, if then! The DOC's lame excuse for not providing him the cure: Its cost! A decision on this case is expected in April 2016. There is also another case on behalf of all prisoners with HCV in Pennsylvania. Mumia supports that case, and sees his appeal as setting a precedent for all prisoners lacking needed medical treatment.



Demonstrators came from Oasis Clinic, Labor Action Committee To Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM), and other organizations, to protest Big Pharma & Gilead Price Gouging

Go to; <http://abolitionistlawcenter.org/2016/03/14/media-release-federal-court-to-decide-if-mumia-abu-jamal-has-right-to-hepatitis-c-treatment/> for more information on Mumia's case for proper treatment for Hep-C.

### **Big Pharma Protested at Foster City ...**

Some 40 people from various organizations, including Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM), a globe-spanning non-profit; the SF Labor Council, various unions, left organizations and gay activists joined the LAC and Oasis for this demonstration. A UAEM representative, Julia Rohrabough, came all the way from UC Davis to join us, and to speak. This was her first protest demonstration.

Other speakers included Dr Diana Sylvestre and Orlando Chavez of the Oasis Clinic, Bob Price of the Freedom Socialist Party, Stan Woods for the Peace and Freedom Party, Charles Minster of the Partisan Defense Committee, Dave Welsh from the SF Labor council and Workers World organization, Bob Wells from Oakland Teachers for Mumia, and Gerald Sanders of the Oscar Grant Committee and LAC. Jack Heyman, International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) retired and LAC, was our rally chairperson.

As we marched around and held a die-in in front of Gilead's main entrance in Foster City, security guards could be seen many yards away observing from the sidelines. As visitors or employees approached the main entrance where we were demonstrating, security guards motioned them away from us, directing them to a back entrance, so that they wouldn't have to come in contact with us. Perhaps they were afraid of a political infection from the public outrage for which Gilead hasn't yet devised a cure! When approached however, most of these people took our flyers.

## ... And Around the World



We salute the participants in the other actions called by Act-Up around the world. Activists in New York demonstrated against Big Pharma giant Pfizer Corporation, while the Yes-Men managed to fool the Washington Post into printing a fake press release that said Pfizer was

Big Pharma, the Face of Greed: Act-Up Demonstrations in New York City against Pfizer, and with a nude-in in London, inside Gilead Sciences' offices.



holding the lid on drug prices--an assertion that the real Pfizer readily denied! Hm-m.

London activists held a nude-in at Gilead in that City to protest lack of availability of a crucial HIV medication, which is deemed too expensive to be funded by the National Health Service (NHS). The NHS was originally designed to provide free health care for all, but is now unravelling due to corporate pressure for privatization, and Conservative government connivance.

Demonstrations also took place in Sydney, Johannesburg, Brasilia, and Washington DC. All of us were united in taking a stand against the rapidly increasing prices--and profits--of Big Pharma.

## Capitalism Is the Problem

Capitalism is at the heart of the problem of inadequate health care in the US, and around the world. The US--the only developed country that lacks a government plan to provide for people's right to health care--is a paradise for profiteers to thrive off of the needs of the poor and sick, Obama Care notwithstanding. And in Europe, social-democratic health-care reforms are under attack by big corporations. Putting profits before human need comes naturally in a system based on the rampant exploitation and oppression of the working and oppressed masses of the world.

We have a different idea. In Foster City, at the headquarters of Gilead Sciences, we took one small step. We said: "Health care is human right, it's for this that we will fight!"

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This report prepared by the Labor Action Committee To Free Mumia Abu-Jamal

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