

Biden's Summit on ~~Democracy~~ Hypocrisy

By Sara Flounders

With great publicity, President Joe Biden called a grand, international Summit on Democracy for Dec 9-10. This gathering, held on Zoom, was hardly more than a Washington D.C., webinar with a few hundred well-chosen invitees and a well-controlled microphone.

Biden invited 111 countries. He snubbed another 81 countries, representing more than half the world's population.

This political theater was an effort to create the appearance of a global political instrument where the U.S., as the dominant force, can claim political and moral authority to act unilaterally. Platitudes on democracy served as a cover for an increasingly aggressive military expansion. The event was scheduled during International Human Rights Day to overwhelm any real attention to human rights.

The gathering had nothing to do with democracy. Its guest list included apartheid Israel, the Philippines and Colombia. Most Asian and African countries were uninvited. But to keep the number of participating countries high, 30 countries with fewer than 1 million inhabitants were included.

There were also a series of participating

U.S. organizations, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which have orchestrated coups and U.S.-funded operations against democratically elected governments globally. Guests from the "private sector" were included but unnamed. But capitalists are the ones who really call the shots on a world scale.

The staging was to highlight the claim that the United States, as a democratic country, must and would lead the world against "authoritarian regimes." Authoritarian was the slur used to target China, Russia, Venezuela, Cuba, Iran and a significant number of countries which assert their national sovereignty against imperialist domination.

Political theater

The purpose of this event was sinister. It was to assert U.S. hegemony worldwide, by shaping a bloc or alliance directed against numerous countries the U.S. has imposed sanctions on, and especially against China.

The United Nations General Assembly so routinely votes down Washington's demands and resolutions that the U.N. is no longer as useful to impose U.S. hegemony. The corporate media simply avoids coverage of U.N. votes.

For example, when for the 29th time the U.N. General Assembly voted to end the blockade against Cuba this year, 184 countries voted to end it; only two voted for keeping the blockade, with three abstentions. Such votes humiliate U.S. ambassadors.

And the U.N. Security Council can no longer be counted on for war resolutions or sanctions votes.

Even leaders of NATO members and the imperialist countries controlling the European Union are increasingly leery of accepting U.S. unilateral actions. German, French, Italian and Spanish imperialists have their own capitalist economic interests and trade deals to pursue in a shaky world economy.

Trying to shape a bloc of countries against "authoritarianism" loses touch with world reality.

A major purpose of the Summit was to

invite and build support for U.S.-armed Taiwan as a way to threaten China. Only 14 out of 193 member countries of the U.N. recognize Taiwan, officially named Republic of China — RoC.

In the midst of this imperialist theater there was a reality check. Uninvited and U.S.-sanctioned Nicaragua announced its official recognition of People's Republic of China and its break with Taiwan.

Every world politician sitting dutifully at attention knows they face the U.S. military with 800 military bases around the world, along with aircraft carriers and 18 intelligence agencies. U.S.-led invasions, coups and drone strikes are hardly secret operations. The United States military has been engaged in wars for 225 out of the 243 years of its existence and continuously for the last 20 years until the withdrawal from Afghanistan.

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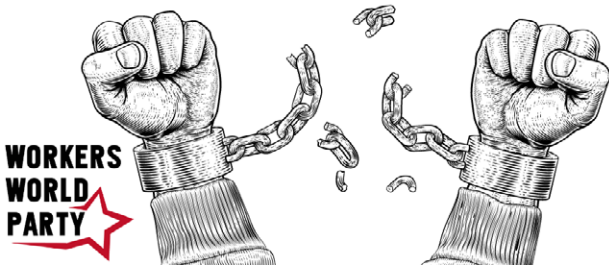
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RUSSELL 'MAROON' SHOATZ
August 23, 1943 - December 17, 2021
Prisoner of war:
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Tribute to come in a future issue.

WW COMMENTARY

Fighting Uber transphobia

By Renée Imperato

On June 1, as part of its “Pride Month” publicity campaign, Uber announced “plans” to “create a safer, more inclusive company” for transgender, nonbinary and other LGBTQ+ identifying passengers and drivers. Uber said it would allow trans and nonbinary drivers to display their real names, instead of the dead names they were assigned at birth. Uber said it would establish a \$60,000 fund to help its driver-workers cover the costs of updating their legal IDs and records. After June 1, just days later, many transgendered drivers had their accounts suspended, because the pictures they submitted did not match the original pictures they had on file, for years in some cases! Why would they match—before and after they transitioned? Whether deliberate or not, this process has amounted to almost a sort of entrapment. In mid-June, Adrian Escobedo received an in-app message saying he had submitted fraudulent documentation and was banned from driving for Uber Eats. When Escobedo asked which documents were determined to be fraudulent, he received no response. The ACLU is representing many drivers who have been impacted in this transphobic discrimination, which has caused a lack of livelihood and suffering from emotional crisis. Uber has



since reactivated Escobedo’s account. (tinyurl.com/yctj3m8v) I might add that Lyft has a similar program, which appears to work and benefit trans and nonbinary workers. Adding to this factor of online-employment access to those responsible, in an example of how “old school” is sometimes more resolvable than online access to resolution, I am a retired trans woman New York City yellow taxi driver of over 25 years. I must say, I never had this particular problem, though I did have safety concerns as a trans taxi driver at times from passengers. But if I did have an issue of recognition of my realness, together I and other trans and cis Local 3036 Union members could go face to face at the NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission on 42nd Street in person, which would greatly enhance our chances to raise hell. Online drivers do not have any such option, which is a problem in getting accessibility to resolution of problems with management. As of this date, some driver-workers like Adrian have finally received justice. But we workers need to continue this campaign to pressure all online apps to end this transphobic garbage, until our final victory. The writer is a former chairperson of New York City Taxi Drivers Union, Local 3036.

To a socialist future — Build Workers World

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Ferguson, Missouri, 2014

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Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it’s the only way forward! Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits. Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ2S+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism. The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis. The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people’s movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system. WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs. Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and

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Rally for Amazon workers! Dec. 22, New York City

By Tony Murphy
New York City

Amazon union organizing is accelerating, as Staten Island Amazon workers refile for union election. On Dec. 22 the Amazon Labor Union resubmitted its petition for a union vote at the facility, known as JFK8, to the National Labor Relations Board. Workers held a lunch-time walkout at the warehouse.

That evening Amazon workers also held a rally for union rights, gathering together their growing New York-area army of supporters at the Red Steps in New York City’s Times Square at 8 p.m.

The demand of the rally was that Amazon immediately recognize the ALU. The urgency of this demand is underscored by the heartbreaking deaths of workers at the tornado-destroyed Amazon warehouse in Edwardsville, Illinois, where bosses prevented workers from using cell phones or even leaving.

“As a matter of public health and a matter of reparations, Amazon should immediately recognize the union without a drawn-out NLRB election,” Amazon Labor Union leader Chris Smalls has stated.

Workers are calling on Amazon to bring back hazard pay, allow workers to bring cell phones into work, stop sexual harassment and stop union busting.

The needless deaths in Edwardsville underscore Amazon’s reckless profit-over-people practices, which range from forcing workers to stay on the job in extreme weather, as also happened when Hurricane Ida struck, to having more than double the average rate of warehouse injuries.

The Intercept reported Dec. 13 that

Amazon warehouses rarely have fire drills, because the bosses don’t want to take time away from production. What an example of profits-over-people: Amazon requires workers to come off the line and sit in anti-union captive audience sessions but won’t schedule lifesaving emergency drills.

Reasons to immediately recognize the ALU

The NLRB election can be skipped, because the Amazon Labor Union has already signed up thousands of Staten Island warehouse workers who want a union. Amazon could simply recognize the union now. The 2020 attempt to form a union at a Bessemer, Alabama, warehouse shows that the long drawn-out NLRB voting process is detrimental to unionization. Bosses use that period to lie, intimidate and threaten the workers into voting against the union.

Amazon can’t be trusted not to union bust. The NLRB found Amazon engaged in anti-union activities that ended up denying the mostly Black, mostly female workforce at the Bessemer warehouse the right to vote for a union. Amazon isn’t unique in its illegal behavior — one of four employers actually fire workers for trying to form a union.

Amazon workers need a union to resist the racism and gender bias of a company that has been sued multiple times by workers subjected to racist and anti-woman harassment. This behavior includes the racist treatment of ALU president Smalls after he spoke up about lack of COVID-19

safety. Another example is the placement of hundreds of Amazon’s polluting warehouses in communities of color, subjecting them to toxic exhaust emitted by the constant traffic of massive vehicles.

lifting or other repetitive motions. These are injuries that linger, sometimes for the rest of a worker’s life. The enormous volume of work intensifies injury. Ambulance responses to Amazon warehouses increase

by almost 50% in the weeks leading up to Black Friday shopping day, because of the punishing demand. (tinyurl.com/yckpypfp)

Amazon drives down prevailing wages for other workers. Because the minimum federal wage is so appallingly low at \$7.25 an hour, Amazon claims to pay decent entry wages. But the company only began to pay more than \$15 an hour in 2018. The breakneck expansion of Amazon warehouses threatens to

reduce wages in surrounding areas. One of the worst examples is in Minnesota, where real wages for warehouse workers declined 14% from 2015 to 2018, after Amazon facilities opened there. A union in Staten Island or at any Amazon facility will help keep wages higher for all workers. (tinyurl.com/2p8p32mv)

Amazon fails to protect workers from COVID-19. The company has rolled back the few coronavirus safety protocols put in place in 2020 and has hidden pandemic-related information from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration by reporting that of 20,000 infections in its workforce, only 27 occurred on the job.

Amazon! Recognize the Amazon Workers Union now! Stop union busting!

Supporters! Gather in solidarity and rally whenever and wherever Amazon workers raise their “Union now” banner!

For more information, please visit: amazonlaborunion.org, or Twitter: @Shut_downAmazon.



Brooklyn, Oct. 25.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Justice for workers through official channels takes forever — or simply never comes. After the Alabama vote when Amazon lied, cheated and intimidated workers, the NLRB took over six months to complete a report finding Amazon guilty — and another three months for a decision to authorize a new vote.

Now, a full year from the start of the Bessemer campaign, the notorious 150% Amazon worker turnover per year means many union supporters have quit or been fired. Organizing for the union has to be rebuilt with workers who come and go rapidly, leaving because of wear and tear on their bodies or having been fired for not “making rate” or having too much “time off task” to meet Amazon’s impossible standards.

“Making rate” injures huge numbers of workers. Amazon has sky-high rates of injuries, more than double the average of other companies doing the same work. Many of those injuries are musculoskeletal disorders, which come from repetitive

ABK Workers Alliance strikes vs. Activision Blizzard

By Danny O’Brien

Since late July, there has been an active class struggle between workers and corporate bosses at the video game company Activision Blizzard, culminating in three strikes — the third ongoing — and powerful efforts to unionize.

On July 20, a lawsuit was filed against Activision Blizzard by the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing, exposing a distinct and pervasive “frat boy” culture, unequal pay structures, rampant sexual harassment and negligence on the part of “Human Resources” to take reports seriously.

The company responded by gaslighting the claims as “distorted” and “false,” and workers retaliated with a work stoppage against the negation and abuse. (Bloomberg Law, July 2021).

CEO Bobby Kotick made a performative apology for the response and promised an internal review of the company’s policies — to be done by infamous anti-union law firm WilmerHale. The workers refuted this choice, stating a conflict of interest between the company executives and the law firm from previous cases. They disagreed with the choice further on the grounds that WilmerHale has a known reputation as a union-buster and as such is not impartial when it comes to securing and ensuring the rights of workers.

Raven Software layoffs

In response to the Dec. 3 layoffs of 12 contractors at Raven Software, a game studio owned by Activision Blizzard, employees initiated a work stoppage. Unified at the moment as the ABK

Workers Alliance, they responded to the sudden layoffs on Twitter, stating:

“This has not only destroyed the morale of our workforce but obliterated trust in the company that has been routinely asking us for patience in improving our work lives. We will not back down from this fight for equity; Raven QA, your contributions to our studios and the industry were incredible, and you deserve much better.” (tinyurl.com/2b97yr4h)

The stoppage is still ongoing and gained mainstream media coverage on its fifth day, when the workers were asked by the Communication Workers of America to sign union authorization cards.

The company responded fearfully to this first step in the establishment of a union by sending out a mass email groveling to the workers, strongly suggesting they refuse to unionize and quietly accept their oppression.

The ABK Workers Alliance is demanding the reinstatement of all laid-off employees, the conversion of all quality assurance contractors to full-time employees, improved representation, transparency in pay and an unbiased third-party audit of the company. Jessica Gonzales, founder and organizer of the ABK Workers Alliance and a prominent voice in this class struggle, has started a strike fund to support the striking workers.

Since the sexual harassment and gender discrimination cases started against Activision Blizzard in the summer, workers have held two other strikes. In

mid-November, employees at an Irvine, California, branch location held a strike, calling for the resignation of Kotick and a workers’ audit of the company. The earliest strike on this timeline was in response to the company’s initial response to the lawsuit, starting at the very end of July.

The capitalists are deploying their time-honored methods of denial, “strong suggestions” and the hiring of union-busting lawyers; and in that, nothing is too remarkable about this case. But the tenacity of the workers against the company across a long time line, with multiple strikes gaining media attention, is remarkable.

The importance of this unionization effort in an industry mostly devoid of unions must be acknowledged as an important part of the tide of unionization we see happening across the country today.

This case shows good timing on the part of the workers for knowing when to strike. When a company faces litigation following some misconduct inevitable to a capital-patriarchal structure, they become more vulnerable to strikes by the workers. Any strike action will enjoy more media coverage, and the company will endure more scrutiny from the public eye. Those at the ABK Workers Alliance have demonstrated how this scrutiny leads to better opportunities for more successful striking and unionization efforts. □



ABK Workers Alliance block entrances to Activision Blizzard, Nov. 16.

PHOTO: VALENTINE POWELL

Portland community backs grocery workers

By Lyn Neeley
Portland, Oregon

Massive community support was shown on Dec. 17 for thousands of grocery workers who walked off the job at 30 Fred Meyer and QFC stores across four Oregon cities. After only one day of the walk out, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555 settled with Kroger, the parent company, for increased wages, added workplace protections, secure retirement and quality health care. Members will consider ratifying the settlement over the next week.

Hundreds of community workers, members of groups and other unions joined the grocery workers on the picket lines. Picketers turned away scabs, delivery trucks and so many shoppers that the parking lot was almost empty. People in passing cars were honking horns and waving their support.

Jobs with Justice member Jamie Partridge said, “I think that management underestimated the community support. Social media blew up, don’t cross the picket line, and they were in a hard place because it’s peak season.” He said stores were scrambling for workers. They expected more people to cross the picket lines. (tinyurl.com/3zbzpnph)

Fred Meyer and QFC stopped paying hazard pay a year and a half ago. Since then, workers continued to work as essential workers, without pay raises or respect. Meanwhile the company has been making record profits.

In violation of their contract, Kroger refused wage increases that workers deserve and has been withholding information about workers’ wages. They are currently offering a two-tier system which divides workers, offering raises for long-term employees but not for the vast majority of newer employees.

UFCW Local 555 called a walkout in stores with expired contracts, after months of negotiations. The union represents workers across the region with different contractual expiration dates. Union spokesperson Miles Eshaia indicated that a contract won in some locations will often help other stores win a decent contract. □



Picketers prevent shoppers, scabs from entering the Fred Meyer parking lot, Dec. 17.

WW PHOTO: LYN NEELEY

Solidarity rally for Kellogg’s strike

By Martha Grevatt
Battle Creek, Michigan

Bulletin: Kellogg’s workers voted Dec. 19 to approve the latest contract offer, ending the strike.

Close to 1,000 Kellogg’s strikers and their supporters rallied near corporate headquarters in Battle Creek, Michigan, Dec. 17. The strike here and at three other plants in Nebraska, Pennsylvania and Tennessee began Oct. 5. The 1,400 workers, represented by the Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Union, want to get rid of the divisive two-tier pay and benefit system and restore equal pay for equal work.

The rally featured BCTGM Local 3-G President Trevor Bidelman and Senator Bernie Sanders. Those who turned out in support of the 325 Battle Creek Kellogg’s strikers were members of many different unions, who traveled from around Michigan and neighboring states, as well as young people of the local community. An example of community support was the donation of hundreds of donuts by Sweetwater Bakery, a Battle Creek institution.

Strikers overwhelmingly rejected a contract offer Dec. 5 and began voting on another tentative agreement Dec. 20. Addressing the latest offer, Bidelman stated, “This is not something that we were looking to fix for the next 3



Kellogg’s strike solidarity rally, Battle Creek, Michigan, Dec. 17.

WW PHOTO: MARTHA GREVATT

to 5 years. The tentative agreement we will be voting on Monday, that’s exactly what it’s doing. It’s a Trojan horse that’s been given to us, that’s going to allow us to basically harm ourselves down the road.”

As Bradley Mapes, a mechanical technician with 17 years seniority explained, “A fair contract would be equal pay and equal treatment. We just want everybody to be treated as equal.” (Battle Creek Enquirer, Dec. 17) □

COVID death of student propels teachers’ walkout

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court struck down a school mask mandate imposed by the Commonwealth at the beginning of the 2021 school year on Dec. 10. The court’s ruling left it up to each school district to set policy. Three days later, Alayna Thach, a



Alayna Thach, 17 years old.

beloved 17-year-old student at Aspira Olney Charter High School in Philadelphia died of COVID Dec. 13, shocking students and staff and propelling them to take action. The school has over 60% Latinx students.

Several of the charter school’s teachers walked off their jobs Dec. 20, demanding penalties for those who don’t wear masks and policy changes in the school’s cafeteria, where students, who are not socially distanced, eat without masks.

Sarah Kenney, head of the union at the charter school, American Federation of Teachers Pennsylvania, called for a return to virtual education until the school develops a plan for increased safety to prevent further deaths. (tinyurl.com/yckpyua6)

Teacher La’Shante Cox said, “Alayna was the type of student who would be with us right now, writing petitions and speaking out on how to keep our community safe.” Following Thach’s death, staff and students gathered on the school’s steps to demand increased mitigation. (tinyurl.com/yckpyua6)

Kailah White, a co-student of Thach, noted that unvaccinated students are dying all over the U.S. Thach, not vaccinated, waited for an appointment in January.

Within weeks of schools reopening for in-person education in September, the Pennsylvania Department of Health reported nearly 28,000 children, ages 5-18, had tested positive for COVID — 12 times higher than the same period in 2020. □

WW COMMENTARY

Drug users need unions, compassion clubs

By Princess Harmony

Drug users and abusers, as a group of people, are among the most oppressed of our class. Because of this, we are in need of an organization or organizations that protect us and our human rights. We also need an organization that helps to combat the overdose epidemic, often caused by fatal opioids like carfentanyl or ohmefentanyl. These organizations would include a drug users union and a U.S. off-shoot of the compassion club Drug Users Liberation Front.

What is a drug users union? It is an organization dedicated to harm reduction, the philosophy that says that we should take all opportunities and all steps to prevent the deaths or the harm caused by drugs to people. Harm reduction includes syringe exchange programs, safe consumption sites and even safe drug supply.

Safe drug supply is the distribution of drugs such as diacetylmorphine (heroin), crystal methamphetamine and cocaine by compassion clubs. All three drugs have been compromised with fentanyl analogues that can and do kill. The DULF in Vancouver, Canada, distributes these drugs to people in their community. Another organization, the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users is a 20-year-old drug users union that works alongside the DULF.

The compassion club model was used to distribute marijuana to patients who needed it and to distribute affordable medications for HIV/AIDS. This model was adapted and applied to the scourge of drug abuse. There is a strong need in the United States to form these organizations; our drug and overdose epidemics are not getting any better and indeed seem to be getting even worse. With COVID derailing everyday life, more people are turning to harder and harder drugs. In fact, drug

overdoses spiked in the last year: 100,000 people have died since May 2020.

This cannot be allowed to continue.

Heroin prohibition is the leading cause of overdose deaths in the United States. Prohibition of drugs that are abused is the main cause of danger in these drugs. With a safe consumption site in place, users would be able to use drugs without the high risk of death. But drug prohibition causes other problems. Here are some of the problems it causes:

1. It creates stigma around the use and abuse of drugs. This stigma creates discrimination in the medical field; drug addicts and people who use drugs are exposed to health care disparities.
2. Drug supplies are adulterated with highly toxic cuts such as ohmefentanyl, acetylfentanyl, acrylfentanyl, butyrfentanyl, carfentanyl, U-47700 and others. Because of these cuts, users are often hospitalized and that hospitalization takes beds from others.
3. The criminal “justice” system is crowded with people on drug crimes, who are then kept incarcerated under deplorable conditions through money bail systems.
4. The “War on Drugs” continues to cost millions of taxpayer dollars that could go to programs such as Medicaid or SNAP. Public assistance programs would potentially assist in stopping drug abuse as well.
5. Illicit drug markets create dangerous conditions wherever they are formed.

In light of these dangers, we must support the creation of drug users unions and compassion clubs. Despite the risk of arrest, people should coalesce and organize these groups. It is important to the proletariat. □

‘We have to become emancipators’

By Jalil Muntaqim

These slightly edited remarks were made by recently freed political prisoner, Jalil Muntaqim, during a Dec. 9 webinar to mark the 40th anniversary arrest of Mumia Abu-Jamal and to demand his freedom.

On October 25, international jurists at the Spirit of Mandela Tribunal found the United States guilty on all counts of charges of genocide. Mumia Abu-Jamal is confronting genocide. Imam Jamil al-Amin is confronting genocide. Leonard Peltier is confronting genocide. All our comrades inside the prison system and many of those in mass incarceration are facing genocide. The U.S. has been engaging in this practice of genocide for over 400 years.

We are finally catching up to this reality.

On Dec. 17, 1951, the great Paul Robeson and William Patterson were the first to bring the charges of genocide to the United Nations, and because of that they were hounded by the FBI. It’s important for us to raise this question today, because from this day forward we are changing the narrative of our conditions here in the United States — Black, Brown and Indigenous.

We are no longer engaging in issues of civil rights. We are engaging in issues of human rights. Our problem, as a people, is that we have been so colonized in our minds that we have accepted, been normalized to, these conditions of colonization, that we have even been, to a certain

degree, complicit in our own genocide.

What we need to do is decolonize our thinking about our relationship to the corporate government of the United States. We have not done that yet. A form of decolonization is the process of liberating our minds. We’re not there yet.

I am raising these questions out of necessity, not only for myself, but for my great-grandkids. How are they going to live in a system that has been promoting white supremacy, that is, naturally, against Black, Brown and Indigenous people?

White supremacy is an aberration. Any time you have a people that feels they’re superior to any other people on the planet, they’re crazy. And we’re not treating it like that. We haven’t accepted that idea that white supremacy is an aberration in human society and civilization.

‘Abolish it’

So we have to raise ourselves up. Black Lives Matter? Black lives have always mattered — but not to white people. That’s a problem. So we have to raise the issues of Black Lives Matter to ourselves, and within ourselves, and decolonize our thinking with regards to how we have identified ourselves. We’ve been called everything under the sun except a child of God by white supremacists. So now’s the time that we need to identify ourselves.

Personally, I identify myself as a New Afrikan. I am divorcing myself from any idea of being part of America, period. Can we raise ourselves, build ourselves up, in that kind of thinking? Can we separate

ourselves mentally, psychologically from that idea of being American, African American? That is a process.

So here I am today raising these questions to you in the spirit of Mandela, in the spirit of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

We enjoin all of you, nationally and internationally, to support the endeavors



of what we’re moving forward on with regards to the People’s Center.

We all know what happened on Jan. 6 when white supremacists stormed Congress. They essentially made a declaration of war to again reassert the idea of white supremacy. In order for them to be successful at doing that, they have to kill Black people, decrease the number of Black people in this country.

We’re not prepared; we don’t understand the depths of what they’re talking about. And if this idiot Trump runs again in 2024, this country will split in half. We have to be prepared for that.

We are telling the international community that we need their support.

Martin Luther King once stated that the United States is “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today,” in essence that the public have blood on their hands, both in treasure and in blood, by sending their children to these imperialist wars around the world. And the world is waiting for us to decide: “What are we going to do?” The world is asking: “What’s going on in America? What’s going on with Black people? How are they allowing this to happen?”

My position is this, here — if we are fighting in the belly of the beast, then we are the vanguard. And the international community is the rear-guard. They need to support us in this struggle. If we are the tip of the spear, then the international community is

the shaft of that spear. The world is waiting for us to determine our future and, in essence, determine the future of the planet.

As we fight for the release of Mumia Abu-Jamal, we have to begin to look at the process of how we free ourselves.

Thank you for having me here to share these ideas. Some of you may think they are wild ideas. And they are. Why? Because these are ideas about freedom. They are ideas about liberation. We have to become emancipators; we have to become abolitionists; we have to become liberators.

When I say abolitionist, I mean abolish everything that is anti-Black, anti-Brown, anti-Indigenous people. Abolish it. □

In a Pennsylvania jail

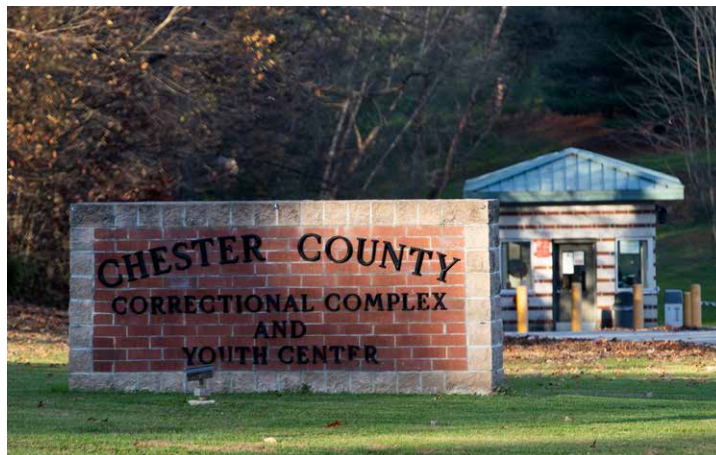
A COVID-19 related death

By Marie Kelly

A 52-year-old man, Melvin James Anderson IV, died while incarcerated in the Chester County Correctional Complex and Youth Center in Pocopson, Pennsylvania, Dec. 7. He was jailed while waiting to be tried for a charge of burglary, which he may or may not have committed. How did he die? He succumbed to COVID-19, after testing negative upon arrival at the facility. He contracted the coronavirus while under the state’s supervision and died.

The prison is overwhelmed with a COVID-19 outbreak. So far 170 cases have been confirmed as of Dec. 14. That is triple the number first reported earlier that week at the facility.

Why lock up more people, when efforts to contain the coronavirus within prison walls are failing miserably here and throughout the country? Shouldn’t the judicial system be doing everything it can to decrease the numbers locked behind the walls through early parole of nonviolent offenders or compassionate release of the ill and elderly?



Instead, law enforcement crams people who have not even had their day in court into dangerous, overcrowded prisons that become a death sentence due to COVID-19 outbreaks, poor medical care and callous officials.

Law enforcement and a racist judicial system have an abysmal track record of wrongful convictions of the innocent. The number of exonerations following wrongful

convictions has reached 2,800 nationwide.

At least 80 people in Philadelphia (Chester County is part of greater Philadelphia) have been exonerated of violent crimes; 23 of them since 2018. Currently, two young men, A.J. Ford and Hasein Strand, are incarcerated in another Philadelphia suburb jail because the Delaware County District Attorney wants to hold them accountable for the murder by police of 8-year-old Fanta Bility last summer. They are in their teens; and given that the vaccine was only recently approved for their age group, can the justice system guarantee their health and safety?

The pandemic has given us another lesson of how the class divide between the wealthy and the rest of us works. If you have the monetary means to hire a well-connected lawyer and post bail, you can escape the cruel inhumane treatment which the workers and oppressed, predominantly Black and Brown people, face when they come up against the police.

Prison abolition is something we must achieve if we ever want to liberate our class. □

Give an incarcerated person a gift of WW

“Inmates need Workers World papers. When you’re locked up, you need an intellectual light to shine through the darkness of state oppression. If you’re a free person reading this, and you care about the struggle against mass incarceration, please take out a subscription for an incarcerated person. It means more than you could possibly imagine.”

— Makasi Motema

Workers World is an independent, revolutionary communist newspaper that began publication in 1959. We are committed to building solidarity among workers and oppressed peoples around the globe. For that reason, Workers World has always provided FREE subscriptions and other radical printed materials to incarcerated members of our class in the U.S. One in three

subscribers to WW is a person who is currently behind bars — in hundreds of prisons across dozens of states.

This holiday season, we ask that you consider contributing to our mission of sending life-affirming, socialist analysis to our siblings behind the walls. This time of year can be especially hard on those forcibly separated from their communities. Giving the gift of connection via committed communists reporting on fighting oppression at home and abroad can help to keep the spirit of fight-back alive, and it lasts longer than just through the holidays. Connection to our collective struggle can be vital to those locked away from society.

Our ability to break through the walls of isolation imposed by capitalists holding the keys to these cages is made possible by your generous support. By supporting our incarcerated subscriber program, you can help

us as we raise awareness and build for the abolition of prisons, jails and detention centers used to oppress our most vulnerable populations. Any donations directed at detainees of this rotten, racist, sexist, anti-LGBTQ2s+, ableist, dehumanizing capitalist system can be made at www.patreon.com/wwp. Send your support and holiday regards to an incarcerated member of your class, the working class, today! It is the gift that keeps on giving. □



Let Afghanistan live!

By Zach Kerner

Contrary to the narrative of U.S. politicians and journalists, the August 2021 withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan did not mark the end of the United States’ so-called “forever war” but rather a shift in U.S. policy — from direct military intervention and occupation to one based on economic sanctions and indirect political subversion. Although the tactics change, the goal is the same: the accumulation of wealth and power through class warfare against the Afghan people.

Just days after Kabul fell to the Taliban on Aug. 15, Washington took measures to turn off the flow of funds to the new government and paralyze the Afghan banking system. The Treasury Department quickly issued a freeze order on nearly \$9.5 billion of the Afghan Central Bank’s assets held in U.S. financial institutions, including the New York Federal Reserve Bank.

Although the Taliban was entitled to receive over \$460 million from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in currency reserves known as Special Drawing Rights, or SDRs, the U.S. ensured that those funds would be blocked. Notably, these punitive measures are in addition to the economic sanctions that the U.S. imposed on the Taliban following the 9/11 attack.

Horrific consequences of sanctions

As reported in Workers World at the time: “Seizing the central bank’s money and cutting all international aid, in a poor country where three-quarters of public spending is financed by grants, gives Washington powerful leverage.

U.S. strategists understand the impact of freezing funds and can calibrate this tactic to inflict maximum pain.”

The horrific and totally foreseeable consequences of these sanctions have, so far, been well documented by international humanitarian organizations, even if they are reluctant to depict the United

Despite the Taliban’s success in forcing the U.S. government to the negotiating table in Doha and then ousting the U.S. military from Afghanistan, Washington has made it clear that it has no plans to respect Afghanistan sovereignty. Indeed, the Biden administration’s response to pleas that the asset freeze be lifted demonstrates the hypocrisy and callousness of U.S. foreign policy.

States as culpable.

On Oct. 25, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and the U.N. World Food Program published a report urging humanitarian assistance, warning that Afghanistan is on a “countdown to catastrophe.” According to the report, over 50% of Afghans will face “crisis” or “emergency” levels of acute food insecurity, including over 3 million children under the age of five.

On Nov. 22, the United Nations Development Program published a report warning that Afghanistan’s financial and bank payment systems are “in disarray” and on the verge of collapse. The UNDP report, citing the IMF, predicts the Afghan economy could contract by 30% for 2021-2022.

On Dec. 6, the International Crisis Group issued a more scathing report, warning that the “hunger and destitution” caused by “economic strangulation,” imposed by the West in response to the Taliban takeover, could “kill more Afghans than all the bombs and bullets of the past two decades.”

In other words, U.S. policy of intentionally starving the Afghan people through economic sanctions on Afghanistan is going as planned. As many predicted, blocking funds from the Taliban and curtailing foreign aid and assistance would lead to a rapid financial meltdown and exacerbate the ongoing famine plaguing Afghanistan.

Despite the Taliban’s success in forcing the U.S. government to the negotiating table in Doha and then ousting the U.S. military from Afghanistan, Washington has made it clear that it has no plans to respect Afghanistan’s sovereignty. Indeed, the Biden administration’s response to pleas that the asset freeze be lifted demonstrates the hypocrisy and callousness of U.S. foreign policy.

The Taliban’s November 2021 letter to the U.S. Congress correctly noted that “the fundamental challenge of our people is financial security, and the roots of this concern lead back to the freezing



Severe drought leaves many Afghans hungry.

of assets of our people by the American government.”

U.S. retaliates for Taliban’s military success

The U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan, Thomas West, rejected the Taliban’s request in a series of revealing tweets. West’s remarks effectively confirmed that the United States was preventing “critical” international aid from reaching Afghanistan as retribution for the Taliban’s military success, while recognizing that Afghanistan’s “economy [is] enormously dependent on aid, including for basic services.”

Further, in typical bourgeois fashion, West condescendingly lectured the Taliban that “[l]egitimacy and support must be earned” and confirmed that the United States would consider lifting the murderous sanctions if the Taliban only learned to “respect the rights of minorities, women and girls.”

The irony was not lost on Afghan Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, who questioned the tortured logic: “The U.S. froze our assets and then told us that it will provide us humanitarian aid. What does it mean?” Muttaqi reiterated the demand to release Afghanistan’s assets: “The assets should be freed immediately. The Americans don’t have any military front with us now. What is the reason for freezing the assets? The assets don’t belong to the Mujahideen (Islamic Emirate) but to the people of Afghanistan.”

The Biden administration has shown no signs of easing the sanctions. In fact, the Biden administration is reportedly entertaining the idea of permanently depriving the Afghan people of the funds needed to combat the current humanitarian crisis, by transferring those funds instead to U.S. plaintiffs with outstanding default judgments against the Taliban. That is what two groups of judgment creditors are arguing to U.S. federal judges.

Although its formal statement is not due until the end of January 2022, the Biden administration seems willing to go along with the plan — the only apparent obstacle is how to seize the Afghan funds without recognizing the Taliban as the legitimate Afghan government.

Following its imperial playbook, the U.S. sanctions imposed on Afghanistan — like the sanctions imposed on Venezuela, Cuba, Iran and many others — are having their intended effect, which is to punish the whole population of Afghanistan for the Taliban’s refusal to surrender the country’s resources and sovereignty to the demands of U.S. and European capital.

The intended consequence is the destabilization of Afghan civil society, making daily life so unbearable that the Afghan people are now blaming the Taliban for their misery and providing the United States and its proxies an opening to enact regime change.

Now more than ever, those in the imperial core must demand: U.S. out of Afghanistan — totally out, and end the U.S.-imposed sanctions.

Let Afghanistan live! □

Film review ‘137 Shots’

By Susan Schnur

“137 Shots” is a new documentary now streaming on Netflix. Directed by Michael Milano, it documents the 2012 execution-style murders of Malissa Williams and Timothy Russell by Cleveland police. Two years later 12-year-old Tamir Rice was gunned down by Cleveland cops while playing at a local recreation center. The killing of young Tamir plays a central role in the film, which pieces together all the parties involved in the racist cover-ups.

The beginning of the film focuses on Cuyahoga County Chief Prosecutor Timothy McGinty, seemingly caring about the unarmed victims shot 137 times. The slaughter included Cleveland police officer Michael Brelo leaping on the hood of Russell’s 1979 Chevy, reloading his gun and firing the rest of his bullets into the lifeless bodies of the two occupants. A total of 62 patrol cars were involved in the chase through Cleveland and into East Cleveland, finally cornering 53-year-old Russell and 30-year-old Williams at a school parking lot, with 13 white cops doing all the shooting.

Protests began immediately on the streets of Cleveland and East Cleveland; these first protests were not shown.

But then, Tamir Rice is shot dead by racist cops, the murder caught on nearby security cameras. The protests could no longer be ignored. Over 1,500 protesters

shut down Cleveland highways and downtown streets. Then the documentary starts to show the ongoing movement for justice for Russell, Williams and Tamir Rice.

Another police murder took place around the same time as Tamir’s. Tanisha Anderson was killed by Cleveland cops responding to a wellness check called in by her family. Anderson’s death was not covered in the documentary, but her name was chanted at every street action.

Previously unseen footage of investigators interviewing the police is especially instructive. The cops were treated with kid gloves, given months to coordinate their stories involving the 137 shots and subsequent car chase. The interview with Timothy Loehmann, the trigger man in the Tamir Rice execution, is especially infuriating. Such obvious lying cannot be covered up forever.

The documentary finally hits its stride and exposes the whole damn (in)justice system from the cops, the prosecutor and the judges to the media and the Cleveland Police Patrolmen’s Association.

The families of Russell and Williams as well as Samaria Rice (mother of Tamir) are featured speaking in their own voices.



Malissa Williams and Timothy Russell

They are shown as powerful advocates for their loved ones.

The end of the film features the Republican National Convention held in Cleveland in 2016. It highlights the intense police occupation of Cleveland, which was very scary in its firepower and numbers. Unfortunately no coverage of demonstrations protesting Trump and the right-wing bigots occupying downtown Cleveland made the final cut.

Any weakness of “137 Shots” is minor, when considering the overall power of the film. It is skillfully made, first lulling unknowledgeable viewers into believing the slimy, fake sincerity of the various bigots carrying out their job of protecting racism in Cleveland. By the end of the movie, it is proven beyond a reasonable doubt that a grave injustice was done to Timothy, Malissa, Tanisha and Tamir and to everyone who loved and cared about them. □

Have you been lied to about Xinjiang and human rights?

This statement was issued by the International Action Center (iacenter.org), posted at wp.me/p4Yme1-4Rf and available in PDF at wp.me/P4Yme1-4SF.

Claiming that it is acting in defense of human rights, the U.S. tries to cover its own criminal record on internal human rights violations and its record of endless wars, assassinations, coups and devastating sanctions by making charges and targeting other countries.

Propaganda fuels U.S. wars

The “2021 Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community,” issued April 9 by Avril Haines, Director of National Intelligence, labeled China as “the greatest threat to the United States.” Numerous other reports and official statements claim Washington must prepare an intensifying level of U.S. intelligence operations, cyberattacks and investment in military technology to counter China.

The U.S. military has encircled China. With joint Democratic and Republican Party backing, the U.S. has imposed economic sanctions, an onerous trade war and canceled cultural exchanges and visas for tens of thousands of Chinese students. This campaign is cynically justified as a defense of human rights.

To confront Washington’s escalating anti-China aggression, the progressive political movement in the U.S. must move into action. We must challenge the tidal wave of racist anti-China assaults in the U.S. corporate media and from Washington’s political establishment.

The most extreme U.S. claims and smear campaigns are focused on charges that China is violating the rights of the minority Uyghur people in the Xinjiang [pronounced Shinjaang] Uyghur Autonomous Region of China.

Propaganda serves to deflect our attention from what we already know. Over 2.2 million people are incarcerated in the U.S., which has the largest prison population in the world. Racist police kill over 1,000 people a year. Why not address the glaring human rights crimes in the U.S.?

Xinjiang and China’s Belt and Road Initiative

Xinjiang Province, in the far western region of China, is an arid, mountainous and still developing region. Xinjiang has significant oil and mineral reserves and is China’s largest natural gas-producing region.

Urumqi, the capital, is a modern rail-and-transit hub. For hundreds of years it was the gateway to Central and West Asia and now to European markets. The province is home to diverse ethnic groups, including Turkic-speaking Muslim Uyghurs, Tajiks, Tibetans and Hui peoples, as well as Han people, who comprise the large majority of the Chinese population.

Xinjiang is a major logistics center for China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative. This broad infrastructure development program is a multitrillion-dollar initiative that has expanded to include programs in 138 countries.

Unable or unwilling to compete by helping countries develop in Central and Western Asia and Africa, the U.S. has done everything possible to sabotage the Belt and Road programs. Washington has imposed economic sanctions on China, surrounded the country with missiles and military bases, funded mercenary armies and promoted internal dissension. This is highly profitable for the U.S. military industrial complex.

Xinjiang borders five Central Asian countries, including Afghanistan and Pakistan, where more than 1 million U.S. troops — and an even greater number of mercenaries, contractors and secret agents — have operated for over four decades in an endless series of destructive U.S. wars.

Washington’s ‘Big Lie’ against China

The U.S. and its corporate media charge that the Chinese government has rounded up 1 million people, mainly Muslim Uyghurs, into internment camps. Many note the cynical duplicity of Washington posing as a friend of Muslims.

In the last 30 years, the U.S. has waged wars primarily against Muslim countries — Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, and has engineered proxy wars which have killed 4 million people and turned 40 million people into refugees. Washington has imposed harsh economic sanctions on 15 Muslim countries, creating hyperinflation and hunger. This war policy reverberates into anti-Muslim campaigns within the U.S.

Like the “weapons of mass destruction” pretext for the war on Iraq, Washington is justifying its aggressive policy against China with false claims that China is committing “genocide” against the Uyghur minority. The U.S. media claims this is based on a United Nations report. However, the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has confirmed that no U.N. body or official has made any charges against China similar to what Washington charges is “genocide.”

Tales of forced birth control and sterilization against the Uyghur minority are exposed by census data. The Uyghur population has actually grown from 3.61 million in 1953 to 11.62 million in 2020. Like the other minority (non-Han) peoples, the Uyghurs were exempt from China’s one-child policy.

More than 60 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America support China against these false U.S.-initiated claims, including more than a dozen members of the Organization of Islamic States.

Supporting the U.S. charges are non-Muslim countries in Europe, plus Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. These countries are the historic colonizers, which supported decades of U.S. wars in the Muslim world.

U.S. proposes endless funding for conflict with China

The \$250 billion U.S. Innovation and Competition Act (USICA) passed the Senate in June 2021 and was to be voted on by the House of Representatives as November ends. USICA integrates the previously proposed Endless Frontier Act, the Strategic Competition Act of 2021 and the Meeting the China Challenge Act and others.

USICA’s more than 2,000 pages lay out plans to invest tens of billions of taxpayer dollars to give the U.S. technological edge over China in semiconductor manufacturing, require “buy American” requirements for federally funded infrastructure projects and slowdown or sabotage China’s technological development.

Measures against China include allocations of \$300 million a year for four years (\$1.2 billion), in what is called the “Countering Chinese Influence Fund.” It provides funding for charging China with “forced labor” in its Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, suppressing human rights, “unfair competition” and “intellectual theft.”

Congressional funding for mercenary operations include \$655 million in Foreign Military Financing in the Indo-Pacific region.

Who makes the charges on ‘human rights’?

Sensationalized claims that China is guilty of rights violations in Xinjiang come from the Washington-based and funded Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders and the World Uyghur Congress. These groups receive most of their funds from the CIA-linked National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a major source of funding for U.S. “regime change” operations around the world.

Other sources of unsubstantiated reports by the International Uyghur Human Rights and Democracy Foundation and the Uyghur American Association, are also funded by NED. Their information sources include Radio Free Asia, a news agency the U.S. government has funded for decades.

The Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders shares the same Washington address as Human Rights Watch. The network has long called for sanctions against China. HRW has been a major source of attacks on governments targeted by the U.S., such as Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba, Syria and China.

Can these U.S.-funded organizations be trusted?

This entire network of shadowy, well-funded, civil society groups, think tanks, nongovernmental organizations and news sources operates under the cover of “protecting human rights” to promote Washington’s policy of

HAVE YOU BEEN LIED TO ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN XINJIANG?



#TAKE BACK HUMAN RIGHTS

escalating sanctions and war preparations.

Just as in past U.S. military offensives, the corporate media is willing to use flimsy anti-China propaganda without checking basic facts.

A detailed investigative report written by Ben Norton and Ajit Singh, entitled: “No, the U.N. did not report China has ‘massive internment camps’ for Uighur Muslims,” includes IRS filing forms, which confirm the writers’ claims of generous U.S. government funding to generate false reports. (The Grayzone, Aug. 23, 2018)

The NED pays handsomely for unsourced documents making claims against China. But these claims provide nothing like the documentary proof of U.S. war crimes made public by Chelsea Manning, Julian Assange, Daniel Hale and John Kiriakou. They were imprisoned for providing concrete evidence of U.S. war crimes. (Kiriakou spent two years in prison, Manning seven; both have been released.)

Harsh new sanctions on Chinese cotton, a major export from the Xinjiang region, were fueled by lurid descriptions of handpicking, using slave labor and child labor in the cotton fields. However, cotton farming is more than 90% mechanized in Xinjiang.

U.S. corporate media give little recognition to China’s historic achievements of ending extreme poverty, illiteracy and lack of potable water, while providing access to basic health care for 800 million of its 1.4 billion people.

Haines’ 2021 Intelligence Report, referred to earlier, even condemns China for “using its success in combatting the coronavirus pandemic to promote the ‘superiority’ of its system”!

China follows a different program

For four decades, the CIA and secret Pakistan Intelligence Services (ISI) in Afghanistan sought to recruit and train Uyghurs as mercenaries, planning to use them as a future terror force in

China. They recruited Chechnyans from Russia’s Caucasus region for the same reason. Both groups were funneled into Syria in the U.S. regime-change operation there.

China’s government responded after terror attacks and explosives in the country had killed hundreds of civilians in busy shopping areas and crowded train and bus stations since the 1990s. Rather than copy Washington’s “war on terror” tactics, China has dealt with the problem of groups that are weaponized with religious extremism by setting up large-scale vocational education and training centers.

Rather than worsening underdevelopment through bombing campaigns, military occupation, secret rendition kidnappings, sanctions and drone strikes — tactics employed by the U.S., China is seeking to engage the Xinjiang population through education, skills development and rapid economic and infrastructure development.

There have been no terrorist attacks in Xinjiang since the reeducation campaigns began in 2017.

A big part of opposing the next U.S. onslaught is challenging the corporate media’s war propaganda and providing facts to counter the defamation campaigns against China.

We need health care for all, free education, union jobs and a clean environment, not continuous U.S. war propaganda and militarism. □

U.S./NATO threats heighten tension with Russia

By John Catalinotto

Washington has threatened economic and diplomatic sanctions against Russia over the conflict with Ukraine and has raised the possibility of military action. In an interview with Fox News Dec. 7, Mississippi Republican Senator Roger Wicker even discussed U.S. troop intervention and a nuclear first strike!

Moscow countered with a series of demands on the U.S. government and the NATO military alliance. These demands would prevent NATO's further military penetration toward the Russian border and stop NATO from absorbing other states in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region. Some of these countries border Russia or were part of the Soviet Union before 1991.

NATO is an aggressive military alliance under U.S. leadership. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact in the early 1990s, the U.S. has mobilized its imperialist allies within NATO behind its attempt to reconquer former colonial countries worldwide. These countries had won some sovereignty when the Soviet Union existed; examples include Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Libya.

NATO has absorbed some former Warsaw Pact members and Soviet republics that have become Western imperialism's neocolonies. NATO uses these countries' troops as potential cannon fodder and their territory for missile bases aimed at Russia.

Unlike the Soviet Union, Russia is a capitalist country. Russia no longer provides a model of potential socialist development that by its very existence threatens capitalist exploitation.

Nevertheless, the U.S. and its allies have applied sanctions and military pressure to prevent Russia from becoming a competitive capitalist rival.

U.S. use of NATO

Washington keeps its Western European imperialist allies lined up behind NATO's military leaders, who have always been U.S. generals. Last spring's NATO war exercises sent troops and tanks from dozens of countries toward the Russian border.

Republican Party leaders like Ricker have made the most aggressive anti-Russia statements and criticized President Joe Biden for being soft on Russian President Vladimir Putin. Despite the Republican rhetoric, U.S. aggressive foreign policy has been and is bipartisan. Both Republican and Democratic Party leaders fully back U.S. imperialism and militarism — the \$768 billion military budget proves it.

Regarding Ukraine, the Democratic administration orchestrated the coup that overthrew an elected president and installed a rightist, anti-Russian regime in 2014. Then-Vice President Biden was involved. And Ukraine's racist and fascist elements played a role in the U.S.-backed coup.

The coup was really a successful maneuver to divide Ukrainians and Russians using right-wing nationalist ideology. In February 2014, the new ultraright Ukraine government threatened the rights of the Russian-speaking residents, including the right to use their language.

The new Ukraine regime virtually forced Russia to annex Crimea, a peninsula jutting into the Black Sea that housed the

Russian fleet. Control of Crimea province had been shifted from Russia to Ukraine in 1954. Then it meant little, as the Soviet armed forces kept the use of Crimea's vital naval base, something the Russian government had no intention of giving up.

The population of Crimea — like that of the Donbass region in eastern Ukraine — was predominantly Russian-speaking and identified more with Russia than Ukraine. In a referendum, the Crimean population supported the Russian takeover. The population of two regions of the Donbass, Donetsk and Lugansk, chose to secede from Ukraine, and the central government waged war on them. This battle has recently heated up.

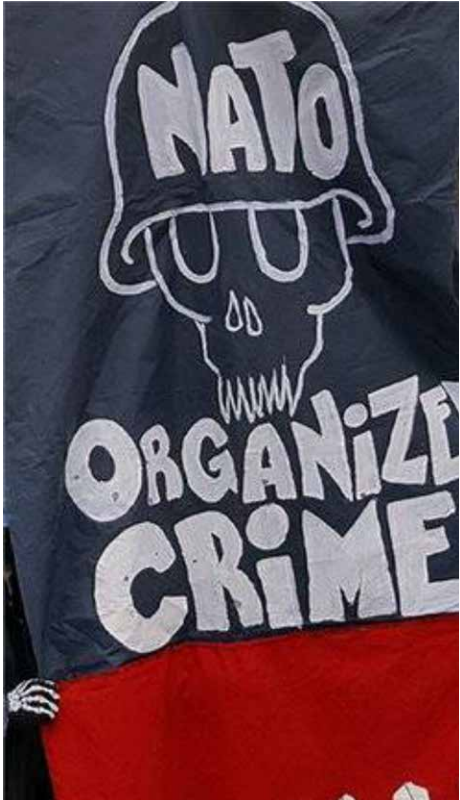
Drone strike in Donbass

Ukraine opened a war on the new Donbass countries, which was muted by an agreement signed in Minsk, Belarus, in September 2014, that set terms for a ceasefire. In October this year Ukraine launched a missile from a drone that hit the artillery base of the forces defending the pro-Russian regions.

Ukrainian generals have stated that their army is incapable of confronting Russia's, and they have asked for additional military help from NATO.

In response to the growing threat that the Kiev regime would assault the Donbass region, Russia has mobilized troops near Ukraine.

In a diplomatic initiative, Putin demanded on Dec. 17 that NATO countries withdraw the 2008 invitation to Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO and that NATO deploy no offensive weapons in states neighboring Russia. Putin held a well-publicized and friendly video conference with



Chinese President Xi Jinping Dec. 15 underlining their common interests.

The NATO leaders have so far rejected these reasonable Russian demands. There are signs that the Biden administration will use any tension with Russia to impose sanctions on Russia and demand a stoppage of the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline from Russia to Germany.

Antiwar forces in the United States can confront increased tension by taking public positions and mobilizing protests to demand NATO's immediate withdrawal from Eastern Europe — and the rapid dissolution of this aggressive military alliance. □

Biden's Summit on ~~Democracy~~ Hypocrisy

Continued from page 1

Domestically the U.S. image is grim, with more than 1,000 police killings a year, the largest prison system and number of prisoners. The U.S. police force at the national, state and urban level exceed the repressive apparatus of all other countries.

As former billionaire Mayor Mike Bloomberg bragged: "I have my own army in the NYPD, which is the seventh biggest army in the world." This one urban force has submarines and drones and its own overseas operations. (Salon, Sept. 28, 2012)

The U.S. record regarding the racist suppression of voting rights, gerrymandering and support for billionaire funding of both political parties is global news.

While Biden declares the U.S. the center of democracy, his own notorious record as the leading crusader for mass incarceration and mandatory prison sentences for

nonviolent crimes exposes his cynicism.

The State Department set up the Dec. 9-10 virtual event with handpicked invitees. Biden's opening talk on a soundstage to a virtual audience lasted 10 minutes. Then the event went into a "closed door session." Several hours later it reopened with a few scripted "round table panels."

Paying for free media

Biden's opening talk declared: "A free and independent media is the bedrock of democracy." Then, he announced that his administration would commit "critical seed money" to pay for "independent media." Some \$47.5 million would be distributed by USAID and the State Department for initiatives meant to boost nongovernmental media.

It is unclear if this \$47.5 million is in addition to or part of the \$300 million a year for four years (\$1.2 billion) spent in

what is called the "Countering Chinese Influence Fund." This fund pays media for news stories attacking China — whatever the source or lack of sources — charging China with "forced labor" in its Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, suppressing human rights, "unfair competition" or "intellectual theft."

Clearly media which is bought and paid for by the U.S. government is not "independent media."

Challenging media hype

Several countries and political forces responded to Biden's challenge by opening a discussion of democracy.

The China State Council issued a paper: "China — Democracy That Works," explaining how China had developed its own model of democracy. China's National Peoples' Congress has 3,000 members chosen from across China's regions and provinces and even the armed forces. There were programs throughout China discussing "peoples' democracy."

"The summit illustrates America's weakness and its inability to endure criticism of its foreign policy at the United Nations," said Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister Bruno Rodriguez.

Carlos Fernandez de Cossio, director general for U.S. affairs at Cuba's Foreign Ministry, tweeted: "The arbitrary list of invitees shows it is an exercise in demagoguery. The meeting will not solve any of the world's major problems, nor will it clean up Washington's discredited foreign policy."

Webinars held by political organizations such as the International League of Peoples' Struggle made the point that the

U.S. exports imperialist war in the name of democracy, with military operations since 2001 in more than 85 countries. It has killed millions of people, including civilians, and created millions of refugees on their own sovereign soil.

A webinar on socialist democracy was organized by the International Manifesto Group to discuss the democratic systems prevailing in socialist societies and expose how the U.S. concept of democracy is leveraged in support of a deeply undemocratic and violent imperialism.

This writer was a panelist on a 90-minute CGTN program in China, with panelists from Lebanon, Nigeria, Russia, Australia, the U.S., China mainland and China Hong Kong discussing their views on democracy.

Speaking from the U.S. and as a writer for Workers World newspaper, I said that the U.S. government and the capitalist class it serves are involved in wars, invasions and sanctions to impose corporate domination but always justified in the name of democracy.

U.S. democracy does not allow people to directly vote on any issue that impacts their lives economically nor to make decisions on endless wars or the military funding that robs half the national budget. Nor can U.S. residents vote for a national health plan, despite the highest number of COVID-19 deaths in the world.

Capitalist democracy exists to protect capitalist rights to property; capitalist money decides who runs for office.

By connecting economic development and programs to end poverty for 800 million people, China opens the possibility of real democracy and participation. □



U.S. Marines in Syria — 'democracy' or imperialist domination?

Wildfire surge of omicron confirms

Health care for profit more deadly than coronavirus

By Sara Flounders

The ominous toll of 800,000 deaths from COVID-19, reached in the U.S. Dec. 14, confirms that health care for profit is more deadly than the virus itself. The U.S. has consistently had the most COVID-19 deaths of any country. (tinyurl.com/3nunmuv7)

Since the omicron variant surfaced here Dec. 1, infection rates have jumped off the charts with 193,305 new cases on Dec. 17. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) forecasts more than 1 million new COVID-19 cases during Christmas week. (tinyurl.com/sjy4ch2k)

Yet China, where COVID-19 was first identified and brought under control, has had no deaths from COVID-19 in 2021. This fact alone confirms that a scientific approach with fully accessible health infrastructure, universal vaccination and national coordination at every level is decisive.

Despite last year's grand promises that vaccine rollouts meant the crisis had passed and the pandemic was over, since December 2020 COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. have tripled.

The lack of a coordinated national health plan, the chaotic for-profit approach to testing and the corporate-controlled vaccine development and distribution continues to have a devastating impact in the U.S. and throughout much of the world.

In comparison, in a country of 1.4 billion people, China has been able to decisively break the chain of infection each time there has been a virus outbreak or appearance of a new variant.

But rather than investigate how China was able to internally control the virus and provide global assistance, the U.S. escalated virulent anti-China propaganda.

Racist scapegoating of South Africa

On Nov. 24, South Africa announced it had identified an extremely contagious new variant, dubbed "omicron."

Rather than put in place a rapid genomic testing system, President Joe Biden blocked all travel from South Africa. Yet the omicron variant was quickly identified throughout Europe and in countries bordering the U.S.

Globally scientists are testing millions of samples of the coronavirus to spot new mutations, follow how the virus is evolving and how rapidly it is spreading. Instead of this scientific approach, racist U.S. officials blamed an African country for discovering the new variant, just as they blamed China for first alerting the world to the emergence of the coronavirus.

Meanwhile, the process of genomic testing for variants within the U.S. is slower, far more sporadic and completely uncoordinated. The CDC sequencing process takes 10 days to complete after receiving a specimen. Some states take a month to complete the tests.

Two weeks after South Africa's announcement, the New York Times finally reported Dec. 6. that the variant was spreading through the U.S. before South Africa's announcement. The omicron variant went undetected due to the slow, uncoordinated testing in the U.S. One Manhattan convention of 53,000 people was a superspreader.

Despite warnings of the wildfire spread of the new omicron variant, no new national shutdowns or emergency restrictions in the U.S. were announced. Holiday travel continues unabated. Deaths in the U.S. remain a shocking 1,300 per day and are projected to escalate sharply. (tinyurl.com/mu2wfbvw)

The new mutation omicron is spreading faster than the delta variant, which spread faster than the coronavirus of two years ago. In Britain on Dec. 1, only 32 cases of omicron were identified. By Dec. 13, Britain's health minister, Sajid Javid, estimated 200,000 daily infections, most of them omicron. Within days, infections will exceed 1 million a day. (tinyurl.com/y677d4fd) And 2 million a day by the end of the month is the new prediction for Britain. (tinyurl.com/4su6tc57)

For-profit health care is a killer

The only strategy of the corporate media, competing politicians and uncoordinated national, state and city bureaucracies is to convince a very alienated and suspicious population that vaccines will end the deadly scourge. Reliance on public service announcements and mandates won't solve the lack of a coordinated health care infrastructure in the U.S., which ranks last in the percentage of fully vaccinated people behind other G7 developed economies — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan. (tinyurl.com/3uxavryc)

More damning is that the U.S. ranks 44th in the list of countries in the percentage of people vaccinated. According to the CDC, as of Dec. 2 only about 197.8 million people, or 59.6% of the total U.S. population, have been fully vaccinated. (tinyurl.com/yc4dxyxs)

Deaths were preventable

Extreme inequalities in U.S. health insurance coverage are linked to the virus spread and its deadly impact. Racial health disparities, including access to care, led to disproportionate deaths in communities of color. Shortfalls of needed medical supplies and treatment still exist — the U.S. has only half the hospital beds per capita of other developed economies.

A Public Citizen report, March 16, 2021, detailed how "Medicare for All" could have prevented hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of infections. The report found that one-third of COVID-19 deaths and 40% of infections were tied to a lack of insurance.

Of the 25 wealthiest countries, the U.S. alone failed to provide universal health care. Even before the pandemic, tens of thousands of lives were lost annually due to for-profit health care. Significantly more people — especially people of color — die of chronic respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, diabetes or cancer than people in other comparably wealthy countries with universal health care systems.

COVAX fails in its promises

COVAX — an ambitious global collaboration set up early in the pandemic to give people in rich and poor nations equitable access to the shots — has failed to meet its many promises. As new, more contagious forms of the virus spread even faster, this gap is a world danger. The World Health Organization project was set up to keep

vaccine profits and vaccine patents in the hands of private corporations by pledging to give vaccines away free or below price to poor countries.

The glowing COVAX promises of 2 billion vaccine doses simply never arrived. U.S. corporations and agencies delivered less than 300,000 doses; 98% of people in low-income countries remain unvaccinated. COVAX has contributed less than 5% of all vaccines administered globally.

China alone directly provided over 2 billion vaccines to the Global South. Of far greater significance is the fact that China is providing the information, raw material and technology so that countries can begin to manufacture their own vaccines. Cuba, which developed its own vaccines, is also distributing hundreds of thousands of doses to low-income countries, particularly those targeted by U.S. sanctions, like Venezuela and Iran.

Predictions and warnings ignored

These unsolvable U.S. surges were explained in a book published a year ago. It's time to revisit its conclusions. "Capitalism on a Ventilator — The Impact of COVID-19 in China and the U.S.," a unique anthology by 50 progressive commentators — written even before vaccines were rolled out — explained why vaccines alone could not solve the soaring COVID-19 death rate in the U.S.

The information in "Capitalism on a Ventilator," which documented the impact of COVID-19 in China and the U.S., was suppressed in the U.S. within capitalist distribution channels and media networks.

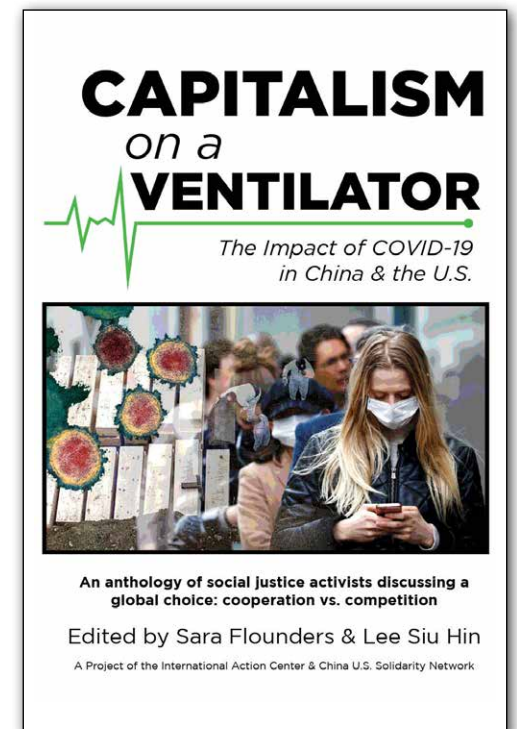
The anthology was gathered to expose how the pandemic health crisis resulted from a for-profit system that will never deliver health to working and oppressed people. This collection graphically described the chaos of schools and offices shutting down overnight. Hospital intensive care units were overflowing, and refrigerated trailers became makeshift morgues, and states were fighting over protective equipment and high-tech ventilators.

Two social systems, two different COVID-19 outcomes

A different social system than that of the U.S. exists in some of the countries that are successfully managing and controlling the spread of the COVID-19 virus — countries like China, Cuba and Vietnam.

"Capitalism on a Ventilator" evaluates these two social systems, both confronting a medical crisis: capitalism, under which everything is dictated by the needs of finance capital; and socialism, which organizes society by prioritizing people's needs.

China's approach is only possible in a



The only strategy of the corporate media, competing politicians and uncoordinated national, state and city bureaucracies is to convince a very alienated and suspicious population that vaccines will end the deadly scourge. Reliance on public service announcements and mandates won't solve the lack of a coordinated health care infrastructure in the U.S., which ranks last in the percentage of fully vaccinated people behind other G7 developed economies — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan.

country that is highly organized to prioritize human needs — to value people over profits.

In the Western media, China's approach is portrayed as top-down, oppressive rule by the state. In reality China's systematic plan to control the pandemic was a collaboration between the state and hundreds of thousands of citizen volunteers.

"Capitalism on a Ventilator" is indispensable to understand how capitalism as an economic system is driven to put profits first and let people, including the most vulnerable, die — while socialist planning can meet the needs and save the lives of a country's people, especially in the middle of a global pandemic.

The China-U.S. Solidarity Network along with the International Action Center are responsible for the publication of this anthology.

"Capitalism on a Ventilator" has been translated into Chinese and will soon be available in print in China. The book is available in English online at Kobo: tinyurl.com/444abk97 and World View Forum: tinyurl.com/5n6vp2wy.

Murder and the rate of return

In a footnote to Volume 1 of Capital, first published in 1867, Karl Marx quoted from the 19th century English labor leader T.J. Dunning:

“With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10% will ensure its employment anywhere; 20% certain will produce eagerness; 50% positive audacity; 100% will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300% and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged.”

Today, 150+ years of class struggle have mitigated the effects of capitalists' lust for profit. Workers have protections in union contracts and in legislation, such as minimum wage, child labor laws, workplace safety regulations and the right to organize.

But periodically in the course of events, disasters occur that shred with tornado-like force any pretense of “caring capitalism.” The Dec. 10 tornadoes were such a disaster.

WORKERS WORLD editorial

While the owners of the Mayfield Consumer Products candle factory in Mayfield, Kentucky, may not have put their own lives at risk, they had no scruples about risking the lives of their employees. At least 15 workers at the factory who wanted to go home to safety were threatened with discharge. The tornado tore through the building, killing eight and seriously injuring many more. In a lawsuit seeking compensatory and punitive damages, workers' attorneys charge the company with showing “flagrant indifference” to their safety. (NBC News, Dec. 18)

The owners' “profits first” mindset has meant low wages, long hours and what employee and father-of-two David Hollowell called “sweatshop” conditions. Many of the workers are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated. Mayfield hires people as temporary help, laying them off before their probationary period ends — only to hire them back as new probationaries. Workers have been

fired for having epilepsy, being overweight or pregnant. Mayfield was previously fined for workplace safety violations. The 245 workers make around \$8 to 10 an hour.

No crime too great in pursuit of profit

Dunning's critique of capitalism was directed at companies similar in size to Mayfield. But the “flagrant indifference” to workers is not confined to small “cockroach capitalists.” The six deaths in the Amazon warehouse in Edwardsville, Illinois—owned by centibillionaire Jeff Bezos—confirm the point emphasized in Marx's footnote: that capitalists will stop at nothing to raise their bottom line.

This is, in fact, the root cause of the climate catastrophe that has led to an increase in the number and severity of tornadoes, hurricanes, floods and other disasters that threaten workers' lives.

It is past time for humanity — through revolutionary struggle — to rid itself of the murderous, exploitative, profit-driven system called capitalism. □

U.S. maneuvers amidst more disasters for the Haitian people

By G. Dunkel

Washington extended Temporary Protective Status for Haitians for another 18 months, because conditions in Haiti are so miserable. Despite this the U.S. government is still actively deporting Haitians back to Haiti, flying them into either the airport at Cap-Haïtien or Port-au-Prince.

According to a tweet from an anti-deportation activist @thcartwright, there have been 137 flights to Haiti involving around 13,700 people from Laredo, Texas.

Why is Haiti so poor?

As a major media outlet of the U.S. capitalist class, the New York Times analysis proclaimed Dec. 19 that it is vital to understand “why it [Haiti] remains the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, even after an infusion of more than \$5 billion in U.S. aid in the past decade alone.”

The Times article fails to point out that following Haiti's liberation from France and slavery in 1804, France forced Haiti to pay with cash what it had won with blood. The Haitians were forced to keep paying until the 20th century. The article does mention that “Citibank — then the National City Bank of New York — confiscated much of Haiti's gold reserves” with “the help of U.S. Marines,” who invaded in 1915.

Alleged U.S. assistance to food aid projects is really assistance to U.S. agribusiness. The U.S. government buys rice from U.S. farmers or on the world markets for food stockpiles in Haiti. This keeps U.S. farmers' prices stable.

The money supposedly going to Haiti is redirected to USAID's Food for Peace program, which provides direct cash subsidies to Haitian consumers. This allows the

many food-insecure to afford to pay for imported food. As a result, Haitian peasant farmers can't compete with this heavily subsidized rice and must stop producing rice.

Another major feature of U.S. aid is for shelter, especially after earthquakes and hurricanes. The supplies to build these needed shelters come from the U.S. or the world capitalist market. As a result, the capital involved again gets recycled out of Haiti.

A lot of the \$5 billion, which the U.S. reports as aid to Haiti, was aid to U.S. industries. Haiti is poor because it has been so intensely exploited, not because it lacks resources.

U.S. holds meeting to decide Haiti's future

On Dec. 16 a plane flew the remaining 12 kidnapped missionaries from the Christian Aid Ministries out of Haiti — five had been previously released.

A day later the U.S. government hosted a virtual meeting of 14 international aid organizations and foreign governments, who had contributed resources to policing and security in Haiti. Haiti was represented at this meeting by the Haitian Chancellor Jean Victor G  n  us and the Ambassador of Haiti in Washington, Edmond Bocchit.

None of the kidnapped missionaries were named, and whether or not money was paid for their release wasn't confirmed. Since there was a large team of FBI, CIA and State Department agents working with the Haitian National Police (PNH) on resolving this issue, the U.S. government had to have known the date of this release.

According to the Dec. 17 Miami Herald, the U.S. has engaged in a vigorous diplomatic effort to get Canada and France, two imperialist countries with major stakes

in the Caribbean, to agree with its plan to upgrade the quality of the PNH and give it the kind of heavy weapons it would need to confront armed groups like 400 Mawozo, the group that kidnapped the 17 missionaries. The PNH has reported that there have been over 800 kidnappings this year, often of groups.

When Vice President Kamala Harris met with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris in November, she raised the issue of an international coalition to support Haiti. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Brian Nichols chaired the virtual meeting. He summed it up as: “The reality is whatever investments we provide for the Haitian national police need to be accompanied by gains in governance, transparency and anti-corruption efforts.”

In all this discussion of security improvements, the underlying problem of how to conduct the elections needed to give the Haitian government democratic legitimacy wasn't raised.

Catastrophe in Cap-Haïtien

The current government of Haiti has not been elected, because the previous government of Jovenel Mo  se, finding it easier to govern by decree, postponed holding elections. The U.S. pretended to object, but as long as Mo  se was satisfied and the political situation was reasonably calm, it didn't take steps to force an election on Haiti.

Elections are not the only issue where the Haitian government has dropped the ball. It is responsible for providing the gasoline/diesel that keeps Haiti's economy running, because its dilapidated electric grid doesn't provide reliable service. So banks, hospitals, schools, the tap-taps that provide transportation and public services of all sorts depend on generators, which depend on gasoline/diesel.

The government put in a sharp increase in the price of gas Dec. 10. When a tanker truck overturned on the approach to a bridge in Cap-Ha  tien on the night of Dec. 13, it started spilling fuel. People in the neighborhood rushed out with buckets to gather the liquid, which is precious to them.

A sudden explosion killed the people gathering the liquid, and it set some 30 houses in the neighborhood on fire so rapidly many sleepers were unable to flee. Cap-Ha  tien's hospitals quickly filled with the injured. As of Dec. 20, at least 70 people had died.

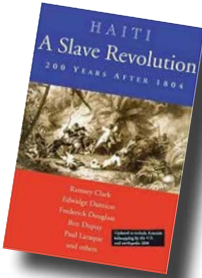
Acting interim Prime Minister Ariel Henry was quick to express his condolences, declare three days of national mourning and said the government would pay for the funerals.

A Haitian political commentator put the popular reaction this way: “This government reaction is just an excuse to hide its responsibility for not having put in place adequate means to guarantee the well-being of the people, leaving them adrift and at the mercy of circumstances.” (Haiti Libert  , Dec. 15) □

Haiti: A Slave Revolution 200 Years After 1804

Ramsey Clark, Edwidge Danticat, Frederick Douglass, Paul Laraque, Ben Dupuy, Pat Chin

Available at major online booksellers. Get a free PDF version at iacenter.org



‘Suppose they had welcomed the Pilgrims like they did the Haitians in Del Rio, Texas’

The following remarks were made by Ustadi Kadiri, a member of the Haiti Action Committee, Dec. 10, at a rally at the San Francisco Federal Building.

Dec. 10, 2021, is International Human Rights Day around the world. But somehow the United States did not get the memo. Why would I say that? Because the U.S. is the number one arms dealer in the world. That means you're killing people and not feeding people. This country was built on exploitation. So for them to discuss or hold any country accountable for human rights is a joke!

It is not possible to be in favor of equal rights for some people and not in favor of all people. It's just not possible. The U.S. has 1,000 military bases around the world. I ask you, is that the way you spread love and unity? Between Sept. 19 and Sept. 27, 2021 — in just nine days — the United States deported over 4,000 Haitians, including hundreds of families with children, without allowing them to seek asylum. Forget about the hurricanes and earthquakes. Biden used Title 42 as an excuse to deport people — the same one that Trump did.

So, no matter where you come from, if you're a person of color, you're not welcome in the “Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave”! Let's go back to the founding fathers “landing on Plymouth Rock,” and imagine the



Ustadi Kadiri holds Haitian flag, Oct. 14, San Francisco, Calif.

Native Americans asking those crooks from England, “May I see your visa, your passport?”

Suppose they had welcomed the Pilgrims like they did the Haitians in Del Rio, Texas. But they didn't — because they recognized them as being human, and treated them the same as they would want to be treated. We who believe in freedom also believe in equal rights and justice. Being human should show: Kindness, empathy, generosity, knowing right from wrong, honesty, gratitude and joy. □

Por qué Cuba no tiene un movimiento antivacunas

Por Marc Vandepitte y Toon Danhieux

Traducido del neerlandés por Sven Magnus. Versión cortada por Mundo Obrero.

Cada vez más, amplios sectores de la población europea expresan abiertamente su desconfianza hacia las políticas para combatir en COVID-19. La reacción de la política tradicional es de pánico y se caracteriza por el paternalismo y la represión: obligación general de vacunarse y restringir la libertad de circulación.

Esa no es la forma de crear apoyo en la población. Para ello será necesario, como mínimo, escuchar los temores y las preocupaciones de las personas no vacunadas. Pero también hay otros elementos en juego. La comparación con Cuba es interesante.

Desconfianza en el gobierno

Muchas personas no vacunadas dudan, con razón, de la competencia y/o de la buena fe de los gobiernos que ahora quieren vacunar lo antes posible. No es tan incomprensible.

Los países europeos están improvisando desde marzo de 2020. No existe ningún tipo de uniformidad o lógica en las políticas para atacar la pandemia de COVID-19. Con índices de contagio similares las medidas difieren mucho de un país a otro.

En Bélgica, donde yo vivo, como en otros países en Europa, la improvisación era incomprensible. El gobierno belga esperó hasta mediados de marzo antes de tomar medidas. Eso fue un mes y medio demasiado tarde.

Si hubieran tomado medidas antes, la tasa de propagación habría sido mucho menor y se habrían evitado miles de muertes por COVID-19. Y parece que no aprenden de sus errores. La respuesta a cada nueva ola de COVID-19 llega tarde.

Aunque los expertos llevaban años advirtiéndolo, el gobierno belga no estaba preparado para una pandemia. Al principio decía que las mascarillas no servían, porque (todavía) no se disponía de ellas debido a una mala gestión. Luego, de repente, se convirtieron en obligatorias.

En septiembre de 2021 las medidas se relajaron en Bélgica con cifras peores, mientras que en los Países Bajos se endurecieron con mejores cifras. ¿Cómo explicar eso? En Bélgica se tienen que poner de acuerdo siete ministros de Sanidad para poder implementar una nueva política. Al mismo tiempo, los gobernadores y alcaldes introducen normas más estrictas o más permisivas y los presidentes de los partidos pulen su imagen a costa de la salud pública.

Cuando esa desconfianza llega a las calles y a las redes sociales, la extrema derecha solo tiene que meter el balón de cabeza. Atraen a su lado a quienes están legítimamente descontentos solo con mostrar empatía con su desconfianza en el gobierno.

Las medidas anti-COVID-19 en muchos países europeos fueron y siguen siendo un enorme caos. Pero, en realidad, la desconfianza es mucho más profunda. En la anterior gran crisis, la bancaria de 2008, los ciudadanos también fuimos los que pagamos el pato. Los bancos que habían especulado con nuestro dinero se salieron con la suya y fueron salvados. Y la gente común pagamos la factura. Es obvio



que existe desconfianza en la capacidad de gestión de una crisis por parte del gobierno.

¿Y en Cuba?

Ya en enero de 2020, casi dos meses antes de que los políticos en Europa entraran en acción, el gobierno cubano puso en marcha un plan nacional para combatir el coronavirus. Se lanzaron campañas masivas de información en los barrios obreros y en la televisión. Ni gobiernos contradictorios ni siete ministros de sanidad que se tenían que poner de acuerdo ni discusiones sobre mascarillas obligatorias.

El gobierno actuó con decisión e hizo todo lo posible para cortar el virus de raíz. Nada de promesas fáciles diciendo que íbamos a recuperar el ‘reino de la libertad’ gracias a las vacunas, nada de soltar las riendas demasiado rápido, debido a motivos electorales o a la falta de coraje político, sino medidas firmes.

Algunos ejemplos. El turismo, principal fuente de ingresos pero también de contagio, se detuvo inmediatamente. Los niños a partir de seis años están obligados a llevar mascarilla. Cuando quedó claro que las escuelas también eran importantes focos de contagio, se pasó a la educación en casa, con muy buen apoyo de la televisión escolar, entre otras cosas.

La asistencia sanitaria en Cuba se centra principalmente en la prevención y está muy descentralizada. Cada barrio tiene su policlínica y existe un fuerte vínculo de confianza entre la población local y el personal sanitario. Desde marzo de 2020 casi 30.000 ‘rastreadores de contactos’ han ido de puerta en puerta, hasta los rincones más alejados de la isla, para comprobar en cada familia si uno de sus miembros estaba infectado. En Bélgica la detección la realizaron personas anónimas en centros de llamadas, lo que no inspira precisamente confianza.

Mientras tanto, todo se centró en el desarrollo de vacunas contra el coronavirus. En marzo de 2021 tres vacunas estaban ya en fase de prueba. En la actualidad Cuba cuenta con cinco vacunas propias, una de ellas para niños de tan solo dos años.

Las diferencias en las políticas COVID entre Cuba y Bélgica se reflejan también en las cifras. En Cuba hubo 146 muertes por COVID-19 a finales de 2020. En Bélgica, con el mismo número de habitantes, la cifra era de casi 20.000. Eso fue antes de la variante Delta. Cuba no llegó a tiempo. Las vacunas propias recién se terminaron tres meses después de que la variante Delta empezara a proliferar. La rápida vacunación en Bélgica, a partir de finales de 2020, ha permitido reducir significativamente el número de muertes causadas por la variante Delta, al menos en las fases iniciales.

En Cuba la variante Delta en realidad llegó demasiado pronto; no había vacunas en ese momento. El pico de infección se produjo en el mes de julio. Esto causó

muchas muertes y sacudió el sistema sanitario. Esta precaria situación sanitaria se sumó a los graves problemas económicos derivados del bloqueo económico de Estados Unidos, la pérdida de turismo y el aumento del precio de los alimentos. Como resultado, hubo mucho descontento entre la gente.

A través de las redes sociales se ha intentado desde Estados Unidos agitar ese descontento y canalizarlo en protestas. El intento acabó fracasando.

Una vez iniciada la campaña de vacunación en Cuba los resultados fueron espectaculares. El 20 de septiembre, al inicio de la campaña, todavía había diariamente más de 40.000 nuevas infecciones y 69 muertes. El 13 de diciembre hay 80 nuevas infecciones y una muerte al día.

En Cuba también se vacuna a los niños a partir de dos años. El 2 de diciembre el 90% de los cubanos había recibido su primera dosis. Es el segundo porcentaje más alto del mundo, después de los Emiratos Árabes Unidos, y el más alto de América Latina. En Bélgica estamos al 75%.

2. Desconfianza en las grandes farmacéuticas

A muchas personas no vacunadas en Europa les parece sospechoso que el gobierno proporcione vacunas gratuitamente. Hay que pagar cada vez más por otros medicamentos. La sanidad cuesta cada año más a los pacientes y ahora, de repente, todos “tenemos” que vacunarnos gratuitamente. ¿No hay nada detrás? ¿Se es un teórico de la conspiración si se hace esta pregunta?

La gente sabe que las grandes farmacéuticas sólo miran las ganancias y no siempre se toman en serio la seguridad de las personas. Entre 1940 y 1980 millones de futuras madres tomaron DES (diethylstilbestrol) contra los abortos espontáneos y en los años 60 se les recetó Softenon (Thalidamide) contra los mareos del embarazo. Esas decisiones produjeron miles de bebés deformes.

La gente también sabe que las compañías farmacéuticas están cobrando precios demasiado altos por sus vacunas contra el COVID-19 y que están subvencionados por el gobierno, pero se les permite quedarse con miles de millones de beneficios. Cuando estas mismas empresas dicen entonces que es necesario otra inyección de refuerzo, esto despierta comprensiblemente la sospecha, aunque la necesidad sea científicamente correcta.

¿Y en Cuba?

En Cuba no existe una industria farmacéutica privada. Todas las vacunas contra el COVID-19 las fabrican laboratorios biomédicos de propiedad gubernamental. El 80% de las vacunas utilizadas en los programas de vacunación del país son de fabricación nacional. Aquí no encontrará precios escandalosos ni beneficios usureros.

En los últimos meses se ha demostrado que las vacunas también son muy eficaces. Por eso no es de extrañar que cualquier persona cubana no solo confíe en sus empresas farmacéuticas nacionales, sino que se sienta orgullosa de ellas.

3. Desconfianza en la ciencia

La ciencia real y la pseudociencia se utilizan a menudo para hacer publicidad de todo tipo de cosas aquí en Europa:

suplementos alimenticios, pañales perfectos, productos para crecimiento de pelo, móviles supersónicos... A consecuencia de ello la ciencia ha perdido gran parte de su estatus para muchas personas.

Además, muchas personas salen de la enseñanza secundaria o superior sin ser capaces de entender las estadísticas o su representación en los artículos.

¿Y en Cuba?

En Cuba la gente se enfrenta a la publicidad profesional solo muy esporádicamente. La ciencia llega a la gente a través de la educación -de alta calidad- y de medios de comunicación no comerciales. Incluso antes de la primera infección se explicó a todos los cubanos en la televisión qué es el COVID-19, cómo se desarrolló la pandemia en todo el mundo, qué se puede hacer al respecto y, por consiguiente, qué medidas se iban a tomar.

La población cubana sabía que sus científicos trabajan por el bien común de su país. La población lo constata casi todos los años, por ejemplo, en las evacuaciones preventivas de los pueblos y ciudades que se encuentran en las rutas de los huracanes, trazadas por los mejores meteorólogos del mundo.

4. Desconfianza en la solidaridad

Una gestión eficaz de la pandemia presupone solidaridad. La mayoría de la población, que personalmente tiene poco que temer de la enfermedad, debe solidarizarse con personas (muy) mayores y físicamente débiles. La vacunación es importante para un hombre o una mujer normal, y también para los niños, para reducir la circulación del virus en la comunidad lo antes posible en favor de los más débiles. La mayoría de la gente -también en Europa- considera que eso es una razón suficiente para participar. Esto también se aplica al cumplimiento de las medidas de seguridad.

Toda la cultura comercial y neoliberal de aquí le recuerda a la gente a diario su deber de desarrollarse, de hacerlo cada vez mejor en la vida, entiéndase, ser más rico. El ideal es la autonomía absoluta, no depender de los demás, ni mucho menos del ‘Estado’, pues de lo contrario se es un aprovechado.

¿Y en Cuba?

Las y los cubanos no están en una situación de competencia o de ‘sálvese quien pueda’. La población cubana sabe por experiencia que solo juntos pueden afrontar los grandes retos del país. Superar los problemas juntos es a lo que están acostumbrados, desgraciadamente hoy más que nunca. Ayudar a los vecinos, limpiar el barrio juntos, celebrar reuniones y tomar decisiones juntos en el lugar de trabajo, etc., es su forma de vida.

La solidaridad forma parte de su ADN. Durante décadas han enviado médicos, enfermeros y profesores al resto del mundo. Un pequeño país de once millones de habitantes, con diez veces menos recursos que Bélgica, envió médicos a luchar contra el COVID en lugares tan lejanos como Italia.

Esta actitud y forma de vida es la cuarta razón por la que hay pocos o ningún antivacunas en Cuba. □

Parte 3

Visión de un sandinista sobre la autonomía ‘Unidad, diversidad, interculturalidad’

Por Johnny Hodgson

La siguiente es la tercera parte de una presentación realizada por Johnny Hodgson, Secretario Político del Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional para la Región Autónoma de la Costa del Caribe Sur (RACCS) el 6 de octubre en Managua, Nicaragua, a una delegación estadounidense compuesta por Coleen Littlejohn, Sara Flounders, Monica Moorehead, Joav Elinevsky y Stan Smith. La transcripción está ligeramente editada. Lea las partes primera y segunda en tinyurl.com/v42fujfk y tinyurl.com/ykxpmzez, respectivamente.

En 1934, el Dr. Hudson, de la costa del Caribe, pudo representarnos en el Congreso Nacional. Cuando tuvo la oportunidad de hablar en el Congreso, cuestionó: “¿Por qué es que en el resto del país tienen carreteras; tienen puerto marítimo; tienen energía eléctrica; tienen agua. ¿Por qué en la Costa Caribe no tenemos estas cosas?”. Esto fue como hace 87 años. Podemos decirle que ahora puede descansar en paz, porque esas cosas por las que hablaba, las estamos consiguiendo.

En mi región -la costa caribeña sur de Nicaragua- tenemos 12 municipios, y en 2007 tres de estos municipios tenían carreteras y caminos pavimentados. Y hoy 10 de los municipios tienen carreteras. Nueve de estas carreteras están pavimentadas, y una no está pavimentada. Así que dos municipios no tienen carreteras.

El 25% de la población tenía acceso a la energía eléctrica. Y ahora, en realidad, el 75% de la gente tiene acceso a la energía eléctrica en la costa del Caribe. Pero no nos vamos a detener ahí; nuestro objetivo es todo el mundo. El tipo de desarrollo del que hablamos es un desarrollo en el que nadie se queda atrás. No podemos decir que nos estamos desarrollando, que somos más felices, que tenemos bienestar, si la gente del Rama no tiene la posibilidad de producir sus alimentos y tener acceso al agua y a la energía eléctrica, etcétera. Así que eso es lo fundamental. Desarrollo donde nadie se quede atrás. Y por eso el modelo es la solidaridad socialcristiana.

Atención Primaria de Salud es lo que tenemos. Esto incluye identificar a una persona que padece alguna enfermedad o encontrar a una persona que está embarazada, ayudarla a ver cómo va la evolución de su embarazo, brindarle atención ginecológica. Incluye centros de salud, puestos de salud, hogares maternos, brigadas. Incluye bancos de sangre. Incluye bancos de leche en la costa del Caribe. Tenemos tres bancos de leche en toda Nicaragua y en la costa del Caribe.

Así que es una enorme red de recursos humanos e infraestructura que se dedica a ayudar, y por eso fuimos tan eficaces también en la lucha contra el COVID-19.

Nicaragua tiene actualmente 77 hospitales. Es el doble de hospitales que en Costa Rica. También van de la mano con la cantidad de médicos que están especializados en medicina interna, en ginecología. Así que estas cosas son parte de un enorme esfuerzo democrático para asegurar que, como decía el Dr. Hudson, nadie se quede atrás. Nadie debe quedarse atrás en este proceso de desarrollo, en esta etapa de la revolución.

El desarrollo durante el gobierno sandinista

Al explicar el proceso electoral, en el año 2007 cuando hicimos esta estrategia de desarrollo, fue una gran cosa. Esta estrategia electoral formuló una propuesta y fue sometida a consulta con diferentes grupos de personas, diferentes sectores.

Pero en la costa caribeña -aunque Daniel Ortega estaba en el gobierno aquí en el Pacífico- en el país y en la costa caribeña, los neoliberales seguían en el gobierno, y la gente de la costa caribeña votó por el gobierno sandinista en 2014, masivamente.

Para que te hagas una idea, tenemos un consejo regional formado por 45 miembros. Ese es nuestro parlamento regional. En la votación de 2014, los sandinistas obtuvieron 30 miembros de los 45 escaños. Luego, después de los problemas [en 2018], tuvimos elecciones en 2019, y los sandinistas pasaron de 30 escaños en el Congreso a 32. Así que crecimos. Y luego vamos a las elecciones del próximo mes [7 de noviembre] en Nicaragua, y definitivamente las cosas que estamos hablando no son solo cosas que el pueblo ve.

Y te digo, nuestros padres siempre soñaron que algún día tendríamos una carretera. Y pasan todo tipo de gobiernos y nunca tenemos esa carretera. ¿Sabes lo que nos decían? Que es imposible construir una carretera hasta Bluefields, de donde yo vengo.

Nuestros padres trataron de construir esa carretera por su cuenta, tratando de hacer ventas y cosas para juntar dinero para construir una carretera, porque el gobierno dijo: “No, no les voy a ayudar a construir esa carretera, porque es imposible”. Y todos nuestros padres intentaron hacerlo. Hoy tenemos esa carretera. De hecho, se viene a Bluefields.

Nuestro pueblo siempre aspiró a tener energía eléctrica. Esto es una lucha. Es una cosa que cuando nuestro pueblo tuvo la oportunidad de mencionar o de hablar o de denunciar, dice: “¿Por qué no podemos tener el derecho a disfrutar de



Inauguración de la carretera Bluefields-Nueva Guinea en la costa caribeña de Nicaragua.

la energía eléctrica?” Hoy, más del 75% de las personas que viven en la Costa Caribe tienen energía eléctrica. Y el otro 25%, la mayoría está muy, muy cerca de tenerla. Ven el trabajo que se está haciendo. Y el acceso al agua - quiero decir, el 4% de la gente tenía acceso al agua, y 10 veces esa cantidad de gente tiene acceso al agua hoy.

Así que la gente ve estas cosas, y la gente está dispuesta a apoyar a los sandinistas por estas cosas, cosas materiales, pero también por lo que te decía de la convivencia comunitaria. La gente aprecia mucho que los sandinistas traten de poner en práctica lo que tanto necesitamos, la unidad y la diversidad, esta interculturalidad, la llevamos dentro. Pero es muy agradable tener un gobierno que promueva eso, que impulse eso, que luche por esa interculturalidad.

La diversidad solía verse como un obstáculo. El gobierno decía: “No podremos avanzar ni desarrollarnos si hablamos lenguas diferentes”. Su idea era la uniformidad. Así que la gente lo apreciaba, y las encuestas dicen que la gente de la costa caribeña de Nicaragua va a apoyar a los sandinistas en estas elecciones.

El otro elemento es la comunicación. Una cosa es el hospital, porque para una mujer en algún lugar como el Río Grande que necesitaba llegar a un hospital hace cinco años, hace 10 años, tendría que tomar un barco durante unos dos días si es un barco lento, o si es un barco rápido como nueve, 10 horas para llegar a un hospital. Así que no se trata sólo del hospital, sino de las carreteras.

He oído que ir de La Cruz a El Tortuguero son cuatro horas por carretera. Así que esos son elementos cuando se habla de desarrollo y progreso, etc., son elementos clave para los derechos y el bienestar. La gente pregunta: “¿Por qué luchas tanto por la carretera de la costa?”. Y me gusta contar esta historia.

Un señor tuvo un evento cardíaco en la isla de La Cornelia a las tres de la tarde. Lo llevaron rápidamente a una clínica. Y el médico dijo: “Tiene que coger un avión”. Para cuando lo estabilizaron y trataron de subirlo a un avión, éste se fue. Así que ahora está atrapado en La Cornelia durante la noche. Ahora tiene que esperar al menos 15 horas para que



MO FOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Líder sandinista, Johnny Hodgson

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el avión vuelva. Así que sobrevive durante la noche. El avión llega a las 8:00 de la mañana. Intentan que suba. Finalmente, lo suben al avión y llega a Managua. Entonces, ¿por qué la discusión sobre por qué un hospital en La Cornelia?

La Cornelia tiene 10.000 habitantes, y tiene un hospital que cuesta algo así como 8 millones de dólares. Así que cuando vas a la toma de decisiones demográficas, no tenía sentido invertir 9, 10 millones de dólares en un hospital para 10.000 personas. Cuando tienes cualquier municipio de Managua o cualquier municipio cercano a Managua - Chichigalpa, por ejemplo - no tenías un hospital. Y son como 300.000 personas las que viven en ese municipio.

Así que 10.000 personas frente a \$10 millones de dólares a 200.000 personas. Cualquier burócrata sentado en la mesa decidiría por los 200.000. Y si es un burócrata con un libro de contabilidad política, diría: “Esto son 200.000 votos”. Por eso tenemos que estar alrededor de la mesa donde se toman las decisiones, para influir en la toma de decisiones en la política. Así que finalmente se construyó el hospital de La Cornelia. Ese señor era mi padre, que sobrevivió, por cierto.

Y para que veas que el municipio más alejado de Managua de la ruta es Ocotal, que está en la frontera con Honduras. Desde Ocotal tardas cuatro horas en llegar a cualquier hospital de Managua. Desde Cornelia, te lleva una vida. Eso es lo que creo que se describiría aquí por política de decisión. □