



Act now to stop coronavirus pandemic

A PEOPLE'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

By Greg Butterfield

We place no confidence in the anti-science, climate-change deniers of the Trump administration, the pathetically inadequate for-profit U.S. health care system, or Big Pharma and Wall Street to address the Covid-19 (novel coronavirus) crisis. The truth is that only a socialized health care system that provides equal access and quality care for all, regardless of ability to pay or immigration status, can address this situation, which is causing fear and anxiety for millions of people.

The Affordable Care Act of 2010 actually imposes financial penalties on those unable to afford health insurance; an estimated 27 million people still have no coverage. That's not counting the millions more undocumented workers, and those whose coverage is so minimal as to be useless. The infrastructure required to contain and treat outbreaks such as Covid-19 exists in countries like China and Cuba, but is sorely lacking in the United States, the richest country in the world, where the disparity of rich and poor is also greatest.

In New York, workers at Chipotle restaurants have held picket lines and walkouts to protest the company's refusal to honor sick days. In Ohio, police in riot gear attacked University of Dayton students with tear gas and pepper balls on March 11, when they protested being abruptly evicted from student housing as the college shut down. Housing activists in Boston rallied on March 12 to demand a moratorium on evictions.

In Baltimore, community organizations led by the Peoples Power Assembly held a news conference and rally on March 7 to outline a people's response to the Covid-19 crisis and demand action from city officials to protect the poorest and most vulnerable. Two days later in New Orleans, activists from the Hospitality Workers Alliance disrupted a mayoral press event, demanding that workers be provided with paid sick leave, health insurance and free testing for the virus.

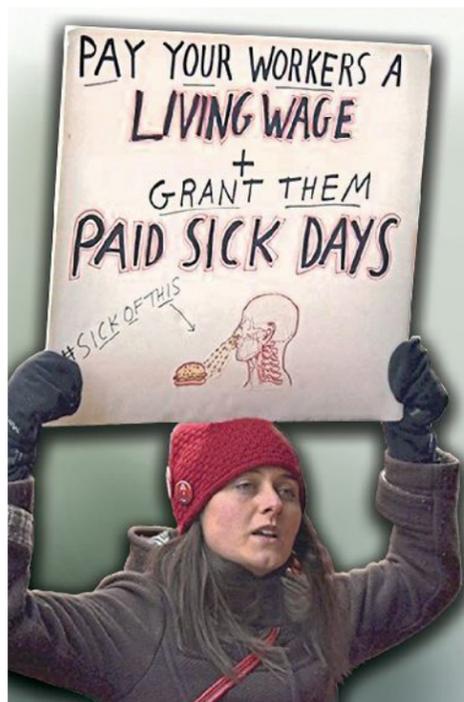
In Chicago, Augusta, Ga., and several California cities, National Nurses United held rallies at hospitals on March 11 to protest new Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations rolling back protections for health workers and patients.

Given the potentially life-or-death consequences, it's no wonder that workers, students and communities are starting to take action across the country. What is urgently needed is to unite these local initiatives into a broad national movement whose demands address all the urgent needs of the workers and oppressed.

Can't wait for November elections to respond

For an effective response to Covid-19 to succeed, it must involve the leadership of health care workers and members of the affected communities at all levels. The response to the Covid-19 crisis cannot wait for the outcome of the November elections.

As workers, organized and unorganized, unem-



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ployed and underemployed, Black, Latinx, Asian, Arab, Indigenous and white, undocumented people, women, LGBTQ2S people, students and youth, prisoners, homeless and disabled people, we must apply all forms of pressure to force the government to take the necessary measures for control and treatment of Covid-19, while ensuring that anti-Asian racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination against our communities or attacks on other countries are not substituted for real solutions.

If the government fails to respond, what can be done? We must be prepared to take direct action to protect our class and communities, including taking over health care and other facilities in cooperation with health care workers and their unions, requisitioning medications and supplies, distributing food stores, and imposing a moratorium on rent and layoffs.

✓ We must demand that all candidates for the U.S. presidency and other elected offices, as well as current elected officials, take a clear position. In particular, Bernie Sanders, who advocates Medicare for all, and the Sanders 2020 campaign, which has the most progressive stance on health care of all the Democratic and Republican campaigns, should be encouraged to participate on this question.

✓ We will not allow local, state or national "emergency declarations" to be used as an excuse for repression: for banning protests and strikes; nor for increasing the police occupation of Black and Brown communities; for jailing or deporting immigrants; or for the deployment of the National Guard or other military forces to prevent "looting," that is, the liberation of the necessities of life and health from profiteers.

✓ We demand that the U.S. government institute cooperation and assistance to other countries fighting the spread of Covid-19. We have seen how the Trump administration used the outbreak in Wuhan to score political points against China while sitting on its hands and doing nothing to assist in stopping the spread of the virus either here or abroad. This is unacceptable. The Covid-19 crisis is an international crisis and solving it requires international cooperation.

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Baltimore People's Proposals for Covid-19

Baltimore People's Power Assembly

As health care workers and advocates and as community, civil rights and union organizers, we call on City and State officials to begin preparations to protect the people of Baltimore, especially those most vulnerable, for a COVID-19 outbreak in our community.

We believe there are special considerations to be addressed in Baltimore. For instance, most of our population are low wage workers living paycheck to paycheck; close to 25% live below the poverty line; and a large number of people regardless of age have chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease that put them at greater risk for death.

Concerns for the elderly and the poor, the homeless, prisoners and our immigrant population need to be addressed sooner rather than later.

These considerations are not only critical for Baltimore but for workers and the poor across the State of Maryland. As such, we are disseminating this to the Governor, State and Senate Delegates also.

We therefore request a meeting with the Baltimore City Health Department — and other political officials and leaders so that we can jointly address our specific concerns and our proposals.

Concrete proposals and questions:

- Full paid sick and childcare leave to all impacted workers for the duration of the time that workers are forced to be off their jobs. This includes workers who are sick or quarantined and also school workers including teacher support staff, custodial workers, etc. It includes parents who are forced to stay home with children.
- No reprisals or job losses for workers who are sick, quarantined or taking care of school children or family members.
- Halt evictions and foreclosures for those who are sick, quarantined or cannot work due to the crisis.
- Develop a plan on how food can be distributed and delivered to vulnerable families and individuals who cannot — stockpile supplies.
- A large number of school children in Baltimore City depend on school provided lunches. Implement a plan in each school to deliver lunches to children in the event of school closing. Include teachers, their union, and parents in this plan.
- Provide a phone hotline staffed by medical professionals so that those who do not have primary doctors or nurses can get clear health instructions so that testing and other home services can be coordinated.

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Dinner honors revolutionary activist Tomás Soto

By Bill Dores

One hundred and fifteen people packed a restaurant in the Dominican Republic city of Santiago on Feb. 29 to honor the life and work of Puerto Rican revolutionary activist Tomás Soto. Reservations had been made for 50. Soto now lives in Santiago and is battling cancer.

Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 1943 and raised in Guánica, Puerto Rico, Soto was radicalized while serving in the U.S. Army in Vietnam. He played a leading role in many struggles in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. These included fighting for open admissions at City College of New York in 1969, organizing Vietnam veterans against the war and to fight for jobs and compensation for time lost in service, and founding the Prisoners Solidarity Committee to support prisoners fighting for justice inside U.S. prisons.

The highlight of the evening was a slideshow presentation by Soto. Reflecting his love of science, the slideshow started with the origins of the universe and life on earth, including evolution and human origins in Africa. It then went on to describe Soto's own fascinating life, which embodied many of the titanic working-class struggles of the 20th century.

Soto's mother and her family were Independentistas. He was raised in the barrio of Ensenada, where U.S. troops landed when they invaded Puerto Rico in 1898. One of his mother's cousins was murdered in the 1937 police massacre of Nationalists in Ponce, and he had kin arrested by U.S. troops suppressing the 1950 Jayuya uprising led by the Nationalist Party.

Soto's father was a founding member of the radical union local District 65, which organized retail and wholesale workers. During World War II, Soto's father joined the merchant marine and the National Maritime Union.

Soto was among the first U.S. soldiers sent to Vietnam. He was with Black fellow GI Elijah Seabrook on Sept. 15, 1963, when they got news that racists had bombed the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., murdering Addie Mae Collins, 14, Cynthia Wesley, 14, Carole Robertson, 14, and Carol Denise McNair, 11.

"Why are we over here when our people are being slaughtered back home?" Seabrook asked.

From that point on, Soto became a rebel inside the military. He was reduced in rank and taken off sensitive assignments. He left Vietnam



Bill Dores, Radhames Morales, Tomás Soto, Sharon Black and Angel Vicioso.

and the Army after being injured in a motorcycle accident and spent two years in rehab.

Demanding open admissions

In 1969, Soto found himself at City College of New York, where he joined the Black and Puerto Rican Student Union. The CCNY campus was located in Harlem, but the student body was 93 percent white. In the spring of 1969, BPRSU members seized the university's South Campus to demand open admissions for Black and Brown youth. They chained shut the gates and renamed the campus the University of Harlem.

Soto was charged with securing one of the gates. The administration sent Black and Latinx security guards to force the gates open. Soto gave them a speech, saying, "We're doing this so your kids will have a right to go to school here." The guards refused to move on the students. After two weeks, the administration agreed to a settlement that transformed the composition of the student body throughout the CUNY system.

During the CCNY struggle, Soto met members of Youth Against War and Fascism, a militant organization that included some of the founders of Struggle-La Lucha. He joined YAWF and led its Prisoners Solidarity Committee. It was a time when prisoners across the country were organizing against intolerable conditions. The PSC raised the slogan that "Prisons are concentration camps for the poor."

Prisoners Solidarity Committee

The PSC was formed in answer to a call from prisoners at the state penitentiary in Auburn, N.Y., who were being persecuted for demanding basic human rights. On Sept. 9, 1971,

inmates at the state prison in Attica, N.Y., rebelled, seizing one of the yards and taking guards hostage. They called for observers from people's organizations, and Soto, representing the PSC, went there. He was able to enter the yard and meet the prisoners. Soto and the PSC stood with the inmates and their demands for union wages and representation, union-run vocational training for inmates and an end to racism and brutality by the guards and administration.

The state evicted the observers from the prison when they refused to be used against the prisoners. On Sept. 12, billionaire Gov. Nelson Rockefeller's state troopers invaded the prison and murdered 43 people, inmates and hostages both. The PSC organized protests around the country, breaking up banquets and public appearances by butcher Rockefeller.

Soto was also active in the American Servicemen's Union, an organization of anti-war GIs and veterans. As the U.S. withdrew from Vietnam, many GIs were coming home to a jobless economy. Black, Latinx and Native vets had it the worst.

The ASU organized protests at phony, corporate-sponsored job fairs that provided business tax breaks but no jobs. At a fair in Chicago, Soto jumped on a table and asked if anyone there had gotten a job. The answer was "No!" Thousands of veterans tore apart the fair and marched through the streets of Chicago to Mayor Daley's house.

Soto worked with the ASU to organize thousands of veterans to march on the White House on May 19, 1973. They marched against cuts in veterans' disability benefits and demanded \$2,500 compensation for time lost in service.

Soto played a leading role in many other struggles of the time. After Ronald Reagan's election, he helped organize the May 3, 1981, march on the Pentagon. The 120,000-strong march and rally had speakers from the liberation movements in El Salvador and Palestine and from the LGBTQ2S movement, which were groundbreaking at the time. Soto helped found the Nov. 29 Coalition for Palestine later that year.

Working as a porter, he became a shop steward in Local 32BJ. He led fights for better working conditions at Helmsley Industries, the Plaza Hotel and the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. At the latter, the high-paid bosses who ran the church told him the workers shouldn't get more



Jacqueline Nunez, Tomás Soto, Marlyn Ramirez

money because they were "working for the Master." He was ultimately fired, but conditions for the workers were improved.

Puerto Rican Committee Against Repression.

On Sept. 12, 1983, freedom fighters from Ejército Popular Boricua (Boricua Popular Army), also known as Los Macheteros, expropriated \$7 million from the Hartford branch of Wells Fargo Bank, one of the colonial banks plundering Puerto Rico. The FBI launched a wave of roundups and repression against the Puerto Rican independence movement. Soto worked with Esperanza Martell, José Alfaro and other activists to form the Puerto Rican Committee Against Repression.

Soto was also involved in community struggles in his Washington Heights neighborhood. In 1989, he was assaulted and stabbed by a landlord's goons for leading a rent strike for heat and hot water in the building he lived in. He spent 9 days in the hospital.

He returned to Puerto Rico in 1989, where he took part in the independence movement and the fight against U.S. naval shelling of the island of Vieques. In 1999, he moved to the Dominican Republic.

Marlyn Ramírez, who helped organize the Feb. 29 dinner, described Soto as "a living legend, a great human being whom I admire and respect ... a caring and humble man of great accomplishments."

Radhames Morales, the U.S. coordinator of the Dominican left party Fuerza de la Revolución, also attended the event. He said, "I have the honor of knowing Tom Soto for many decades and I can testify that he has been a lifelong revolutionary militant. Tom worked on many fronts of struggle in New York City, but what stood out most was his ongoing work for the independence of Puerto Rico. His fight against the war in Vietnam, in which he played a protagonist role, and support for the Salvadoran guerrillas with their FMLN was outstanding. Tom also stood out in the student struggles in New York universities, but the front in which he impacted us most was the defense of the tenants rights in the Dominican community of upper Manhattan. For me, Tom Soto is an international militant who has demonstrated once again that the brotherhood knot that unites Cuba, Borinquen and Quisqueya is inseparable."

Members of Struggle-La Lucha from Baltimore and New York City also attended the event. SLL members did a video interview with Tom and are preparing a documentary on his life and work. □

A NEW BOOK <https://tinyurl.com/vn3qvn5>

BLACK AUGUST 1619-2019

commemorates 400 years of Black freedom struggle in British North America. This book examines the construction of a racial capitalist venture — slavery — where the histories of African, Native and working people overlapped.

Black August celebrates the legacy and accomplishments of Black women. ▶ The book is dedicated to Black, Brown, oppressed, and poor people who have been imprisoned and killed by the U.S. criminal justice system.

Historical series by Matsemela-Ali Odom • Contributions by Gloria Verdieu
• Carl Muhammad • Zola Fish • Mary Lou Finley • Dennis Childs • Eusi Kwayana
• Mumia Abu-Jamal • Curtis Howard • Poem by Sylvia Cameron Tafaró

STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM ★ LA LUCHA POR SOCIALISMO



California graduate students expand strike for cost-of-living adjustment

By John Parker

If you go on the website of University of California graduate student workers who are now fighting for a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to manage extremely high rents, you will see daily updates like this:

“UC Wide Blackout – today, March 5. At UCSC, both entrances to campus have been closed since 5:30 a.m. No class, no work! Come to the picket for food and community. Wear black! ...

“We are disappointed that UCSC administration, UCOP, and the UC Regents have consistently refused to negotiate in good faith in order to find an amicable solution to the needs of UC students and workers, instead choosing to retaliate against precarious community members and prolong strike activity.”

Those graduate student workers at U.C. Santa Cruz, members of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 2865, representing 19,000 student workers at the U.C. system, began a wildcat strike in December after unfruitful negotiations with administrators. They are demanding a \$1,412 per month COLA to meet skyrocketing rents in the area.

That militance reflected the anger at the news Feb. 28 that U.C. Santa Cruz had issued termination letters to 54 graduate students and the frustration of student workers across the U.C. campuses who pay well over 50 percent of their salary on rents, leaving little for food, health care and transportation, especially if they have children.

Veronica Hamilton, vice president of U.C. Santa Cruz’s graduate student association and chair of the campus unit of UAW Local 2865, was quoted in the Los Angeles Times on Feb. 28 regarding the challenges of workers: “Housing is expensive in Santa Cruz, and student workers have a difficult time living on the typical stipend of \$2,400 a month before taxes.”

According to the Cost of Living Adjustment White Paper done by U.C. graduate students, a one bedroom apartment in the city of Santa Cruz costs over \$1,800 per month, eating up 75 percent of that \$2,400 stipend.

And it’s not just Santa Cruz that has extraordinarily high rents. Workers at the Berkeley campus suffer from area rents costing over \$1,700 per month for a one bedroom apartment.

Instead of negotiating in good faith, the U.C. administration reportedly decided to spend an exorbitant amount of money in one week — money which could have been used to pay a liveable wage — on riot police bussed in from other campuses to intimidate and terrorize striking students and their supporters.

Yulia Gilichinskaya, a fourth-year Ph.D. student in Film & Digital Media who has insider knowledge of meetings with administrators, told Salon on Feb. 25 that the university spent \$300,000 per day on cops.

Students were beaten with batons and arrested. And this police violence occurred on other U.C. campuses as well.

The work done by graduate students with regard to academic achieve-



According to a Cost of Living Adjustment White Paper done by U.C. graduate students, a one bedroom apartment in Santa Cruz costs over \$1,800 per month, eating up 75 percent of that \$2,400 stipend.

ment, according to faculty, is irreplaceable. In fact, of great concern to the faculty is how the hostile tone of the U.C. administrators, especially U.C. President Janet Napolitano — who threatened the workers with firing early on — could possibly help contribute to getting the work of the faculty done.

“Napolitano never addressed who would replace grad workers,” James Sirigotis, a fifth-year Ph.D. student in Sociology, told Salon in that same article.

Sirigotis, who was one of the protesters physically injured by the expensive terrorist police force, noted that faculty members understand this contradiction: “What was the plan if they were willing to fire these TAs. How do you expect us to be able to teach? How do you expect the university to operate?” he continued.

The strike has now expanded to other U.C. campuses. On Feb. 27, U.C. Santa Barbara and U.C. Davis graduate students joined the strike.

After receiving news about the fired student workers many more grad student workers joined the strike and pledged to not accept any of those newly opened positions. According to the grad students’ website:

“About 80 grad students withheld Fall grades and, as of Feb. 28, are out of a job next quarter. Fifty-four had already received Spring appoint-

ments and were dismissed, and the rest simply won’t get hired (they received notice that they ‘will no longer be considered’ for these appointments). But the fight isn’t over! More TAs will withhold Winter grades, and 559 grads have pledged to refuse TAships vacated by dismissed grads. The strike continues. Together, we win! See you on the picket.”

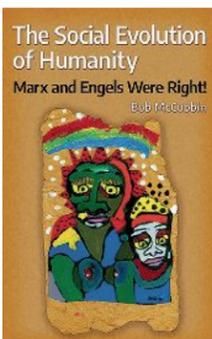
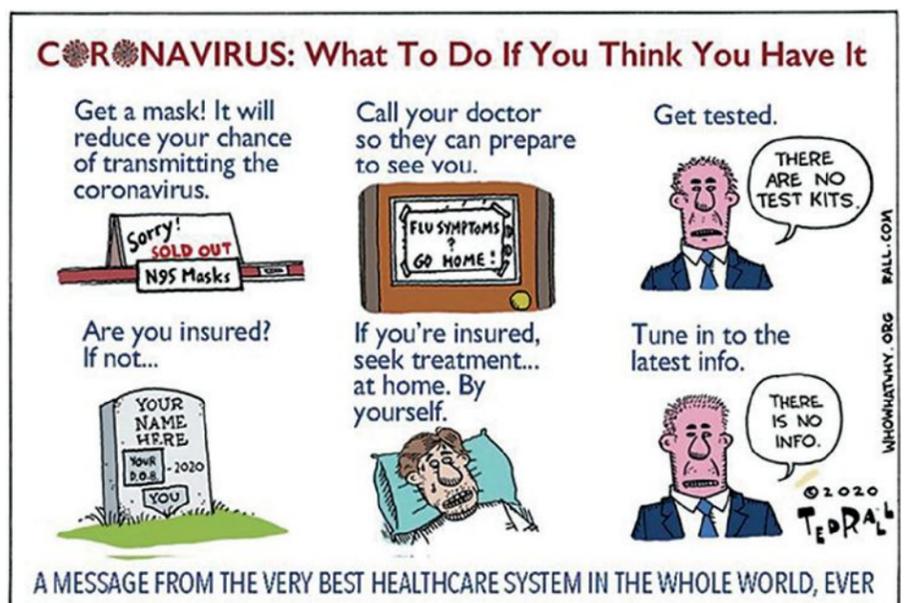
The U.C. administration, in an attempt to break the strike and solidarity, offered \$2,500 for one year, amounting to about \$200 per month instead of the \$1,412 requested. The money goes to all Master of Fine Arts and Ph.D. students at U.C. Santa Cruz only, excluding other master’s

programs and applies to graduate students in general, not to graduate student workers, allowing the offer to not fall under a union contract.

In a statement regarding that offer, UAW Local 2865 President Kavitha Iyengar writes:

“While we are glad to hear this news [of the \$2,500 stipend offer], it is not enough, for three reasons: first, because it is not under the framework of a union contract and thus not legally enforceable, it is not guaranteed. Second, it is limited to workers at Santa Cruz. As our framework for a COLA demonstrates, workers at every single campus are rent burdened and need this relief. And third, even with these funds, student workers are still rent burdened.”

To get caught up on the strike, you can visit the various social media sites for the nine U.C. campuses participating, found on the website <https://payusmoreucsc.com/>. 📧



Paperback or Kindle? <https://tinyurl.com/vwarcv7>

The Social Evolution of Humanity Marx and Engels were right! by Bob McCubbin

This study of the evolution of humanity focuses on human social/sexual relations and, in particular, the changing social status of women. It offers a selection of scientific evidence that updates and augments the viewpoint expressed in Frederick Engels’ masterful work, *‘Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.’*

McCubbin is the author of *‘Roots of Lesbian and Gay Oppression: A Marxist View.’* First published in 1976, during the first flush of the modern LGBTQ2S movement, McCubbin’s unparalleled achievement was to offer a historical analysis of when, where, why and how LGBTQ2S oppression developed.

Covid-19 in Baltimore: 'This is a people's issue'

By Daniel G. Cardwell

Over a dozen community organizers and health care workers met to raise concerns over the city's response to Covid-19. Members of the Peoples Power Assembly (PPA) and National Nurses United (NNU) called upon city officials, the Baltimore City Health Department and city residents to work together to protect the community's most vulnerable people.

Standing in front of Baltimore City Hall, Sharon Black of the PPA read a list of demands. They included paid sick and childcare leave for all low-wage workers impacted by the illness. That means no reprisals or job loss for workers who are sick, quarantined or taking care of school children or family members. The activists also called for the city to halt evictions and foreclosures for those who are sick, quarantined or cannot work due to the crisis, and for free meal distributions to students in case any Baltimore City schools are forced to close.

After the demands were read, Jennie Lu of NNU spoke to the importance of nurses having a constant voice in running hospitals and health care — not just during



Sharon Black of the PPA reads a list of demands.

times of crisis. She pointed out that an "abysmal" 29 percent of nurses nationwide said that their employers had a plan to deal with Covid-19. "If nurses aren't protected, then nobody is protected."

'Patients should not be afraid to seek care'

The NNU also demanded Johns Hopkins cease suing patients for medical debt, which deters people

from seeking care in the first place. When people can't get treatment, they remain sick and have a higher chance of passing on illness. As Lu pointed out, medical debt hurts everyone, not just the poor.

Longtime Baltimore Civil Rights leader Marvin "Doc" Cheatham responded to the City Health Department's recommendations for prevention: "We don't need you to tell us what needs to be done. We need you to

come work with us." Cheatham also stressed the importance of neighbors banding together, not wasting time waiting for officials to respond.

Bonnie "Raven" Lane also gave practical demands to help address the concerns of Baltimore's homeless people. She called on city officials and shelters to provide public washing stations and increase sanitation of public spaces, like busses and public parks.

Solidarity with people of the world

Black, Indigenous and Latinx communities are even more endangered by this pandemic because of poverty and racist policies. This results in lower

rates of health insurance coverage and less access to medical care. As the capitalist health care system fails us, Cuba offers to send doctors to the most vulnerable communities around the world. In Baltimore, labor unions, community organizations, activist groups and socialists are taking the lead in making progressive demands of city and state officials, while directly organizing the people to defend themselves from a crisis sparked by Covid-19 and a failing market. ☐

Act now to stop coronavirus pandemic

A PEOPLE'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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✓ **Iran is suffering a severe outbreak and its efforts are being hampered by U.S.-imposed economic sanctions.** All U.S. sanctions and blockades against other countries must be ended, including against Cuba and Venezuela, whose exemplary health care system and popular mobilizations in response to natural disasters are recognized as some of the best in the world.

✓ **In December 2019, the U.S. Congress, including most representatives and senators of both the Republican and Democratic parties, voted to give President Trump a \$130-billion budget increase for the Pentagon.** We demand that this money be rerouted from the bloated U.S. war machine to the international effort to stop the Covid-19 crisis and to create the infrastructure to deal with future pandemics. The many university research and development programs that operate in cooperation with the U.S. military industry should be repurposed for prevention and treatment of Covid-19, to save lives now and to improve the response to outbreaks in the future.

✓ **Before President Trump silenced health officials and abruptly subordinated them to Vice President Mike Pence on Feb. 26,** the Centers for Disease Control issued some advice to the public concerning Covid-19. One was for people to stock up on at least 2 to 3 weeks' worth of nonperishable food items in case of a Covid-19 outbreak. But how many of us can afford to do that? More

than three-quarters of U.S. workers live paycheck to paycheck, while a significant share of U.S. households would not be able to pay for an unexpected \$400 emergency. Outrageously, this "advice" was given as the Agriculture Department is poised to deny SNAP benefits (food stamps) to 700,000 people beginning in April and to decrease the benefits of millions more. The USDA rule changes must be suspended. Nationwide, about 20 percent of the population suffers hunger or is in imminent danger of going hungry. The government must provide adequate food to the entire population, regardless of ability to pay.

✓ **Another piece of CDC advice was for workers to be prepared to stay home from work or telecommute.** But how many workers really have that option? Millions do not even have access to paid sick leave. As a recent article by the Economic Policy Institute states, "The CDC recommendations all seem well and good but how does someone with no paid sick days or insurance cope?" The Homeland Security Act gives the president the right to declare a "major disaster," and allows the president to provide unemployment benefits to anyone who becomes unemployed because of it, including anyone unpaid because of sick leave. Declaring a disaster allows the president to tap the Disaster Relief Fund, which contains billions of dollars.

✓ **For Covid-19 to be contained and treated, people must be able to seek out and access health care and other resources.** How can migrant

workers and refugees do so when they are threatened with arrest and deportation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol agents? There must be an immediate, unconditional end to deportations. The tens of thousands of refugees caged by the U.S. across the country must be released and provided with adequate housing, health care and other necessary resources to live a healthy life. So too must the ever-growing population of homeless people, including families, and those housed in substandard, overcrowded and unsafe conditions. There must be a nationwide moratorium on evictions starting immediately. This would not bring down the economy. In fact, it would be a boost to the economy in general.

✓ **What about the prisons?** The U.S. has by far the largest prison population on earth, with some of the worst conditions, particularly when it comes to health care. Communities disproportionately affected by mass incarceration and the prisoners themselves must be put in charge of determining the necessary measures to adequately protect them.

✓ **According to Wall Street and the corporate media, the dramatic drop in the stock market was caused by fear of Covid-19.** But the profit system has been teetering on the edge of a recession for at least a year. Mass layoffs or wage cuts cannot be allowed to take place by blaming the virus. The government must institute an immediate moratorium on layoffs and wage cuts.

These are just some examples of

the measures that are required. Others will surely be raised and must also be addressed. Labor unions, community organizations, activist groups and socialists should take the lead in organizing people in every workplace, school and neighborhood to fight for these demands.

On March 11, the city of San Francisco and the state of Washington banned "large gatherings," while Washington, D.C., recommended cancelling or postponing any events of 1,000 people or more. The town of New Rochelle, a suburb of New York City, has been put under a "containment zone" for 14 days by New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who deployed the National Guard there.

Of course, many organizations, both mainstream and in the progressive movement, have postponed public events and closed event spaces to help contain the spread of the coronavirus. This is laudable. But the time may come soon when the risks of not taking action are greater than the risks of mass gatherings. And even after the current crisis is passed, workers and communities will likely have to fight to maintain and regain their right to protest, strike and organize.

The money, people-power and technology exist to respond to the threat of the Covid-19 outbreak and future dangers to the health and well-being of the people. But those resources must be taken over and mobilized by the people and for the people, not for the interests of the profit-hungry 1% who have shown time and again that they don't care if we live or die. ☐

Cuba: Better than ‘not all bad’

By Cheryl LaBash

March 10 was primary election day in Michigan. One of the major issues brought forward in the Sanders campaign among many important ones like eliminating cash bail and racist mass incarceration, is Medicare for All.

Sanders has been vilified for daring to say that Cuba is “not all bad.” The return to Cold War stereotypes about socialism and communism is a relic that has lost its punch with the younger folk.

As we experience the chaos reigning across the U.S. as the capitalist economic system and neoliberal government structures deal with the Covid-19 virus epidemic, let’s reflect on how Cuba’s medical system might handle this differently.

First, of course, health care is a human right in Cuba. Everyone is covered for everything up to and including heart transplants. The U.S. blockade has made it difficult or impossible to get some equipment, replacement parts, medicine and more, but everyone is covered.

This is the aspect that compares with Medicare for All. The health care systems in all imperialist and former colonizer countries reportedly have this universal health coverage — with the lone exception being the United States.

Cuba better than ‘not all bad’

But Cuba also has family doctors who live in the neighborhood — every neighborhood, urban and rural. They know the health challenges faced by the human beings in their community. They are the first line in preventing sickness, together with the Committees in Defense of the Revolution block organizations.

Why does Cuba have fewer infant and maternal deaths than in the U.S. per capita? The key is prevention before cure.

If we had Cuban-style health care, our local doctors and nurses would be knocking on doors in New York, Washington, Maryland, California and other centers of the outbreak to test and interview everyone.



A general announcement in the U.S. has now declared that everyone over age 60 should stay indoors. But what if they work? Need to use a bus or subway for transportation? Who will tell their employer? Will they be paid even if they have no sick time? Will their job and income be there when the threat passes? How will they get food? In the U.S., the only safety net is the one we create for ourselves with our families and neighbors, our union and co-workers. But that isn’t enough.

What should you do if you are feeling sick? We are told “call your doctor,” but don’t go there. Most people don’t have a doctor, just an urgent care clinic run by a variety of drug stores or other companies or their health plan center. Visiting these centers potentially brings more people into contact with the virus, increasing the epidemic. How many places do you call before you get the contact number you need? How do you do this if you are sick and scared that a potentially deadly virus is attacking your body?

This kind of question and insecurity do not stress the lives of Cubans because the responsibility to deal with social crises is not left to each individual to navigate. Solidarity and unity are their key to a life better in many ways than that in the U.S., although with fewer material things.

An ounce of prevention

An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure, except in the capitalist system, where the pound of cure rakes in megaprofits from Big Pharma and the corporate medical industry.

Cuba’s lower infant and maternal mortality and life expectancy equal to or better than that of the U.S. highlights the human improvement due to prevention-focused health care. And at a fraction of the cost spent in the U.S., where the cost is more than \$10,000 per capita.

Medicare for All and a prevention focused health system is not the end of the story. Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parilla called for international solidarity to defeat Covid-19. The foreign minister’s tweet reported by Cuba News Agency “expressed the need to strengthen cooperation among the world’s nations, as well as the need to see health as a human right for all and not as a business in the hands of a few.”

The article pointed out that “Cuba has already defined strategies to contain the risk of entry and spread of the virus in the country.” But also, according to the press conference statement, “Dr. Manuel Romero Placeres, director of the Pedro Kouri Institute of Tropical Medicine (IPK) in Havana, warned that Covid-19 is one

of the most virulent coronaviruses and is genotypically stronger, and if protective measures are not taken properly, the consequences of the epidemic could be disastrous.”

On a March 9 television program explaining Cuba’s special health preparations, Manuel Marrero Cruz reiterated “that Cuba is standing beside the Chinese government and people.” He mentioned Cuba’s modest contribution in providing Interferon Alpha 2b, with proven results.

In addition to following health procedures, U.S. residents must uplift the call to end economic warfare against Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, Zimbabwe and all other countries blockaded by U.S. imperialism. Medical and pharmaceutical research on a vaccine will benefit from open collaboration. China recognized this by internationally sharing the entire genome sequence for public health authorities, laboratories and researchers.

According to Dr. Trevor Bedford, quoted on Seattle’s Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center website, “Basically, a week after registering that there’s this new thing, the amazing scientists in China have a genome for the novel virus that had never been seen before. ... That first genome has been amazing for people developing rapid tests to be able to actually confirm cases.”

Baltimore People’s Proposals for Covid-19

Continued from page 1

- Provide free broadband internet service through Comcast so that all city residents including students without service can be connected for emergency communication and school work.
- Develop a free app that can be downloaded to phones and computers so that alerts can be sent out to dispel rumors and deliver people oriented preventative health education.

- Make sure everyone is fully covered for all medical treatment including testing and suspend debt in the advent of a major crisis.
- Protect all health care and frontline workers; consult with union representatives from the National Nurses Union, 1199 Healthcare Workers United, United Food and Commercial Workers and with workers directly. Make sure that there is adequate personal protective equipment for all frontline workers.
- Develop and distribute an app for all willing and able health care providers, nurses, doctors, EMS from the broader community so that they may be called up to act as frontline teams if needed.
- Make special provisions now for undocumented and immigrant families who may be fearful in reporting illness due to fear of deportation. This includes suspending all

- deportations and consulting with the immigrant community.
- Make sure that plans are being made to specifically service the homeless both in shelters and in the street.
- Address the rights of those who are incarcerated, especially those in city jail, to make sure that loved ones who are locked up are not forgotten and at risk.
- What is being done by the Mass Transit Administration to ensure commuters and bus riders are as safe as possible i.e. frequently cleaning?
- We ask that the city and state government dispel racism and racist stereotypes that have been promulgated during this pandemic and that accurate medical information be made widespread to the public now rather than later through TV and radio ads. It is critical that no community is targeted or blamed.

The people of Baltimore and the many organizations that they belong to are a tremendous resource that can be drawn on in a time of crisis.

The city and state government has the power to declare a State of Emergency to provide for the people and take action to promote not only people’s health and safety, but to protect people from evictions, job and wage losses, and much more.

Addressing these proposals protects the health of the entire population. Unless low wage workers, the poor and those most vulnerable are insured that they will not be stigmatized or suffer great losses, they will be less able and willing to self-quarantine. Unless we involve frontline health care workers and community organizers in being part of the solution, we will be hampered in fighting an epidemic.

—Baltimore People’s Power Assembly

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While millions here lack health care, U.S. bombs Iraq and invades Yemen

By Bill Dores

The coronavirus stalks the land. Millions in the United States are without health insurance or paid sick leave. The White House has cut funds to the Centers for Disease Control. It's also cutting food stamps. People are not getting tested for the virus because there are not enough kits.

But the Trump regime wants to bail out Wall Street and Big Oil. Not only with nearly \$2 trillion, but with war and sanctions, with bombs, missiles and blood.

On March 12, U.S. planes carried out air strikes across Iraq, murdering members of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units battling ISIS and al-Qaida. An airport worker also died when the U.S. Air Force bombed a civilian airport under construction.

The Pentagon claimed it was retaliating for an attack on a U.S. military base, Camp Taji, that killed two U.S. and one British occupation soldier. On March 14, rockets struck the base again.

Iraq's parliament and government have asked U.S. troops to leave their country. The Pentagon refuses to bring them home.

On March 11, U.S. Marines invaded Yemen to back up Saudi-United Arab Emirates forces attacking that impoverished country. They are on the island of Socotra and in the port of Aden. Yemen is being ravaged by hunger and cholera due to the U.S.-



backed Saudi blockade. The United Nations has called the situation there "the worst humanitarian crisis in the world."

In Syria, Washington is trying to sabotage a ceasefire negotiated by Russia between the Syrian government and the invading Turkish NATO army. Turkey's forces are backing al-Qaida terrorist forces in Syria's Idlib province with U.S.-supplied F-16 fighter jets and Israeli Sabra tanks. U.S. troops occupy Syria's oil fields, denying Syrians the use of their own oil.

"Turkey is a NATO ally," said U.S. "special envoy to Syria" James Jeffrey. "We have a very, very big foreign military sales program; much of the Turkish military uses American equipment. We will make sure that that equipment is ready. As a NATO partner, we share information intelligence. ... We are going to ensure that they have what they need there."

On March 4, the White House approved a \$2.4 billion deal to sell ae-

rial tankers to the racist apartheid state of Israel. The tankers would extend the range of the 50 F-35 combat aircraft the U.S. is giving Israel, making it easier for the settler state to attack Iran.

This is while brutal U.S. sanctions hinder Iran's fight against the coronavirus. Iran has called U.S. sanctions, which have killed thousands in the past two

years, "medical terrorism." China is defying U.S. sanctions to send medical aid—test kits, medicine, ventilators and protective gear to Iran.

The U.S. State Department's Defense Security Cooperation Agency said the Israeli tanker sale "supports the foreign policy and national security of the United States by allowing Israel to provide a redundant capability to U.S. assets within the region, potentially freeing U.S. assets for use elsewhere during times of war. Aerial refueling and strategic airlift are consistently cited as significant shortfalls for our allies. In addition, the sale improves Israel's national security posture as a key U.S. ally."

Meanwhile, on March 11, 15-year-old Mohammed Abdel Karim Hamayel became the 10,000th Palestinian murdered by the U.S.-armed Israeli military since 2000. He was shot by an Israeli army sniper while he and his friends were trying to defend their village, Beita near Nabulus, from "Israeli" settlers trying to

seize their land. U.S.-armed Israeli soldiers and settlers, often born in the U.S., terrorize and murder Palestinians daily in an effort to drive them from their homes. And people in the besieged Gaza Strip are still dying from the U.S.-Israeli blockade.

What's all this got to do with the economic meltdown triggered by the coronavirus? Everything. War is capitalism's answer to crises of oversupply and overproduction. That's what this crisis fundamentally is. It is devastating the U.S. oil and gas industry and the U.S. fracking industry most of all.

Since 1990, the U.S. has waged war after war to save the oil industry and its bankers from a global crisis of oversupply, to keep their investments profitable. War and sanctions created an energy-price bubble that pumped up corporate profits and made the U.S. fracking boom seem like a gold mine. But no amount of blood sacrifice can forever appease the god of capital. It always demands more. The crisis always comes back.

The people of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Yemen and the entire region have made it clear that they do not want U.S. troops on their land, U.S. warplanes in their skies or U.S. warships in their waters. They are demanding that the U.S. leave. The people of Palestine need to be free of U.S.-funded Israeli occupation. Working-class and oppressed people in the U.S. also need to be free of U.S. financial-military capitalism and its permanent war economy. We need to build a mass people's movement to put an end to endless war. ☐

ICE deploys paramilitary units against sanctuary cities

By Daniel G. Cardwell

In the wake of plainclothes Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents shooting an unarmed tourist from Mexico, President Donald Trump deployed a hundred members of the Border Patrol Tactical Unit (BORTAC) — the Border Patrol's equivalent to SWAT police — to 10 cities.

Most of these cities are sanctuary sites that limit cooperation between local law enforcement and federal police like ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Armed with stun grenades and sniper training, these units are now tasked with invading migrant communities around the country. Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Newark, N.J., New Orleans, New York and San Francisco are all targets.

As Democratic politicians rebuke Trump for what they call a political attack against the liberal policymakers of sanctuary cities, they graciously line their own pockets with federal funds from Trump's Operation Relentless Pursuit. The initiative increases federal police presence and distributes an additional \$71 million towards federal law enforcement in Albuquerque,

Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, Kansas City, Memphis and Milwaukee. It seems that liberal policymakers at sanctuary sites are more upset about the lack of federal policing money than they are about the assault on their communities. Moreover, it's clear that this is an onslaught from the ruling class on migrant communities and Black communities alike.

And as if this all-out racist attack on our cities wasn't enough, the Supreme Court has continually affirmed the state's right to terrorize oppressed communities.

On Feb. 25, the Supreme Court dismissed a civil case by the family of 15-year-old Mexican citizen Sergio Adrián Hernández Güereca against U.S. Border Patrol agent Jesus Mesa.

In 2010, the border police agent fired his weapon over the border from Texas, killing the unarmed teen as he stood on Mexican soil. Despite video evidence to the contrary, Mesa's claim to self-defense against "thrown rocks" was upheld by the U.S. criminal justice system, and the U.S. denied Mexico's request for Mesa to be extradited to face criminal charges in Mexico.

But the facts of Hernández Güereca's murder weren't at issue last



Border Patrol Tactical Units (BORTAC) are carrying M4 rifles with silencers.

week. Instead, the Supreme Court ruled on whether federal agents could be subject to lawsuits from foreign citizens in the case of cross-border shootings. Citing national security concerns, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that federal agents are constitutionally immune to being sued for killing people in foreign countries. Considering that the U.S. partakes in thousands of criminal attacks on foreign countries every year, the Supreme Court's apprehension over "national security" seems well-warranted.

The ruling had an immediate ripple effect in the courts and on the family of José Antonio Elena Rodríguez. In 2012, Elena Rodríguez was shot ten times through a border fence by CBP agent Lonnie Swartz. Like Hernández Güereca, Elena Rodríguez was killed for allegedly "throwing rocks." Though Swartz was the first U.S. law enforcement

officer to be indicted in relation to an over-the-border killing, he was acquitted of all charges. Now, less than a week after setting their precedent against Hernández Güereca's family, the Supreme Court returned the lawsuit against Swartz to a lower court. That makes two cases of civil-suit immunity for child-murder within a week.

The liberal justices, led by Ruth Bader Ginsberg, dissented to the majority-conservative court's decision. But that's all they could do within the confines of an unambiguously racist injustice system. A sanctimonious dissent is inadequate. When was the last time the Supreme Court affirmed the people's right to food or flu vaccines? Blocked an illegal war or unjust sanction? The Supreme Court continues to prove that its main role is to justify the wealthy capitalists' war upon oppressed and working people. ☐

Stocks and viruses

Don't let Wall Street panic get in the way of a much-needed coronavirus response

By Cheryl LaBash
and Gary Wilson

Holy cow! The Wall Street roller-coaster ride has taken a big plunge. By March 2, Wall Street stockholders had lost \$4.6 trillion since the Feb. 19 market high. The percentage drop is changing too frequently to keep up.

The media call it the Covid-19 induced stock market crash.

But how could that be?

Humanly, the COVID-19 coronavirus can be devastating, more devastating in the United States than in other industrialized countries because there is no universal health care system.

Economically, the impact of a pandemic will be a temporary slowdown. There is a fall in production as workers take time off sick. School closures increase the reduction in labor supply, as workers are forced to take time off to care for children.

According to a study published in Health Economics, the fall in production is generally short term and is usually restored when workers come back and work overtime. That might raise costs, but only temporarily.

The Wall Street bankers wouldn't panic over reports of a pandemic. The COVID-19 coronavirus has caused an economic slowdown, mainly in China. China's remarkable response fighting the coronavirus appears to have contained the spread of the virus.

The March 9 stock market nose-dive partly reflected the price war in the crude oil markets.

"Oil prices fell through the floor in early trading Monday, tanking as much as 30 percent after Saudi Arabia slashed its crude prices for buyers," CNBC reported.

"This has turned into a scorched Earth approach by Saudi Arabia, in particular, to deal with the problem of chronic overproduction," John Kilduff, founding partner of Again Capital, told CNBC." The overproduction crisis has plagued Big Oil since 2018 and is not related to the drop in demand during the coronavirus epidemic.

The virus-related drop in demand, however, is not a permanent condition and the industry normally has no trouble adjusting to known falls or rises in demand.

The continuing fall of the stock market reflects the general instability in the capitalist mode of production for profit. The economy was already slowing, contracting. Capitalist economies periodically fall into crises of overproduction, a major downturn, a full-on recession or even depression.

As Axios reported on the day after a 7 percent stock market fall, "while the [COVID-19] outbreak itself is unlikely to drive an economic collapse, the U.S. has been something of a ticking time bomb for some time.

- Growth has declined over the last two years despite higher government spending and a \$23.4 trillion national debt.
- While the labor market has boomed, many of the jobs added have been hourly service-industry positions that offer limited scope



Jeremy was told by his Chipotle managers that he couldn't go home despite having flu symptoms...

**Chipotle:
Putting workers
and the public at
risk.**

for savings or health insurance. 44 percent of all U.S. workers earn barely enough to live on, a Brookings Institution study found in January."

Bernie Sanders and Big Pharma

Business Insider reported on Feb. 26 that some on Wall Street say that the Bernie Sanders win in Nevada triggered the stock market fall.

"If this stock market reversal is due exclusively to the virus, then why is United Healthcare down far more than [the S&P 500]?" Jeff Gundlach asked CNBC's Scott Wapner in an email. "Why is health care as a sector broadly not outperforming?" Answer to these questions: The market is digesting a better than 50 percent chance of Bernie getting the nomination."

The pharmaceutical-health care industry is maybe the most profitable in the U.S. The pharmaceutical companies have the highest profit margins in health care and some of the highest profit margins for any industry.

Health care is an industry, not a service. And its primary purpose is to produce a profit. Capitalism has predominated over health care in this country, maybe more than anywhere else on the planet. The insurance giants have blocked universal health care for more than a century.

More than a hundred years ago, in the 1912 elections, former President Theodore Roosevelt ran as the Progressive Party presidential candidate on a platform that included support for national health insurance. Roosevelt came in second in the popular vote, behind Democrat Woodrow Wilson but ahead of Republican Howard Taft. Socialist candidate Eugene Debs, who won 6 percent of the popular vote that year, also supported universal national health insurance. The country has suffered without it.

U.S. public health care is not only by far the worst system among rich countries, it is much worse than that of many middle-income or poorer countries when it comes to confronting a fast-moving epidemic. And it is by far the most expensive per capita with poorer outcomes than countries with national health

care systems, including economically blockaded Cuba.

Distributing a vaccine is not that difficult — World Health Organization workers managed it with smallpox even in the poorest regions of the world in the 1970s. Mobilizing medical professionals to administer in-home COVID-19 testing nationally or a hotline to effectively direct individuals who feel unwell are possible. But how can that be done with a health care system geared to price-gouge sick people out of as much money as possible?

Of course, Medicare for All would fix some of the worst abuses being seen in the U.S. health care system. And everyone knows it. Bernie Sanders, calling his platform democratic socialist, is campaigning for Medicare for All, as well as ending student debt, stopping deportations and a \$15 minimum wage. But it's not the politician and his promises that Wall Street heard, it's the movement behind the campaign. Millions came out to vote, seen by many as a vote for socialism, a vote that says we can't continue in the old way. It's time for a change. That change zeroes in on Big Pharma and corporate health care profiteers.

Trump's response

CNBC reported March 8 that "as confirmed cases of the coronavirus continue to rise, President Donald Trump has quickly embraced the pharmaceutical industry." The solution, Trump says, will come from Big Pharma.

The Trump administration has decided to make the workers pay the cost of the coronavirus epidemic. The capitalist solution! It's something like his Afghanistan policy, where Trump wants to privatize the war, that is, to turn it over to for-profit contractors like Erik Prince, making a deal with the Taliban that al-

lows the U.S. to withdraw troops, but leave contractors in place.

The Trump administration has already made deep cuts in the funding of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC is the leading national public health institute of the United States. It should be at the head of any national response to an epidemic. Trump not only cut its budget, he has put a toadstool politician, Mike Pence, in charge of the response to COVID-19 and has overridden several CDC recommendations for responding to the coronavirus. The CDC has been practically pushed out.

Meanwhile, workers are being made to bear all the costs of the epidemic: health care costs, lost work days, even loss of jobs. Most are not paid enough to be able to take on the extra expense of the high-cost U.S. health care system. This, by the way, can only increase the spread of the virus and make the illness worse.

What's needed

The U.S. needs to make tests available and free for all. It must also deliver the necessary health care free of charge. That means everyone, including the jobless, prisoners and immigrants, no matter what status.

With a U.S. administration noted for crudely inflaming racism and anti-foreign bigotry, solidarity must triumph over any demonization of the sick or scapegoating of China or Asian people in general.

There needs to be full pay for sick leave, with complete job protection.

People must make a living wage to be able to meet the requirements of a health emergency.

The fight for free universal health care and a living wage has become even more urgent as the novel coronavirus COVID-19 sweeps through our cities. It's a movement whose time has come. 📌

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NEPAL

Mass march challenges U.S. military scheme

By Greg Butterfield

Have you heard of the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)?

Yes, it sounds like a company that produces cheesy reality TV shows. But the truth is more dangerous. And it has workers and peasants in Nepal fighting mad.

On Feb. 25, thousands of people marched through the streets of Kathmandu, Nepal's capital, to demand that the country's Parliament reject participation in the MCC. Many carried banners and signs in Nepali and English denouncing the MCC, while others carried red flags. The action was organized by the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP).

The angry crowd marched to the U.S. Embassy, where they were confronted by lines of police. After a standoff, a delegation of NWPP leaders was able to deliver a letter of protest addressed to U.S. President Donald Trump. Embassy staff refused to meet with them, sending out a security guard to take the letter.

At that moment, Trump was being wined and dined by the far-right prime minister of neighboring India, Narendra Modi. Trump's visit to India unleashed a wave of violence against Muslims and supporters that left at least 24 people dead.

Trump and Modi also signed a \$3 billion arms deal. The NWPP has led many protests against Indian military encroachment on its much smaller northern neighbor.

The letter addressed to Trump, signed by Parliament member Prem Suwal, says: "The [MCC] agreement is not only against the national interest of Nepal but also harms the sovereignty and national freedom of the country. Nepalese people refuse to accept the compact as Nepal and the Nepalese people always adhere to the nonalignment policy in the international sphere. ... It's an open secret that MCC is a project under the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the U.S. government."

Denouncing the MCC compact as a prelude to subordination to the



Kathmandu, Nepal, Feb. 25.

PHOTOS: BALAKRISHNA BANAMALA

Pentagon, the letter continues: "The people of the world are quite aware that the presence of U.S. military bases in different parts of the world is the main source of threat to world peace. ... The MCC compact is starkly juxtaposed with the sentiment of the Nepalese people, who have long been struggling for national freedom, safeguarding sovereignty, peace and prosperity."

What is the MCC?

The MCC was established by President George W. Bush in 2004 as a way of placing more stringent requirements on poor countries to receive U.S. financial aid. At least 45 countries currently have MCC compacts or threshold agreements — mostly oppressed countries in the global South.

The MCC is supposed to be independent of institutions like the State Department and U.S. Aid for International Development. But the selection process and program administration are overseen by right-

wing organizations like the Heritage Foundation, Freedom House and the Brookings Institution, which loyally serve U.S. imperialism, and its criteria are largely based on countries accepting market-driven economies, austerity budgets and cooperation with the U.S. military.

On Feb. 28, the government of Sri Lanka rejected an MCC agreement on the recommendation of an expert panel, which said it would damage the country's sovereignty and was incompatible with the constitution.

'Springboard against China'

Struggle-La Lucha spoke with Surendra Gosai, an educator and leader of the NWPP from Bhaktapur. He was part of the delegation that delivered the protest letter to the doors of the U.S. Embassy.

"The MCC and Indo-Pacific strategy is aimed at making Nepal a springboard against China," Gosai explained. "The U.S. and India are both preparing for a new war against China. The provisions in the

agreement will make Nepal a new colony of the U.S.

"We have been opposing the MCC in Parliament and in the streets," he said. "Today, some 5,000 youths, teachers, peasants, workers and people from different walks of life participated in the protest. We walked two hours and around eight kilometers through the capital city to the U.S. Embassy, where we handed over the protest letter. Many people in the capital expressed their solidarity with us."

Asked how poor and working people in the U.S. can help Nepalis resist the MCC, Gosai replied: "Joining hands and intensifying the anti-imperialist struggle would be a good way. Nepalese need solidarity and it's important to share with the workers and peace-loving people of the world how we are resisting."

Since the march in Kathmandu, Gosai has continued to travel around Nepal, participating in rallies and marches against the MCC in several cities and towns. □

Don't starve, fight!

By Stephen Millies

Ninety years ago, on March 6, 1930, over a million people demonstrated across the United States for unemployment relief. The Great Depression had broken out a few months before, punctuated by the stock market crash of October 1929.

By the time 110,000 people gathered in New York City's Union Square to demand help, the number of jobless had almost tripled. By 1933, 13 million people were unemployed, a quarter of the workforce.

Those were "the good old days" before unemployment insurance and SNAP benefits (food stamps) were won. If you didn't have family members able to help, you faced homelessness and hunger. New York

City hospitals reported 94 deaths from starvation in 1931.

The Communist International called for an International Unemployed Day on March 6, 1930. In the United States, the Communist Party and the Trade Union Unity League organized protests.

"Don't starve, fight!" was the famous slogan used. A leading demand was "work or wages."

"Last hired, first fired" is still the rule for Black workers in the U.S. It was worse 90 years ago. By 1934, 60 percent of African American men were jobless in Detroit.

Black and white organizers in the Communist Party made special outreach efforts to African Americans. Black, white and Latinx workers rallied together on March 6, 1930.



Children were among tens of thousands of communists and unemployed who marched on New York's City Hall in a similar protest in 1932.

In Detroit's Cadillac Square, 100,000 people gathered. Fifteen thousand people turned out in Flint, Mich., despite the police arresting the organizers before the demonstration.

Chicago's police chief claimed that communists were threatening "bombings and assassinations."

Continued on the next page

CIA secretly owned global encryption provider, stole secrets of 100+ foreign governments

By Scott Scheffer

Disillusioned former CIA operative Philip Agee wrote a book exposing the CIA's record of spying, sabotage and murder in 1975 called "Inside the Company." But until recently, few realized there was an actual profit-making company, owned by the CIA, that has been one of its most important tools in espionage.

Long-held suspicions that a joint operation between the U.S. CIA and Germany's spy agency, the BND, stole access to communications of adversaries and allies alike have now been acknowledged in a Feb. 11, 2020, Washington Post article by Greg Miller. The information theft was accomplished through a Swiss company called Crypto AG, which the two spy groups secretly purchased in 1970 and ran for nearly five decades. The spying was deemed "Operation Rubicon."

The CIA is rotten to its core and its mission is far more deadly than just spying. The Washington Post article is based on one CIA document, but there is a massive body of long-delayed acknowledgements, evidence and well-grounded suspicion that has been building up since the CIA's foundation.

The CIA's bloody footprints were clearly visible in the early 1950s, when they overthrew elected President Mohammad Mossadegh of Iran and President Jacobo Árbenz of Guatemala. In 1961, they were complicit in the murder of President Patrice Lumumba in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Months later, they were defeated by forces led by revolutionary leader Fidel Castro in their full-scale invasion at Cuba's Bay of Pigs — and are suspected by many of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy for the Bay of Pigs failure.

During the Vietnam War, the CIA's "Operation Phoenix" hunted down and murdered sympathizers of the North Vietnamese revolutionary

struggle throughout the south. They were caught spying on anti-war and Black liberation activists here in the U.S. in the 1970s.

From 1979 to 1989 in Afghanistan, they armed and funded the Mujahideen to overthrow the government of what was then the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan — a newly born, but short-lived socialist country. In the 1990s, they helped to dismember Yugoslavia by funding and training the counterrevolutionary Bosnian Army and Kosovo Liberation Army. These examples are a mere fraction of their crimes. We can only speculate as to how much of the information stolen by Crypto AG was used to help carry out much of it.

Crypto AG gave backdoor access

Until it was taken over by imperialist spymasters, Crypto AG sold equipment to governments that encrypted their communications with their embassies, military, trade offices, etc. When CIA/BND took over, new technologies enabled backdoor access so they could read everything being sent by client countries. The encrypted information was then decoded by the U.S. National Security Agency.

Differences between the two capitalist states prompted the CIA to buy the German share in 1992. According to Miller, Germany became concerned about the scope of the U.S. espionage, and the CIA was annoyed by Germany's interest only in profit. Under sole CIA stewardship, and up until its 2018 dissolution, Crypto AG still netted millions of dollars and remained an espionage nuclear weapon for U.S. imperialism.

Miller's article revealed that, through Crypto AG, the U.S. spied on Spain, Italy, Turkey, Greece, Argentina, India, Pakistan and the Vatican. Progressive author William Blum wrote in "Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower," that Iran, Iraq, Libya, Yugoslavia and other

countries were targets as well. Libya was the first to act on its suspicions and started buying encryption equipment from a different company. Iran took note of that, which led to the 1992 arrest of Crypto AG's top salesman. After he was released, he was fired by Crypto AG and was forced to pay back the money for his bail.

Over the decades, 120 countries used Crypto AG's equipment. The Soviet Union and China were wary, and both developed their own encryption systems. But the imperialists gleaned secrets about them from other countries' messages. They gained an edge against the Palestinian leadership and shared information with Israel in the days leading up to the Camp David talks. They shared information with Britain as it warred with Argentina and seized Argentina's Islas Malvinas in 1982. They were aware of numerous right-wing, Latin American dictatorships targeting leftists for assassination — presumably this would have included the Pinochet regime's 1976 assassination of Orlando Letelier in Washington, D.C. — and they did nothing to stop them.

In an NPR follow-up interview with Miller, when asked how high up in the U.S. presidential administrations the knowledge had reached, his answer revolved around the Camp David Accords and indicated just as an example that President Carter was fully aware.

U.S. media outlets are owned by giant corporations and report on capitalist government and corporate scandals to maintain the façade of a free press. Their allegiance, however, is to capitalist rule. Regarding the exposure of "Operation Rubicon," it's noteworthy that much of the recent coverage spreads the lie that the Chinese company Huawei, the world's leader of 5G technology, will open the door to Chinese espionage via technology similar to what Crypto AG has been doing. This is the line of the \$1.5 trillion U.S. telecommunications industry. This myth is part of the competitive U.S. corporate war against Huawei that has gone as far as to pressure Canada to arrest Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou and attempt to extradite her to the U.S. to stand trial on trumped up charges. ☒



The CIA's Crypto AG plant in Switzerland.

Continued from page 8

That didn't stop 50,000 workers from marching in the Windy City. Thirty thousand came out in Milwaukee.

Fifty thousand marched in Pittsburgh, while 30,000 assembled in Philadelphia. In Ohio, 30,000 turned out in Cleveland and 15,000 in Canton. Large demonstrations were also organized in Baltimore, San Francisco and Los Angeles. (Daily Worker, March 7, 1930)

Firefighters sprayed workers in Washington, D.C., with cold water as they approached the White House. New York City Mayor Jimmy Walker mobilized the entire police force to prevent people from marching to City Hall.

Walker's cops viciously beat workers with their clubs. Communist Party leaders William Z. Foster, Robert Minor and Israel Amter were arrested and sentenced to six months in jail for participating in an "illegal" demonstration.

Struggle wins some justice

A widespread myth is that President Franklin Roosevelt gave the people Social Security, unemployment benefits and the right to organize unions. None of these concessions were given. People had to fight for them.

Unemployed councils led by the Communist Party fought evictions and demanded jobs. During one struggle to keep a family in their home, Chicago police killed the Black activists Abe Gray, John O'Neil and Frank Armstrong on Aug. 3, 1931.

Thirty thousand people marched to protest this atrocity. Chicago Mayor Cermak was forced to halt all evictions. Everybody knew that it was the "reds" who won this moratorium.

A working-class upsurge began that organized millions of workers into unions. A 44-day sitdown strike shut down General Motors — then the world's largest corporation — and won a union contract.

United States Steel agreed to sign

a union contract, too. But not all struggles were victorious, at least at first. The strike against "Little Steel" — the smaller rivals of U.S. Steel — was drowned in blood.

Chicago's Democratic Mayor Ed Kelly had his cops kill 10 striking steelworkers on Memorial Day in 1937. President Roosevelt's cynical answer was to quote Shakespeare: "A plague on both your houses," meaning that both the labor movement and big business were responsible for this bloodshed.

But how could any unions be organized at all when a fifth of the working class was jobless? The 19th century railroad tycoon Jay Gould bragged that he could hire one-half of the working class to shoot the other half. Some workers would be so desperate that they would cross picket lines just to eat.

But the 1930s were different. All the anti-eviction struggles and hunger marches helped organize unions, too. So did the demonstra-

tions to save the lives of the Scottsboro defendants — nine young Black men in Alabama falsely accused of rape — and to protest Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia.

Thousands of protests forced Roosevelt to establish the Works Progress Administration, which hired millions of jobless workers.

Millions of the unemployed knew that the strikers at General Motors were fighting for them.

That's the spirit that today's labor movement needs to copy. The capitalist class wants to privatize both Social Security and the U.S. Postal Service. They want to get rid of everything that poor people won in the 1930s and 1960s.

Stopping the billionaire class from turning back the clock goes hand-in-hand with organizing workers at Amazon and Walmart. So does denouncing police brutality, defending immigrants and supporting Indigenous struggles. Don't starve, fight! ☒

CYCLICAL CAPITALIST CRISES Behind stock market turmoil

By Gary Wilson

March 5 — The Dow index just fell 12 percent in one week, the worst week for stocks since the 2008 financial crisis. Many wonder if this could become a full-on stock market crash.

Among socialists, there is always a temptation to paint a fall on Wall Street in terms of an imminent economic or political collapse. And while that is a possibility, a market crash never causes an economic collapse. It's more like a symptom of capitalism's economic instability.

On the other side, apologists for the capitalist system are saying that the momentous drop is merely a "correction." The capitalist economists claim that the global stock market fall is unrelated to the fundamentals of the economy, that the market has been gripped by coronavirus jitters. Just give it a couple of weeks and all will be well.

What happens at the stock market isn't capitalist production; it does not produce value. What happens at the stock market is a reflection of the conditions of capitalist production.

The stock exchange concentrates all industry, agriculture, commerce and the means of production into the hands of the stock exchange operators, that is, the biggest banks and financial institutions, including central banks such as the Federal Reserve.

But the stock market is an integral part of the financial industry, and its crash is a forerunner of the economic situation, not the aftermath.

A crisis of overproduction

Overproduction refers to cyclical crises of the capitalist system, caused by the anarchy of capitalist production.

Marxist economists often use the terms overproduction and overproduction crisis. But what exactly is overproduction?

A common conception of overproduction is based on an incomplete understanding of Marx's theory of surplus value. Workers get in wages and benefits only a fraction of the value they create during the workday. In effect, they work for themselves for part of the day in return

for wages (paid labor) and for the capitalist the rest of the day free of charge (unpaid labor).

According to this view of overproduction, workers cannot purchase all the commodities they produce and that is what causes the crisis. This is called "underconsumption."

The underconsumption explanation says that a capitalist crisis can be overcome by raising wages and expanding credit. When workers take on debt, it expands demand for cars and housing and enables other major purchases. Raising wages and expanding credit can temporarily overcome the "underconsumption-ism" inherent in capitalism, allowing the economy to expand.

Some have suggested that the current crisis is tied to the unprecedented expansion of consumer debt — mortgages, car loans, credit cards, student loans — to over \$14 trillion, and the subsequent rise in delinquencies, that is, nonpayment of debt that has now reached a level last seen in the 2008 economic crash.

Capitalist Keynesian economics is based on an underconsumption theory, that recessions are the result of inadequate consumer demand.

A major flaw in this underconsumptionist explanation of overproduction crises is the idea that it is only, or mainly, workers who are the buyers of all goods and services.

However, capitalists as well as their unproductive (of surplus value) institutions, including the government, especially the Pentagon, are also buyers. The capitalists are the buyers of the machinery, the raw materials, the robotics, the computer systems, and the labor power that is required for production. And debt is not just consumer debt, but business debt, capital investments.

On underconsumption, Karl Marx said, "It is sheer redundancy to say that crises are produced by the lack of paying consumption or paying consumers. The capitalist system recognizes only paying consumers, with the exception of those in receipt of poor law support. ... When commodities are unsalable, it means simply that there are no purchasers, or consumers, for them."

"When people attempt to give this redundancy an appearance of some deeper meaning by saying that the working class does not receive enough of its own product and that the evil would be dispelled immediately if it received a greater share, i.e., if its wages were increased, all one can say is that crises are invariably preceded by periods in which wages in general rise and the working class receives a relatively greater share of the annual product intended for consumption," Marx concluded.

A crisis of overproduction comes about because of the anarchy of capitalist production. Individual owners of means of production produce goods and services with no guarantee of a buyer. The inevitable result is a mass of commodities with no buyers (for many reasons, including a competitor's product being cheaper or better, the product no longer being needed, or ... you can come up with a few other reasons a product can't be sold).

Under capitalism, it is not possible to prevent or avoid crises of over-

production, because they flow from an irresolvable contradiction of the system, the anarchy of production.

In "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," Frederick Engels describes capitalist crises as collisions between two forces — production and the markets. Capitalists expand production seemingly without limit and are in competition among themselves to do that, but the markets expand only slowly if at all.

Since under capitalism, production cannot grow faster than the market, this contradiction is periodically resolved through a massive contraction of production, destruction of existing productive forces and mass unemployment.

This resolution is only temporary. After the crisis, and after sometimes years of stagnation, production enters a new powerful expansion that leads once again to a new flooding of the market — and a new crisis.

Current crisis no exception

Most if not all capitalist crises since 1825 have tended to begin in the consumer goods sector, especially residential construction. Other durable consumer goods industries such as the auto industry, which became important during the last century, also tend to turn down before the rest of the economy does.

The current crisis is no exception. The U.S. housing crisis is a construction crisis, a crisis of overproduction. There are more than 53,000 homeless people in Los Angeles, yet there are more than 100,000 vacant apartments and houses there. The housing is needed, but it remains vacant because it can't be sold for a profit.

The auto industry is similarly in the grip of an overproduction crisis. As CNBC reported last November, "Global car sales expected to slide by 3.1 million this year in steepest drop since Great Recession."

Automakers are slashing the workforce at the fastest pace since the Great Recession a decade ago.

The crisis of global overproduction in the car industry, sharpened by the race to dominate in the transition to electric and hybrid vehicles, triggered the latest gigantic merger, that between the France-based PSA (Peugeot) and Fiat Chrysler.

The aircraft industry was in a crisis of oversupply, as the financial press put it, which was relieved somewhat when the Boeing 737MAX was grounded. The financial press is now warning that the return of the 737MAX will trigger a crisis. "There could potentially be as many as 1,000 surplus aircraft next year," Reuters reported.

Indeed, the U.S. could be headed into recession.

A new recession will only increase the growing interest in socialism in the U.S., as shown in the Bernie Sanders campaign. Socialism, of course, is the only way to put an end to capitalist economic crises. That means replacing capitalism with socialism. Modifying capitalism can relieve some of the pain, but it won't stop capitalist crises.

Capitalism is a virus that can't be fixed. The disease is built into the system. Capitalism must be thrown out for the good health of all humanity. ☐

Rafael Cancel Miranda, in our hearts

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where the coffin was brought so that his people, those people that Don Rafa loved so much, paid their last respect.

The first stop was at the College of Lawyers in San Juan, where Cadets of the Republic, the Lolitas (group of women who commemorate the centenary of Lolita Lebrón this 2020) and hundreds of people came to welcome his body. Then, at noon, he was moved to the Puerto Rican Athenaeum where the program was followed. Then, we walked through the streets of Old San Juan towards the Cathedral, where a service was held.

Early Saturday, a caravan set off to Mayagüez in the western end of the island. In different cities there were concentrations of people with their fists raised waiting for the passage of the procession, with the Puerto Rican flag and with banners alluding to Cancel Miranda. In several places they had thrown flowers into the street, forming beautiful fragrant carpets. More cars joined as the caravan proceeded. Murals painted on walls and banners were seen saying goodbye to the national hero, with messages of appreciation. "Good-bye Commander!" and "The goal is reached sooner on your feet than on your knees," a characteristic phrase of Don Rafa.

In Mayagüez we arrived at the Casa Grande Museum, where the wake concluded. The next day, a mass was celebrated in the city's cathedral, officiated by the Bishop of Mayagüez, Álvaro Corrada del Río, who addressed the audience with a fiery message which he emphasized by hitting the staff on the floor, while making the crowd remember and shout the maxim of Don Pedro Albizu Campos, "the homeland is courage and sacrifice," urging those present to defend Puerto Rico, especially in

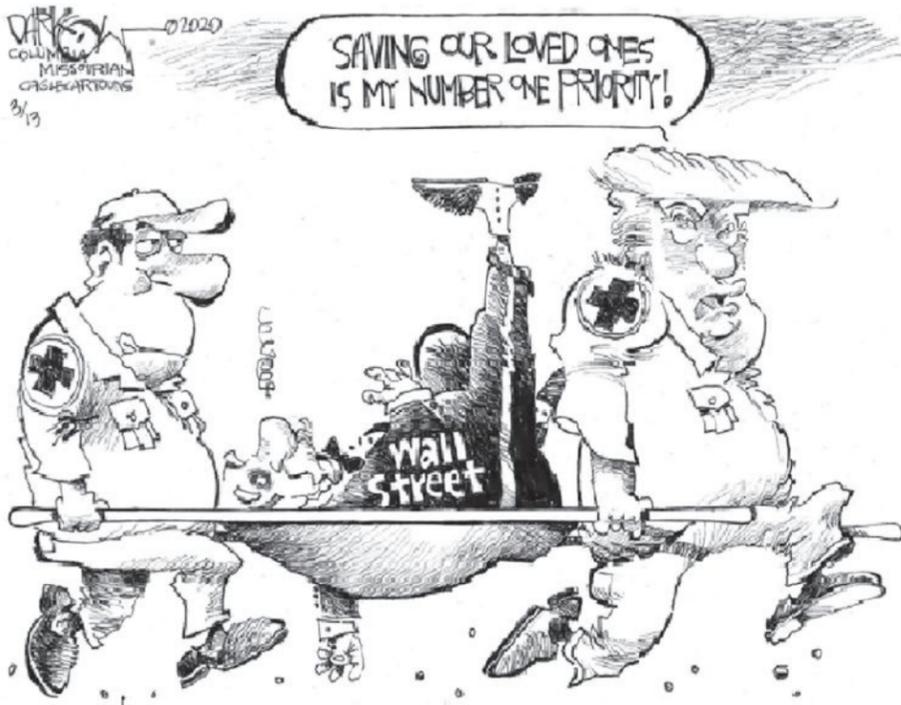


María de los Ángeles Vázquez thanks the people of Puerto Rico for their love for her deceased comrade. At her side, the son of both, Rafael Cancel Vázquez.

these difficult historical moments of neoliberalism and dictatorship of a Fiscal Control Board ruling. He ended his message with "¡Viva Puerto Rico Libre!"

From the cathedral we proceeded to the cemetery where Don Rafael's father is also buried. After a few words of farewell and exhortation to the unity of the patriotic forces by Rubén Berríos, president of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, whom Cancel Miranda had asked to make his farewell, Rafael, the youngest son of Cancel Miranda, spoke. He read a message from his father: "Do not cry for me, I am not here anymore, I am in your hearts. And I will continue there. What I do ask is that you always keep the [Puerto Rican] flag raised, that you always walk with your head held high, that you do not be deceived, that you do not become zombies, [because] the media aim to control our minds, that you do not fight with each other [independence] comrades. Who is the enemy? The Yankee empire!"

Rafael Cancel Miranda is now in our minds and hearts as a noble example and incentive for the fight towards the definitive liberation of Puerto Rico. Rafael Cancel Miranda, ¡PRESENTE! ☐



Trump bails out oil industry as coronavirus crisis intensifies

By Jon Queally

Climate action groups and progressive critics expressed disappointment and outrage on March 13 after President Donald Trump—despite a continued failure to offer far-reaching support to the U.S. public—moved to bolster the bottom lines of oil and gas companies by announcing a massive federal purchase for the nation’s Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR).

“Based on the price of oil, I’ve also instructed the Secretary of Energy to purchase at a very good price large quantities of crude oil for storage in the U.S. strategic reserve,” Trump announced during a White House press conference—surrounded by CEOs from major corporations, including Walmart, CVS, and Target—in which he also declared an official national emergency in order to combat the outbreak of the coronavirus.

“We’re going to fill it right up to the top,” he said of the SPR, but critics were quick to point out that move has everything to do with helping his wealthy friends and cronies in the fossil fuel industry, and nothing to do with helping average people now under threat from the spreading pandemic.

“Trump has once again put the interests of oil and gas executives ahead of the interests of people and communities,” said Alex Doukas of Oil Change International. “With this move, Trump has rolled out a plan to prop up U.S. oil companies before he has even bothered to guarantee paid sick leave for US workers who are going to be on the frontlines of the coronavirus crisis for weeks to come.”

The news came Friday as additional school closures were announced for states nationwide, grocery store shelves were wiped clean, and worry continues to spread about just how extensive the outbreak will become.

Greenpeace warned that the total cost of the oil purchase “could exceed \$2.6 billion in public funds,” a stark comparison when put next to the proposal put forth by House Democrats just hours earlier. Introducing the “Families First Corona-

virus Response Act,” which calls for an estimated \$1.7 billion aimed at helping working families and children to weather the public health crisis, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said, “The American people expect and deserve a coordinated, science-based and whole-of-government response to keep them and their loved ones safe: a response that puts families first to stimulate the economy.”

By putting his administration’s emphasis on bailing out the oil industry, John Noël, a senior climate campaigner for Greenpeace USA, said the president is doing the opposite of putting people first.

“Trump’s response to a global pandemic is to put billionaires and corporate polluters ahead of American families. There’s no evidence that this handout would protect jobs, pensions, benefits, or ease the hardships facing fossil fuel workers or communities confronting the COVID-19 outbreak right now. It’s nothing more than a gift to the industry that created the climate crisis.”

Doukas agreed, calling it “wildly inappropriate” for Trump “to abuse the Strategic Petroleum Reserve as a tool to prop up the oil and gas industry at a time when the White House should be focusing on how to help everyday people in the U.S.”

“Where is the relief for workers grappling with caring for their families, retail workers risking exposure every day, families grappling with debt and mounting bills while their livelihoods are put at risk?” he asked. “No, today President Trump focused on propping up polluting industries and trotting out CEOs to sell their wares.”

Despite the criticisms from those focused on the needs of families, it appeared the announcement during what was dubbed Trump’s “Shock Doctrine press conference” had the desired result.

As CNBC reported, following Trump’s late-day announcement, “crude futures jumped 5%” in the last hour of market trading.

Source: Common Dreams
tinyurl.com/u2ss24x

Robert Seth Hayes, freedom fighter

By Stephen Millies

Robert Seth Hayes was a freedom fighter who fought for all Black and oppressed people. The Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army member passed away last year on Dec. 21.

Hayes was a grandfather and political prisoner who spent 45 years in New York prisons until he was finally released in July 2018. On March 1, the People’s Forum in midtown Manhattan was filled with his comrades, friends and supporters to honor his memory.

The celebration of Hayes’ life was called by the National Jericho Movement for Recognition and Amnesty for All U.S. Political Prisoners. Co-sponsors were the ProLibertad Freedom Campaign; Call to Action on Puerto Rico; Holyrood Church Ministry of Solidarity with the Peoples; and NYC Free Peltier.

Claudia de la Cruz, executive director of the People’s Forum, welcomed people to the tribute. She reminded the audience that it was the 66th anniversary of when the Puerto Rican liberation fighters Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Irvin Flores Rodríguez and Andres Figueroa Cordero attacked the U.S. House Representatives on March 1, 1954.

Messages were read from political prisoners David Gilbert, Russell Maroon Shoatz and Leonard Peltier. Gilbert, who had been locked up with Hayes, mentioned how Hayes would work in the tiny garden that prisoners were allowed to care for.

Russell Maroon Shoatz has been incarcerated for 48 years, including 22 years in solitary confinement. Shoatz described how Hayes experienced a lot of suffering but was known for his smile.

Anne Lamb, of the NYC Jericho Movement, spoke of how prison authorities “spent 20 years trying to kill Seth.” They refused to provide adequate medical care for Hayes, who developed hepatitis C and diabetes as a result. Hayes lived just 17 months after being released.

Shoatz’s daughter, Teresa Shoatz, said her father had stage 4 cancer, a condition that could have been prevented by earlier medical testing.

Leonard Peltier, a leader of the American Indian Movement, also wrote in remembrance of Robert

Seth Hayes. Often described as the Nelson Mandela of Indigenous people in the U.S., Peltier is beginning his 44th year of imprisonment.

Mandela spent nearly 28 years in apartheid prisons. The jailhouse “democracy” of the United States has a worse record.

Robert Seth Hayes, Russell Shoatz and Leonard Peltier have spent more than 40 years in jail. So did Janet Africa, Janine Africa and Eddie Africa, who were in the audience. David Gilbert has spent nearly 40 years being locked up.

Free them all!

Pam Hanna, who was a comrade of Hayes’ in the Black Panther Party, described what a skilled person he was, including being a good cook. Hayes later conducted cooking classes for his fellow revolutionaries.

Cultural performances were given by Ngoma and SpiritChild. While Ngoma performed “Music for My Soldiers,” people shouted out names of political prisoners.

Brother Shep, a Black Panther Party veteran, offered a painting of Robert Seth Hayes. Ksisey Sadiki spoke of her father, Kamau Sadiki, a veteran of the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army who has been sentenced to life imprisonment.

Paulette D’auteuil of the International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee spoke of visiting Leonard Peltier at the federal prison in Coleman, Fla.

A statement was read from the prison branch of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine mourning Robert Seth Hayes. Former political prisoner Daniel McGowan, who had been associated with the Earth Liberation Front, spoke about Hayes. McGowan represented the Certain Days Calendar Collective, which produced a beautiful calendar featuring dates of revolutionary history.

The national chair of the Jericho Movement, Jihad Abdulmumit, stressed the need to reach out to people. He urged the audience to engage in “critical thinking” in how to broaden the struggle to free all political prisoners.

A frequent call during the meeting was “What’s the call? Free them all!” Long live the memory of Robert Seth Hayes!

Robert Seth Hayes, ¡PRESENTE! 📌

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TO CELEBRATE THE LIFE OF FREEDOM FIGHTER
ROBERT SETH HAYES!**

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DANIEL MCGOWAN, CERTAIN DAYS CALENDAR COLLECTIVE
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Rafael Cancel Miranda, ¡PRESENTE!

En la noche del lunes 2 de marzo Rafael Cancel Miranda, líder indiscutible del nacionalismo puertorriqueño, pasó a la inmortalidad. Y se podría decir que con la frente en alto, tal y como vivió, dando un último golpe al colonialismo yanqui. Su férrea voluntad le permitió cumplir con sus deseos: morir después del 1ro de marzo, aniversario de aquella fecha que en 1954 junto a Lolita Lebrón, Irvin Flores y Andrés Figueroa Cordero subiera las escalinatas del Congreso estadounidense para mediante unos disparos, exponer la farsa del recién impuesto Estado Libre Asociado en Puerto Rico.

Pero, aún más, el 2 de marzo tiene otra connotación. Ese día en 1917, Estados Unidos había impuesto la ciudadanía estadounidense, solo a un mes de que ese país entrara en la Primera Guerra Mundial. Y en el 2017, el depuesto gobernador pro yanqui Ricardo Roselló había firmado una orden ejecutiva para hacer de ese nefasto día uno feriado, el “Día de la Ciudadanía Americana.” Don Rafa, como muchas personas le llamaban, escogió ese día como su último, por lo que ahora, en vez del día de la nacionalidad colonial, se celebrará la vida de un inmortal de la lucha por la liberación patria.

Las jornadas de despedida comenzaron el viernes, 6 de marzo en San Juan y concluyeron el domingo 8 de marzo con el entierro en su ciudad natal de Mayagüez.

Fueron unas jornadas altamente emotivas donde el movimiento independentista le acompañó en las diversas actividades de despedida. Ex prisioneros y prisioneras políticas, el liderazgo y las bases de los diferentes partidos y organizaciones que luchan por la independencia, amistades, y el pueblo en general acompañaron a su viuda María de los Ángeles Vázquez y al hijo de ambos, Rafael Cancel Vázquez. Discursos, elegías, canciones patrióticas, poesía, y sobre todo, el himno nacional revolucionario rindieron homenaje a este nuestro héroe nacional.

La bandera de Puerto Rico siempre estuvo acompañada de las de Cuba, Nicaragua y Venezuela — países a los cuales Don Rafa le unía una profunda amistad revolucionaria — presidían las estancias donde se llevaba al féretro para que su pueblo, esa gente que tanto Don Rafa amaba, le diera su última despedida.

La primera parada fue en el Colegio de Abogadas y Abogados en San Juan, donde Cadetes de la República, las Lolitas (grupo de mujeres que conmemoran el centenario de Lolita Lebrón este 2020), y centenares de personas acudieron para recibir su cuerpo. Luego, al medio día, se trasladó al Ateneo Puertorriqueño donde se siguió el programa. De allí, se caminó en procesión por las calles del Viejo San Juan hacia la Catedral donde se ofició un servicio.

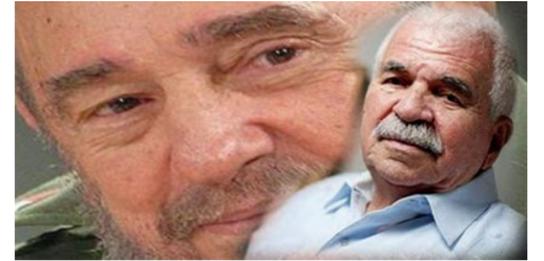
Temprano el sábado se partió en caravana hacia Mayagüez en el oeste de la isla. En diferentes pueblos había concentraciones de personas con el puño en alto esperando el paso de la comitiva, con la bandera boricua y con pancartas alusivas a Cancel Miranda. En varios lugares habían arrojado flores, formando hermosas alfombras fragantes. Según avanzaba la caravana, se iban añadiendo carros. Se observaban murales pintados en paredes y cruza calles despidiendo al héroe nacional, con mensajes de agradecimiento. ¡Hasta Siempre Comandante! y “Se llega más pronto a la meta de pie que de rodillas,” frase característica de Don Rafa.

En Mayagüez se llegó al Museo Casa Grande donde se concluyó el velatorio. Al próximo día se celebró una misa en la Catedral de la ciudad, oficiada por el obispo de Mayagüez, Álvaro Corrada del Río, quien se dirigió a la audiencia con un fogoso mensaje el cual enfatizaba golpeando su bastón en el piso, y haciendo que se recobrara la máxima de Don Pedro Albizu Campos, “la patria es valor y sacrificio,” instando a las y los presentes a que defendamos a Puerto Rico, sobre todo en estos tan difíciles momentos históricos de neoliberalismo y dictadura de un Junta de Control Fiscal. Terminó su mensaje con un “¡Viva Puerto Rico Libre!”

De la catedral se procedió al cementerio donde yace también el padre de Don Rafael. Luego de unas palabras de despedida y exhortación a la uni-

dad de las fuerzas patrióticas por Rubén Berríos, presidente del Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, a quien Cancel Miranda había pedido que hiciera su despedida, habló Rafael, el hijo menor de Cancel Miranda. Leyó palabras de su padre “no me lloren, que yo no estoy aquí ya, yo estoy en sus corazones. Y ahí seguiré. Lo que sí les pido es que siempre tengan esa bandera en alto, que siempre caminen con la frente en alto, que no se dejen engañar, que no sean zombis, que nos controlan la mente los medios de comunicación, que no peleen con los demás compañeros [independentistas], ¿quién es el enemigo? ¡El imperio yanqui!”

Rafael Cancel Miranda está ahora en nuestras mentes y nuestros corazones como un ejemplo digno e incentivo para la lucha por la definitiva liberación de Puerto Rico. Rafael Cancel Miranda, ¡PRESENTE!



Puerto Rican liberation fighters who opened fire inside the United States Capitol in 1954: Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda and Andrés Figueroa Cordero. Not pictured: Irving Flores Rodríguez.



El hijo de Don Rafa, Rafael Cancel Vázquez, (derecha al frente con guayabera blanca) ayuda a llevar el féretro de su padre.



Oscar López (izquierda con camisa negra) y Don Heriberto Marín (a la derecha con camisa negra) quien luchó en el levantamiento del 1950, escuchan palabras del obispo de Mayagüez.

Rafael Cancel Miranda, in our hearts

On the night of Monday, March 2, Rafael Cancel Miranda, the undisputed leader of Puerto Rican nationalism, passed into immortality. And it could be said that it is with his head held high, just as he lived, offering a last blow to Yankee colonialism. In spite of the illness that threatened his body, his strong willpower allowed him to fulfill his wishes: to die after March 1, the anniversary of that day when in 1954, along with Lolita Lebrón, Irvin Flores and Andrés Figueroa Cordero, he climbed the steps of the United States Congress to shoot out the farce of the recently imposed Commonwealth status in Puerto Rico.

But, even more, March 2 has another connotation. On that day in 1917, the United States had imposed American citizenship, only a month before that country entered into World War I. And in 2017, the deposed pro-Yankee governor Ricardo Roselló had signed an executive order to make that nefarious day a holiday, “American Citizenship Day.” Don Rafa, as many people called him, chose that day as his last, so now, instead of the day of colonial nationality, the life of an immortal in the struggle for the liberation of the country will be celebrated.

The farewell days began on Friday, March 6, in San Juan and ended on Sunday, March 8, with the burial in his beloved hometown of Mayagüez.

They were highly emotional days where the independence movement accompanied him in the various farewell activities. Former Puerto Rican political prisoners, the leadership and the bases of the different parties and organizations that fight for independence, friends and the people in general accompanied his widow María de los Ángeles Vázquez and their son, Rafael Cancel Vázquez. Speeches, elegies, patriotic songs, poetry, and above all, the revolutionary national anthem paid tribute to our national hero.

The flag of Puerto Rico was always accompanied by those of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela — countries with which Don Rafa had a deep revolutionary friendship — presiding over the rooms

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