



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

Climate strikers demand system change

written by Struggle - La Lucha
September 27, 2019



New York City. SLL photo: Sharon Black

Millions took part in the historic, youth-led, global climate strike on Sept. 20. At least 5,000 actions were held in 163 countries, kicking off a week of civil disobedience, news conferences, organizing events and more to combat the growing capitalist climate crisis.

From the **Philippines** to **Afghanistan**, from **South Africa** to **Puerto Rico**, oppressed people living on the front lines of climate change and imperialist wars led the way and set the tone.



New York City. SLL photo: Greg Butterfield

In the U.S., the largest protest took place in **New York**, where 250,000 marched from Foley Square to Battery Park — the majority of them multinational, high school students. The pressure for mass walkouts from public schools was so great that city officials gave the youth permission to skip classes that day, trying to blunt the impact of a mass strike.

The mood in Manhattan's streets was militant and passionately anti-capitalist. "System change, not climate change" was a slogan seen on many of the thousands of handcrafted protest signs calling out the profit system and big business for their

culpability in the growing environmental catastrophe. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Amazon.com were also slammed hard: “The wrong ICE is melting, the wrong Amazon is burning.”

A banner from Struggle-La Lucha, “The Pentagon: world’s biggest polluter. Shut it down!” was very popular, as was a second banner from the Socialist Unity Party declaring, “No more blood for Big Oil profits — U.S. hands off Iran and Venezuela.” Many young people as well as older marchers stopped to have their photos taken with the banners, snapped up newspapers and fliers, and expressed their support for the anti-war, anti-imperialist demands.

Unions also joined the massive demonstration, including 1199SEIU, the New York State Nurses Association, the United Federation of Teachers and the Communication Workers.

Speakers at Battery Park conveyed a strongly anti-colonial, pro-Indigenous message, with young people from many nationalities speaking. Many climate strikers stayed through the hot afternoon to hear Greta Thunberg, the 16-year-old activist whose one-person climate strike outside the Swedish Parliament helped inspire the global movement.

Thunberg has both inspired millions of young people to take to the streets, and become a reviled figure for climate change deniers like Donald Trump and big capitalists, who fear the revolutionary potential that message could unleash. Her intensity and uncompromising demands that governments and politicians acknowledge the scientific reality of climate change and the urgent need for action to save lives was on full display at the [U.N. Climate Action Summit](#), where she hurled the charge of “How dare you!” at the assembled politicians.

But [Thunberg isn’t alone](#) in giving a voice to the movement. The climate strike has introduced many to young leaders like Autumn Peltier, a 13-year-old water protector

from the Indigenous Wikwemikong First Nation; 17-year-old Mexican-born, New York activist Xiye Bastida; and African American Mari Copeny, a 12-year-old from Flint, Mich., who is helping lead the fight for clean water in her hometown.



San Diego. SLL photo: Gloria Verdieu

Youth, workers fight for climate justice

Struggle-La Lucha's Gloria Verdieu reports: "There were walkouts at high schools and universities throughout **San Diego**. I went to the one close to where I live at San Diego State University. Hundreds of students walked out of class. There were

also faculty, community and some city council members.

“The message was that now is the time for action against climate change. After marching through the campus, a rally began with a message from Greta Thunberg, who said, ‘No company on earth has a climate change strategy that is good enough.’”



Seattle Amazon workers walk out. Photo: Amazon Employees for Climate Justice

In **Seattle**, more than 1,700 Amazon.com workers walked out of the company’s headquarters to join the Climate Strike. Organized by the group [Amazon Employees for Climate Justice](#), they struck the behemoth company to demand that billionaire CEO Jeff Bezos pledge for the company to reach zero emissions by 2030 and stop providing cloud computing services to oil and gas companies. They were joined by workers from Google and other tech giants who merged with the student-led march to City Hall.



Baltimore. SLL photo: Emma Rose

“Over five hundred **Baltimore** youth and students came together on Sept. 20 to participate in the Global Climate Strike,” reports Emma Rose. “Middle and high school students from city schools, including Baltimore Polytechnic, City College High School and the Baltimore School for the Arts, as well as students from local colleges, gathered to declare to government officials and the world that they will not stand for climate change denial and disregard.

“Students demanded a better future for themselves and their peers. One youth held a sign calling attention to the recent climate disasters ignored by the U.S.: ‘I strike for the 4,000+ Boricuas that died after Hurricane María and our friends in the Bahamas.’

“Youth and supporters marched from Baltimore Inner Harbor to City Hall. Organizers of the rally set up an open mic where dozens of youth got a chance to speak. One Bryn Mawr high school student organizer declared: ‘By striking, we support a global movement which demands a Green New Deal, respect for Indigenous land and sovereignty, environmental justice, protection and restoration of biodiversity, and sustainable agriculture.’”



Boston. Photo: UAINÉ

‘Earth before profits’

According to M. Tiahui, “Huge crowds in **Boston** for the Climate Strike. We were proud that there were four Indigenous speakers on the program. Thousands of people heard messages about climate justice and the need to center Indigenous knowledge and sovereignty.”

One of those speakers was Mahtowin Munro, co-leader of United American Indians of New England, who said: “Profound climate change happened in this hemisphere following the invasion of Columbus and the other European colonizers that would follow. The changes were due to the decimation and genocide of tens of millions of

Indigenous humans within a short period of time. Every place the Europeans landed, Indigenous populations were massively reduced, including right here where we stand.

“I’m gonna be real and not lie to you today. The years of delays in understanding and addressing modern climate collapse have meant that we’re not going to be able to reverse a lot of the changes that are already underway. But that doesn’t mean we should give up. It means that we have to fight even harder and be in the streets disrupting just like we are today!

“We can’t trust the people, systems and corporations that have raced toward destruction for years to suddenly turn around and do the right thing. We need to insist on putting Earth before profits and not settle on half-measures and promises. We need immediate changes, not gradual. We need much more than a Green New Deal.”



Los Angeles. SLL photo: John Parker

In **Los Angeles**, thousands of high school students defied city officials and walked out to join Climate Strike actions at Pershing Square, City Hall and other locations. An action is planned at the Brazilian Consulate on Sept. 27 to protest the ultra right-wing Brazilian government's inaction on the massive fire burning the Amazon forest.



Washington, D.C. SLL photo: Leon Koufax

Leon Koufax reports: “Thousands of people gathered on Capitol Hill in **Washington, D.C.**, to demand that political and economic leaders take progressive action regarding climate change. The image was rather stirring — activists demanding action to preserve our planet while juxtaposed to a symbol of an institution that has refused to hold polluting corporations accountable.

“The demonstration was high in spirit and mainly composed of youth. The message was clear: we refuse to inherit a planet that is dying due to capitalist greed and recklessness. One of the most powerful speakers of the afternoon was a young Indigenous woman who proclaimed that not only was the land we were all standing on stolen from her people, but those who stole that land have done nothing but

disrespect its beauty and resources for hundreds of years.”

As world leaders gathered in New York for the United Nations General Assembly in the days immediately after the Climate Strike, 16 youths filed a [petition](#) to the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child attempting to hold Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany and Turkey accountable for their inaction on the climate crisis. The [young people](#) are from Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany, India, Marshall Islands, Nigeria, Palau, South Africa, Sweden, Tunisia and the U.S.

The world’s biggest enemy of human rights and climate justice, U.S. imperialism, has never ratified the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, while President Trump has announced the U.S. will pull out of the (woefully inadequate) Paris climate accords.

“Let’s say it very clearly,” as Bolivian President Evo Morales said at the U.N. General Assembly on Sept. 24. “The root of the problem is capitalism.”

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

