

USPCN honors life and memory of Dick Reilly, adopted son of Palestine

written by Struggle - La Lucha
February 21, 2020



A pioneer in the movement for Palestine solidarity in the U.S., Richard "Dick" Reilly, passed away of complications from lung cancer on the evening of Tuesday, Feb. 11,

2020, in his Chicago apartment. He was 67 years old.

Known across the U.S. and even internationally as one of the core leaders of national formations like the November 29th Coalition and the Palestine Solidarity Committee, Dick dedicated over 40 years of his life to supporting our fight for the liberation of Palestine.

The working-class son of Scott Reilly and Catherine Freeman, he gravitated as a young man to join the struggle for workers' and oppressed people's rights by organizing for a period with the Industrial Workers of the World. Soon thereafter, he was introduced to the Arab Community Center (commonly known as the Markaz, "Center" in Arabic) and began his lifelong activist passion.

It was the perfect fit. Progressive, social justice-minded Arabs and Palestinians who ran the Markaz uniting with a progressive, social justice-minded Irishman who wanted a united, liberated Ireland and saw in the Palestinian struggle his own.

Last year, USPCN organized an important event, a debka performance by Wishah, one of the top troupes in the Arab world, and there we explained why our institution is a legacy of the Markaz. The solidarity organizations Dick helped found, worked with and inspired also had the same political affinity with the Markaz, and today's Palestine solidarity movement is one of his own powerful legacies.

From his base in Chicago, Dick was the Midwest Coordinator and National Executive Committee member of the Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC), a vibrant group that organized direct action protests, rallies, press work and educational presentations in communities across the country from the 1980s through the early 1990s, an intense era that saw the Israeli war on Lebanon in 1982 and what is popularly called the First Palestinian Intifada, or Uprising, which began in December 1987.

One year into the Intifada, Dick helped lead a delegation to Palestine, where he was arrested while participating in a protest commemorating the 1982 Israeli-supported massacre of hundreds of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps of Beirut. He was one of seven activists deported by the Israelis back to the U.S.

Although he was never able to visit Palestine again, his work with PSC continued unabated, and his relationship with Palestinians in Chicago and across the U.S. grew even stronger. The PSC organized side by side with the Markaz on a number of important projects, including Palestinian political prisoners' rights campaigns and concerts for Palestine that were headlined by Black liberation artist Gil Scott-Heron and progressive singer-songwriter Kris Kristofferson, respectively.

There is a common misconception that intersectionality in the Palestine support movement is a new phenomenon, that today's U.S. Palestinian community and its supporters only recently began relating to other oppressed and marginalized communities. But in reality, Palestinians, the PSC and Dick had deep ties with the most important progressive movements in the 1980s, supporting community organizing in solidarity with the people of El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, South Africa, Puerto Rico and others; with Black people, Native people, Asians and Chicanos in the U.S.; and with workers' rights, women's rights, environmental rights and other social justice organizations.

The PSC worked with the Markaz to help elect Harold Washington, Chicago's first Black mayor, and supported the Rainbow Coalition and Rev. Jesse Jackson's bid for U.S. president, which played a role in prompting Jackson to add support for Palestinian statehood to his platform. USPCN and other Palestinian institutions owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the Markaz, other Palestinian elders across the country, and PSC leaders like Dick Reilly for today's strong relationships and alliances with many social justice and liberation movements in the U.S.

When the Second Intifada broke out in Palestine in 2000, when the Lebanese

resistance ended Israel's occupation of its land in 2006, and when Israel attacked Gaza numerous times, especially in 2008-2009, 2012, 2014 and Land Day 2018 (when the #GreatReturnMarch began), Dick was again supporting our community and leading solidarity efforts — this time organizing with, advising and mentoring a whole new generation of Palestinians.

He and his wonderful life partner, Christine Geovanis, a leading organizer and solidarity activist in her own right, provided much of the press work for USPCN's organizing at that time — through HammerHard MediaWorks, a labor of love they established with others to support institutions like ours that lacked communications capacity.

A new anti-war movement in the U.S. was established after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and of course Dick was there too, assuming leadership in the Chicago Coalition Against War and Racism, and helping in 2001 to found Chicago Action Medical, an organization of medics, nurses and activists who provide health care to anti-war and other protesters across the city. He was a psychiatric social and crisis worker at Northwestern Hospital, and of course he also helped organize health care workers in Chicago.

He played a major role in supporting Palestinians in the U.S. who were again being challenged by the mainstream anti-war movement to decenter Palestine from the work. The argument, of course, like it had been ever since the 1967 occupation, was that the question of Palestine divides social justice movements in the U.S. because of “soft Zionist” participation, and occasional leadership, in them.

But we did not budge. The Zionists in the anti-war movement who claimed that it would be a tactical mistake to connect Israel with the war on Afghanistan or the impending war on Iraq were isolated, and Dick stood shoulder-to-shoulder with us when we won that battle, leading to the largest national protest specifically for Palestinian rights in the history of the U.S. — 80,000 people marching in

Washington, D.C., in response to heroic Palestinian resistance to another Israeli massacre in the Jenin refugee camp in 2002.

Dick was also an extremely close friend to Rasmea Odeh, the Palestinian-American organizer who was forced from the U.S. after being wrongfully convicted on an immigration charge in 2017. They had known each other for decades, and he worked on her communications team, strategizing with leaders of the Rasmea Defense Committee to help nullify the jury (without success, unfortunately) in her case. She was shattered to hear of his passing.

USPCN and a number of its members across the country learned a ton from Dick Reilly over the years, but he was also a great listener and learner himself. Christine and he would always ask us for their “marching orders,” because they were the truest of solidarity organizers. Dick understood fully the concept of self-determination and knew that the leadership of any national liberation movement must come from the oppressed nation itself.

He participated in the discussions and the debates with the old Markaz crew back in the day and with the Palestinian and Arab leaders of today’s movement in the U.S.,



and he offered his insight and opinions (wow, did he have opinions!), but when the decisions were made and handed down, he followed the line of march.

We loved him for this discipline and [for his steadfast commitment, always, to the Palestinian thawabet \(the “constants”\)](#) — our Right to Return, to self-determination, to resist Israeli Zionist occupation and colonization and U.S. imperialism, and to liberation in an independent state on all of historical Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital.

And so, Dick Reilly, after 40+ years of your commitment to us Palestinians, it is time for us to make a commitment of our own: we pledge to the proud Irish Republican our solidarity with you — that we won’t rest until your people are truly liberated in a united Ireland, “when they own everything from the plough to the stars,” as one of your heroes, James Connolly, once proclaimed.

And we also pledge that there will be no rest until your beloved Palestine is free “From the River to the Sea”!

Dick Reilly, ¡PRESENTE!

U.S. Palestinian Community Network (USPCN)

February 15, 2020

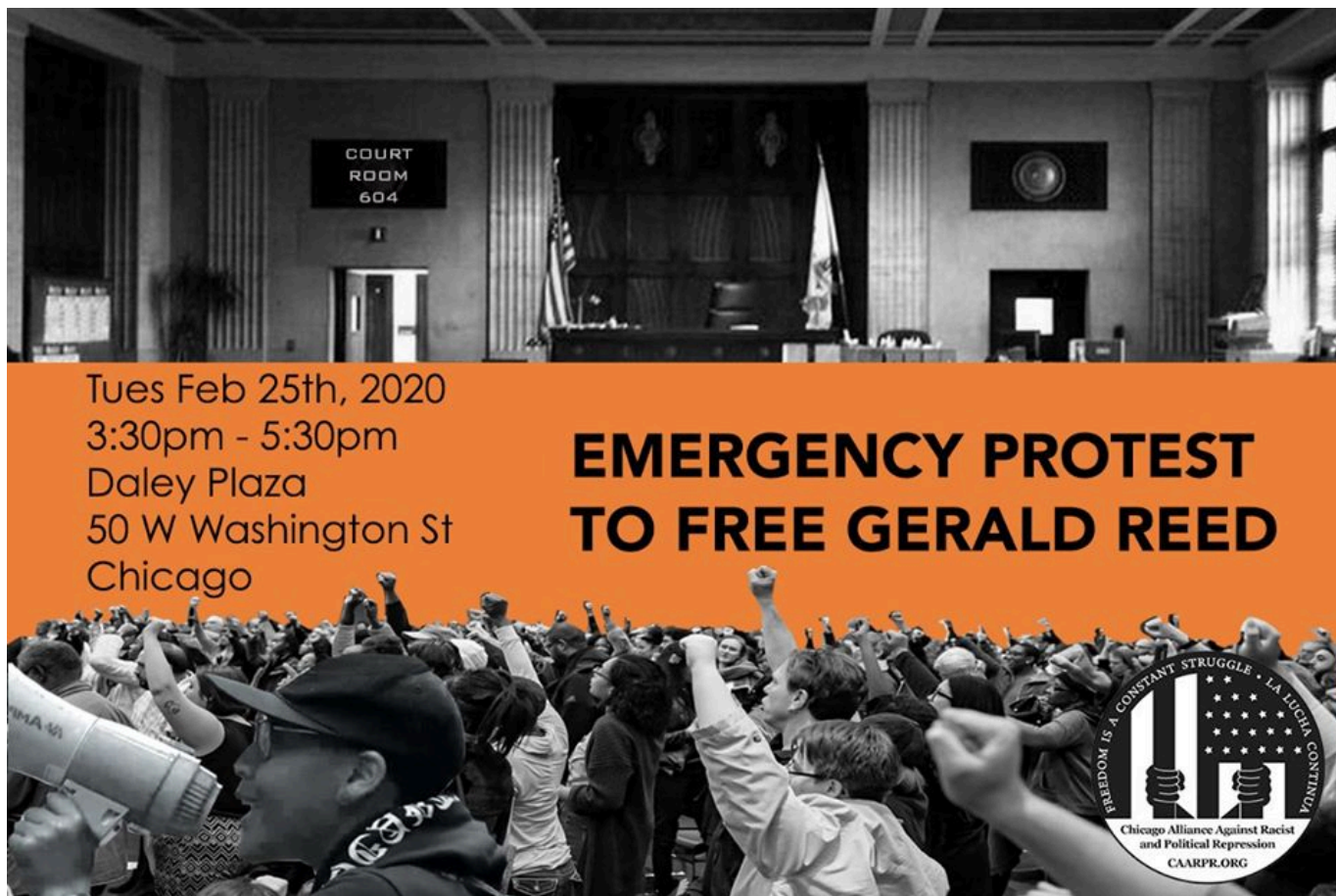
Contributions in Dick Reilly’s name are being accepted by the [Middle East Children’s Alliance](#). A [GoFundMe page](#) has been established to assist with raising money to cover his medical expenses.

Source: [USPCN](#)



Chicago Feb. 25: Emergency protest to free Gerald Reed

written by Struggle - La Lucha
February 21, 2020



Tues Feb 25th, 2020
3:30pm - 5:30pm
Daley Plaza
50 W Washington St
Chicago

EMERGENCY PROTEST TO FREE GERALD REED

**Demand Chief Judge Evans release Gerald Reed
immediately - Impeach Judge Hennelly!**

Judge Thomas Hennelly has attempted to illegally reverse the order of another judge, Thomas Gainer, who vacated the conviction of Gerald Reed and ordered a new trial. Gainer vacated Reed's conviction after overwhelming evidence that his "confession" to a double murder in 1990 was the fruit of horrible torture by police working under Commander Jon Burge, torture so extreme that it broke his thigh bone. Reed has spent 29 yrs in prison for crimes he did not commit.

@CaarprNow #FreeGeraldReed #FreeEmAll

For more info call CAARPR 312.939-2750

Tuesday, February 25, 2020 at 3:30 PM - 5:30 PM CST

Daley Center Plaza, 50 W Washington St, Chicago

Emergency Rally to Free Gerald Reed: Demand Chief Judge Evans release Gerald Reed immediately - Impeach Judge Hennelly

As well as committing to standing up for Gerald Reed on Tuesday Feb 25, heres what you can do to support Gerald Reed today?

1. Share this event with everyone you know, invite friends, loved ones, co-workers to go to the protest with you. Get on all your social networks spread the word, include [#FreeGeraldReed](#) [#WeSupportGeraldReed](#) [#FreeEmALL](#)
 2. Sign petition Tell Governor Pritzker: Pardon Gerald Reed Now <https://www.caarpr.org/pardonreed>
-

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The one hundred people packed into Hennelly's courtroom on Friday February 14, 2020 were stunned when Hennelly announced his decision to send Reed back to Prison to serve a life term. Armanda Shackelford, Reed's mother and a leader of the Chicago Alliance, responded in disbelief. "I never would have thought that this judge would do what he did today," she said.

Judge Hennelly's ruling on Feb 14th was unheard of. It was outrageous and a racist insult to Black and Brown communities.

Gerald Reed has gone through a seemingly endless process started by the Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission in 2012 . He's been in prison almost 30 years. His evidentiary hearing regarding the torture he suffered at the hands of Jon Burge's minions was conclusive. Judge Gainer vacated his conviction. By what right does Judge Hennelly think he can just undo this order.

Judge Hennelly had only two options: get on with a new trial or dismiss the case. He arbitrarily conjured up a third option that really doesn't exist: he reversed judge Gainer's order, sending Reed back to prison to serve a natural life sentence for crimes he did not commit.

Veteran courtroom observers say that Judge Hennelly's action is unprecedented and illegal. A Circuit Court judge has no authority to reverse the decision of another circuit court judge.

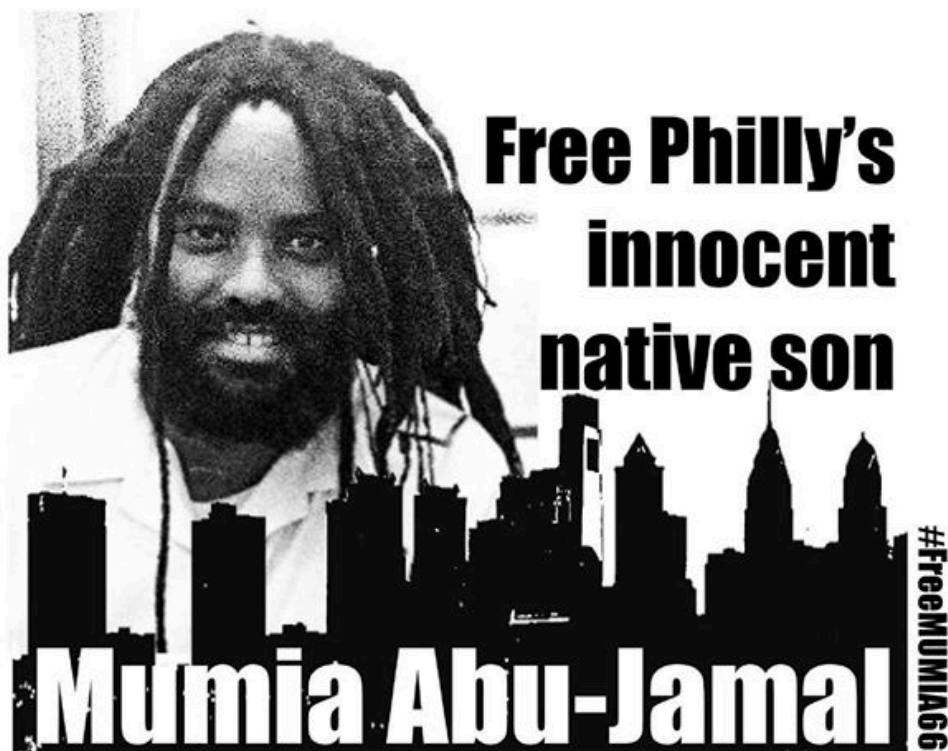
We demand Chief Court Judge Evans release Gerald Reed immediately and impeach Judge Hennelly

#FreeGeraldReed #WeSupportGeraldReed #FreeEmAll



Philadelphia: Come out for Mumia's freedom, Feb. 28

written by Struggle - La Lucha
February 21, 2020



Come out for Mumia's freedom:

Tuesday, Feb. 25 – Protest against PA State Attorney General Josh Shapiro's promotion of new reactionary probation/parole measure. Demo at 1600 Arch St., Philly at noon

Friday, Feb 28 - DA's office, 4-6pm, on day Krasner to announce whether or not he challenges Mumia's appeals. We call for Mumia's release.

Sunday, March 8, Free Mumia Organizing meeting (Location to be determined)

Tuesday, March 10 – Mumia & Imperialism monthly discussion, based on his 3 book series: Murder Inc - Empire/Genocide/Manifest Destiny, 6:30pm, Calvary Church, 48th & Baltimore

Apr. 24 -26 weekend of Mumia's 66th birthday (details to be determined) #FreeMumia66

Sixty six sites of resistance for Mumia all over Philly area - organize one yourself!

Friday, April 24 - 66 Free Mumia forum, film showings, house meetings, posterings, etc

Saturday, April 25, Free Mumia march

Sunday, April 26, Free Mumia gathering picnic in park

International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal; Mobilization4Mumia;
Campaign to Bring Mumia Home; Free Mumia Coalition NYC; Food Not Bombs - Solidarity
Mobilization4Mumia@gmail.com; facebook/mobilization4Mumia; <https://mobilization4mumia.com/resources>

Friday, February 28, 2020 at 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM EST

Philadelphia District Attorney's Office
Three South Penn Square, Philadelphia

DA Larry Krasner to supposed announce whether or not he challenges Mumia's appeals on Feb 28. We call for Mumia's release.

Abu-Jamal's supporters rallied outside Philadelphia District Attorney 's office on Friday, January 31, on the day he was expected to announce his response to legal briefs for Post Conviction Relief Act hearings and a request to remand Mumia Abu-Jamal's case back to Common Pleas court, filed by his attorneys in early September 2019.

Krasner instead asked the court for a 30-day postponement.

Once again, after 38 years held behind bars for a crime Abu-Jamal is innocent of, justice continues to be denied.

Recent exonerations of 10 Philadelphia residents unfairly convicted for crimes they did not commit reveal a simple truth - the Philadelphia police, courts and prosecutors convict innocent Black men based on gross violations of their constitutional rights. The same patterns of constitutional violations plague the case of Abu-Jamal."

Since Jan. 2018, investigations by the Conviction Integrity Unit of the DA's office have resulted in exonerations of Sherman McCoy, James Frazier, Dwayne Thorpe, Terrance Lewis, Jamaal Simmons, Dontia Patterson, John Miller, Willie Veasey, Johnny Berry and Chester Holmann III. ([Washingtonpost.com](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2019/11/12/philadelphia-conviction-integrity-unit-exonerations/), 11/12/19)

Pam Africa of the MOVE Organization said to the crowd, "Krasner, do for Mumia what you've done for these men here." Based on his innocence, he should be released like they were.

Philadelphia is not alone. The National Registry of Exonerations counted 165 exonerations in the US last year. The registry has tallied 2,500 wrongful convictions since 1989, costing defendants more than 22,000 years of incarceration. (law.umich.edu/special/exoneration)

Seven of the ten men released in Philadelphia were convicted by longtime district attorney Lynne Abraham, a “tough-on-crime” prosecutor who regularly sought maximum punishments and death sentences. In 1981, Common Pleas Court Judge Abraham arraigned Abu-Jamal and years later as District Attorney fought against his appeals in post conviction relief hearings.

Ineffective counsel, false witness testimony, witness coercion and intimidation, phony ballistics evidence, prosecution failure to turn over evidence to the defense as required by law, racist jury selection — these and other legal errors led to the exoneration of the 10 innocent defendants after decades in prison. These are the same injustice practices Abu-Jamal’s attorneys and supporters have been citing since 1982.

On [Facebook](#)



The best democracy money can buy: Bloomberg is greasing the election

written by Struggle - La Lucha

February 21, 2020

Millions of people know that billionaire Michael Bloomberg is trying to stop Bernie Sanders and buy the White House for himself. The former stop-and-frisk New York mayor has already spent over \$400 million seeking the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. He may spend billions more.

Bloomberg's fellow billionaire, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, reportedly urged him a year ago to run for president. [Bezos' \\$104 billion fortune](#) is even bigger than Bloomberg's. Both of these tycoons run nonunion outfits.

When told of Bezos' phone call to Bloomberg, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez remarked: "They've got class solidarity. The billionaires are looking out for each other."

[Bernie Sanders sarcastically said](#) that the two moguls, whose fortunes amount to a

total of \$164 billion, could make for “a strong grassroots movement.” Actually, the overworked employees in Amazon’s warehouses are [among the largest contributors](#) to the Bernie Sanders campaign.

Buying elections

Bloomberg isn’t just spending oodles of cash on Facebook and TV ads, like his \$10-million Super Bowl commercial. Moneybags Mike is also buying endorsements, including those from elected officials. His tax-deductible charities are [being used to purchase influence](#).

Buying elections is nothing new for Bloomberg. In 2009, [he spent \\$102 million](#), or about \$183 per vote, to get re-elected mayor of New York City. Bloomberg had already spent \$159 million in his previous successful runs for mayor in 2001 and 2005.

As repulsive as Bloomberg’s vote-buying is, there’s nothing illegal about it. Capitalist democracy is democracy for capitalists. Homeless people have the same “right” to contribute to political campaigns as Michael Bloomberg does with his [\\$60 billion fortune](#).

This is the sort of “democracy” that Wall Street wants to bring to Cuba and Venezuela. Working people there don’t want it and neither should we.

Hiring presidents

Even with the U.S. dollar buying less than 15 cents of what it could buy [50 years ago](#), Bloomberg’s \$60 billion stash is still a lot of money. It amounts to what 4 million low-paid workers earn in a year at the miserable federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour.

But that’s only if these 4 million workers were able to work 40-hour weeks for the

entire year and not suffer seasonal layoffs. That \$60 billion also represents the annual wages of over 1.9 million workers earning \$15 per hour. There was less inequality in the time of the Pharaohs.

The United States has never been “a government of the people, by the people, for the people.” Forty-one of the 57 signers of the Declaration of Independence were slave owners.

That means that [72 percent of these “founding fathers”](#) directly profited from the African Holocaust. Among them was John Hancock, the guy with the big signature.

Money has always greased U.S. elections. The communist leader Vince Copeland wrote about this red, white and blue corruption in his book “Market Elections.” Almost \$6 billion was spent on the [2018 congressional elections](#).

It’s been exceptional, however, for the biggest billionaires to try to seize the White House for themselves. When Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon — whose family owned Alcoa, Gulf Oil and what is now the Bank of New York Mellon — made noises about running for president in 1928, his campaign went nowhere.

Nelson Rockefeller wasn’t able to become president either, although he came close by becoming the unelected President Gerald Ford’s vice president.

Big Capital prefers to hire their presidents. That was the case with professional politicians like Richard Nixon or Bill Clinton; the media-made “war hero” Dwight Eisenhower; or the washed-up movie star Ronald Reagan.

The wealthy and powerful knew that if a member of the Mellon or Rockefeller financial dynasty became president, they would steal everything they could. Another reason is that some capitalist intellectuals realize that there needs to be a curtain separating the billionaire masters from their bought-and-paid-for presidential puppets.

Anybody but Bernie

Bloomberg's candidacy destroys this shell game. It proclaims in flashing lights that the United States is a government of the rich, by the rich and for the rich.

Many capitalists believe that Bloomberg's fortune is the only thing that will stop Bernie Sanders from getting the Democratic nomination. If Bloomberg is able to steal the Democratic Party's nomination at the Milwaukee convention, millions of people will be outraged.

It may be the catalyst for forming a mass working-class movement that will break decisively with the dead end of capitalist parties.

Both Trump and Bloomberg are wannabe dictators. "I have my own army in the NYPD [New York City Police Department], which is the seventh biggest army in the world," [proclaimed Bloomberg in 2011](#).

President Trump puts migrant children in cages. While Bloomberg was New York City mayor, thousands of youth — convicted of nothing — were sent to the Rikers Island prison simply because they couldn't afford bail.

Among them was Black youth Kalief Browder, who spent three years in jail — two years of which were spent in solitary confinement — before his charges were dropped. Browder later committed suicide on June 6, 2015.

Bloomberg succeeding Trump in the White House will be like Bloomberg having replaced Rudy Giuliani in New York's City Hall. Black and Latinx people suffered 20 years of hell from this racist tag team.

Michael Bloomberg may implode in the Feb. 19 Democratic debate. He still needs to

be flushed out of politics. His \$60 billion fortune should be seized for reparations.



2020 May Day Brigade to Cuba

written by Struggle - La Lucha
February 21, 2020



Apr 26 - May 9
Caimito, Cuba

From April 26 to May 10 join the International May Day Brigade in Cuba. Join with others from many continents to learn Cuba's history and current reality through panel discussions, excursions to historical sites and voluntary work along side Cuban workers.

On [Facebook](#)



Venezuela prepares for potential threats

written by Struggle - La Lucha
February 21, 2020



The military has been deployed throughout Venezuela. This was not only in Caracas, where weapons, soldiers and militia could be seen, but in the entire country. Each of the five components of the Bolivarian National Armed Force (FANB) was activated: the Bolivarian National Guard, the Bolivarian Army, the Bolivarian Navy, the Bolivarian Military Aviation, and the Bolivarian Militia.

It was the Bolivarian Shield 2020 exercise involving the activation of 2,300,000 combatants, announced by President Nicolás Maduro last Friday. The last operation of similar dimensions was held in the month of September, centered on the border areas, under the name of Sovereignty and Peace.

“The FANB’s strategic operational command, the eight strategic regions of integral

defense, the twenty-eight operational zones of integral defense, the ninety-nine areas of integral defense, the groups and popular bases of integral defense, and the popular units of integral defense are all deployed in the national territory,” said the strategic operational commander, Remigio Ceballos.

The exercises were televised and presented what a military deployment would look like in the face of a scenario of aggression. The deployment of soldiers, anti-aircraft system, the firing of missiles from warships, as well as an operation to establish resistance centers in Caracas in a bombing and troop attack scenario could be observed.

One of the significant elements within the Bolivarian Shield was the activation of the Militia. The General in Chief, Vladimir Padrino López, highlighted the importance of this component: “the incorporation of the Militia as a special component of the FANB gives an added value to the defense of the Nation (...) they are regular combatants, not armed civilians”.

The Bolivarian Militia has been the object of different attacks by the Venezuelan opposition, which has oscillated between ridiculing those who are part of the Militia on the one hand and, on the other, expressing their concern for the increase in the number and training of militia men and women.

This is one of the most distinctive features of the Venezuelan political process, which allows and encourages the participation of the population in the process of defense of the Nation under Article 130 of the Constitution. The Militia consists mostly of men and women from the popular sectors, slums, rural areas, workers, identified with Chavism and the need to prepare themselves against current threats.

These threats come at a critical time in Venezuela after the US tour of Juan Guaidó, with the central scenes of his presence at the State of the Union address, as well as the meeting at the White House with President Trump.

These are not merely photographs: a sector of the Venezuelan right is openly calling for forceful actions to be taken against the Venezuelan government. The work of that opposition wing is to achieve that operation through the campaign they have been carrying out in the United States, where a sector of the Republican Party and the State Department are working in that direction.

Within this framework, the Bolivarian Shield 2020 was a demonstration of force, military readiness, and dissuasion to both the United States and neighbouring countries, particularly Colombia and Brazil, both of which have been areas of high tension.

This is not the only defence action developed by the government, within the hypotheses of conflict where regular military action seems the least likely. The framework of possibilities indicates that the possible operations are centred on manoeuvres via paramilitaries, mercenaries, with attempts at surgical shootings – such as assassinations or extractions – or attacks that seek to provoke social upheaval.

The exercise was also a new reaffirmation of the authority of Nicolás Maduro and the fiction of the presidency of Juan Guaidó, which, since his return, has made no concrete or decisive announcements.

[Translation by Internationalist 360°](#)



NYC March 14: A People's Victory Celebration of the release of the MOVE 9

written by Struggle - La Lucha
February 21, 2020



Saturday, March 14, 2020 at 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM EDT

Holyrood Episcopal Church / Iglesia Santa Cruz
715 W 179th St, New York, New York 10033

WELCOME DELBERT AFRICA TO NEW YORK CITY

Over the course of the past three years we have won the release of all of the surviving members of the MOVE 9 who have been wrongfully incarcerated for over 40 years.

This will be Delbert Africa's first trip to New York City since his release in January 2020. He will be joined by other members of the MOVE 9, of the MOVE

Organization, of the movements to free the MOVE 9, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and countless other US political prisoners.

This is truly a People's Victory flying in the face of the false narrative that the global US Empire is omnipotent. The people united will never be defeated, and this victory is a testament to the fact that with persistence and solidarity anything is possible.

There is more work to do, to bring our other imprisoned leaders home, and to dismantle the System which maintains the Prison Planet we live in and threatens the destruction of all life. However, now is a time to celebrate this great victory, and begin to plan the road ahead.

On [Facebook](#)



NYC Feb. 21: Lift illegal sanctions off Zimbabwe

written by Struggle - La Lucha
February 21, 2020

On the 55th Commemoration of the Death of Malcolm X
A December 12th Movement Pan-African Forum

LIFT ILLEGAL SANCTIONS OFF ZIMBABWE

Southern African Development Community-SADC

August 2019 Summit:

"...expressed solidarity with Zimbabwe, and called for the immediate lifting of the sanctions to facilitate socio-economic recovery in the country"

**Friday,
Feb. 21, 2020**

Doors open at 6:30pm

National Black Theater

2031 5th Ave. @ 125th Street

for info: (718) 398-1766

D12M.com / #EndSanctionsOnZimbabwe

Cultural
Performance
by Acclaimed
Drummer
Jerome Jennings



Keynote Speaker

Ambassador Dr. Arikana Chihombori-Quao

Former African Union Ambassador to the U.S.A.

-Diplomat, medical doctor, educator, public speaker and leading spokeswoman for Africans right to self-determination and their own path of development...

"We need to come together....We need first to decolonize the Black mind. We need to take time to sincerely inventory who we are and how we were colonized, otherwise the battle is going to be lost"





‘It is clear that this is U.S. neoliberal interference in Bolivia’

written by Struggle - La Lucha
February 21, 2020

Interview with Julia ‘Pachamama’ Fernández and Gualberto Arispe Maita

Struggle-La Lucha’s Scott Scheffer spoke with Los Angeles Native/Quechua/Chicana activist Julia “Pachamama” Fernández, and with Gualberto Arispe Maita, a MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo) representative and MAS deputy candidate in Chapare and the president of MAS Youth. Julia interpreted our questions to Gualberto by phone and relayed his responses to us.

Struggle-La Lucha: Evo Morales expelled the United States Agency for International Development from Bolivia in 2013. Now, the Trump administration has sent its agents back into Bolivia in January to “assist” the coup regime. What role is the U.S. and USAID playing in the May 3 elections?

Gualberto Arispe Maita: The presence of the DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration] /USAID was to make us fight between Bolivians, dividing the social sectors in our politics. That is why President Evo [Morales] made the decision to expel them and now, after the coup, they will return to our country. It is clear that this is U.S. neoliberal interference. Those institutions have not given good results nor have they helped the Bolivian people; on the contrary, they have always left us massive problems, causing destabilization. The OAS [Organization of American States] and other accredited institutions like them will oversee the elections on May 3, but they do not have the confidence of the Bolivians because they were the ones that supported the consummation of the coup in our country. We are asking other organizations to come to see the elections to make the results transparent.

SLL: What has been the impact on the Indigenous and working-class population of the expulsion of Cuban health care workers?

Gualberto: On the issue of our Cuban medical brothers/sisters, it is unfortunate because thanks to them many Bolivians recovered their eyesight. On the issue of literacy, they have also helped us a lot, but the so-called transitional government, which clearly is a U.S. backed coup, expelled them and their accredited embassy in Bolivia. We want the social sectors to repudiate those dictatorial acts. ... Our effort is to recover democracy for our people, which we are currently lacking.

Julia “Pachamama” Fernández: I was just told by a woman in Bolivia who does not want to have her name publicized that the Juana Azurduy program has been suspended by the de facto government today. And, it’s a stipend program that’s designed to provide health and nutrition benefits, basically for pregnant mothers and young children in underserved sectors of the population — so that’s been suspended.

And it’s clear that most of the most vulnerable communities which predominantly comprise our Indigenous peoples in the rural areas are the ones obviously being

most affected. And that, along with the expulsion of our Cuban medical doctors, has basically created panic within the sectors.

And so we have elders, we have children, pregnant women and men, which includes those protectors of democracy who were assaulted and shot during those peaceful marches in Senkata and Sacaba, who still have not received medical attention, so they are the most vulnerable. For me that spells out G-E-N-O-C-I-D-E. For me that's what's happening.

SLL: The illegitimate government of [Jeanine] Áñez wants to bar Evo Morales from running for senator, saying he hasn't been a resident of Bolivia, even though it was their coup, backed by the U.S., that forced him at gunpoint to leave. They've also implied that they may try the same tactic to stop the MAS presidential candidate [Luis] Arce and vice presidential candidate [David] Choquehuanca from running. Of course, there is also continuing repression, harassment and ongoing arrests of MAS supporters. Yet, the movement seems so strong and determined. What is the MAS view on possibilities of the upcoming elections and how to move the struggle forward?

Julia: It's going to get heavier in the months to come. But I just don't want to think the worst. I'm hopeful because my people are very strong. We've been through so many different wars and we've gone through the gas war and the water wars, and we've won.

Basically, the Indigenous movement is being forced to rebuild amid all the chaos happening in Bolivia. Right now, there's like a series of intimidations, of persecution and unlawful detention of innocent MAS supporters, false accusations against grassroots journalists and against MAS political leaders — even, you know, false allegations against the presidential candidate Luis Arce Catacora. The focus—in spite of what they're facing—is to really stay together against all odds. And the Bolivian Indigenous peoples have fought and won the gas and water wars in the past. The

May elections may not be fair, but international volunteers will arrive to be witnesses of the upcoming historical events happening in Bolivia. And as for the Bolivian people, their courage and their strength will pull them through.



Cops raid Wet'suwet'en camps. Indigenous and allies respond: Shut Down Canada!

written by Struggle - La Lucha
February 21, 2020



Indigenous people and allies who support Indigenous sovereignty have taken to the streets throughout Canada in response to multiple raids on peaceful encampments in Wet'suwet'en territory in British Columbia.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) with guns, dogs and helicopters have conducted raids against Wet'suwet'en clan camps. The camps, located along a road in Wet'suwet'en lands, are part of an effort to block the Coastal Gaslink pipeline company from entering Wet'suwet'en lands.



Twenty-eight people have been arrested by police as part of enforcement operations in Wet'suwet'en territory. All have since been released, with some facing future court dates.

On Feb. 6, the RCMP launched a pre-dawn raid on the first Wet'suwet'en camp at kilometer 39 of the Morice Road. They arrested six people, detained journalists and dismantled the camp.

On Feb. 7, the RCMP—including tactical squad members with rifles—moved in via helicopters and vehicles on the Gidimt'en camp at kilometer 44, eventually arresting four people.

On Feb. 10, the RCMP entered the Unist'ot'en camp and arrested seven there who were in a prayer ceremony for Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women (#MMIWG2S).

All of these raids have included dogs, snipers, helicopters flying overhead, and removing or distancing journalists so that they often could not record what was happening.



Years of resistance

The RCMP raids have been in response to years of resistance by the traditional clans of the Wet'suwet'en Nation to TransCanada's Coastal GasLink pipeline. Their stolen lands are unceded, not subject to any treaty. They do not consent to the destruction

of their lands. Despite this, Coastal Gaslink has continued to violate environmental regulations and destroy archaeological sites that are sacred to the Wet'suwet'en. Canada and its partner corporations seek to exploit and destroy the lands and protect corporate profits.

The RCMP is enforcing their interpretation of laws and court orders to allow Coastal GasLink pipeline workers into the area. Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs, title holders to the land, have refused to consent to the pipeline.

Canadian law had previously recognized the rights of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and five clans, in addition to recognition of the government-sanctioned "Indian Act" band council chiefs. A Supreme Court of Canada ruling confirmed the land's unceded status in 1997. Nonetheless, the British Columbia Supreme Court recently declared that Coastal GasLink lines could pass through their lands.

According to a Unist'ot'en statement, "Each clan within the Wet'suwet'en Nation has full jurisdiction under their law to control access to their territory. Under 'Anuc niwh'it'en (Wet'suwet'en law) all five clans of the Wet'suwet'en have unanimously opposed all pipeline proposals and have not provided free, prior and informed consent to Coastal Gaslink/TransCanada to do work on Wet'suwet'en lands."

The Wet'suwet'en have their own laws. Their laws and systems of governance predate Canada by thousands of years. The collective will of the people is the final law, not the signatures of single chiefs or band councils (Canada-approved tribal governments).

In addition to protecting the future of the lands, the Wet'suwet'en are also trying to protect their people from violence. Coastal GasLink was building a work camp that would house up to 400 men only 20 km. from the Healing Center on Wet'suwet'en Yintah (lands). As a result, the hereditary chiefs had closed a road to protect the people from harm, since man camps are well-known to be dangerous to nearby

Indigenous women.

“Just these past two years we’ve had two women from our own community of Witset go missing,” Dr. Karla Tait from the Healing Centre said. “One was discovered murdered. Despite being such a small Indigenous community, I think we’ve lost about seven women, that I’m aware of, that we don’t have any suspects or any leads on their whereabouts.” Witset has a population of about 815.



Red dresses symbolizing #MMIW

As the RCMP entered the Unist’ot’en camp, there were dozens of red dresses hanging from trees symbolizing Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women #MMIW. Coastal Gaslink workers and the RCMP tore them down.

The sight of Mounties (RCMP) invading Wet’suwet’en lands and of the peaceful defenders being arrested inflamed people across Canada and in other countries, as

well. Many Indigenous people were already outraged by the December 2019 Guardian revelation that the RCMP had secretly been ready with snipers during previous Wet'suwet'en raids in January of 2019, with RCMP officers calling for "lethal overwatch" to protect the Coastal Gaslink project.

Calls to #ShutDownCanada rose up, and people around Canada engaged in fast and furious actions to intervene economically and politically so that Canada would take notice. Supporters of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs blocked roads and bridges in cities across Canada. Access to the busy Port of Vancouver was blocked for days before dozens were arrested. In Halifax, on the other side of the continent, part of the port was blocked for some hours. The Tyendinaga Mohawks in Ontario and other defenders elsewhere have blocked train tracks to shut down service on the CN Rail and Via Rail. "When justice fails, Block the rails!" From coast to coast, marchers round dance at public places, march, and demand that Canada back down from Wet'suwet'en and from its destructive defense of oil and gas extraction.

Youth-led occupations of the offices of federal cabinet ministers and members of Parliament have occurred across the country. Indigenous youth locked themselves down to the main entrance to the British Columbia Legislature, where hundreds more people later joined and blocked the doors on the opening day of the legislative session.

Reconciliation Is dead

When the RCMP arrived at the gate to Unist'ot'en, the matriarchs were in ceremony and cremated a Canadian flag marked with the words "Reconciliation is dead." Matriarch Freda Huson threw the paper with the court injunction against the Wet'suwet'en into the fire, shouting "This is all it's worth, the paper it's written on."

The RCMP has a lengthy and bloody history as an occupying army whose role for generations has been removing Indigenous people from their lands, suppressing

Indigenous resistance, breaking strikes and more.

While Trudeau and other politicians have sometimes paid lip service to Indigenous sovereignty and the concept of reconciliation, it has become painfully clear that they are not interested in building better relationships with Indigenous nations and have not kept their promises to improve conditions for First Nations, Metis and Inuit people.

Indigenous children continue to be condemned disproportionately to foster care and experience suicide crises in all too many communities. Indigenous people are disproportionately imprisoned, impoverished and underhoused. Many reserves continue to lack basics such as clean drinking water. Indigenous women, girls and 2-spirit people continue to go missing and murdered. Colonialism and genocide have never ended.

Indigenous sovereignty is not respected, and the government and energy extraction corporations collaborate in trying to force Indigenous consent or ignoring Indigenous refusal of projects that impact them. Oil and gas companies and the government use economic and legal pressure and intimidation to force consent whenever possible. If they can't manufacture consent, such as with the Wet'suwet'en, they roll ahead with their plans anyway.

It has become increasingly clear that the British Columbia government and the RCMP do the bidding of energy corporations such as Coastal Gaslink, and that Prime Minister Trudeau is hand-in-glove with energy extraction and mining corporations that sustain the current form of the Canadian economy.

Please donate to the legal fund:
<https://actionnetwork.org/fundraising/Unistoten2020LegalFund>

