

Minneapolis is burning! The capitalist system must burn

written by Struggle - La Lucha

May 29, 2020



Demonstrators chant at police officers outside the Minneapolis police 3rd Precinct in Minneapolis on Wednesday afternoon, May 27, 2020. Photo: Star Tribune

While reading Mumia Abu-Jamal's latest commentary, ["After 100,000,"](#) where he speaks about the increasing numbers of COVID-19 deaths, Mumia explains, "For Black folk this is a time of ineffable loss." What he did not know is that on May 25,, the day before his audio commentary was loaded onto Prison Radio, 46-year-old George Floyd was murdered by the police in Minneapolis.

Floyd, father of two, was murdered by the Minneapolis police in broad daylight in front of crowds of people, including children watching, pleading with police to take the pressure off Floyd's neck as he gasps, "Please, please. I can't breathe."

Video footage shows that Floyd was not resisting when handcuffed and pinned to the ground by a white police officer who pressed his knee on his neck for over 6 minutes, while another police officer stood guard, preventing the people from interfering. The paramedics reported that Floyd showed no sign of life when they arrived. Floyd died at the scene. Many saw this as a repeat of Eric Garner's murder. Garner was brutally killed for selling cigarettes without a license; Floyd was brutally killed for allegedly using a counterfeit \$20 bill.

Now parts of Minneapolis are burning, as people try to make sense out of this senseless, inhumane killing of Black people in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis that is affecting us all.

Some of the news coverage has said that this incident opens up "old wounds." These wounds are not old; they are deeply, chronically infected, not close to being healed. Earlier this month, we heard about Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Ky., murdered in her home. We saw the video of Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Ga., murdered by vigilantes while jogging. The families, friends and supporters of Arbery and Taylor are running, marching and rallying for justice in cities nationwide, while safely wearing masks and maintaining social distance.

Since January 2020, the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S., there have been 400 police killings in the U.S. — 73 Black, 43 Latinx, 11 other and 130 unknown, as reported in [a Washington Post database](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2015/01/01/police-shootings-database/) that contains records of every fatal shooting in the U.S. by a police officer in the line of duty since Jan. 1, 2015. The Washington Post has taken up the arduous task that the Guardian started in 2013: ["The Counted: People killed by the police in the U.S."](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2015/01/01/police-shootings-database/)

The counting began in 2013, after the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement released a 2012 report that found a Black person is killed by the police, security personnel or vigilantes in the U.S. every 28 hours.

Have the numbers changed in the past eight years? According to the Washington Post, the death toll is unchanged. The database shows that the number of Black people killed by the police in 2015 was 258; in 2016 it was 234; in 2017 the number was 223; in 2018 it was 229; in 2019 it was 235; and, as of May 28, 2020, the number was 73. This does not include George Floyd. He hasn't been added to the database as of May 28, though he was killed by police on May 25.

Over four-and-a-half years, the Washington Post database has a total of 5,338 people shot and killed by the police. Of the deaths, 1252 are Black, 1091 are nonwhite and 610 are unknown. According to the 2016 U.S. census data, white people are the racial majority, 72 percent of the population. African Americans are the largest racial minority at 12.7 percent; Latinx people are the largest ethnic group at 17.8 percent; and Indigenous peoples are just under 1 percent.

The above numbers are less than the numbers on the Guardian's database because the Washington Post does not count people who died in police custody, were killed by off-duty police, by vigilantes, security guards or people killed by police while in pursuit. Some examples of people not included would be Freddie Gray, Leah Jenkins, Ahmaud Arbery, Marlyn Barnes and many others. Another disturbing factor is that out of the 400 people killed in 2020, 130 are listed as race unknown.

Even with these flaws, the Washington Post database is important and commendable. It is far from easy and requires input from many resources, but it is absolutely necessary.

Mumia speaks of the ineffable loss that Black people are facing by the deaths during this pandemic. The devastating sadness and anger is intensified with the

increasingly relentless persecution by the police of the Black and Brown communities across the U.S. Even though this has a huge impact on communities of color, police terror affects all communities, and it has not let up during the national COVID-19 crisis.

The police continue to do what they do. Black Lives do not matter; Brown lives do not matter; poor lives do not matter. Today, Minneapolis is burning. Soon the masses of people must realize that this whole capitalist system itself must burn and, until it does, we will continue to be brutalized, because in capitalism there is no room for human compassion or dignity.



U.S. unemployment hits depression levels. Don't blame China

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The New York Times headline declared: “U.S. unemployment worst since the Great Depression.” (New York Times, May 9, 2020, print edition)

Actually, the Times report understated the unemployment numbers. In a press release, the Bureau of Labor Statistics explained that the official U-3 unemployment rate, which is supposed to measure jobless people actively looking for work, was actually incorrect, as it didn’t include many who were newly laid off for obscure technical reasons. Including them, the BLS statement said, would mean the unemployment rate is 19.7 percent, not 14.7 percent.

Two weeks later, more than 40 million workers have applied for unemployment benefits. Well over 27 percent of the workforce is jobless. And that number does not include gig workers or temp workers who are without jobs now. That’s a significantly higher unemployment rate than at the depth of the Great Depression, when joblessness hit 24.9 percent in 1933.

As many as 40 percent of the people laid off will not be getting rehired because their employers — restaurants, theaters, small businesses, and big companies like Hertz, JCPenney, Frontier Communications, J. Crew, Lord & Taylor — are going bust.

Before the coronavirus, people receiving unemployment benefits in most states got less than half their weekly paycheck. Now, the federal stimulus package provides \$600 a week. That \$600 weekly check is what you'd earn for a 40-hour week if you were getting paid \$15 an hour. It's more than double the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour. The stimulus payments end in July.

The unemployment checks will stop because Trump and most capitalist economists say that the current unemployment crisis is the result of the deliberate shutting down of the economy made necessary by the COVID-19 pandemic. They call it "[The Great Repression.](#)"

By decree, the country will be reopened for business and unemployment will be over — that is, benefit checks to the unemployed will be over. In part, it's also a propaganda move to say there's no economic crisis of capitalism.

Covering up capitalist crisis

The politicians and the capitalist economists don't want to acknowledge that there is a cyclical capitalist crisis of overproduction, a recession, maybe a depression.

Steep, long-term unemployment is what defines a depression. In the Great Depression, after employment reached its deepest lows in 1933, full employment did not return until the U.S. had entered World War II in 1941.

Today, Trump and many capitalist economists say this is only COVID-19, there is no underlying economic crisis. Therefore, full employment will return quickly when the pandemic is over, maybe in the next year or two.

So it's not a depression, not even a recession?

The global economy was already approaching a recession when the pandemic hit.

Reports showing the looming recession are hidden in the financial press — never mentioned in the popular media.

Joe Weisenthal, writing in [Bloomberg's Markets newsletter](#) on May 13, says that a recession really began some time in the middle of 2018. Weisenthal said on Twitter: "While the official recession will likely be dated to Q1 of this year, I'm increasingly of the view that the down cycle really began some time in the middle of 2018."

On May 14, financial bloggers Pam Martens and Russ Martens wrote on their "Wall Street on Parade" blog that the evidence suggests the financial crisis [began in August 2019](#).

Whenever the crisis began, clearly the world economy was already in the beginning stage of a recession when the pandemic began. On top of the economic crisis came the government-ordered COVID-19 shutdowns of many businesses and stay-at-home orders. Shipping and travel declined dramatically, causing the demand for oil to plummet.

However, Trump and the capitalist economists are now claiming that there was nothing wrong with the U.S. economy before the pandemic hit. Instead, they are blaming both the pandemic and the economic crisis on China, and even the Chinese Communist Party. If it wasn't for China, Trump now claims, everything would be fine.

It's not only Trump and the Republicans who are blaming China. Joseph Biden's Democratic presidential campaign blames the economic crisis on COVID-19. Biden holds that while Trump's reaction to the pandemic was incompetent, the real villain is China. To have anyone believe this, Trump and Biden rely on a combination of

anti-Chinese racism and old-fashioned anti-communism.

China saved lives

For example, there is the claim that the Chinese government badly botched its response to COVID-19. In reality, the Chinese government's response to the pandemic has been far superior to the response of federal, state and local governments of the U.S., a fact that the anti-China propaganda attempts to obscure.

China's rapid response held back the virus and saved lives.

When a new disease suddenly appears, identifying and containing it is not a simple task, and there are always mistakes. Once it was clear how serious the crisis was, China acted immediately.

With full transparency, China notified the World Health Organization (WHO) on Dec. 31 that there were 27 cases of a mysterious pneumonia-like illness in Wuhan. On Jan. 12, Chinese scientists shared the virus's genome via the internet. It was the fastest this has ever been accomplished. According to a recent timeline published by China to refute the slanders being spread by the U.S., China briefed the U.S. on coronavirus epidemic prevention on Feb. 3 for the 30th time.

The WHO, and other public health agencies and experts, describe China's response as setting new, groundbreaking standards and practices in outbreak detection and response. WHO officials said China's quick response helped contain the spread and saved lives around the world.

The ruling class and its paid politicians, Democrats and Republicans alike, are increasingly united on making China the scapegoat.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has been unleashed as the U.S. attack dog on China, [reports The Hill](#). The measures being threatened against China can only

aggravate the economic crisis, but may serve to rally support for the president in a war-like situation.

A built-in crisis

The media have completely hidden the boom-and-bust industrial cycle of capitalism.

Capitalism is doomed to periodic crises of overproduction. A crisis of overproduction comes about because of the anarchy of capitalist production. Capitalist crises are a collision 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. Production exceeds what can be sold for a profit.

U.S. capitalism was in a crisis of overproduction in 2019 and in the beginning of 2020. This could be seen in the record level of consumer debt. On Feb. 11, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York said consumer borrowing in the U.S. rose to a new record level at \$14.15 trillion. That's mortgages, student loans, auto loans and credit card debt.

Also rising, according to the Fed's report, were credit card delinquencies, that is, nonpayment of credit card debt. That's because, in part, wages for most workers are lower, in real terms, than they were 40 years ago.

At the same time, business sector debt was historically high, the Fed also reported, higher and more unstable than consumer debt. The Fed's response, in fact, was to print more money to bail out Wall Street and the unstable businesses.

The "Great Repression," as they call the COVID-19 economic shutdown, has a very real impact, but it is layered on top of a recession that would have meant mass job loss, either later this year or in 2021, whether or not the pandemic had occurred. This is not to deny that the pandemic will profoundly shape the new recession. The

current economic situation is being shaped by the interaction between the “Great Repression” and an underlying cyclical crisis of overproduction.



Unarmed. And dead.

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TRAYVON MARTIN (Walking home with iced tea and Skittles. Shot by George Zinneman, who was found not guilty.)

KEITH SCOTT (Sitting in car, reading. Shot by police officer, who was not charged.)

ATATIANA JEFFERSON (Looking out her window, shot by police officer, who is still under indictment for murder.)

JONATHAN FERRELL (Asking for help after auto accident. Shot twelve times by police, case ended in mistrial.)

JORDAN EDWARDS (Riding in a car. Shot in the back of the head by police officer, who was found guilty of murder.)

STEPHON CLARK (Holdng a cel phone. Shot 8 times, 6 in the back. Officers not charged.)

AMADOU DIALLO (While taking out wallet, officers fired 41 shots by four officers, who were all acquitted.)

RENISHA MCBRIDE (Auto accident, knocked on door for help. Homeowner was found guilty of second-degree murder.)

TAMIR RICE (Playing with toy gun, shot by police officer arriving on scene. Officer was not charged.)

SEAN BELL (Hosting a bachelor party, 50 rounds fired by police officers, who were found not guilty of charges.)

WALTER SCOTT (Pulled over for brake light, shot in the back by police officer, who pleaded guilty to civil rights violations.)

PHILANDO CASTILE (Pulled over in car, told officer he had a legally registered weapon in car. Officer acquitted of all charges.)

AIYANA JONES (Sleeping, accidentally shot by officer in a raid on wrong apartment. Officer cleared of all charges.)

TERRENCE CRUTCHER (Disabled vehicle, shot by police officer, who was found not guilty of manslaughter.)

ALTON STERLING (Selling CDs, shot at close range while being arrested. No charges filed.)

FREDDIE GRAY (Beaten to death by officers while being transported in police van. All officers involved were acquitted.)

JOHN CRAWFORD (Shopping at WalMart, holding a BB gun on sale, police officer was not charged.)

MICHAEL BROWN (Shot by twelve times by officer, including in the back. No charges filed.)

JORDAN DAVIS (Killed because he was playing loud music. Shooter found guilty of first-degree murder.)

SANDRA BLAND (Pulled over for traffic ticket, tasered and arrested. Suspicious "suicide" while in jail. No charges.)

BOTHAM JEAN (Shot at home, which police officer mistook for her own. Officer found guilty of murder.)

OSCAR GRANT (Handcuffed and face-down, officer shot him in the back. Officer found guilty of involuntary manslaughter.)

COREY JONES (Waiting by his disabled vehicle, was shot three times by police officer, who was found guilty of murder.)

AHMAUD AUBREY (Jogging, shot by two men who claimed they suspected him of burglaries. Both men charged with murder and aggravated assault")

Chyna Smith



Marxism and insurrection: When the people rebel against racism

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On Memorial Day 2020, four Minneapolis police brutally murdered George Floyd. Video of the killing quickly spread around the world. On May 26, some 20,000 people marched in Minneapolis, where they were confronted with a violent police response, including rubber bullets and tear gas. The following day, the city erupted into a full-scale rebellion against the racist police. As of this writing, Minnesota's governor has called in the National Guard to help repress the ongoing uprising.

This article by Sam Marcy, a leading Marxist thinker and fighter of the second half of the 20th century, was written during the Los Angeles rebellion against racism in May 1992, following the acquittal of the cops who beat Black motorist Rodney King. It explains the revolutionary significance and class character of these popular rebellions against racist state violence that the corporate media and politicians seek

to cover up.

The brutal suppression of the Los Angeles insurrection offers a classic example of the relationship of bourgeois democracy to the capitalist state. The statistics most eloquently demonstrate the relationship.

The number of arrests in Los Angeles County alone as of May 5 is 12,111 and still rising. The number of injuries has reached a staggering 2,383. Several hundred are critically wounded. Thus, the number of dead at present will undoubtedly continue to rise.

All this has to be seen in light of the repressive forces amassed by the city, state and federal government: 8,000 police, 9,800 National Guard troops, 1,400 Marines, 1,800 Army soldiers and 1,000 federal marshals. (Associated Press, May 5, 1992)

At the bottom of it all, Marxism differs from all forms of bourgeois sociology in this most fundamental way: all bourgeois social sciences are directed at covering up and concealing — sometimes in the most shameful way — the predatory class character of present-day capitalist society. Marxism, on the other hand, reveals in the clearest and sharpest manner not only the antagonisms that continually rend asunder present-day bourgeois society but also their basis — the ownership of the means of production by a handful of millionaires and billionaires.

Bourgeois sociology must leave out of consideration the fact that society is divided into exploiter and exploited, oppressors of nationalities and oppressed. The basis for both the exploitation and oppression is the ownership of the means of production by an ever-diminishing group of the population that controls the vital arteries of contemporary society. They are the bourgeoisie, the ruling class. At the other end of the axis is the proletariat of all nationalities, the producer of all the fabulous wealth.

Material wealth has been vastly increasing along with the masses' productivity of

labor. But only 1 percent of the population amasses the lion's share of what the workers produce while a greater and greater mass is impoverished.

Flattering 'the people'

Especially during periods of parliamentary elections as in the U.S. today, bourgeois sociologists are full of effusive praise for "the people." Each and every capitalist politician embraces "the people" with what often becomes disgusting flattery. The people are everything during periods when the bourgeoisie needs them most of all, as during its many predatory wars. Indeed, at no time is the bourgeoisie so attached to the people as when it is in its deepest crisis.

But the people — the unarmed masses — become nothing, not even human beings, when they are in the full throes of rebellion against the bourgeoisie's monstrous police and military machine. Does not the Los Angeles insurrection prove all this?

No amount of praise, no amount of flattery, can substitute for a clear-cut delineation of the class divisions that perpetually rend society apart.

To the bourgeois social scientists, the masses are the object of history. Marxist theory, on the other hand, demonstrates that the masses are the subject of history. Where they are the objects of history they are manipulated as raw material to suit the aims of ruling-class exploitation. They become the subject of history only when they rise to the surface in mass revolutionary action.

Their rising, as in Los Angeles, is what Karl Marx called the locomotive of history. Their revolutionary struggle accelerates history, bringing to the fore the real character of the mass movement.

To speak of the people in general terms, without cutting through the propaganda to reveal the relations of exploiter to exploited, of oppressor to oppressed, is to participate in covering up the reality.

Oppression of a whole people

Most indispensable for an understanding of contemporary society is the relation between oppressor and oppressed nationalities. One cannot apply Marxism to any meaningful extent without first recognizing the existence of national oppression — the oppression of a whole people by capitalist imperialism. This is one of the most characteristic features of the present world reality.

This concept above all others must be kept foremost if we hope to understand what has happened in Los Angeles and in other major cities of this country.

The insurrection and the way it is being suppressed closely follow the exposition by Frederick Engels in his book ["The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State,"](#) and later brought up to date by Lenin in ["The State and Revolution."](#)

What is the state? What is democracy?

Bourgeois sociologists and scholars and above all capitalist politicians always confound the relationship between the two. They often treat them as a single phenomenon. In reality, the relation between democracy and the state is based on an inner struggle — between form and essence.

The state can take on many different forms. A state can have the form of a bourgeois democracy; it can be a monarchy; it may be ruled by a military junta. And in modern society, on the very edge of the 21st century, it may have a totalitarian or fascist form.

Whatever its form, its essence is determined by which class is dominant economically and consequently also dominant politically. In contemporary society, this means the rule of the imperialist bourgeoisie over the proletariat and the oppressed nationalities.

Bourgeoisie needs different forms of rule

The bourgeoisie cannot maintain its class rule by relying solely on one particular form of the state. It can't rely only on the governing officialdom — even those at the very summit of the state, even when they are solely millionaires and billionaires. Under such circumstances, should there be an imperialist war or a deep capitalist crisis that leads to ferment among the masses, the bourgeois state would be vulnerable to revolutionary overthrow.

But the state is not just the officialdom — who presume to govern in the interest of all the people. The state in its essential characteristics is the organization, to quote Engels, of a “special public force” that consists not merely of armed men and women but of material appendages, prisons and repressive institutions of all kinds.

The decisive basic ingredient of the state is the armed forces with all their material appendages and all who service them. Most noteworthy are the prisons — more and more of them — calculated to break the spirit of millions of the most oppressed while pretending to some mock forms of rehabilitation. All the most modern means — mental and physical — are used to demoralize and deprave the character of those incarcerated.

These repressive institutions, this public force, appears so omnipotent against the unarmed mass of the oppressed and exploited. But it stands out as the very epitome of gentility and humaneness when it comes to incarcerating favored individuals, especially the very rich, who have transgressed the norms of capitalist law.

In general then, the Los Angeles insurrection shows that democracy is a veil that hides the repressive character of the capitalist state. The state at all times is the state of the dominant class. And the objective of the special bodies of armed men and women is to secure, safeguard and uphold the domination of the bourgeoisie.

Growth of the state

Engels explained that in the course of development of capitalist society, as the class antagonisms grow sharper, the state — that is, the public force — grows stronger.

Said Engels, “We have only to look at our present-day Europe where class struggle, rivalry and conquest has screwed up the public power to such a pitch that it threatens to devour the whole of society and even the state itself.”

Written more than 100 years ago, this refers to the growth of militarism. The sharpening of class and national antagonisms had even then resulted in larger and larger appropriations for civilian and military personnel employed for the sole purpose of suppressing the civil population at home and waging adventurist imperialist wars abroad.

The state grows in proportion as class and national antagonisms develop. Democracy is merely a form which hides the predatory class character of the bourgeois state. Nothing so much proves this as the steady and consistent growth of militarism and the police forces in times of peace as well as war.

The ruling class continually cultivates racism to keep the working class divided, in order to maintain its domination. This is as true at home as it is abroad. The forces of racism and national oppression have been deliberately stimulated by Pentagon and State Department policies all across the globe.

Marxism on violence

After every stage in the struggle of the workers and oppressed people, there follows an ideological struggle over what methods the masses should embrace to achieve their liberation from imperialist monopoly capital. There are always those who abjure violence while minimizing the initial use of violence by the ruling class. They denounce it in words, while in deeds they really cover it up. That's precisely what's

happening now.

Yes indeed, they readily admit the verdict in the Rodney King beating was erroneous and unfair. But — and here their voices grow louder — “The masses should not have taken to the streets and taken matters into their own hands.” Their denunciation of the violence of the ruling class is subdued and muffled — above all it is hypocritical, a sheer formality. It’s an indecent way of seeming to take both sides of the argument when what follows is in reality a condemnation of the masses.

In times when the bourgeoisie is up against the wall, when the masses have risen suddenly and unexpectedly, the bourgeoisie gets most lyrical in abjuring violence. It conjures up all sorts of lies and deceits about the unruliness of a few among the masses as against the orderly law-abiding many.

Marxism here again cuts through it all. The Marxist view of violence flows from an altogether different concept. It first of all distinguishes between the violence of the oppressors as against the responsive violence of the masses. Just to be able to formulate it that way is a giant step forward, away from disgusting bourgeois praise for nonviolence. It never occurs to any of them to show that the masses have never made any real leap forward with the theory of nonviolence. Timidity never made it in history.

Indeed, Marxists do prefer nonviolent methods if the objectives the masses seek — freedom from oppression and exploitation — can be obtained that way. But Marxism explains the historical evolution of the class struggle as well as the struggle of oppressed nations as against oppressors.

Revolutions, force and violence

As Marx put it, “force is the midwife to every great revolution.” This is what Marx derived from his study of the class struggle in general and of capitalist society in

particular.

None of the great revolutions has ever occurred without being accompanied by force and violence. And it is always the oppressor — the ruling class and the oppressing nationality — that is most congenitally prone to use force as soon as the masses raise their heads.

In all the bourgeois revolutions in Europe, this new would-be ruling class used the masses to fight its battles against the feudal lords. Then, when the masses raised their heads to fight for their own liberation against the bourgeoisie, they were met with the most fearful and unmitigated violence. All European history is filled with such examples, from the revolutions of 1789 and 1848 to the Paris Commune of 1871. Does not the bourgeoisie, once it has tamed the proletariat at home, use force and violence through its vast military armada to more efficiently exploit and suppress the many underdeveloped nations throughout the world?

It is so illuminating that Iraq, the nation subjected to the most violent, truly genocidal military attack in recent times, has taken upon itself to press a formal complaint in the United Nations Security Council on behalf of the embattled masses in Los Angeles and other cities. Iraq called on that body to condemn and investigate the nature of the developments here and the irony is that the head of the Security Council felt obligated to accept the complaint. Not even the U.S. delegate, obviously taken by surprise, objected.

How much real difference is there between the suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871 and that of the revolutionary rising of the masses in Los Angeles in 1992? The brutal suppression differs only in magnitude and not in essence. While it might seem that in Los Angeles national oppression alone is involved, in reality it derives from the class exploitation of the African American masses dating back to the days of slavery.

Watts and social legislation

Following the Watts insurrection, the bourgeoisie made lofty promises to improve the situation. The Watts, Detroit, Newark and other rebellions did win significant concessions that eventually were enacted into law. They became the basis for a temporary improvement in the economic and social situation of the oppressed people.

None of the progressive legislation, up to and including affirmative action, would have been enacted had it not been for the rebellions during the 1960s and the 1970s. Yet now, almost three decades after the Watts rebellion, the masses are in greater poverty and the repression is heavier than before. The fruits of what was won have withered on the vine as racism and the deterioration of economic conditions took hold once again.

Once more the bourgeois politicians attempted to mollify the masses with endless promises of improvements never destined to see the light of day. This evoked a profound revulsion among the masses. It took only an incident like the incredible verdict of the rigged jury that freed the four police officers in the Rodney King beating to ignite a storm of revolutionary protest.

If revolutionary measures are ever to have any validity, doesn't a case like this justify the people taking destiny into their own hands?

Less workers, more cops

How interesting that technology everywhere displaces labor, reducing the number of personnel.

There was a time when it was hoped that the mere development of technical and industrial progress, the increase in mechanization and automation, would contribute to the well-being of the masses. This has once again shown itself to be a hollow

mockery. The truth is that the development of higher and more sophisticated technology under capitalism doesn't contribute to the welfare of the masses but on the contrary, throws them into greater misery.

What has been the general trend? The growth of technology, particularly sophisticated high technology, has reduced the number of workers employed in industry as well as in the services. The introduction of labor-saving devices and methods has dramatically reduced the number of workers in all fields.

But the opposite trend prevails in the police forces. This is an absolutely incontestable fact. At one time the police patrolled the streets on foot. Maybe they used a public telephone for communications with headquarters. Today they are equipped with sophisticated gear. They ride either on motorcycles or in police cars or helicopters. They communicate by radio.

All this should reduce the number of police. But the trend is quite the contrary: to increase the forces of repression. This is not geared to productivity as in industry. Their growth is geared to the growth of national antagonisms, the growth of racism and the bourgeoisie's general anti-labor offensive.

In Los Angeles, the bourgeoisie is forced to bring in federal troops to assist city and state authorities. The social composition of the U.S. Army is not just a cross-section of capitalist society. The Army and Marines, especially the infantry, have a preponderance of Black and Latinx soldiers. What does this signify?

The U.S. imperialists had to wage a technological war against Iraq out of fear that the preponderance of Black and Latinx soldiers could end up in a disastrous rebellion; they might refuse to engage in a war against their sisters and brothers in the interests of the class enemy. That's why the armed forces never really got into the ground war that seemed at first to be in the offing.

In Los Angeles, the local police and state forces were inadequate. Only because the masses were unarmed was the bourgeoisie able to suppress what was in truth an insurrection — a revolutionary uprising.

Spontaneity and consciousness

As Marx would put it, such a rising is a festival of the masses. The incidental harm is far outweighed by the fact that it raises the level of the struggle to a higher plateau. The wounds inflicted by the gendarmerie will be healed. The lessons will be learned: that a spontaneous uprising has to be supported with whatever means are available; that a great divide exists between the leaders and the masses.

No viable class or nation in modern capitalist society can hope to take destiny in its own hands by spontaneous struggles alone. Spontaneity as an element of social struggle must beget its own opposite: leadership and organization. Consciousness of this will inevitably grow.



Mumia Abu-Jamal: After 100,000

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What happens when the counter strikes 100,000? Nothing.

One hundred thousand American dead; that means, for all intents and purposes, nothing much. For does the counter stop counting? Or does it continue rolling on like the mighty Mississippi River?

Is 100,000 an end or just another number? And then summer begins to emerge and people rush out-of-doors to get some socializing in. What happens in the next two weeks — a spike, a dozen spikes?

It must be said that even as the official number strikes 100,000, the official number isn't the real one, for the U.S. is so stingy with testing that thousands of people, some who died at home, were never tested. How many homeless people have died, and do you really think they get tested?

In times like these, all people are not created equal. For Black folk, this has been a time of ineffable loss. For many workers — cleaners, nurses, orderlies, bus drivers, cab drivers and the like — their work was on the front line of the contagion of the coronavirus.

As America now opens its doors, what will they find: a new day or more death?

From Imprisoned Nation, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Listen to Mumia's commentary on [Prison Radio](#).



The rule of the rich is not democracy

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The U.S. was established as a republic in 1787 and remains so to this day. It is a republic, but not a democracy.

The American Revolution was not a bourgeois democratic one, like the great Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804, where the ownership of the land was turned over to the formerly enslaved. Democracy, as Aristotle explained, means the rule of the poor.

Aristotle, describing the democracy of his day in Greece, was quite explicit about the fact that democracy means rule by the poor. Rule by the rich is oligarchy. Aristotle says that the real distinction between oligarchy and democracy is in fact the distinction between whether the wealthy or the poor rule, not whether the many or the few rule.

In the U.S., the wealthy rule, not the poor. It is an oligarchy, not a democracy.

The American Revolution — as the War of Independence by the 13 North American colonies is called — had a republican and anti-monarchy character. But republicanism is the political ideology of a landlord class defending itself from the encroachments of the king, not anything democratic.

In the 13 colonies, the leadership of the American Revolution consisted of men of wealth and land; [34 of the 47 signers](#) of the Declaration of Independence were slaveholders, perhaps the most conservative leadership of any revolution in history.

Not until the Civil War and Black Reconstruction was there a democratic revolution in the U.S., but the Reconstruction revolution was drowned in blood. Pro-slavery terrorists murdered tens of thousands of Black people in the South from 1867 to 1877, burying the Reconstruction revolution.

Independence for bankers and slaveholders

The 1776 Declaration of Independence was a call to revolution written by bankers and plantation owners. It includes in its list of violations by the King of England Lord Dunmore's Proclamation in 1775, also known as the First Emancipation Proclamation, that freed all enslaved peoples in the Royal Colony of Virginia.

Another grievance against the king cited in the declaration was the Royal Proclamation of 1763, a decree prohibiting settlers moving into any land west of the Appalachian Mountains and recognizing the rights of the Indigenous peoples living there.

John Adams says that the American Revolution did not start in 1776 but in 1760, at the end of the Seven Years War (also known as the French and Indian War), a war that was led by the commander of the Virginia militia, the wealthy plantation owner George Washington. With their victory, the 13 colonies took control of all the Native land from the East Coast to the Mississippi River. Washington, one of the biggest

slaveholders in Virginia, was given 20,000 acres of land in the Ohio region for his services in the war.

The British crown borrowed heavily from British and Dutch bankers to bankroll the war, doubling Britain's national debt. King George III declared that since the French and Indian War was for the benefit of the colonists, they should contribute to paying down the war debt. To defend this newly won territory from future attacks, King George III also decided to install permanent British army units in the Americas, which required additional sources of revenue. These are the taxes that the colonists objected to and rallied against.

Taxes, however, weren't the only objection. One of the offenses cited by the colonists against the King of England was the decree prohibiting settlers West of the Appalachians. In May 1763, Pontiac, an Ottawa leader, led a number of Native nations in the area of the Great Lakes in an uprising against British forces and settlers along the frontier, commonly called Pontiac's Rebellion. The Royal Proclamation served as a peace treaty with the Indigenous nations who were battling to defend their homeland.

Today, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 is recognized under international law as establishing the legal precedent that the Indigenous population had rights to the lands they occupied.

The colonists considered the entire territory West to the Mississippi to be their own conquered land and refused to recognize the Royal Proclamation.

War against the British and Native nations

The War of Independence (1775-1783) was fought not just against the British, but also against the Native peoples. At the end of the war, victory was declared not just over Britain but also over the Indigenous nations.

The newly formed United States and the Iroquois signed a treaty in 1784 under which the Iroquois ceded much of their historical homeland to the U.S., followed by another treaty in 1794 in which they ceded even more land. The governor of New York state, George Clinton, was constantly pressuring the Iroquois to turn over their land to white settlers. At the same time, European settlers continued to push into the lands beyond the Ohio River, leading to a war between the Western Confederacy and the United States. The war against the Native nations continues to this day.

Because the leaders of the War of Independence were the landowners and slaveholders, merchants and bankers, shippers and lawyers, the enslaved peoples and tenant farmers tended to side with the British against the revolution. That was behind British Gov. Lord Dunmore's proclamation liberating all enslaved peoples. The British raised several Black regiments during the war. The proclamation also absolved all tenant farmers of their feudal rents, which were owed to the local landlords.

After the War of Independence was won, each of the 13 former colonies had separate governments run by the landowners and slaveholders, merchants and bankers, shippers and lawyers. They had led the rebellion, but the soldiers who fought the war were all from the laborers and small farmers who were promised "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" in the Declaration of Independence's call to revolution. They were also promised pay for their service. They got none of it.

Shays' Rebellion

Shays' Rebellion has been relegated to obscurity in the U.S. history books seeking to glorify the rule of slaveholders like George Washington and James Madison and financiers like Alexander Hamilton. (See "Whose Constitution is it?" by Gary Wilson, 1987)

Daniel Shays was a poor farm laborer who had joined the Continental army when the

War of Independence broke out. He fought at Lexington, Bunker Hill and Saratoga and was wounded in action. By 1786, Shays had resigned from the army since he hadn't been paid. Back at home, he found himself in court for nonpayment of debts. Army veterans were given certificates of promise instead of pay.

Farmers, many of them veterans, began to organize and form committees. It was a poor people's mobilization. In Vermont and New Hampshire as well as Massachusetts, rallies were held against the heavy taxation and debt burden. The uprisings in Western Massachusetts were more foreboding. Taxes were high and the poor had no money to pay what they owed. Farmers with guns began to show up at court hearings to prevent their land from being taken away. Even the state militia, when it was called out to put down the farmers, split its ranks between those supporting the farmers and those opposed.

At Great Barrington, Mass., a militia of a thousand was called out to put down the armed crowd. The militia would not move when ordered. When the chief judge suggested that the militia divide with those supporting the court going to one side of the road and those opposed to the other, over 800 went against. The court adjourned and the crowd cheered.

What brought Shays onto the scene was the indictment of 11 leaders of those farmers' protests. Shays organized a thousand armed farmers, most of them army veterans, and led them to Springfield, where the court was sitting. As they marched through the square their ranks grew. The judges postponed the hearings. The poor people's army closed the courts for several months. Shays' Rebellion was serious.

The upper classes throughout the 13 states were thoroughly frightened at this armed uprising of poor people. There was no money to pay the veterans what they were owed, but they had the money to raise a new army to put down Shays' army.

Gen. Henry Knox, who became the first secretary of war of the United States, wrote

a letter to George Washington at the time, warning of the dangerous ideas of the Massachusetts farmers. These farmers believed that since the revolutionary war had been fought “by the joint exertions of all, therefore [the land, etc.] ought to be the common property of all.”

A call went out immediately for a strong central government to, in the words of the preamble of the Constitution, “insure domestic tranquility.”

The Constitutional Convention, secretly assembled in Philadelphia in 1787 right after Shays’ Rebellion was put down, did not represent the small farmers, the slaves, the poor indentured servants, women, Native peoples or any of the other oppressed. They were the bankers, merchants, landowners and slaveholders, shippers and lawyers. They represented the rich.

In 1776, African Americans comprised about 20 percent of the entire population in the 13 colonies. At that time, enslaved people were about 60 percent of South Carolina’s total population and 40 percent of Virginia’s. Although the largest percentages of enslaved peoples were found in the South, slavery did exist in the middle and Northern colonies. In Boston and Newport, 20 to 25 percent of the population consisted of enslaved laborers. Other large cities, such as Philadelphia and New York, also supported significant enslaved populations.

Although enslaved people in cities and towns were not needed as agricultural workers, they were employed in a variety of other capacities: domestic servants, artisans, craftsmen, sailors, dockworkers, laundresses and coachmen.

All slaves were considered property that could be bought and sold. Slaves thus constituted a portion of the owners’ overall wealth. Although Southern slaveholders had a deeper investment in slavery than Northerners, many Northerners, too, had significant portions of their wealth tied up in the ownership of enslaved people.

Constitution modeled on Roman Republic

When the framers of the Constitution met in Philadelphia, they chose as a model the Roman Republic, a slave state. It was a republic, not a democracy. Rome was considered to be the most stable slaveholder state in the past. And that's what they wanted.

The U.S. Constitution is almost a direct copy of that of Rome. The Roman Constitution was designed to give the semblance of power to the free, nonenslaved citizens (men only) while actually concentrating real power in a senatorial elite. [The state structure in Rome](#) was made up of:

1. The Consul. Consuls held the highest office and took on the kingly "power to command." Two consuls were elected for a year and alternated in office on a monthly basis. The president of the U.S. has the same position today as the Roman consul. The consul has supreme command of the army and the civil administration.
2. The Senate, which could pass decrees and represented the class from which the consuls were generally chosen. The U.S. Senate was explicitly modelled on this. Two senators were appointed by each state in the U.S.; direct election of senators didn't happen until 1913 with the 17th Amendment.
3. The "comitia centuriata" or Assembly of the Centuries, an assembly of military officers (property owners) that selected the consul by indirect election: almost exactly copied by the U.S. Electoral College.
4. The Plebian Council or People's Assembly. This was a mass democratic assembly that could pass laws. The Plebian Council operated on the basis of direct democracy, not elected representatives. It could not, however, set its own agenda, having to vote on motions put to it by magistrates who were invariably from the upper classes. The U.S. Constitution does not have a popular democratic assembly, but instead substitutes a House of

Representatives, based on elections (which are funded by wealthy oligarchs).

The effect of the Roman structure was that executive power was always held by a member of the slave-owning patrician class. The Roman Senate likewise was always made up of slave owners rather than common people. Similar effects were achieved in the U.S. Of the first 10 presidents of the U.S., only two, John Adams and John Quincy Adams, were not slave owners. John and John Quincy were both lawyers, serving bankers and landlords.

The Constitution legalized slavery, as noted by Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall in 1987, and specifically prohibits Native peoples from having any rights.

Elections by ballot favor wealthy

Elections by ballot, Aristotle also said, are a mark of oligarchy, the rule of the wealthy, not of democracy, the rule of the poor.

Elections always favor the wealthy. It takes money to be a professional politician. The rich can spend to influence elections and have an education that prepares them as orators. Indirect elections, the Electoral College, only increases the rule of the wealthy.

In the 2000 election, George Bush lost the popular vote but won in the Electoral College. The same happened again with Donald Trump, who lost by almost 3 million votes — over 2 percent — but won the indirect Electoral College vote.

The U.S. government is made up of professional politicians, lobbyists and bureaucrats.

After the American Revolution, most states allowed only white male adult property owners to vote, about 6 percent of the population. In the early 1800s, the property requirement was gradually changed to paying taxes so that by 1857, all white male

taxpayers were allowed to vote. Citizenship was not required until 1928, following an anti-socialist, anti-immigrant campaign that led to the illegal deportation of 1.8 million people.

The Reconstruction era 15th Amendment states that voting rights cannot be denied or abridged based on “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” And briefly, voting rights were opened to African Americans. Disfranchisement came after the defeat of Reconstruction, with Jim Crow laws effectively keeping voting limited to white male taxpayers.

Great struggles were waged in the following years and over time more democratic rights were won, particularly the right to vote. After a mass women’s movement for suffrage, women’s right to vote was won in 1920, with the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.

In 1964, the 24th Amendment prohibited the requirement to pay poll taxes in order to vote. Not until the historic Civil Rights Movement won the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was a nationwide “one person, one vote” electoral system established in the U.S., with the notable exception that prisoners are often denied the right to vote. The U.S. currently has 2.3 million people in prison, the most of any country in the world.

Reconstruction: A democratic revolution

A democratic revolution in the U.S. came with the Civil War (1861-1865) and Black Reconstruction (1865-1877), but that revolution was drowned in blood, much like the revolution taking place at the same time in France — the Paris Commune of 1871. Reconstruction is known as the unfinished revolution.

It was a revolution that destroyed forever the power of the slave owners as a class and chattel slavery as a system. The institution of slavery was overthrown, but the

popular democracy that emerged in Reconstruction was subverted by racism breaking the unity of the poor, the laboring class, against the rich, and then crushed by the Ku Klux Klan and the Northern capitalists.

Reconstruction instituted voting rights, free public education and equal rights for all, including former slaves and women. There is no more democratic period in all of U.S. history. W.E.B. Du Bois' book "Black Reconstruction" details the significant, really revolutionary, advances made under Reconstruction.

As Du Bois notes elsewhere, socialism is the completion of the Reconstruction revolution. (See [“Black August 1619-2019”](#) compiled by Gloria Verdieu)

Socialism is democracy, the rule of the poor, the working class. That's the revolution that has to be finished.



Iranian oil tankers arrive in gas-

poor Venezuela

written by Struggle - La Lucha

May 29, 2020

May 24 — The first of five Iranian oil tankers, named Fortune, entered Venezuelan waters on Saturday night where it was received by the Bolivarian National Armed Force (FANB). Its arrival was an event followed live throughout the country in view of various speculations about whether or not the U.S. military would attempt any action to stop it.

The first declarations of the U.S. administration let it be known that they were evaluating actions before sending ships. At the same time, the Southern Command broadcast the dispatch of four warships to the Caribbean Sea as part of the anti-narcotics operation announced by the White House in early April.

The Iranian government, for its part, stated that it would take “categorical and immediate” action in the event that an attempt was made to stop the ships. The FANB, in turn, announced that it would wait for the ships in its exclusive economic zone to accompany them to the arrival points in Venezuela.

The Pentagon denied having plans to stop the shipments from Iran a few days before the arrival of the first tanker, and the White House Security Council described the import as an “act of desperation by the corrupt and illegitimate Maduro regime” without mentioning potential action to prevent it.

The arrival of the ships, as well as their journey from the Suez Canal, through the Straits of Gibraltar, and into the Atlantic Ocean, was then under constant monitoring and analysis. Fortune’s entry into Venezuelan waters without incident confirmed the hypothesis that the United States would not take action given the consequences it could trigger.

The shipment coincides with the intensification of the sanctions and the siege on Venezuela. Mauricio Claver Carone, director of the National Security Council for the Western Hemisphere, threatened oil companies Repsol, Eni and Reliance in recent days with “sanctions that could be devastating” if they maintain their economic activities in the country.

The event has a strong symbolic significance: it is the strengthening of relations between two governments that have been blocked and declared enemies by the United States, carrying out an action that is an open challenge to U.S. foreign policy. Both the Fortune and the four other Iranian ships have been sanctioned by the US Treasury Department.

The U.S., the Venezuelan right and Luis Almagro, secretary general of the Organization of American States, maintain that this alliance represents a threat to the region. According to them, this is a link that encompasses military and intelligence, an accusation that is not new and for which they have never presented any evidence.

Sending the ships generated strong support within Chavismo. The opposition, however, was divided between two positions: those who maintained the need for the ships to arrive, in view of the shortage of gasoline, and those who spoke out against it, claiming that the US should stop them.

The latter position had little support in the country or within the opposition. The blockade has little social legitimacy, and although there are debates among the people about the origin of the economic difficulties, there is a majority consensus that the sanctions only make the situation worse, affecting the whole population and not just the government, as the U.S. and the coup opposition claim.

The arrival of the tankers comes at a time when the country has been out of gas for more than two months, coinciding with the time of quarantine. The total estimated

gasoline that the ships will bring is almost 1.5 million barrels, and its duration will depend on the distribution policy adopted by the government.

The Fortune will enter the El Palito refinery in Carabobo state on Sunday night. The other ships will arrive in Venezuelan waters in the next few days, where they will be received by the FANB.

Source: [*Internationalist 360°*](#)



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COVID-19: Facts disprove U.S. charges against China

By Scott Scheffer

The U.S. campaign of slander against China regarding its response to the coronavirus can't be seen only as electoral damage control for Donald Trump, nor should it be interpreted only as friction between two economic rivals with billions of dollars at stake.

Not that those aren't factors. But, even with its historic concessions to the global capitalist economy, the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party showcases the superiority of socialist planning in the fight against the coronavirus and points toward a future where private ownership can be eliminated.

The anti-China propaganda, along with Trump's trade war and growing Pentagon threats toward China, are all part of the global class struggle.

The danger for the U.S. ruling class is that literally millions of young people in the U.S. are already fed up with the capitalist agenda of racism, war and gaping inequality, and since the election campaign of Bernie Sanders the fear of uttering the word "socialism" seems to have evaporated.

Exposing the lies about China is an important part of building a fightback movement against rampant U.S. capitalism and imperialism.

China did not conceal anything about the outbreak.

On Dec. 31, 2019, China complied with International Health Regulations — the United Nations' system of monitoring potential epidemics — and notified the World Health Organization (WHO) that there were 27 cases of a mysterious pneumonia-like illness in Wuhan, capital of Hubei province. Nothing was known yet about its ability to spread pre-symptomatically or from humans to humans.

On Jan. 12, Chinese scientists shared the virus's genome via the internet. It was the fastest this was ever accomplished.

On Jan. 22, President Xi Jinping spoke personally with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron about the outbreak. Ma Xiwei, the head of China's National Health Commission, spoke with U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar on Jan.



A medical brigade from eastern China left Wuhan April 8 after helping to beat back the pandemic.

The novel coronavirus was not manipulated.

Scientists from Scripps Research Institute published the results of a study in the journal *Nature Medicine* on March 17. It is the most widely cited information on the origin of the virus that causes COVID-19. "Our analyses clearly show that SARS-CoV-2 is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus," they wrote.

They point to two pieces of evidence that they consider conclusive:

First, the virus's ability to attach itself to human cells so successfully indicates it happened through natural selection — not human engineering. And second, the molecular structure resembles viruses found in bats and pangolins more closely than it resembles any of the six other identified coronaviruses that infect humans.

"These two features of the virus...rule out laboratory manipulation as a potential origin for SARS-CoV-2," concluded Kristian Anderson of Scripps.

There was no accident at lab in Wuhan that "leaked" the virus.

The Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) is one of about 50 high-security labs that study infectious microbes in the world. At this particular lab, they study coronavirus samples taken from bats. After the genome of SARS-CoV-2 was shared with the rest of the world by China, lab scientist

shi Zhengli compared the DNA to every virus sample at the lab. All of the samples there were of viruses from previous outbreaks — too dissimilar to be the cause of COVID-19.

Viral samples at the WIV lab are handled with strict protocols, as they are in all Biosafety Level 4 laboratories. Some samples are chemically deactivated for study and all samples are frozen in liquid nitrogen and then kept in a freezer set to minus 80 degrees Celsius. All technicians wear double sets of personal protective equipment (PPE).

There have been accidents that resulted in shutdowns of similar laboratories. One such shutdown occurred at a U.S. lab at Fort Detrick, Md., in August 2019. But none have occurred at the WIV lab.

China acted to correct Wuhan authorities for the reprimand of Dr Li Wenliang.

Dr Li, an ophthalmologist who worked at Wuhan Central Hospital, noticed a number of cases of a pneumonia-like illness that presented similarities with the deadly SARS virus. He shared his observation with colleagues on an internal email network. On Dec. 31, Wuhan police reprimanded him for "spreading false information."

News of the incident spread across social media. When central leaders in Beijing learned of it, they, in turn, reprimanded the authorities in Wuhan. The mayor of Wuhan and police officials apologized publicly.

Sadly, Dr Li died from COVID-19 in February. But, Li was not a "whistleblower." The efforts to learn about COVID-19 and prevent a health catastrophe were underway in China before Dec. 31. In fact, that is the same day that the first notice to the WHO took place.

In the U.S., millions have lost their livelihoods overnight. The deadly virus has hit oppressed communities — where deep poverty blocks access to health care — the hardest. The racist prison system is now a massive network of death traps. Seniors trapped in nursing homes run for profit are dying in startling numbers.

This disaster can't be assigned just to Trump or to the Republican Party. The blame belongs on the doorstep of capitalism. The division created by slanders against China has to be exposed.

MALCOLM X

Free them all now! National day of protest May 30

The recently refounded National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (NAARPR) calls upon all its members, comrades, friends and allies to join in a national day of protest on May 30, 2020, at 3 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

We as a movement have been agitated into taking mass, united action, not by the pandemic alone, but even more significantly by the federal government and the financial lords and barons of Wall Street who, driven by their own greed and lust for political power, are willing to sacrifice the lives, health, safety and well-being of the people; who deem their profits and their continuing plunder of the national treasury more important than the lives of the people.

We will be protesting to stop the racist murder and violence that this administration has willfully unleashed. Not only is the government standing by as COVID-19 ravages African American, Latino and Indigenous communities — inciting mass Black death with its calls to reopen the economy — but the police and racist vigilantes continue to brazenly hunt and kill Black folks while they sleep in their beds and on open roads in broad daylight. We are protesting the murders of Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Ga., and Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Ky., because they are outrages that demand justice. This lynch-style, racist terrorism must stop, and perpetrators must be punished.

We are calling for this united action to protest genocidal government policies that have allowed city and county jails, federal and state prisons, juvenile detention jails and immigrant detention centers to become hotbeds for COVID-19 infections and death camps for millions. Who are the human beings incarcerated in these so-called correctional facilities?

They are overwhelmingly oppressed Black and Brown people, LGBTQ and Trans people and poor white, working-class people. They come to jails and prisons in large part from the 140 million poor people living in the U.S. They cannot voluntarily social distance themselves. Their confinement prevents them from taking action to protect themselves from death-causing infections. Their continued imprisonment under these circumstances is an act of genocide.

We must help them. The prisoners of Cook County jail in Chicago managed to write on one of the windows of the jail: HELP WE MATTER.

We are calling this united action to help protect all prisoners from COVID-19 infections and death by demanding that all prisoners be liberated from the death camps that U.S. prisons have become. We demand that the president, governors and mayors, prosecutors and judges take immediate steps to depopulate jails, prisons, immigrant detention centers and juvenile facilities.

Continued on page 6



Justicia para Ahmaud Arbery: Fin a la supremacía blanca y al asesinato racista



African Liberation Day 2020: Solidarity key to people's victory

written by Struggle - La Lucha

May 29, 2020



Message of solidarity for [African Liberation Day 2020: A Virtual Event](#) from May 23 to May 25, called by the Maryland Council of Elders, the All-African People's Revolutionary Party and others. This year's African Liberation Day theme is "Imperialist Sanctions on Zimbabwe, Cuba and Venezuela are Acts of War: Africans Everywhere Must Fight!"

My name is Andre Powell and I am representing the Peoples Power Assembly in Baltimore and the Socialist Unity Party nationally.

The United States and the Pentagon continue their policy of brutal sanctions in an effort to control and destroy sovereign nations. The majority of sanctioned countries represent the oppressed world, whether former colonies fighting for their independence, those who are building socialism or those still battling against imperialism.

After the end of World War II, the U.S. and its Western European allies competed among each other to gain control over the countries of South America, Africa and Asia. Liberation struggles broke out as they tried to break free from decades of colonialism. The struggle for true independence was still out of reach for those countries, as the U.S. and European powers were able to assert neocolonial control over every aspect of life. In other words, they were independent in name only.

Western European powers and the U.S. colluded with each other as they chose those who would head the new governments of each country. If a particular leader would not do their master's bidding, they were removed from power, many by covert means or direct murder, only to be replaced by another puppet. Additional methods of control included the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, whose financial assistance is often tied to the implementation of austerity measures.

Currently, the U.S. has imposed sanctions against 39 countries around the world. The strongest sanctions are against the countries of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cuba, Iran, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, China and Nicaragua. On the African continent, the U.S. has imposed sanctions on Sudan, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Libya, Mauritania, Somalia, South Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Rwanda, in addition to Zimbabwe. A total of 14 countries.

These sanctions are an act of war, just as if the U.S. were dropping bombs. All of these countries have a right to their own self-determination and national sovereignty. The Peoples Power Assembly and the Socialist Unity Party stand in solidarity with these countries as they fight against U.S. imperialism and its allies.

At this time, here in the U.S., another war rages against oppressed people and workers within our own borders.

This war on the working class is waged by bankers, billionaires, courts, police and other parts of the state apparatus of the capitalist system. The coronavirus pandemic shows how ineffective capitalism is in providing for the people during a major health crisis. They ignored the early warnings from the World Health Organization. They made no plans to prevent the spread and instead let it fester until the death toll climbed to numbers where it could not be ignored.

Now they put forth a feeble attempt to implement measures to prevent the further spread. They try to appease the country by buying us off with a measly emergency check while once again giving away billions of dollars to big business. The failure to manufacture personal protective equipment has resulted in the deaths of so many health care workers, just as the lack of ventilators has resulted in many patients dying in intensive care units.

Initially, it was kept hidden from the news media and public that Black and Brown people were dying in disproportionately higher numbers. The nation's prison population, which is 80 percent Black, are sitting ducks trapped in what are literal death camps. The same can be said about immigrant detention camps.

While we fight for our lives on one front, the fight against police terror and white supremacy continues. The Ahmaud Arbery case, reminiscent of the murder of Trayvon Martin, has illustrated that racist violence is deeply embedded in the system.

Unity against the capitalist onslaught of sanctions against the countries of Africa will lead to the ultimate victory of their right to self-determination, free from imperialist control. That same unity will beat back the racist atrocities in this country, whether they are from the barrel of a gun or institutionalized in written policies of the government.

The Peoples Power Assembly and the Socialist Unity Party support the demands of African Liberation Day for both the continent and here in the U.S. Solidarity is the key to people's victory.





Socialism and dignity: The right to use a bathroom

written by Struggle - La Lucha

May 29, 2020

Capitalism is humiliation. Having to ask to go to the bathroom can be deeply humiliating.

As a young girl, Julia Wright was escorted by a family friend, Constance Webb, to Manhattan's Bergdorf Goodman department store. Webb, who was white, asked a clerk where the women's bathroom was.

The clerk looked over the counter, saw the African American child, the eldest daughter of famed novelist Richard Wright, and said, "There are no restrooms for you!" Shortly thereafter, in 1947, Wright's family moved to Paris so their daughters could escape this demeaning treatment.

Decades later, individuals and families wander the streets of New York City and wonder where they can go to the bathroom. Everywhere there are signs reading

“Bathrooms for customers only.”

People have to buy something in order to use the facilities. The human necessity of adults and children to go to a restroom usually requires money.

Many bathrooms are not accessible for the disabled. Transgender people have been attacked and arrested for using restrooms.

Where can homeless people go? There used to be public bathrooms in 400 New York City subway stations. Now only a handful are open.

This writer observed a homeless man on a subway car who couldn't hold it anymore. The man was crying and apologizing to the other subway riders. He was trying to preserve his dignity.

Then his urine flowed down the floor and passengers lifted their feet in order to escape it.

Such a scene couldn't happen in Havana, and not because the Cuban capital lacks a subway. Despite a cruel U.S. economic blockade, every person in socialist Cuba has dignity. It's natural for Cuban municipalities to provide free public bathrooms.

Under capitalism, since it's based on exploiting human labor, it's natural to rob people's dignity.

Human rights and bathrooms

Farmworkers fought for years to have bathrooms. The farm and ranch owners forced workers to relieve themselves in the fields.

Refusing to provide bathrooms wasn't just a matter of bosses being cheap. It was political.

Landlords wanted farmworkers to be seen as animals. And they wanted workers to feel less than human.

The grape boycott and struggles of the United Farm Workers union led to federal regulations and state laws requiring portable toilets and sinks in the fields. [Yet as late as 1988](#), California and other states weren't enforcing these rules.

Workers, particularly women workers, are fired for using company bathrooms "too often." [Amazon warehouse workers](#) in Britain skip bathroom breaks to keep their jobs. It's no different in the United States.

Transit workers have to struggle to get bathroom breaks. That was a big issue in the 2015 strike of [Amalgamated Transit Union Local 998](#) members in Milwaukee. Bus operators were given only a four-minute break at their end of their routes.

These guarantees mean nothing if a bus is running late because of traffic. Some operators are forced to wear diapers. [ATU Local 587](#) members in Seattle faced the same problems.

The ATU reports that "one study found that not responding to an extreme urge to urinate affected attention and thinking. The effect was equal to that of staying awake for 24 hours or having a blood alcohol level (BAC) of 0.05 percent. For comparison, a commercial driver would be disqualified at a BAC of 0.04 percent."

The ATU says [transit operators have a right to](#):

- Rapid access to restrooms when needed, on all routes and all shifts;
- Safe access to clean, fully equipped facilities along routes and at the end of routes with locations identified and updated;
- Adequate time to access, use and return from restrooms;
- No retaliation, discipline or threats for going to the restroom;
- Restroom use time built into scheduling;

- Clear policies on restroom access along the route, including how to notify dispatch, safe methods for leaving and securing the bus, communicating with passengers and discharging passengers.

These six demands are absolutely necessary and could be rapidly implemented. Yet workers have to fight for them in the capitalist U.S. and Canada.

Capitalism vs. socialism on the toilet front

Elected officials in New York City have complained for years about the lack of public bathrooms. It's a problem for the 65 million tourists who spent \$44 billion in the Big Apple in 2018.

In 2006, the Spanish company Cemusa — since taken over by the French corporation JCDecaux — won a contract to [install public bathrooms](#) in New York. These weren't free; a quarter was needed to use them.

The stupendous number of 20 public toilets were ordered for the metropolis of 8.6 million people. In 2018, 15 of them were still [in a Queens warehouse](#).

Contrast that to the socialist People's Republic of China, whose President Xi Jinping in 2015 called for better sanitation. The three-year target of 57,000 new public toilets was exceeded and a total of 70,000 were installed by 2018.

Some of these facilities have been criticized for being too luxurious. According to the [South China Morning Post](#), a so-called "five-star public toilet near downtown Chongqing featured TV, Wi-fi, phone chargers, water fountains and automatic shoe polishers."

It might have been [inspired by Lenin](#), the leader of the Bolshevik Revolution, who predicted using "gold for the purpose of building public lavatories in the streets of some of the largest cities of the world."

The lack of clean public restrooms may hinder people from returning to restaurants, theatres and stadiums in the U.S. [after coronavirus shutdowns are lifted](#).

Throughout the U.S. South, laws segregated restrooms and water fountains by race. Racism also prevailed up north, like at Bergdorf Goodman on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue.

Julia Wright has returned many times to the U.S. to fight for the freedom of her friend Mumia Abu-Jamal. The journalist and former member of the Black Panther Party was framed for the 1981 killing of a Philadelphia police officer.

Abu-Jamal was sentenced to death, and after protests took him off death row in 2011, he is still in prison. Julia Wright has helped lead efforts to free Mumia Abu-Jamal in France, where a street is named after the revolutionary.

During the coronavirus crisis, it's more urgent than ever to fight to free the prisoners and to provide free, clean, accessible bathrooms for everybody. A socialist revolution will guarantee both.



<https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/2020/05/page/2/>