

Los Angeles: End the U.S. economic war on Cuba, June 25

written by Struggle - La Lucha
May 25, 2023

**Biden, take Cuba
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of "State Sponsors of Terror"**

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SUNDAY, JUNE 25, 2023 AT 2:00 PM PDT

End the U.S. Economic War on Cuba!

Wilshire Federal Building



San Diego celebrates Malcolm X Day

written by Struggle - La Lucha
May 25, 2023

The Sixth Annual Malcolm X Day Celebration was held on May 20 at San Diego's Malcolm X Library, commemorating the 98th birthday of ancestor El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz.

Kim Phillips-Pea, lead organizer, stood by her commitment to continue hosting an annual celebration emphasizing the importance of commemorating Malcolm X Day and educating the community, especially our youth, by dispelling the myths and untruths about Malcolm X.

The theme for 2023 was "Do for Self" - not in a narcissistic way, but by way of self-care and self-love so that we are able to care for and love others.

The program began with drumming through audience participation, followed by libations led by JohnnieRenee Nelson, honoring our ancestors' past, present, and

future.

Phillips-Pea pulled together individuals from many organizations, local, national, and international, and throughout the San Diego community, to form a program that addressed the concerns and challenges we face in this difficult time.

As the library's performance annex filled, District 4 Council President pro tem Monica Montgomery, who is on the task force to study and develop reparation proposals for African Americans, spoke on the importance of honoring the legacy of Malcolm X. Next came Baye Kesbamera, member of the International Elders Advisory Board for the 8th Pan African Congress (PAC), who spoke about San Diego's history of struggle.

Among the many community and organizational speakers was Brother Lee from the Nation of Islam (NOI), who spoke on mental health and wellness; a representative of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), who read a statement on the legacy of Malcolm X; and a representative of the Friends of Malcolm X Library, who spoke about the library's history.

Cultural performances included students of Dennis Newsome, instructor in the Afro-Brazilian martial art of Capoeira, followed by an intermission where healthy food was served, and everyone had time to break bread, socialize, and browse the community vendor tables circling the room.

The program ended with a panel discussion with Professor Matsemela Odom, international president of International People's Democratic Uhuru Movement (InPDUM) and Black is Back Coalition; Dahryan Muhammad, member of African Liberation Day 2023; and Sartteka Nefer, community activist.

Everyone was encouraged to read the "Autobiography of Malcolm X" and read his speeches, particularly those given after his trips abroad in 1964.

Everyone was invited to the African Liberation Day Rally and Conference to be held on the weekend of May 27-28 in San Diego.



How about ‘work requirements’ for yacht owners? Ebenezer Scrooge is alive and well in Congress

written by Struggle - La Lucha
May 25, 2023

Using the so-called debt limit as a club, congressional leaders are pushing for more attacks on the poor. Don't expect Joe Biden to fight back. That's our job.

The current fiscal crisis is completely artificial. The debt limit, first enacted in 1917, is now set at \$31.4 trillion.

Since 1960 it's been [raised 78 times](#). It could easily be increased again.

With an approaching June 1 deadline – when Uncle Sam supposedly won't be able to

pay its IOUs – the wealthy and powerful are demanding more cutbacks. These include increasing work requirements in order to eat.

[South Dakota Rep. Dusty Johnson](#) is insisting people work until they're 65 to qualify for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs) benefits, also known as food stamps. People 49 and under are already required to work 80 hours a month (or around 20 hours a week) unless they have young children or can prove they're disabled.

If people could find good-paying, full-time jobs, they wouldn't need food stamps. [Households in 32 states](#) receiving food stamps had them cut by at least \$95 per month in March as the COVID-19 emergency allotments were suspended.

Almost 45 million people use SNAP benefits and millions more qualify. This includes 9.5 million people 50 and over. The [American Association of Retired Persons \(AARP\)](#) thinks millions could have their food stamps cut.

Even the current work requirements have proven so harsh that [many states suspended them](#) during the last recession. They were halted by the U.S. government during the pandemic but are scheduled to be reinstated on July 1.

Worse is forcing people to work in order to qualify for Medicaid. After Arkansas imposed work requirements, [18,000 adults lost their access](#) to health care.

Not known is how many people died or became seriously ill after being kicked off Medicaid in the second-poorest U.S. state. Meanwhile the Walton family – owners of Arkansas-based Walmart – are enjoying a [\\$173 billion fortune](#).

Denying hunger and poverty

The whole point of these so-called work requirements is to compel people to take the lowest paying jobs with the worst conditions. This allows bosses to lower wages for

millions of other workers as well.

Capitalists want to be able to use these vulnerable workers as potential strikebreakers. The labor movement has to oppose these forced work programs.

How is President Biden resisting the latest demands for cutbacks? He's bragging that he voted in the U.S. Senate for food stamp work requirements in 1996.

The alleged concern shown by the Wall Street Journal for U.S. government deficits is completely phony. Capitalists collected [\\$475 billion in tax-free interest](#) off the national debt last year. U.S. Treasury bonds have no lack of buyers.

The obvious way to reduce the federal debt is to reduce war spending. Why aren't the Democrats saying that?

The Biden administration is asking for [\\$886 billion for the Pentagon](#) in its 2024 budget. Add the CIA and a dozen other spy agencies and the real war budget is around a trillion dollars.

At least \$75 billion has been [spent on the proxy war](#) against the Russian Federation.

Apologists for capitalism are no different from Queen Marie Antoinette, who, when informed the French people were starving, declared "let them eat cake!"

[Former Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels](#) claims that only 2.5% of people are really poor.

In a 1964 speech endorsing Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, Ronald Reagan denied there were any hungry people in the United States:

"We were told four years ago that 17 million people went to bed hungry each night,"



said the washed-up matinee idol. “Well that was probably true. They were all on a diet.”

Reagan’s well fed, prosperous and bigoted audience laughed heartily.

By 2021, [53 million people](#) were using food banks. Millions more couldn’t afford supermarkets anymore and were [shopping at dollar stores](#) instead.

Only the people can stop Congress from cutting food stamps and other needed social programs. The AFL-CIO needs to call a new Solidarity Day to fight these vicious cutbacks.

It’s billionaire parasites like Jeff Bezos who need work requirements. Bezos should be made to clean the bathrooms in his Amazon warehouses.

And his \$500 million yacht should be seized to give homeless and other working-class children a vacation.



Biden drops ‘One China’ policy, uses Philippines for war drive over Taiwan

written by Struggle - La Lucha
May 25, 2023

Pentagon strategists have been beefing up their military presence in Asia and building alliances in preparation for an all-out war against China. In recent months Taiwan has increasingly come into focus as the likely excuse to justify a war as terrible - or worse — than any in modern history.

They want to use Taiwan as a tool to “manufacture consent.” But the island is important for more than just war propaganda. Pentagon planners are readying plans for control of areas of Asia and, in particular, the South China Sea that would be of value in war.

In early April, [CNN reported](#) that U.S. forces would now be allowed to rotate troops to nine military bases in the Philippines, including four new bases. Three of the four

are within a few hundred miles of Taiwan and close to military defense locations of China's People's Liberation Army.

The Philippines bases would facilitate a takeover of the channel between northern Luzon and Taiwan - the area called the Bashi Channel. Control of Taiwan would be instrumental in moving into the South China Sea.

Only weeks after securing access to the bases, the U.S. conducted war exercises jointly with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Annual Balikatan war exercises between the U.S. and the Philippines have been growing in size and scope in their decades-long history, and this was the largest ever, involving 17,600 troops - nearly double that in 2022.

More than 12,000 of the troops were from the U.S., a small number from Australia, and the remainder from the AFP. They used live ammunition, F-16 fighter jets, the F-35B stealth bomber, Patriot missile batteries, and Blackhawk and Chinook helicopters. They included amphibious landing practice, and targeted and sunk a decommissioned ship close to the South China Sea.

Balikatan 2023 was an open threat and practice for war against China.

In another signal of the heightened war danger, Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. followed up with an announcement that the AFP would join the U.S. in ongoing naval patrols of the South China Sea. Marcos' father was a brutal U.S.-backed dictator who was driven into exile by an uprising of the Filipino people in 1986.

War budget, arms sales

On March 9, U.S. Secretary of Defense [Lloyd Austin announced](#) President Joe Biden's proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Defense Budget of \$842 billion - which is \$26 billion more than 2023.

Describing Biden's proposal, Austin said: "To sustain our military advantage over China, it makes major investments in integrated air and missile defenses and operational energy efficiency, as well as in our air dominance, our maritime dominance, and in munitions, including hypersonics.

"This budget includes the largest ever request for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, which we are using to invest in advanced capabilities, new operational concepts, and more resilient force posture in the Indo-Pacific region. It also enables groundbreaking posture initiatives in Guam, Mariana Islands, the Philippines, Japan, and Australia."

Separate from the proposed defense budget, the Biden administration has approved \$19 billion in arm sales to Taiwan. Weapons makers are energetically pushing for more of that.

[Defense News reported](#) May 3, "A delegation of United States defense contractors and a former senior leader of the U.S. Marine Corps pledged the beginning of deeper cooperation with Taiwan.

"Speaking at a public forum in Taiwan's capital Taipei, retired Lt. Gen. Steven Rudder said the U.S. wants to be part of the defense capabilities of Taiwan and improve the supply chain resilience of the island. He also emphasized how critical the island's position is for security."

Taiwan was already part of China more than a century before George Washington was elected the first president of the U.S. Its unwarranted recognition as a separate country only happened in 1949 when Chiang Kai-Shek, the nationalist leader who slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Mao Zedong's revolutionary fighters beginning with the 1927 Shanghai Massacre, was finally chased out.

Chiang fled to Taiwan and was recognized by the imperialist powers of the U.S. and

Britain as the legitimate government of China. Under pressure from the U.S., the United Nations didn't even grant the People's Republic of China a seat until 1971.

Since then, officially, the U.S. has adhered to the "One China" policy in recognition of the fact that Taiwan is part of China. The "Three Communiques" were mutually agreed on policies that the U.S. ostensibly accepted in exchange for the right to invest in China.

Two trends of thought have competed with each other among those billionaires who dominate U.S. policy toward China. There are those who want to maintain a stable profit-taking relationship.

But the spectacular successes of China in lifting more than 800 million people out of extreme poverty, China's rise as a world scientific power, its global leadership in surviving the COVID-19 pandemic, and myriad other achievements have emboldened those capitalist rulers who want to destroy China.

The anti-imperialist movement is facing its greatest challenge in many decades. The proxy war against Russia and the growing momentum for war against China have to be seen as one. A powerful people's movement that takes militant action against U.S. imperialism can and must block another calamitous war.



In Cuba, National Assembly of People's Power truly represents the people

written by Struggle - La Lucha
May 25, 2023

Havana – The first thing you notice coming from the U.S. to the beautiful island of Cuba is how chill the people are. They hang out late into the night, chatting, playing dominoes, listening to music, or just watching the sights.

The second thing you notice is that government officials do not fear the people they represent. It is truly a government by the people and for the people.

Unlike U.S. government officials who do not mix among the people, Lis Cuesta Peraza, wife of Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel, and National Assembly Deputy Mariela Castro Espín marched among the people in the Conga Against Homophobia and Transphobia without any security detail.

When we visited the Capitol in Havana on May 12, there were no armed guards surrounding the building where the National Assembly of People's Power meets. At the entrance were two guards who waved our delegation of LGBTQ+ activists from the U.S. right in. We were escorted through the building by Sergio Martínez, a deputy of the assembly, who met with us and explained the Cuban political process.

The National Assembly has 470 elected deputies. They do not receive a salary for their service and are not allowed to get campaign funding. They are also subject to recall by the people of their districts at any time. Therefore they cannot be bought, and they cannot betray the districts they are there to represent.

Deputies must maintain their jobs in their chosen professions. What a contrast with U.S. Congress members and other elected officials who are owned and controlled by corporate lobbyists and dark money!

At the Capitol, the president, vice president, and secretary of the assembly, the presidents of the commissions, and their staff work throughout the year. But most elected deputies work in their communities and meet in Havana two times per year. If needed, the president can call a special meeting to discuss urgent matters.

At the end of May 2023, a special session will be held to discuss and approve the Social Communications legislation, to protect the Cuban people from the constant misinformation war waged by the United States.

The U.S. government hopes this misinformation war may work on Cuban youth because they know it hasn't worked on older Cubans, who remember what the country was like under Washington's thumb before the revolution – where children died of hunger and other curable diseases, people lived in shacks, and the majority of the population was illiterate.

But even the Cuban youth, especially those in the Union of Communist Youth and

Federation of University Students, continue to defend their revolution and their homeland. “Although we are grateful for the solidarity the world has shown us, we can’t wait for anyone to defend our revolution; we have to continue to build our revolution and a better Cuba today,” asserted a young woman leader of the federation.

Elections in Cuba

When it comes to the electoral process in Cuba, you immediately notice that lies and misinformation are also propagandized to the people in the U.S. regarding “corrupt” elections in Cuba.

There is only one political party, the Communist Party of Cuba. But anyone can run for office. Candidates are selected by the community they live and work in. Each neighborhood gives from 2-8 nominations for delegates that are well-known and respected by their community, so capitalist-style campaigns are not allowed or necessary. They represent their neighborhoods in the Municipal Assembly.

From these, the candidates for the National Assembly are selected. Fifty percent of the candidates go through this process. The other 50% of the nominated candidates come from the mass organizations of civil society, where one will find the Federation of Cuban Women, Committees for Defense of the Revolution, Cuban Workers’ Central, and others.

All the nominations then go to the National Candidacy Commission, where they are thoroughly vetted. There is no requirement that a candidate be a member of the Communist Party, although many are. This totally debunks the U.S. government’s assertion that Cuba’s Communist Party selects the legislature.

U.S. capitalist politicians can never understand integrity, honesty, or service to the people because they are put into power to serve the needs and wants of the ruling

class.

The National Candidacy Commission proposes a final list of candidates, which go back to the Municipal Assemblies for approval, and finally to the general elections. Anywhere in this process, Cubans can reject a candidate but must provide evidence as to why they believe the candidate is unable to serve.

Currently, 55% of the National Assembly delegates are women. Some 73% of people voted in the last election. Compare that to the U.S., where just over half of the voting population participated in the 2020 general election.

After the National Assembly is seated, the deputies elect the president, vice president, and secretary of the parliament, and also the president and vice president of the Republic and members of the Council of State.

By law, a member of parliament carries the vote and the issues from their community, meeting with their constituency once a month. The work of a member of the National Assembly is one of service with no pay. They live in their communities and may be called upon to respond to a neighbor constituent in the middle of the night after a long day at their job. They are required by law and by duty to respond promptly. The people have the right to request the removal of any elected official.

The role of the Communist Party is to develop the guidelines for the development of a socialist society. The Party's mandate is to meet the needs of the majority of Cubans, to have social justice for all, and to ensure that every Cuban can express and participate in the development of the type of society Cubans want.

Contrary to the stated role of "representatives" in the U.S., the reality for people here is no social justice, homelessness, no medical care, hunger, and state-sanctioned violence.

Legislative process

For legislation to become law, it must be approved by the National Assembly. In the case of laws that affect the entire population, the people must vote for them.

The Council of State meets between the two annual sessions. Twenty-one deputies are elected by the National Assembly to serve on the council. Their charge is to serve the legislature by organizing and gathering information on issues brought by their constituents or mass organizations.

Legislation is prepared by a group of experts who develop a draft proposal. Then it goes to the respective sectors for input – for instance, farmers will have input in any legislation that affects farmers. Anyone who has an interest in the topic can request inclusion in the discussion and development.

After the National Assembly approves major new legislation, it may go to a referendum for the people to vote yes or no. Such was the case of the Families Code, passed in Cuba last year, a law that is far ahead of any country, especially the United States, as it relates to families and the LGBTQ+ community. (A future article on the Families Code will explore this further.)

The interest of the Cuban people is paramount for the National Assembly. Imagine if we in the U.S. could truly have leaders that make our interests more important than the interests of Big Oil, Big Pharma, or Big Banks. Imagine our representatives working towards the development of a better life for all people in the U.S.

These scoundrels, our so-called “representatives,” know nothing about sacrifice, service, or commitment. They will never willingly give up their millionaire donors, their mansions, and their paid expensive vacations.

Only a socialist revolution in the U.S. will wrench power from them and give it back to the people where it belongs.

Impact of U.S. economic blockade

Deputy Sergio Martínez ended our meeting as most of the people we met ended their meetings – with a discussion on how the longest sanctions imposed on any country have impacted and continue to impact the people of Cuba. He spoke of its impact on energy production, agriculture, and medicine.

“The Biden administration has not been friendly and in fact has been more harmful with misinformation, the blockade, and now putting Cuba on the list of state sponsors of terrorism,” Martínez explained.

When we visited the Denunciation Memorial in Havana, I was disgusted by the gall of the U.S. imperialist government in having a list of so-called “state sponsors of terrorism.” This same U.S. government has rained torture, rape, and murder on Cuba, all over the world, and upon its own citizens. Calling anyone else a terrorist is simply hypocrisy at the greatest level.

A recent meeting of Latin American countries voted against the exclusion of Cuba and demanded an end to the blockade, as well as taking Cuba off the terrorist list.

“We cannot wait for the U.S. to end the blockade. We have to develop our country with it still in place. Sovereignty is a right we will not renounce no matter what or at any cost,” the humble, revolutionary servant of the Cuban people stated.



Hundreds in Times Square declare: Nakba was a crime! Palestine will win!

written by Struggle - La Lucha
May 25, 2023

New York City's Times Square was filled with protesters on May 14. They marked the 75th anniversary of the Nakba - meaning "catastrophe" in Arabic - that was the founding of the apartheid regime that occupies Palestine.

"Israel" was founded in 1948 upon the massacres of hundreds of people at Deir Yassin and other villages. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled from their homes.

As a notice for the protest explained, "Israel" means "75 years of occupation, of apartheid, of settler colonialism, of massacres, of ethnic cleansing."

The rally was called by NY4Palestine, which includes Al-Awda NY, the Palestine

Right to Return Coalition; American Muslims for Palestine; Palestinian Youth Movement; and Students for Justice in Palestine.

Other organizations endorsing the rally were the December 12th Movement; ANSWER Coalition; Bronx Greens; Brooklyn for Peace; Neturei Karta (Orthodox Jews who denounce Zionism); Party for Socialism and Liberation; Socialist Unity Party; Veterans for Peace; and Workers World Party.

Colorful banners and loud chants attracted onlookers. Speakers reminded people that it's the \$158 billion that the U.S. has given to the Zionist regime that keeps it alive.

Bill Dores from Struggle-La Lucha newspaper linked the lynching of Jordan Neely by a white supremacist on the New York subway to the mass killing of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. "They claim they don't have any money for the homeless or for food stamps ... but they can spend billions for Israel."

People marched through the streets to Grand Central Station. The cavernous train station echoed with "Apartheid has to go!" and "Money for jobs and education, not for occupation!"

Palestine will win!



Struggle □ La Lucha PDF - May 15, 2023

written by Struggle - La Lucha
May 25, 2023
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Marching with Cuba's Cenesex on a historic **MAY DAY**

By Melinda Butterfield

Havana — May Day in Cuba. Nothing quite like it — even if it takes place a little later than expected.

Havana is renowned for its huge, colorful, and powerful marches every May 1, International Workers' Day. This year was already planned to be different. Because of severe fuel shortages caused by the U.S. blockade, it was decided to focus on local marches in Cuba's provinces and the various municipalities that make up Havana.

Then severe weather struck. Havana's May 1 celebrations had to be postponed. Instead, it was "the First on the Fifth" — the great workers' action was held on Friday, May 5, the 205th birthday of Karl Marx, the founder of scientific socialism.

Another difference: in an additional move to conserve fuel for urgent people's needs, the usual march through the Plaza of the Revolution was changed to a mass rally along the Malecón, Havana's famous sea wall.

I arrived in Cuba from New York City on May 3 to attend the VII International Colloquium on Trans Identities, Gender, and Culture, hosted by the National Center for Sex Education (Cenesex), together with Serena Sojic-Borne, a comrade from the New Orleans chapter of Freedom Road Socialist Organization.

Comrade Mariela Castro Espín, director of Cenesex, invited the international delegates from Mexico, Italy, the United States, and other countries to join the center's delegation in the May Day action, a proposal we gladly accepted.

Queer youth for socialism

In the U.S., it's impossible to imagine a city full of workers rising well before dawn to defend the system they live under. U.S. workers are exploited by their bosses, lied to by politicians, overworked and underpaid, without universal health care or the right to housing.

How different is Cuba! In Havana, workers from every sector, along with students and other organized groups, began gathering by 4 a.m. As the international delegates walked by the University of Havana, contingents of young people were already starting to arrive, chanting, singing, and drumming.

Across the wide boulevard, workers representing Radio Rebelde (founded by Che Guevara) and other media outlets were gathering around their banners.



As we reached the intersection where Cenesex was gathering, outside a movie theater, comrade Mariela Castro was among the first to arrive — greeting people, keeping the group motivated and excited. Organizers from TransCuba Nacional, the national network of trans women, distributed trans flags to the many young queer people as they arrived and kept folks from wandering too far afield.

At the intersection where we gathered, we witnessed young people organized by the Committees in Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) blocking streets and directing traffic away from the marchers. A CDR leader took time to snap some group photos of our contingent for Mariela.

'Love is the law'

The dozens of queer youth who gathered with Cenesex, a majority of them Black Cubans, carried an enormous rainbow flag and a lead banner that read, "Por todas las familias, el amor es ley" — "For all Cuban families, love is the law."

This refers to the revolutionary new Families Code approved last year, which expands the rights of all families, including LGBTQ+ families and chosen families. May is also the International Month Against Homophobia and Transphobia and is celebrated in Cuba much like Pride Month is in the U.S.

For Cenesex and the networks of trans, gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, this is a key time to educate the queer community and the broader Cuban public about the provisions of the new code.

- U.S. LGBTQ+ delegation travels to Cuba to learn about new Families Code
- Queer Liberation Party for Cuba trip
- Montana Rep. Zooey Zephyr

SAN DIEGO MAY DAY

- Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!
- Free Leonard Peltier!
- Free Them ALL!

► Biden sends troops to border

As we marched down the wide, dark street toward the Malecón, more people streamed into the contingent at each intersection. We took our place among the tens of thousands already gathered beside the sea, while revolutionary songs played over gigantic speakers that reached everyone in the rally.

Dozens of hands of all colors and gender expressions took hold of the massive Pride flag and shook it in time to beat. Beside the Cenesex group were health care workers' unions, unions of the economic ministry, parents holding small children on their shoulders, and portraits of Martí, Fidel, and Che, all awaiting the inspiring words of Ulises Guillarte, general secretary of the Cuban Workers Federation (CTC).

The beautiful sunrise over the sea slowly spread across the massive demonstration — a beautiful symbolic moment.

Together we sang, chanted, and celebrated the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, the achievements of socialism despite the punishing and illegal U.S. blockade, and the continuing struggles of the world's workers and oppressed.

Viva Cuba! El amor es ley! 🇨🇺

HARRY BELAFONTE: Problems faced by people of color 'are as dire & entrenched as half a century ago'

► Justice for Jordan Neely! ► U.S. judiciary sides against workers ► Biden nukes in Korea, anti-China alliances
► Repression in Puerto Rico ► NNOC brigadistas detained and harassed ► Remember Khader Adnan ► Gaza

- Marching with Cuba's Cenesex on a historic May Day
- Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Free Leonard Peltier! Free Them ALL!
- Harry Belafonte
- Justice for Jordan Neely!
- Not another lynching!
- Struggle can bring justice
- What's the matter with Montana? Deindustrialization and political reaction
- Migrants not welcome, Biden sends troops to border
- U.S. judicial system's bias against workers
- U.S. LGBTQ+ delegation travels to Cuba to learn about new Families Code
- Biden nukes Korea, builds anti-China alliances
- Remember Khader Adnan, martyr of freedom
- Israeli occupation forces launch brutal attacks on Gaza
- Represión en Puerto Rico
- Repression in Puerto Rico
- Detenidos y acosados los brigadistas del NNOC
- NNOC brigadistas detained and harassed
- TSEUA niega acceso a información de la Junta de Control Fiscal
- En Puerto Rico, la lucha continúa contra privatización de energía



Cuban socialism advances biotechnology

written by Struggle - La Lucha
May 25, 2023

Twentieth anniversary of the Human Genome Project

April was the 20th anniversary of the official completion of the Human Genome Project (HGP). This was an international collaboration to identify all the DNA sequences comprising the human genome.

Planning for this colossal effort began as far back as 1984. The execution took 13 years, from 1990 to 2003. In actuality, the identification of nucleotide base pairs making up the genome was only 92% complete in 2003, when the project was declared completed. It was not until 2021 that the genome was sequenced, with only 0.3% of base pairs remaining undetermined.

The achievement by 2003 was astonishing. Countless hours of human labor combined with advances in computing power resulted in a nearly complete picture

of the human genome only 50 years after the DNA structure was determined. The project was driven primarily by public collaboration - not market forces - with a relatively free exchange of information. Researchers worked in some 20 institutions in six countries, including China.

Since 2003, major milestones have been reached. For example, as of March this year, a Mississippi woman named Victoria Gray is experiencing a complete cessation of all symptoms of sickle cell anemia, a painful disease mainly affecting Black people. She began receiving experimental gene therapy using CRISPR technology in 2019. This would not have been possible without the HGP and other recent advances in genetics.

Advances hampered by the profit motive

The full potential of these and other scientific advances is hampered by the profit motive inherent in the capitalist mode of production. Consider that recombinant human insulin has been on the market since 1982, yet 1.3 million diabetic people in the U.S. rationed insulin in 2021; the Biden administration has moved to bring down prices, but, again, this is 41 years after the product became available.

In a period marked by anti-intellectualism, academic and even journalistic information remains behind paywalls. On the other hand, disinformation - as with the far right's anti-vaccine propaganda - is often free.

And on top of the more "normal" limitations placed upon scientific development are imperialist blockades and sanctions. The anti-imperialist movement should be clear that sanctions are war by other means. The blockade of Cuba is designed to put maximum pressure on the population to force regime change, benefitting foreign capitalists. It is designed to hurt common people, especially children and older people. The Cuban government estimates that as of spring 2022, they have lost more than \$150 billion because of the blockade. That is \$150 billion that could have gone

toward health care, housing, or combatting climate change. It could have gone toward improving infrastructure to withstand the frequent hurricanes that batter the island.

Cuba develops biotechnology industry

Cuba is known around the world for its medical professionals. Cuban nurses and doctors go where there is need, to any country where they can travel. But Cuba is also distinguishing itself with world-class biotechnology research and manufacturing.

In Havana, our delegation visited the Centro de Ingeniería Genética y Biotecnología de Cuba – in English, the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology in Cuba, established in 1986. Multiple staff were gracious enough to take a couple of hours out of their workday to explain the history of this industry in Cuba, detailing achievements made despite seemingly impossible conditions imposed by the blockade. This demonstrates how seriously they take internationalist solidarity. As with everywhere else we went, the staff emphasized the importance they give to interchange with people from the U.S.

This institution had humble beginnings when, in 1980, Fidel Castro met with U.S. oncologist Dr. Randolph Lee Clark and others to discuss the promise of interferons and other cutting-edge medicines. Fidel had a grand vision for this industry in Cuba. He understood how it could improve people's lives, developing alongside the free, comprehensive health care system.

Today, this sector can manufacture over 70% of the medicines used on the island. This strengthens the resilience and sovereignty of the national economy and assures access for the population. Since 2012, the biotechnology industry has been grouped principally under the state-owned BioCubaFarma, uniting multiple pre-existing entities. According to the presentation we saw, BioCubaFarma has 996 products on

the national market, with 76% relating to public health.

By prioritizing this sector and integrating it with on-the-ground health care through socialist planning, Cuba has radically decreased the incidence of infectious diseases. The entire population up to 40 years old has been immunized against Hepatitis B, which kills up to 1 million people worldwide each year. As of 2021, Cuba has fewer than 100 cases of acute Hepatitis B. No cases have been reported for people 15 years old and younger.

This is just one example. Cuba is also on track to eliminate meningitis.

BioCubaFarma has produced a recombinant human epidermal growth factor – a drug called Heberprot-P – which improves healing of advanced diabetic foot ulcers. Around the world, patients with diabetic foot ulcers have a mortality rate of almost 50% within five years, making this condition a significant public health concern, including in the U.S.

To date, this industry has produced five vaccines against COVID-19, with Cuba's Abdala being the first COVID-19 vaccine developed in Latin America. Abdala has a 92.28% efficacy at three doses. Importantly, these vaccines do not require special refrigeration, making them suitable for wide distribution in the developing world.

In all, the presenter explained the development and impact of around 13 different biotechnology products. All of these are the result of heroic efforts in the face of the blockade. He was clear that the full development of the sector is impossible so long as the blockade is in place. As a worker in a U.S. molecular biology lab, this writer knows that all of the materials and equipment needed to carry out even the most basic research in these areas are expensive. It is difficult for laboratories in Cuba to replace non-functioning equipment or to obtain chemical reagents. He described these difficulties as “a continual nightmare.”

For these reasons, biotechnology development is held back. This harms the Cuban people, who are deprived of income and more rapid scientific development. But it also harms people worldwide who could benefit from access to Cuba's products. That includes people in the U.S., especially the working class and oppressed.

For the free exchange of information

The Human Genome Project showed that great advances in knowledge and technical ability are possible with international collaboration and a free exchange of information. That project itself was nearly thwarted by forces representing a different vision - one which saw genetic therapies and even genes as exploitable for profit. This is emblematic of science under capitalism. Fortunately, the public project won out. But in general, the existence of capitalism and imperialism thwart the full flowering of human potential, including scientific advancement.

Cuba's scientific achievements under present circumstances are enormous. BioCubaFarma does have collaborative projects in some countries, including China and Spain. But without the blockade, much more would be possible. Imagine if researchers from Cuba and the United States could work together without this interference. Imagine how much poor and oppressed people in the U.S. would benefit from Cuban medicines and aid from their incredible medical professionals. Imagine the benefit to Cuba if its products were widely available in the U.S.

The working class in the U.S. has no interest in continuing the blockade. For us - as for the working class in Cuba - it is a detriment. What will benefit us, again, is the free exchange of knowledge and expertise. What will benefit us is internationalist collaboration.



A drag show In Havana

written by Struggle - La Lucha
May 25, 2023

May 13, Havana — Almost the moment we arrived at the corner next to the state-owned club, Cabaret Las Vegas, a car with one of our friends from the National Center for Sex Education (Cenesex) stopped by. She called us over to say hello before going on her way; she had just returned from airing a television roundtable with Mariela Castro Espín and others.

The place was nearly empty because we arrived too early, at 11:00 p.m. But by 1:00 a.m. and the start of the drag show, it was absolutely packed.

I was moved to see community members as well as foreign guests enjoying themselves. We experienced a brief blackout earlier in the night, reminding us of the blockade.

(The electricity came back online quickly, though; this is the only one we have witnessed since being here.)

There was a wide age range represented, from very young to elders. In the crowd, we saw another friend from Cenesex — a trans woman whom we happen to know is 74 years old! Congratulations to her for being a model of strength and determination, as well as grace.

With all the people gathered at tables sharing drinks, there was little room for dancing, though some did. People sat talking and laughing with their arms wrapped around one another. Some kissed.

The drag performers regaled the people not only with style but affection. Throughout their performances, people got up on stage to give them money, hugs, and kisses.

The patrons were relatively mixed. There were masculine-presenting people as well as feminine ones throughout the bar.

Overall there was a strong impression of affection and community.



Israeli occupation forces launch brutal attacks on Gaza

written by Struggle - La Lucha
May 25, 2023

Since [Khader Adnan](#) died on May 2 after 86 days of refusing food in protest of his detention in an Israeli prison, the apartheid government's terror campaign against Gaza has only escalated.



Beginning May 9, the Israeli Air Force launched a series of brutal attacks against densely populated Gazan residential areas. The Israeli attacks [across](#) the Gaza Strip have [killed](#) 30 people, including six children. In addition, more than 90 Palestinians have been wounded, including many elderly.

As part of this terror campaign, Israel assassinated senior [Al-Quds Brigades](#) commander, [Iyad Al-Hassani](#). This is the sixth Al-Quds Brigades commander assassinated in their homes by Israel in as many days.

The IDF martyred Al Hassani in a massive strike against the Al-Nasr neighborhood in western Gaza City. Several children were killed as well. Al-Hassani has led Palestinian resistance operations in Gaza City on behalf of Palestinian Islamic Jihad for 26 years, including operations against illegal Israeli settlements during the

Second Intifada.

The Israeli strategy is clear, cut the head off of Palestinian militant resistance no matter the cost. No matter how many children are killed or orphaned — no matter the overall cost of human life.

Absolute brutality is the only way for Israeli apartheid to survive. Consequently, militant resistance is the only way it will fall. CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News will continue to spread the lie that Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation is criminal or terrorist. Israel is not the victim in this situation. The Zionists are the aggressor at the behest of their [imperialist backers](#) in Washington, D.C.

It's as if the Palestinian people are supposed to take their genocide lying down. History demonstrates that they will and should do no such thing.

From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!

Lev Koufax is an anti-Zionist Jewish activist.

