

May Day 2024: Resist the witch-hunts!

written by Melinda Butterfield
May 1, 2024



Attack on Gaza Solidarity Encampment: NYPD riot police raid Columbia University to mass arrest students on the night of April 30.

On International Workers' Day 2024, workers in the U.S. could swear that Senator Joe McCarthy and Minister Cotton Mather had returned from the dead.

More than 35,000 Palestinians, including 14,000 children, have died in just over 200 days of Israel's genocidal campaign in Gaza - funded, armed and given political cover by Washington. Yet any expression of opposition to the mass slaughter of

Palestinians is labeled “antisemitism” by politicians of both capitalist parties and the corporate media.

Congressional hearings reminiscent of the Red Scare anti-communist spectacles of the 1950s target university officials. Depending on how pliable they are, they are driven from office – like former Harvard President Claudine Gay, the first Black person to serve in that post – or they are [given marching orders to crack down](#) on student protesters, like Columbia University President Minouche Shafik.

After two weeks of violent police raids against campus Gaza Solidarity Encampments coast-to-coast, Columbia and other schools are now carrying out mass suspensions, threatening to prevent student activists from graduating. Right-wing politicians have called for students who participate in the encampments to be blacklisted from future employment.

Nor is it just Republicans. On April 29, [23 House Democrats](#) called on Columbia President Shafik to “end” the encampment that sparked a nationwide student uprising, or resign. And of course, [Genocide Joe Biden](#) himself joined fascist [House Speaker Mike Johnson](#) in threatening the heroic students and faculty resisting at Columbia.

This comes after months of police attacks, targeted arrests of organizers, and slander campaigns against pro-Palestine protesters.

Yet the student encampments continue to grow and spread day by day.



Trans youth and supporters rally against anti-trans legislation at the Nebraska State Capitol in Lincoln, Feb. 8.

Whipping up anti-trans hate

At the same time, another witch-hunt is unfolding across the U.S. targeting transgender people.

In many ways, this hate campaign – now underway for three years and growing ever-more dangerous – set the stage for how opponents of genocide in Gaza are being treated.

So far this year, [550 anti-trans bills have been introduced](#) in state legislatures in 42

states, along with 47 national bills. This includes some of the most drastic measures yet – cutting off all access to gender-affirming health care regardless of age, banning all restroom access, threatening the livelihoods of teachers, librarians and other workers if they are queer or respect the rights of trans students, and generally attempting to force trans lives out of existence.

State hearings on trans issues have the same tenor as the Congressional anti-Palestine hearings, driven by fascist politicians who repeat long-discredited theories or bigoted political and religious ideology as fact. When trans people and supporters show up and try to be heard, they are often silenced, driven out, or arrested.

Typical of this approach is the [Cass Review](#) commissioned by the British government, where anti-trans attacks are also at a fever pitch. This so-called review to advise the National Health Service policy on treatment of trans youth dismissed over 100 scientific studies to cherry-pick a handful that reached anti-trans conclusions.

The supposedly impartial review was carried out by a team that excluded trans people, but included known transphobes who collaborated with Florida's DeSantis administration.

And yet the Cass Review is already being used by the British government to cut off access to care, not only for trans youth, but also trans adults. It is being favorably cited by U.S. far-right politicians and “liberal” media like the New York Times and The Guardian to manufacture consent for anti-trans genocide.

Like the opponents of genocide in Gaza who are unjustly accused of antisemitism, no amount of evidence will suffice to refute the witch-hunters' charges of “grooming” and “social contagion.” Like those accused of witchcraft in 17th century New England, the only way trans people can prove their innocence is to stop existing – death.



State troopers in riot gear attack pro-Palestinian students at the University of Texas in Austin.

No more Odessa massacres!

The witch-hunt rhetoric directed at pro-Palestine students and faculty and at trans people escalates the danger of fascist violence, whether from “official” repressive bodies of the state (police and national guard) or “unofficial” neo-Nazi aligned movements. It’s an attack on the rights of the whole working class and all oppressed people, and must be fought with unity and urgency.

Ten years ago, on May 2, 2014, fascist gangs were given the green light by the U.S.-backed coup government in Ukraine to carry out a bloody massacre of nearly 50 activists and workers at the House of Trade Unions in Odessa. The working class movement in Ukraine was smashed and thousands of organizers driven into exile in its wake.

Anti-fascists from Ukraine to the U.S. warned then that Washington’s support for neo-Nazi terror abroad would boomerang here. Now this is visible for all to see.

The working class is making important gains in organizing, from Starbucks to Amazon to the United Auto Workers victory at Volkswagen in Tennessee. But this progress is threatened by the attacks on the political and civil rights of students, teachers, and LGBTQIA+ people.

The bigoted politicians, the neo-Nazis and the big capitalists behind them will not stop with demonizing the Gaza solidarity movement and trans community. The purpose of the witch-hunts is to shatter the ability of the working class and

oppressed to resist.

Don't wait for an Odessa massacre to happen here! Mobilize to resist the bosses' witch-hunts!



PFLP: Long live May 1 as a day of struggle against the enemies of humanity

written by Melinda Butterfield

May 1, 2024

O our great Palestinian people,

O people of the Palestinian working class and strugglers everywhere,

O all the free and honorable in our nation and the world,

Every year on the first of May, the peoples of the world, especially the global

working class, and all the poor, oppressed, and downtrodden in this world, celebrate in the face of the brutal, savage, and enslaving practices perpetrated against them by a ferocious financial elite, which disregards all human values and principles, striving with all their might to perpetuate their control and dominance over the peoples of the world and their resources, using for their political, economic, and social objectives everything that military industries and modern technology have developed, and all methods of treachery and deceit, to achieve their goals and interests, without any moral or human scruple or conscience.

Our people, along with all the workers and free people of the world, commemorate the first of May this year at a time when they are subjected to the most brutal and fierce campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing, surpassing in savagery and bloodiness the fascists and the Nazis, at the hands of a group of murderers calling themselves an army for an invasive replacement entity, under the leadership, partnership, support, cover, and complicity of the American administration and the colonial Western imperial powers, the enemies of humanity.

They believe that, with their crimes and brutality, they can break the will of our people and impose surrender and defeat on them, in a frenzied attempt not only to kill humans and destroy stones and uproot trees but also to erase the identity, history, and civilization of our people, and make it impossible for our people to remain on their land.

At a time when the massacres and crimes committed by the Zionist-imperialist alliance continue and escalate, our steadfast people, believing in the justice of their cause, in all their cities, villages, and towns across the entire land of historic Palestine, and in all places of their presence, especially our steadfast people in the Gaza Strip, write a new page of heroism and miracle each day, the likes of which history has rarely witnessed.

Despite the wounds and pain, despite the blood and body parts, the torrent of

flowing blood, and ethnic cleansing in its ugliest forms, our people always rise from under the rubble and debris, carrying their wounds and marching towards victory and freedom, raising the flag of resistance, with more determination and belief in the justice of their cause and the inevitability of victory, their weapons being patience, steadfastness, and resistance, and the support of all the free and honorable people in our nation and the world.

As we bow in reverence and awe before the sacrifices, steadfastness, and determination of our people, we must emphasize the importance of strengthening the internal front and fortifying it, and unity of stance and action across various political, field, and social levels, and depriving the enemy of the ability to achieve through deceit and political maneuvers what it failed to achieve on the battlefields.

We also call for enhancing social solidarity and support among the various political and social components of our people, to overcome this ordeal with greater strength and resilience in the face of conspiracies and thwart them.

In light of the intensification of the confrontation between the forces of aggression, injustice, and war profiteers, and the forces of peace, justice, freedom, and humanity in the world, despite all the financial capabilities, military capabilities, and economic hegemony that the forces of aggression possess, the forces of freedom and justice grow more aware and discerning in defending their interests against the imperialist plans aiming to eliminate all noble human and ethical values. In this context, we extend our highest expressions of thanks and appreciation to all the free and honorable in the world, who stand today alongside our people and their just cause, in the face of imperialist-zionist crimes.

We send a salute of respect and pride to the university students all over the world, especially to the students at American universities, who are protesting against the crimes of the occupation and the support of the U.S. administration for it, and who demand a halt to the aggression against the Palestinian people.

We also salute all the labor and women's organizations that stand in solidarity with our people and their cause, and all the free and honorable who fill the squares and fields of the capitals and cities of the world in support of our people and supporting their just cause.

Glory and eternity to the martyrs, freedom to the prisoners, and healing to the wounded.

A salute to our steadfast people across the entire land of historic Palestine and in all places of their presence.

A salute of love and loyalty to our brave workers as they, alongside all components of our people — political and social — wage the battle for national, economic, and social liberation.

A salute to the global working class in the face of injustice, aggression, and the onslaught of global imperialism.

A salute to all the honorable and free people in the world who stand against injustice and aggression.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Central Media Department

May 1, 2024

[Source: Resistance News Network](#)



UAW workers at Daimler Truck win big wage gains: Organize the South!

written by Melinda Butterfield

May 1, 2024

Blinking at the last minute on April 26, Daimler Truck agreed to union demands for big pay raises. The 7,300 United Auto Workers members won an immediate 10% wage increase.

Pay will go up by at least 25% over the proposed four-year contract. UAW President Sean Fain announced that employees will for the first time receive cost of living increases.

The lowest-paid UAW members making school buses at Daimler's Thomas Built Bus won increases of over \$8 an hour. Their wages will match the pay of the workers in the truck plants.

Equal pay for equal work was won. [The hated pay tiers](#) — where two workers doing the same job get different pay because of when they were hired — will be abolished.

Daimler — headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany — is the world's biggest commercial vehicle manufacturer. It made \$4.3 billion in profits last year from exploiting 100,000 workers in the United States, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Türkiye and other countries.

Corporate profits are stolen wages. Daimler's wage theft amounted to an average of \$43,000 in profit taken from every one of its employees.

The huge corporation saw how UAW's successful strikes last year against General Motors, Ford and Stellantis (Chrysler and Jeep) brought the Big Three automakers to their knees. The week before, workers at Volkswagen's Chattanooga, Tennessee, plant voted three to one to join the UAW.

What made the Daimler and Volkswagen victories all the more important is that they happened in the U.S. South.

[Daimler has truck factories](#) in Cleveland, Gastonia and Mount Holly, North Carolina, and Gaffney, South Carolina. The Thomas Built Buses plant is in Mount Holly. (There's also a Daimler Freightliner truck plant in Portland, Oregon.)

Using the Klan to bust unions

The UAW breakthroughs in the Carolinas and Tennessee are historic because unions have been overwhelmingly kept out of southern states.

Just one out of 37 workers in North Carolina have union protection. That's 2.7% of the workforce.

Next door [in South Carolina](#), only 2.6% of workers belong to unions.

This union busting is a legacy of slavery and the bloody overthrow of the Reconstruction governments in the South following the U.S. Civil War. The Ku Klux

Klan was used to break union drives like at the old Bibb textile mills in Macon, Georgia, in the 1940s.

Wall Street bankers were the puppet masters of these lynch regimes which they viewed as reservoirs of cheap labor. Behind the fascist Alabama Gov. George Wallace was U.S. Steel, whose mills dominated the state's economy in the 1960s.

At least U.S. Steel hired Black workers, although usually in the worst jobs. Ford and General Motors refused to employ Black workers on their Atlanta area assembly lines until the early 1960s. They did so only after Black workers in Detroit threatened walkouts.

The biggest southern industry was textiles, centered in the Carolinas. Yankee textile outfits fled south to escape union drives in the North. By 1960, 89% of U.S. textile production was in the South.

Wages in southern mills were up to 40% below the northern average. Key to keeping this industry non-union was keeping out Black workers.

No other manufacturing industry in the United States was so segregated for so long. In the southeastern textile belt, millions of Black workers lived near mills where they couldn't get a job.

Hiring Black workers in southern textile mills is one of the great triumphs of the civil rights movement. However, hundreds of these plants, including the Bibb Mills, have since shut down.

When Ezell Blair Jr., Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeill and David Richmond began their sit-in at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, on Feb. 1, 1960, just 3.3% of textile workers were Black.

Eighteen years later, in 1978, African Americans "held a quarter of all production

jobs in the Southern textile industry.” (“Hiring the Black Worker, The Racial Integration of the Southern Textile Industry, 1960-1980,” by Timothy J. Minchin)

Avenging Ella May Wiggins

Some whites did break with Jim Crow. The most notable example was the Gastonia, North Carolina strike — led by the Communist Party — in 1929. Today Gastonia is home to one of the UAW-organized Daimler truck plants.

Despite a fantastically intense campaign of race-baiting, hundreds of white workers remained loyal to the National Textile Workers Union. The NTW called for equality between Black and white workers.

The strike was drowned in blood. Among its martyrs was 29-year-old union leader Ella May Wiggins. She was shot to death in broad daylight on Sept. 14, 1929.

Typical of the poverty suffered by white textile workers was that four of Wiggins’ children died of whooping cough. (“The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker 1920-1933,” by Irving Bernstein)

Textile workers were seething. They exploded in 1934. One hundred seventy thousand workers went on strike in the South.

Bosses and their state governments mobilized 23,000 sheriff deputies, National Guard soldiers and private gunmen to break the strike.

After receiving \$20,000 from mill owners, Georgia Governor Eugene Talmadge declared martial law. A concentration camp for arrested strikers was set up at Fort McPherson near Atlanta.

Thirteen strikers were killed in the South. Another two died in the North. Seven workers were murdered at the Chiquola Mill in Honea Path, South Carolina, alone.

("Testing the New Deal: The General Textile Strike of 1934 in the American South," by Janet Irons)

President Franklin Roosevelt and Labor Secretary Frances Perkins did nothing about these bloody massacres. Don't count on Joe Biden to help union organizing drives either. Genocide Joe is busy helping to kill children in Gaza.

The capitalist deep state also allowed the Klan and Nazis to murder five Communist Workers Party members in Greensboro, North Carolina, on Nov. 3, 1979.

Cesar Cauce, Mile Nathan, Bill Sampson, Sandi Smith and Jim Waller were murdered in front of TV cameras. The leader of these fascist killers, Edward Dawson, was on the payroll of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms of the United States Treasury Department.

None of the assassins spent a day in jail. Like the Honea Path atrocity in 1934, the Greensboro Massacre was approved by the wealthy and powerful.

The UAW victories at Daimler and Volkswagen are helping to avenge Ella May Wiggins and the Greensboro martyrs. Organize the South!



Behind Southern governors' anti-union agenda

written by Melinda Butterfield

May 1, 2024

Southern politicians who sold their souls to the corporations and banks are a bit rattled right now, and who can blame them? Volkswagen workers won big in Chattanooga, Tennessee, when 73% of plant workers voted to join the United Auto Workers Union.

This is the first time that autoworkers have successfully unionized via election in the South since the 1940s! What if more of us workers here in the South get an idea?

Before the vote even happened, six “anti-woke” southern governors put out a joint letter condemning the union. That should tell us how significant the unionization victory is.

Seriously. The Volkswagen vote is a big deal for all workers in the region. When economists compare workers of the same type, with the only difference being

whether they're union members, unionized workers earn 10-15% more in wages according to the U.S. Department of the Treasury. That's just wages. Unionized workers have better benefits and working conditions, too.

And unlike with "trickle down economics" - the now totally disproven idea that tax breaks for the ultra-wealthy will trickle down to the rest of us - when it comes to the benefits of unions, the high tide really does lift all workers' boats. The Treasury Department admits that the data is clear on this point. There is a spillover.

For every 1% increase in union membership in the private sector, that results in a 0.3% increase in wages for nonunion workers, and the benefits are greatest for workers without college degrees.

Workers in states that have extreme anti-union laws (misleadingly called "right to work" or RTW laws) make 3.2% less on average than those doing the same job in states with less restrictions on unions. That is to say, full time workers in RTW states like Louisiana or Mississippi make about \$1,670 less per year.

The letter written by the governors has a laughable graphic saying "Republican governors stand with American Auto Workers." It's signed by Kay Ivey (Alabama), Brian Kemp (Georgia), Tate Reeves (Mississippi), Henry McMaster (South Carolina), Bill Lee (Tennessee), and Greg Abbott (Texas). Every word of the statement is a lie. We should ask who they're working for, because it ain't us.

Roster of shame

The governors' main claim is that all the jobs are going to leave if the workforce unionizes. But there is no correlation between whether a state has RTW laws, and thus low unionization rates, and employment. When you look at whether prime working-age people (ages 25-54) have a job in RTW vs. non-RTW states, there's no systematic difference. Fluctuations in employment follow the same capitalist boom-

and-bust cycles (expansion followed by recession) across states.

Forbes looked at U.S. Census data for 2023 and ranked the states with highest and lowest poverty levels. Mississippi comes in as the poorest state, with 19.1% living below the federal poverty level. So there's Tate Reeve's state.

(U.S.-occupied Puerto Rico has a poverty rate of 43%, but the island is not a state, so is usually not included on these lists. It's being plundered by corporations and banks. U.S. out of Puerto Rico, now! Puerto Rico will be free!)

Louisiana has the second-highest poverty level, but our governor - Jeff Landry - didn't sign the letter; maybe because auto-manufacturing hasn't taken off here yet. Alabama is the 7th highest, so Kay Ivy gets an "F." South Carolina comes in at number 10; Henry McMaster is another loser.

So, three out of six of the signees govern states in the top 10 poorest. And since they're doing absolutely nothing to alleviate poverty, we can rest assured that they do not care about workers, only about making themselves and their big donors rich. There's no reason to trust them about unions.

Speaking of big donors, a Mississippi Today investigation in late 2023 found that Tate Reeve's top campaign contributors brought home a whopping \$1.4 billion in state contracts and grants, all from agencies Reeves oversees. It pays to play! Or is it pay to play?

Texas-sized hypocrisy

According to Market Realist, Greg Abbott has a net worth of \$14 million. In December 2023, his campaign received \$6 million - "the largest single donation in Texas history," in the campaign's words - from Pennsylvania billionaire Jeff Yass.

Yass is thought to have \$29 billion. He's the co-founder and managing director of

investment firm Susquehanna International Group.

Why would a Pennsylvania capitalist be funding Texas politics? Because he champions the anti-public school voucher movement, tax cuts for billionaires, and all manner of other things that only benefit the rich. He's making an investment in Texas.

The truth is that there is nothing unusual about these shenanigans, and Democratic politicians are no better. The Washington Post said it: "More than half of those who served in the House and Senate were worth more than \$1 million; many had net worths that stretched into the tens of millions."

We should not be surprised where these capitalist politicians' allegiances lie. Every time they try to stir us up about unions, trans people, immigrants, or some supposed foreign adversary, we should ask: "What's in it for you?"

