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Part-time jobs, no benefits: The real state of the working class

By Gary Wilson

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But last month, Biden tried to back up his claims with a BLS report showing that over the 12 months ending in January 2024, average weekly wages increased by 3%, while the average price of consumer goods rose by 3.1%. So they are saying wages have almost, but not entirely, caught up with inflation.

Actually, the BLS report is like a trickster's sleight of hand.

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**Nex Benedict's death:
a turning point in the
fight for trans lives!**

▶ A trans woman
reflects on Int'l
Women's Day



On International Women's Day, we salute Palestinian women and women worldwide struggling against U.S. imperialism and capitalist oppression.

It is imperative that we amplify the resistance of Palestinian women during the current genocide perpetrated by Israel and its puppet master, the U.S.

Their heroic resistance and sacrifice remains foremost in our hearts and minds this Int'l Women's Day 2024.

▶ PFLP on starvation massacre

▶ San Diego flood victims

▶ 'Exploring the Police State'

▶ Ukraine continues attacks on civilians

**March for
GAZA**

▶ Los Angeles

▶ Michigan ▶ NYC

▶ Honor Aaron
Bushnell!

▶ Bombs over babies

▶ Let's GO to Cuba!

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Part-time jobs, no benefits: The real state of the working class

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In his March 6 [State of the Union address](#), President Joe Biden declared, “We have the best economy in the world.” He said millions of new jobs had been created in the last three years and that unemployment was at record lows.

Fact-checking is not required for presidential speech writers, so exaggerations are acceptable. Biden was maybe speaking loosely. The morning after, the [Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\) reported](#) a rise in unemployment in February, including a full percentage point increase for Black and Latine workers.

The BLS also reported that in February 2024, there were 132.9 million full-time jobs and 27.9 million part-time jobs. That’s a drop in full-time employment. A year ago, in February 2023, there were 133.2 million full-time jobs. The new jobs are part-time jobs, which have increased by 921,000 since February 2023, when it was 27.1

million.

But last month, [Biden tried to back up his 'best economy' claims](#) with a BLS report showing that over the 12 months ending in January 2024, average weekly wages increased by 3%, while the average price of consumer goods rose by 3.1%. So they are saying wages have almost, but not entirely, caught up with inflation.

Actually, the BLS report is like a trickster's sleight of hand.

While the government reports a 3% wage increase, this figure is only for full-time workers, excluding a significant section of the workforce, such as part-time and contract workers. The full-time data includes "earnings" by management and corporate officers. Most workers did not get a 3% wage increase. Minimum-wage workers saw a 0% increase last year.

Union workers won wage gains last year. BLS data shows that 458,900 workers were involved in 33 major strikes in 2023. However, only 11.2% of the workforce is in unions, which is not enough to raise the overall wage average.

Joining a union remains the most effective way to struggle for higher wages and better working conditions.

And while the consumer goods inflation rate is reported at 3.1%, that leaves out the services inflation rate, which was reported to be over 5% in January. Most of your daily costs are for services like rent or mortgage, transportation, health care, and so on.

'Huge, huge plunge'

As for "strong employment gains," the BLS reported that 353,000 jobs were added in January. That's the employment gains.

In the Wall Street Journal, Charles Schwab's chief investment strategist, [Liz Ann Sonders](#), says:

"Even though on the surface it looked okay, the details under the surface were much more negative, including for that December report, a huge plunge in household employment." Sonders refers to the BLS Household Survey, also known as the Current Population Survey (CPS), which is one of two monthly employment reports by the BLS.

Sonders continues: "Two months ago [there was] a huge, huge, almost 700,000 plunge in household employment. What we've seen in the Household Survey is that most of the gross gains have been in part-time employment. All the losses [overall] have been in full-time employment. You can also pick up things like people holding multiple jobs."

So in January, the only rise was in part-time jobs.

Atlanta Federal Reserve Bank President [Raphael Bostic said](#): "In recent months, job creation has been heavily concentrated in one comparatively small sector: health care and social assistance. Health care and social assistance account for only 14% of private-sector employment but have accounted for 60% of private employment growth over the past several months."

Real unemployment rate is 8%

The unemployment rate is reported to be 3.7%. That's the U-3 unemployment rate.

The BLS issues six different measures of unemployment each month, labeled as U-1 to U-6.

[Investopedia explains](#) that the U-3 unemployment rate is the one most commonly cited. However, the U-3 rate does not include all workers.

The BLS says that in January 2024, the workforce in the U.S. (nonmilitary) was 166.43 million. Some 36% to 40% of U.S. workers could be classified as gig and contract, freelance, or temporary. Around 28.1 million are part-time workers.

When you put them together with full-time workers, adding in all the contract and temp and part-time workers who want full-time jobs, you get the U-6 unemployment rate. And [that rate was 8%](#) in January.

Investopedia continues: “U-3 is often criticized ... because it actually excludes individuals who work part-time but want full-time work and discouraged workers. ...

“Many economists consider the U-6 rate, not the U-3 rate, to be the most complete measure of the real unemployment situation in the U.S.

“Unlike the U-3 rate, the U-6 unemployment rate includes a whole swath of unemployed people. It is seen by many as more in line with what it means to be unemployed.”

Investopedia adds, “Gallup, the data analytics firm, considers the U-6 rate to be ‘the real unemployment rate’ and maintains that the widely quoted U-3 rate does not accurately represent the reality of joblessness.”

So they are saying that the real unemployment rate is 8%.

Good union jobs not available

Unemployed workers who could have found good union jobs in earlier generations can only find work in anti-union, low-paying service industries – when they can find jobs.

In 1955, the largest employer in the U.S. was General Motors, followed by US Steel and General Electric. Most of those workers were unionized.

Today, Walmart is the largest employer, run by the wealthiest family in the U.S., with an estimated wealth of almost \$260 billion. Walmart's 2.1 million workers, misnamed "associates" by the company, are not unionized and get poverty-level wages. Many rely on food pantries, SNAP benefits, WIC, Medicaid, and predatory loans just to get by. Some 40% of Walmart's workforce is part-time.

The second largest employer is fiercely anti-union Amazon. The monopoly employs approximately 1.5 million full-time and part-time workers. [National Employment Law Project reports](#) that Amazon's warehouse wages average 26% less than the average monthly earnings for all workers.

"Black and Latinx workers, whom Amazon disproportionately relies on, bear the greatest impact of Amazon's low relative pay in the warehouse sector," the report says.

"Amazon reports that 32% of its frontline workers are Black, and 27% are Hispanic. Notably, Black women represent the largest share of its frontline workers — roughly one out of six. These statistics suggest that Amazon's pay policies may be reinforcing and perpetuating labor market inequities across the U.S."

Many, maybe most, Amazon warehouse workers are part-time even after years on the job. Work schedules are erratic; sometimes there is a single four-hour shift in a week, and other times, it is up to 39 hours (not quite full-time). The schedule is unpredictable.

Part-time work has become the default at most big corporations — Home Depot, FedEx, Target, Kroger, UPS, Starbucks, and UnitedHealth (the third to the tenth largest employers in the Fortune 500).

Part-time means little to no benefits, no paid vacation, no holidays, no ... the list keeps going.

According to the Living Wage Calculator at MIT, a living wage (the hourly rate that an individual in a household must earn to support themselves and/or their family, working full-time) for a single adult with no children would be \$20.42 in Detroit. The current minimum wage in Detroit is \$10.33.

There is no way for a part-time worker getting only 20 hours a week to make a living wage.

Starbucks, the 8th largest employer with 391,000 workers, is nasty in its attempts to stop the workers from unionizing. Just ask [Starbucks Workers United](#). Starbucks jobs are not regular full-time schedules. The company uses flexible “optimal scheduling.” Workers must make themselves available for 70% of the total hours the store is open.

A store open 115 hours per week requires a barista to be available to work 80.5 hours each week. That can mean making yourself available from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. on weekdays. Weekend requirements are even harsher. The work schedule is changed weekly.

When Biden says that the economy is excellent, he means for the corporate bosses, not for the workers.

Things look good for the billionaires.

[Statista reports](#) that corporations in the United States made profits totaling \$3.3 trillion in the third quarter of 2023, an increase from the second quarter.

The profits of the so-called “Magnificent 7” U.S. tech monopolies — Apple, Amazon, Alphabet, Meta, Microsoft, Nvidia, and Tesla — now exceed almost every company globally.

CNBC reported Feb. 19: “The meteoric rise in the profits and market capitalizations

of the Magnificent 7 U.S. tech behemoths outstrip those of all listed companies in almost every G20 country.”

Wall Street is smiling.

Gary Wilson is the author of [*War and Lenin in the 21st Century*](#).



Vietnam won, so will Palestine

written by Struggle - La Lucha
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The solidarity movement with Palestine has swept the world. So did the struggle against the Vietnam War two generations ago.

Close to [80% of Gaza City has been destroyed](#) by U.S.-made and U.S.-paid-for bombs and shells. Over 30,000 Palestinians, including 13,000 children, have been killed.

The Pentagon dropped [two million tons of bombs](#) on Laos, killing a tenth of the country's people. Millions more were killed in Vietnam and Cambodia.

Nearly three million GIs were sent to Vietnam and around a trillion dollars was spent (adjusted for inflation) on the Pentagon's dirty war. This didn't stop a Vietnamese tank from crashing through the gates of the former U.S. Embassy in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) on April 30, 1975.

Vietnam had won. So did every poor person on the planet, including workers in the United States.

One of the U.S. war criminals in Vietnam was retired Army Gen. John C. Bahnsen Jr., who died on Feb. 21. He's described as a hero for dropping grenades from a helicopter on Vietnamese in a [fawning obituary published by the New York Times](#).

Bahnsen was awarded 19 medals. [Helicopter pilot Hugh Thompson Jr.](#) was shunned by military brass for helping to stop the My Lai massacre in which 500 people were murdered.

War criminal Lt. William Calley, who helped lead the massacre, had been a strikebreaker during the Florida East Coast Railway strike.

"The enemy of my country is my enemy, and our mission was to kill them," [declared Bahnsen](#).

Who is the enemy of poor and working people in the United States, the vast majority

of the country's population?

It wasn't the People's Republic of China that shut down nine of the 10 General Motors plants in Flint, Michigan, impoverishing the Black-majority city. It wasn't Vietnam that poisoned Flint's water supply.

The Russian Federation isn't responsible for freezing the federal minimum wage at a miserable \$7.25 per hour since 2009. (Many state minimum wages are higher, although still inadequate.)

Capitalist monopolies increased food prices by 25% since 2020, not Iran. The rent is too damn high because of big landlords, not Yemen. It was bankers that foreclosed seven million homes, not Palestinians.

Genocidal racism

Bahnsen came back home to the United States. Fifty-eight thousand GIs didn't.

General George Patton Jr. was Bahnsen's commanding officer in Vietnam. In the documentary "Hearts and Minds" — which won an Academy Award in 1975 — Patton was shown gleefully displaying an ashtray made from a Vietnamese person's skull.

That's the level of Hitler's Third Reich, where lampshades were crafted with human skin. Patton Jr. was the son of World War II [General George Patton](#), who despised survivors of the concentration camps, calling Jews "lower than animals."

The leaders of the apartheid state occupying Palestine are just as racist. "We are fighting animals," declared Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, referring to the people of Gaza.

The Israeli daily newspaper [Hayom stated](#) the time had come to "send Gaza back

into the Stone Age.” This rag is owned by the family of the late [billionaire casino owner Sheldon Adelson](#), who gave over \$400 million to Trump and other Republicans.

[Israeli Minister of Heritage Amichay Eliyahu](#) called for dropping an atom bomb on Gaza. Eliyahu also called for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan to be “wiped out.”

During the Vietnam War, the military brass [contemplated using nuclear weapons](#). Among those considering the nuclear option were Pacific Commander in Chief, Admiral Harry D. Felt and Chair of the Joint Chiefs General Earle Wheeler. U.S. aircraft carriers bombing Vietnam carried nukes.

Kissinger made barely disguised nuclear threats at the Paris peace talks. These threats and the genocidal U.S. killing of millions caused Vietnamese negotiator Lê Đức Thọ to [refuse the Nobel Peace Prize](#) awarded to himself and Kissinger.

One continuous struggle

The threat of the People’s Republic of China intervening, as happened in the Korean War, is said to have [convinced the U.S. not to use nukes](#) in Vietnam.

The generals and admirals also blamed the anti-war movement for stopping them. So did President Richard Nixon.

On April 28, 1970, the U.S. invaded Cambodia. Three days later, as anti-war rallies and demonstrations [swept the United States](#), Nixon called student protesters “bums.”

The Ohio National Guard killed four students at Kent State University on May 4, 1970. They were Allison Krause, Jeffrey Miller, Sandra Scheuer and William Schroeder.

Ohio Gov. John Rhodes had originally called out the Guard to [break a Teamster strike](#).

On May 15, 1970, state and local police in Jackson, Mississippi, fired into a dormitory at Jackson State University. Black students Phillip Gibbs and James Green were killed.

Many of those who are demonstrating to stop the genocide in Gaza also marched for Black Lives Matter.

Three of the four Kent State martyrs — Krause, Miller and Scheuer — were Jewish. Today both Columbia and George Washington universities suspended the local chapters of Jewish Voice for Peace because JVP helped organize demonstrations in defense of Gaza.

In 1966, the Georgia House of Representatives voted to kick out Black Representative Julian Bond because of his opposition to the Vietnam War. In 2023, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to censure Rashida Tlaib, the body's only Palestinian member, for defending Palestine.

Presidents Johnson and Nixon were war criminals. So is Genocide Joe Biden, who is helping to starve Gaza.

The U.S. Navy couldn't defeat Vietnam and it can't stop Yemen from turning ships around in solidarity with Palestine. Palestine will win.



Michigan continues to demand 'ceasefire now!'

written by Struggle - La Lucha
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Three Michigan cities – Detroit, Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo – held ceasefire marches on March 2, answering the call for “Global Ceasefire, End Genocide” actions. On March 3, a car rally streamed through the streets of Detroit and neighboring Oak Park to block traffic on I-696.

In Detroit, Michigan’s largest city, the ceasefire protest gathered at the riverfront Hart Plaza. There demonstrators topped the park flag pole with a Palestinian flag. Chanting loudly in the gentrifying downtown area, the protest clogged the full width of Woodward Avenue en route to a rally at Grand Circus Park, near sports arenas and music venues.

Lead banners from the Palestinian Youth Movement and Freedom Road Socialist Organization called out the themes of the action: End the genocide on Gaza now!

From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free! Hands off Rafah! Victory to the Palestinian resistance! Remember Aaron Bushnell!

These weekend actions continue the outpouring of local ceasefire resolutions across Michigan - in Ann Arbor (City Council and School Board), Canton Township, Dearborn Heights, Dearborn, Detroit, Ferndale, Hamtramck, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Warren, Washtenaw County, Wayne County, Ypsilanti, to start.

The “Vote Uncommitted” wave begun by 101,000 votes in the Feb. 27 Michigan presidential primary spurred similar electoral expressions on Super Tuesday against the Biden administration’s arming of Israel’s genocide in Palestine.





Tens of thousands march for Gaza in Los Angeles

written by Struggle - La Lucha

March 11, 2024

As part of the March 2 Global Day of Action, Los Angeles saw tens of thousands take over a huge area of downtown. It was among the biggest - if not THE biggest - in Los Angeles since Israel began its genocidal assault on the people of Gaza.

The action was initiated and endorsed by the Palestinian Youth Movement, ANSWER Coalition, Jewish Voice for Peace, Labor for Palestine, Socialist Unity Party and many other groups. The size of the crowd made it difficult to walk through or advance from the back of the march to the front, much less determine its numbers.

The action included many young Palestinians, and signs and banners indicated that Jewish organizations and individuals, labor unions, LGBTQ+ people, and Black, Brown and Asian people from the neighborhoods of L.A. all came out in solidarity.

The march was followed by a long car caravan. Between people on foot and cars and trucks decorated with signs, banners, and Palestinian flags, the protest covered an area of about 30 blocks of downtown.

Several events happened while the march was being organized and word was spreading, adding to its size and militancy. Aaron Bushnell burned himself to death in his Air Force uniform on Feb. 25 at the front gate of the Zionist consulate in Washington, D.C., shouting "Free Palestine" as he doused himself with gasoline and ignited it.

Just four days later, Zionist forces murdered more than 100 people and wounded more than 700 who were waiting for food from aid trucks. And, in the weeks leading

up to March 2, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced to the world that a ground invasion of the southern city of Rafah was imminent.

While the flow of arms from the U.S. continues, the White House has been calling for a temporary pause in the war against Gazans. The majority of humanity is demanding an immediate and permanent end to the genocide. No one in the Biden administration has even hinted that the supply of weapons and funds should stop.

The blood of more than 30,000 Palestinians is on Joe Biden's hands. But the worldwide movement against genocide is growing in numbers and determination. Palestine will never die.







Twin manias: AI frenzy and war boom inflate stock market

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Twin manias have gripped the stock market. The stock market has soared to record highs.

On March 1, [CNBC reported](#) that “the stock market wrapped up its fourth straight winning month ... The tech-heavy Nasdaq index was the last of the major U.S. stock benchmarks to reach a record close this year — when it achieved the milestone Thursday. This move has been fueled by enthusiasm over artificial intelligence, which has lifted mega-cap tech stocks - and the broader market - through 2023 and into this year.”

An Artificial Intelligence gold rush has fueled a meteoric rise in technology stock. Nvidia, which powers much of the AI boom, has become the poster child of this frenzy. Other tech titans are also having staggering stock climbs.

Paired with the AI mania is the war industry bubble.

The war industry is booming with the expectation that the gravy train of increasing military budgets and foreign arms sales will continue. Valuations of major weapons firms like Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman have ballooned to near-all-time highs.

The major U.S. stock indexes like the S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average have set new highs since the March 2020 COVID market plunge. However, the rise is isolated to a few mega tech and digital economy stocks like Apple, Microsoft, Google, Amazon, and Nvidia, as well as the war industry stocks of Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and General Dynamics.

Compared to the bond market, U.S. stocks are near their most expensive levels in over two decades. The last time stocks were this pricey relative to bonds was during the dot-com boom.

The dot-com bubble of internet-based company stocks in the late 1990s culminated in a market crash from 2000-2002. Today's intense concentration on the stock market in just a handful of tech behemoths and war industry monopolies echoes the dot-com bubble. Most of the rest of the market is struggling.

Rises in the stock market don't mean gains for the working class — the rich guys at the top own stocks. So to say that the stock market is doing well is to say that the 1% is doing well.

You have to laugh when you see President Biden's response. On Feb. 10, Biden tweeted, "The stock market going strong is a sign of confidence in America's economy."

Biden must be talking to the 1%, trying to convince them that he deserves another term. Workers don't want to hear about the financial gains of the wealthy class.

Gary Wilson is the author of [War and Lenin in the 21st Century](#).



A trans woman reflects on International Women's Day

written by Struggle - La Lucha
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Two weeks ago, I had a gender-affirming surgery called an orchiectomy (google it if you're curious). It's rude and not a good idea for cisgender people to ask trans people, "Have you had x, y, or z surgery?" – you will probably get an answer along the lines of "Take a long walk off a short pier." But I'm choosing to talk about mine publicly to make a point.

Bodily autonomy is an issue that is core to all women, cis and trans, living under this patriarchal capitalist system. It's essential for all transgender people and to every person, really. It encompasses everything from gender-affirming care and

reproductive freedom to piercings, tattoos, and hair styles. It's the simple, basic right to feel at home in the body you were saddled with at birth.

Until the end of 2022, I was undecided about whether I wanted any gender-affirming surgeries. The gender dysphoria (again, google it) I felt about certain body parts retreated a great deal after I started hormone replacement therapy and began living as my true self - as a woman. But the vicious attacks on trans rights, especially on trans health care, convinced me I should at least get this one operation - to eliminate my need for one of the medications I might soon be banned from acquiring legally and making forced detransition by the state somewhat more difficult.

So, in a very real sense, it wasn't my choice to get surgery. But I'm glad I still could take necessary preventive action to protect myself against genocidal transphobic laws.

If you've never had to think about having surgery to put a roadblock in front of politicians who want to rob you of your identity - well, this International Women's Day might be a good time to reflect on how that would feel. Similarly, you might consider how it feels to be a cis woman, trans man, or nonbinary person who needs an abortion in the U.S. today.

Surviving while trans

I know that I'm lucky to have health insurance paid for by my employer, which allowed me to get my operation despite the exorbitant copays and deductibles that come out of my pocket. So many trans people have no insurance at all. And yet, my access to gender-affirming care is immediately threatened, even though I live in a so-called Blue State. In this case, I have lost access to my doctors and specialists as of Feb. 29.

Like many thousands of New Yorkers, trans and cis, I'm a casualty of a battle

between two corporate giants: UnitedHealth Group, the country's largest private insurer, and Mount Sinai Health System, one of the largest health care providers in New York City.

Last year, United and Mount Sinai couldn't agree on who should get a bigger cut of profits through obscene health costs, and United declared all Mount Sinai-owned hospitals and affiliated doctors out of network. A New York State law requiring 60 days continuing coverage expired at the end of February. It's one of the largest mass expulsions of providers ever but has barely been reported by the corporate media.

Many affected New Yorkers who have Mount Sinai-affiliated providers may not even know what has happened until the next time they get sick and try to schedule an appointment.

This profit-driven attack has an outsized effect on trans New Yorkers. Mount Sinai's Center for Transgender Medicine and Surgery is a national leader in trans medicine, and its doctors have a policy of "informed consent" for trans adult patients. This minimizes the gatekeeping that the medical industry has traditionally used to prevent trans people from getting gender-affirming care, which is still all too common.

It took more than a year of appointments, invasive questions, and scheduling headaches to arrange my orchiectomy. But then I had to fight tooth and nail to reschedule my surgery before the Feb. 29 drop-dead date, after which my insurance would no longer cover it.

Now, thousands of trans people who relied for our care on doctors affiliated with the Center for Transgender Medicine and Surgery are unable to see our caregivers and will have to struggle to find gender-affirming care experts among the very limited pool of qualified providers available in the city.

New York State and City politicians brag about providing a safe haven for trans people. But state and local officials have done nothing to prevent or address this transphobic attack by two capitalist monopolies.

Solidarity and revolution

Across the country, the health care system is in freefall, accelerated by the pandemic (which is still ongoing, despite what Genocide Joe and his CDC say). The rental and housing market across the U.S. is untenable. Food prices have driven millions more to already overwhelmed food banks while right-wing governors and Democratic mayors slash school lunch programs. Boeing's dangerous, underfunded, and outsourced aircraft are a symptom of the utter chaos that engulfs U.S. airports daily.

When my spouse and I ride the subway or walk home at night, we have to be alert and prepared to fight. Like all women, we face the threat of sexual violence; as trans women, we face the added threat of transphobic violence, which grows by the day, prodded by the hateful rhetoric of politicians, social media "influencers," and the New York Times. Black trans women – always the majority of those we have to mourn on the annual Trans Day of Remembrance – face racist violence, too.

All of the infrastructure of daily life that workers depend on is one good push away from complete collapse. We all know it but are engulfed in trying to survive our own daily life-and-death crises. Likewise, the left and progressive movements are maxed out trying to oppose the genocide in Palestine. How do you fight on every front at once?

This International Women's Day, solidarity is more important than ever. Personal solidarity, woman to woman, cis to trans; of men toward women; of white people toward BIPOC communities; of all workers, against the bosses and politicians that seek to keep us divided.

Solidarity isn't just mutual aid, though those efforts are critical for trans people and other marginalized communities – for what the Black Panthers called “survival pending revolution.”

There's the key word: revolution.

Women need a revolution that overturns the capitalist social system and its political institutions. Trans people, immigrants, Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities, people with disabilities and the homeless, LGBTQ+ and youth – all workers – need a revolution.

To get it, we need not only a vision of a better world to fight for but also the crucial ingredient to actually make it happen: solidarity — in the streets, in our workplaces, in schools, in our communities and homes — the kind of solidarity that spurred students at Nex Benedict's school to walk out of classes in defiance of the far-right government of Oklahoma.

Stop the genocide in Gaza! No trans genocide in the U.S.!

Melinda Butterfield is a member of Women in Struggle-Mujeres en Lucha, an organizer of the Coalition to Protect Trans Lives, and co-editor of Struggle-La Lucha.



International Women's Day salute to Palestinian women

written by Struggle - La Lucha
March 11, 2024

International Working Women's Day 2024

SALUTE PALESTINIAN WOMEN



On International Women's Day, we salute Palestinian women and women worldwide struggling against U.S. imperialism and capitalist oppression.

It is imperative that we amplify the resistance of Palestinian women during the current genocide perpetuated by Israel and its puppet master, the United States.

Their heroic resistance and sacrifice remain foremost in our hearts and minds this International Women's Day 2024.



Military spending fuels the fire: Cost of living rising with basic services at luxury prices

written by Struggle - La Lucha
March 11, 2024



You can believe the increase in your expenses. Inflation continues to ravage every day.

Workers are feeling the pinch of inflation more than ever, with core services experiencing their [worst monthly jump in 22 years](#). Unlike headlines focused on “core goods” like TVs or gas, this inflation surge hits where it hurts – everyday necessities.

The price index for core personal consumption expenditures (PCE) skyrocketed to a

7.15% annualized rate in January. This represents the sharpest month-to-month increase in over two decades.

In simpler terms, you're paying significantly more for essential services like rent, health care, transportation, child care, repair bills, cell phone plans, car insurance, and even haircuts. Housing costs are particularly distressing, with shelter prices rising 6% in January.

This inflation surge isn't just a number on a chart – it's impacting workers across the country.

"Housing costs are running hot," the [New York Times](#) noted Feb. 26. "The cost of shelter was up 6% in January from a year earlier, and rose faster on a monthly basis than in December, according to the Labor Department."

Rents are going up. And the Times adds, "For home buyers, the combination of rising prices and high interest rates has made housing increasingly unaffordable." Mortgage rates have doubled from about 3% to almost 7%

Overall, 30% of all U.S. households are spending more for housing, but among renters, this ratio goes up to 50%.

On health care, the Medical Economics newsletter reports that "prices are going up, with various costs in health care edging upward ... over the last 12 months, prices for all items rose by 3.1%." Annual family premiums for employer-sponsored health insurance climbed 7% on average in 2023.

Food services purchased to be consumed away from home, like at restaurants, rose 5.1% in January.

Transportation services costs — including automobile maintenance and repair, parking fees, tolls, and public transportation — are at a record high and are up 9.5%

from a year ago.

Cable and satellite TV, streaming, concerts, sports, and movies are up from a year ago.

Prices have swelled 9.4% for everything from broadband and mobile phone bills to home repairs, education, lawyers' fees, laundry, elderly care facilities, and even funerals.

One of the primary drivers of inflation is military spending. There were inflation crises during World Wars I and II, as well as the Korean and Vietnam wars. In 1983, following President Ronald Reagan's stupendous military expenditures, inflation jumped 9.25%, and the national debt rose from \$997 billion to \$2.85 trillion.

Then in 2002, with the launch of wars on Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya (Pentagon propaganda name, "War on Terror").

And again today, with the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, the U.S.-armed and -funded war on Gaza and the increasing war buildup in Taiwan, a trillion dollar annual war budget, and a national debt of \$34.38 trillion.

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Bombs over babies: What about the children?

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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News reports show that funds for early childhood education and welfare are drying up at every level of the U.S. government. The cutback is raising issues about the continued maintenance of child care centers. Many are closing because families are unable to pay for them.

On average, families are forced to spend an unaffordable one-quarter of their income on child care fees. Urgent issues are being raised about the ability or inability of parents to continue to work, and about the jobs of child care workers - one of the lowest-paid jobs in the country. One issue that gets little attention is the economic stress caused by racism, which hits communities that are struggling the hardest.

The elephant in the room is the most important issue that is seldom addressed: the development and nurturing of small children, the future of all societies. What happens to three- and four-year-olds when they are locked in with angry older

siblings while their parents desperately try to find subsistence? What happens when they are parked for hours in front of a TV or computer or allowed to feel that they are the cause of the stress destroying their families?

What happens when they are denied the advantage of learning numbers and the letters of the alphabet from skilled teachers, when they can't spend their days learning to socialize and make friends or going to a playground? Child care centers can provide nutritious food and medical attention and set up child-friendly environments.

In the U.S., unlike many countries, early childhood education is not part of the public education system. It is viewed as if it were a "babysitting problem." Education is a basic right that has been fought for since Emancipation. During the Civil Rights Movement, Black and Latinx families in New York City fought for community control over their children's education. In the process, they won an activist child care workers' union.

Racist backlash hurts all kids

The racist backlash that eroded those gains has hurt all children. The results of a 2020 study by the U.S. Department of Education reflect the overall low position of public education. Roughly half of U.S. adults aged 16 to 74 — 54% or 130 million people — lack literacy proficiency. In a [2024 World Population review](#), the U.S. ranks 36th in literacy. The largest percentage of those with low literacy skills are white U.S.-born adults.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, one in every five children in the U.S. is unsure where they will get their next meal. The report found that 44.2 million people lived in households with difficulty getting enough food to feed everyone in 2022, up from 33.8 million people the previous year. Those families include more than 13 million children experiencing food insecurity, a jump of nearly 45% from

2021.

Overall, households with children experienced food insecurity at significantly higher rates than the national average. The rates for Black and Latinx households were both more than double the national average.

The Census Bureau released data on the poverty rate in 2022. Due to economic relief during the pandemic, the child poverty rate dropped to 5.2% in 2021. By 2022, the child poverty rate more than doubled, rising to 12.4%. In wealthy cities like New York, that rate is soaring to over 16% in some areas.

Another threat to small children is the loss of Medicaid coverage. Since spring 2023, Medicaid has dropped coverage for around 4 million children. Those without any insurance are denied routine care for conditions such as asthma and diabetes, not to mention vaccines.

The availability of free child care would go a long way to easing the myriad of crises currently facing families. Child care must be established as an intrinsic part of public education.

On Feb. 27, the New York Times reported, "[Without Funding, the Business of Child Care is Back on the Brink](#)." The Times reports that "during the pandemic there was temporary relief. The federal government spent \$24 billion dollars to keep the industry afloat." That relief funding, which is taxed, expired in September. Child care, like the prisons that are privatized for profit, is not viable without the support of government funds.

Like most Democratic Party administrations, Biden was unwilling to implement campaign promises on social spending, unlike the \$100 billion he has supplied to the military industry. The Republicans, despite their reverence for fetuses, do not support subsidized child care and universal pre-kindergarten.

The whole world has been outraged by the rain of U.S.-supplied bombs killing Palestinian children. The military industry is pocketing the profits of that inhuman massacre.

When the world's children come first, children in the U.S. will begin to thrive.

