

# Putin approves supply of 80,000 tons of fuel to Cuba

written by Struggle - La Lucha

November 9, 2024



Russia has announced a \$60 million diesel shipment to Cuba during bilateral meeting in Havana. The Russian assistance, authorized directly by President Vladimir Putin, represents an international effort to help stabilize Cuba's energy sector.

The announcement of the supply of Russian fuel was made during the Meeting of the Co-Chairs of the Intergovernmental Commission for Economic-Commercial and Scientific-Technical Collaboration, which began sessions in Havana. The bilateral meeting is headed by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Chernyshenko and Cuban Deputy Prime Minister Ricardo Cabrisas.

"Following instructions from our president, Vladimir Putin, Russia is ready to provide emergency assistance to sister Cuba in connection with the current situation in the energy sector," Chernyshenko said during the bilateral meeting. The Russian assistance follows a significant collapse of Cuba's electric power system on October 18, which left much of the country without electricity for approximately 72 hours. Electricity service was not restored until the early hours of October 21.

According to the latest report from Cuban energy authorities, issued on November 1, the island continues to experience a deficit in electricity generation, although they have ruled out the possibility of a new disconnection from the national grid.

The Russian assistance, authorized directly by President Vladimir Putin, represents an international effort to stabilize Cuba's energy sector, which has faced serious

challenges due to the lack of fuel and the deterioration of its electricity generating facilities as a result of the economic blockade imposed by the U.S. government. The effort also comes at a time when Cuba is recovering from two major hurricanes that have recently hit the island.

Source: [Resumen Latinoamericano - Buenos Aires](#)



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## **Elecciones en Puerto Rico, inicio de más luchas**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
November 9, 2024



El pasado 5 de noviembre se celebraron las elecciones generales en Puerto Rico. La gran esperanza con la que miles de boricuas, sobre todo, la población juvenil votante quería que se convirtiera en realidad, no ocurrió. Los meses de propagandas mentirosas y asquerosas en contra de la Alianza compuesta por el Partido independentista Puertorriqueño y el Movimiento Victoria Ciudadana, influyeron en la ciudadanía envejecida que representa la mayoría en esta colonia y que ha sido golpeada por un sistema colonial neoliberal diseñado para servir a los grandes intereses del imperio gringo y sus secuaces aquí en el archipiélago. Los actos de corrupción y las muchas irregularidades en el proceso electoral por parte del partido oficialista, el Partido Nuevo Progresista, incluyendo votos de personas ya fallecidas, que fueron intentos desesperados para frenar el empuje de la Alianza, favorecieron a su candidata Jeniffer González.

Sin embargo, fue un evento histórico donde el candidato por la Alianza, el dirigente del PIP, Juan Dalmau, logró posicionarse en el segundo lugar, desplazando así al Partido Popular Democrático, que por décadas se había turnado con el PNP, la administración de este gobierno colonial.

Pero los próximos cuatro años prometen ser uno de luchas incesantes que se convertirán en la pesadilla del nuevo gobierno. El despertar de toda una nueva

generación de jóvenes y del 60 porciento del pueblo que votó en su contra, así ya lo está dejando mostrar en sus expresiones de repudio con el dicho “yo no me quito”.

El gabinete que está formando la nueva gobernadora está plagado de hombres misógenos y violentos que así ya lo han demostrado en administraciones pasadas y que ella ha rescatado.

Somos colonia de EUA, y por lo tanto, no somos inmunes a su realidad. ¿Cuál serán las repercusiones de la victoria de Trump aquí? La Jeniffer pertenece al Partido Republicano de EUA y siempre ha salido a la defensa de Trump.

Por otro lado, está el inversionista gringo radicado en PUR para beneficiarse de la Ley 60 de exenciones contributivas, el billonario parásito John Paulson que se ha hecho propietario de los hoteles más lujosos de la isla y construye mansiones para que millonarios extranjeros se radiquen aquí y sigan desplazando a nuestra población. Se dice que será nominado para Secretario del Tesoro en la administración Trump. Su política extrema de reducir los gastos del gobierno abonará asimismo a la política de la nueva gobernadora para el abandono del pueblo que ya ha sufrido por la imposición del neoliberismo extremo.

Esta combinación peligrosa será indudablemente un combustible más para nuestra lucha por la independencia.

Desde Puerto Rico, para Radio Clarín de Colombia, les habló Berta Joubert-Ceci



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# A Cuban perspective on race and revolution

written by Struggle - La Lucha

November 9, 2024

- [Part 1: Populists fought the ruling class](#)
- [Part 2: Populism or fascism?](#)
- [Part 3: The history of Black Populism](#)
- [Part 4: Two paths after slavery's end](#)
- [Part 5: A Cuban perspective on race and revolution](#)

In preparing [Part 4](#) of this series on the history of the populist movement, I included a section comparing the starkly different post-slavery trajectories of Cuba and the U.S. While preparing that material, I spoke with a young Cuban woman of African descent. We met her during our [U.S. Friends Against Homophobia and Transphobia](#) delegation to Havana in 2023. Here, she is identified as "R" for "respondent."

**Gregory E. Williams:** My article concerns the legacy of the Civil War in the United States. Both Cuba and the U.S. abolished slavery after a long struggle. But the

reality in the two countries is quite different today because of the two different social systems: capitalism in the U.S. and socialism in Cuba.

Cuba doesn't have racist housing discrimination or police murdering hundreds of Black people every year like in the U.S. So I am comparing that in one section of the article.

What do you think about the progress Cuba has made regarding equality of people of African descent since 1959? Does Cuba have racism in any way comparable to the United States?

**R:** In Cuba, the triumph of the Revolution in 1959 brought radical changes to the lives of people of African descent. But, although the progress is unquestionable, manifestations of racial discrimination still persist since it is not so easy to reverse centuries of racist and discriminatory attitudes in 65 years.

In 2019, [the National Program Against Racism and Racial Discrimination](#) was created as a strategy at the highest management level to provide a definitive solution to these issues.

However, it is important to mention that the signs of discrimination based on skin color, which may still be present in Cuban society, are not at all comparable to the situation in the United States. All Cubans equally enjoy the same rights and access to opportunities under the legal protection of the Constitution of the Republic.

**GEW:** This gives a good context for people to understand. Of course, racism is a continuing problem because of the centuries of racist colonial oppression, as you say. But, Cuba is proactive and making new advances, not just resting on the old achievements of the revolution.

This is one thing I really respect about the Cuban revolutionary approach. As with gender and sexual rights — areas where Cuba is advancing — it is a question of how

to move forward. By contrast, with the capitalist class's attacks in the U.S., we are moving backward.

## En español

Al preparar la cuarta parte de esta serie sobre la historia del movimiento populista, incluí una sección que compara las trayectorias marcadamente diferentes de Cuba y EEUU después de la esclavitud. Mientras preparaba ese material, hablé con una joven cubana de ascendencia africana. La conocimos durante nuestra delegación de [Amigos de Estados Unidos contra la Homofobia y la Transfobia](#) a La Habana en 2023. Aquí, se la identifica como "R" de "encuestado" o "respondent" en inglés.

**GEW:** Mi artículo trata sobre el legado de la Guerra Civil en los Estados Unidos. Tanto Cuba como Estados Unidos abolieron la esclavitud después de una larga lucha. Pero la realidad en los dos países es bastante diferente hoy debido a los dos sistemas sociales diferentes: el capitalismo en Estados Unidos y el socialismo en Cuba.

Cuba no tiene discriminación racista en materia de vivienda ni policías que asesinan a cientos de afrodescendientes cada año como en Estados Unidos. Así que estoy comparando eso en una sección del artículo.

¿Qué opinas sobre los avances que ha logrado Cuba en materia de igualdad de los afrodescendientes desde 1959? ¿Cuba tiene un racismo comparable al de Estados Unidos?

**R:** En Cuba, el triunfo de la Revolución en 1959, trajo consigo cambios radicales para la vida de los afrodescendientes. Pero, si bien los avances son incuestionables, aún persisten manifestaciones de discriminación racial, pues no es tan fácil revertir en 65 años siglos de actitudes racistas y discriminatorias.

En 2019 fue creado el [Programa Nacional contra el Racismo y la Discriminación](#)

Racial como una estrategia, al más alto nivel de dirección, para dar solución definitiva a estos temas.

No obstante, resulta importante mencionar que las muestras de discriminación por color de la piel, que puedan aún estar presentes en la sociedad cubana, para nada son comparables con la situación en EEUU. Todos los cubanos, disfrutan por igual, de los mismos derechos y acceso a oportunidades bajo el amparo legal de la Constitución de la República.

**GEW:** Esto proporciona un buen contexto para que la gente lo entienda. Por supuesto, el racismo es un problema continuo debido a los siglos de opresión colonial racista, como usted dice. Pero Cuba es proactiva y logra nuevos avances, y no se basa simplemente en viejos logros de la revolución.

Esto es algo que realmente respeta del enfoque revolucionario cubano. Al igual que con los derechos del género y la sexualidad - áreas en las que Cuba está avanzando - es una cuestión de cómo avanzar. En cambio, con los ataques de la clase capitalista en Estados Unidos, estamos retrocediendo.



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# Cuba goes immediately into recovery after Hurricane Rafael leaves the island

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
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*News coming out of Cuba is spotty this morning as the second hurricane in a week has pounded the island, once again knocking out the compromised national electric grid of the blockaded country.*

*Ed Newman from Radio Havana Cuba has reported that Hurricane Rafael, which followed a trajectory that passed between Pinar del Rio and Artemisa in the western part of the country, left the island last night at 8 p.m. leaving behind significant damage but at this time there are no reports of any deaths.*

Nov. 7 — As soon as Hurricane Rafael began to leave Cuba, the National Defense

Council, headed by President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, met to evaluate the steps to be taken after the strong impact of this meteorological phenomenon.

We are going immediately to the recovery, with no time to lose, from the early hours of Thursday, said President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, when heading, on Wednesday evening, the meeting of the National Defense Council, in which the next steps were evaluated, after the strong impact of Hurricane Rafael.

The meteorological phenomenon reached the western zone of Cuba with category three, and registered winds of over 180 kilometers per hour.

Accompanied by the members of the Political Bureau of the Party, Manuel Marrero Cruz, Prime Minister, and the Secretary of Organization of the Central Committee, Roberto Morales Ojeda, as well as the heads of several ministries, the President indicated to make the preliminary assessment of the damages during the night and early morning, in order to make the first analysis early in the morning, and trigger the recovery process.

The President will be, with several ministers, touring the affected areas as from Thursday, to assess the damage on the ground and make decisions.

The Minister of Economy and Planning, Joaquín Alonso Vázquez, head of the Economic-Social Group of the National Defense Council, informed about the measures taken for the protection of people and material goods, the distribution of the standard family food basket, the anticipated harvests, the production of bread, the supply of fuel to the generators, the protection of vessels, the preparation of the brigades for the recovery, among other decisions.

The implementation of the strategy to connect the National Electric System, which has been down since Wednesday afternoon due to the strong winds of the hurricane, is underway, for which electric subsystems are being created in the Center and the

East.

The revision of the distribution lines in the West has begun in order to start the recovery of the electric service.

Source: [Granma](#), translation [Resumen Lationamericano - English](#)

*To make an urgent donation to help Cuba's recovery from Hurricanes Rafael and Oscar visit Peoples Forum*

<https://secure.givelively.org/donate/peoples-forum-inc/let-cuba-live-donate-for-urgent-humanitarian-aid>



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## **Venezuela sends aid to Cuba in response to Hurricane Rafael**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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November 7, 2024 - On Wednesday night, Venezuelan President Maduro expressed his solidarity with the Cuban people as Rafael, a Category 3 hurricane, made landfall with winds reaching up to 175 kilometers per hour.

"We are sending a ship with humanitarian aid that will arrive in Cuba in four days. We are preparing a second shipment with additional aid," he said, referring to a load of approximately 300 tons that includes supplies, construction materials, and first aid equipment.

"Solidarity and brotherhood will continue to be the fundamental principles uniting our nations," Venezuelan Foreign Affairs Minister Yvan Gil affirmed from La Guaira port.

Rafael caused significant damage in Artemisa, Mayabeque, and Havana, three provinces where the electricity service was cut off. In Artemisa, authorities reported damage to hospitals, schools, homes, roofs, and the electrical grid. In Mayabeque, the main impacts occurred in banana and cassava crops.

Hurricane Rafael made landfall at 4:20 p.m. local time (9:20 p.m. GMT) along the southern coast of the Artemisa province and left Cuban territory more than two hours later via the northern coast of Pinar del Río. The Cuban Meteorological Institute recorded winds up to 185 kilometers per hour (115 mph) and rainfall reaching 200 millimeters (7.9 inches).

On Thursday, while rains continue in Cuba, President Miguel Diaz-Canel confirmed that his administration is focusing its efforts on infrastructure recovery tasks following the hurricane's passage.

Lazaro Guerra, the Director of Electricity at the Ministry of Energy, reported that the power supply had already been restored in several areas of Matanzas, Sancti Spíritus, and Holguín.

By midday Thursday, Rafael was moving toward Mexico at 155 km/h (96 mph), impacting the weather conditions in El Salvador, where afternoon and nighttime rain and storms are expected.

Source: [teleSUR / Resumen](#)



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## The revolution never gets old!

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
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### **Joint statement of revolutionary organizations in Russia:**

Comrades! Today, we stand together against the capitalist system, for the conquest of power by the workers and for the deprivation of this power from the bourgeois exploiting class. The reference point and beacon for us in this struggle, the best proof of the rightness and necessity of our cause, is the main event of the 20th Century - the October Socialist Revolution of 1917.

Great October is already 107 years old, but since this event is epochal, determining the main vector of development of human history for centuries to come, it is not subject to any aging. Let us repeat what is well-known and obvious to everyone who looks at the process of world development objectively and does not distort it to

please the bourgeois class.

The significance of October is that for the first time in history, power was taken by the oppressed and exploited, workers and peasants, dispelling the myth that only representatives of the propertied classes could rule. This became possible thanks to the revolution carried out under the leadership of a proletarian party seasoned in class battles — the Bolshevik Party.

The immediate consequence of the seizure of power by the workers was the construction of a socialist state. In this state, thanks to the liberation of labor from the yoke of capital, there was an unusually rapid and comprehensive rise in productive forces, which made the economically and politically backward country the flagship of world development. A socialist society was created — a society of people of high culture, high level of education, high civic morality. This is the basis on which the Soviet people were able to achieve the Great Victory over fascism. They were able to be the first in space and nuclear energy. They were able to ensure peace for the world in the period after the Second World War.

The bourgeois counterrevolution of the late 1980s - early 1990s destroyed all these achievements, destroying the socialist social system, the socialist state — the USSR — and demonstratively shooting the remnants of Soviet power in 1993. Bourgeois propagandists today are trying to prove that the counterrevolution took place due to the unviability of socialism. Lies! The bourgeois revolution became possible as a result of the ruling CPSU ceasing to express the interests of the working class and all workers, and stooping to accepting and implementing the restoration of capitalism under the guise of “perestroika” and the “market” course.

The list of bitter and gloomy things capitalism has brought to our land and lives is endless. Suffice it to say that it has created a monstrous stratification between rich and poor, made people's position in society and their very lives (medicine is now paid for!) directly dependent on the thickness of their wallets, deprived the workers

of all rights and all opportunities to influence the fate of their country.

Capitalism has literally showered us with the most disgusting vices of bourgeois society and also drawn us into an endless series of conflicts and bloody wars on national grounds, the largest of which, the current war with the Nazi regime in Ukraine (and that regime arose only thanks to capitalism), is unfolding before our eyes.

The longer this goes on, the more obvious it becomes that the only way out for the workers is to achieve a new socialist path of development, to break the bourgeois system. No reforms or elections will change anything here. And so our eyes are turned to the example of the Great October.

The bourgeois government understands all this very well and strives to nip any movement toward a new revolution in the bud. Repressions against activists follow, bans on peaceful public events under a variety of pretexts, as well as any manifestations of protest in general. There is a desire to ban the very political literacy of the opponents of the bourgeois regime — the teachings of Marxism-Leninism — equating it with “terrorist” and “extremist” ideologies. But we know from the experience of the 1917 revolution that the thicker the lid that the bourgeoisie tries to push on the cauldron of workers’ protests, the stronger the explosion will be.

Long live the 107th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution!

Long live the coming October!

Happy Revolution Day!

**Central Committee of the Russian Communist Workers' Party (RKRP-CPSU)  
Presidium of the Central Committee of the United Communist Party (OKP)  
Central Committee of the ROT FRONT  
Executive Committee of the Labor Russia movement**

*Translated by Melinda Butterfield*



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# **Working class activists and U.S. President cross paths in Baltimore**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

November 9, 2024

Oct. 31 — We and President Joe Biden had very different Tuesdays. But somehow, we crossed paths in Baltimore City, Maryland.

In the first place, Biden and these writers are very different kinds of people. We're members of the Peoples Power Assembly, working on the "Amazon: Invest in Workers, not Genocide" campaign. Biden is a segregationist from Delaware who, right now, is in charge of the biggest, most violent, and most profitable military apparatus in the world.

When we woke up on Tuesday, Oct. 29, 2024, all we knew was that we'd be leafleting around the Amazon warehouses, getting the word out about the campaign.

When Joe Biden woke up that Tuesday, his staffers and the Secret Service already had his itinerary mapped out. All the appropriate police and city officials had been contacted and coordinated with. Every photo op was carefully vetted, every available police and military vehicle had full gas tanks, and all personnel had a full kit.

His “visit” to the city was nothing more than a stop for ice cream (in one of Baltimore’s most gentrified neighborhoods) and a speech at the port. Outside those two stops, Joe Biden traveled with a small army of armed security.

He must have been going to his speech at the port when we crossed paths.

We had already finished leafleting around the warehouse in Sparrows Point for the day. We’d been leafleting around the Broening Highway warehouse for maybe half an hour when we saw Baltimore City police shutting down roads. Curious, we hung around to see what was happening.

Sure enough, the motorcade appeared. We made sure to film its entirety so we could let Joe know we were there and what we were raising to the working class.

While we traveled on foot to meet the workers where they were, the president, boxed away in his “Beast” — the presidential armored limousine — pushed people as far away from him as possible. The sirens of the convoy rang out in unison until they spotted us. One by one the pattern switched and the volume intensified as if to deter us from filming our “public servant.”

Of course, the public was not invited to his speech at the port.

It was his usual fare—folksy lip service that rang hollow. It’s clear that the White House is desperate to protect its left flank and knows very well that it has to at least appear to address the issues of working people in Baltimore.

In one moment, he congratulated the dockworkers on the higher wages they earned

through their strike against automation and, in another, claimed his party would lead the way in the “modernization” of America’s ports. This was a slap in the face of the dockworkers who continue to fight against the tide of automation.

Keep in mind that most of the funds the President announced for Baltimore’s ports are still only theoretical. He made no real commitment to fund the rebuilding of the Key Bridge, only that he is “calling on Congress” to pass a bill.

It would go a much longer way if he accomplished any of the demands we raised on his most recent visit. There’s a lot of money in the war budget that’s funding a genocide that could be spent on infrastructure.

Ultimately, it’s all far too little and far too late. No new bridges or tunnels are going to curb the rising police violence across the city. No “modernized” port is going to relieve the food deserts. Schools across the city don’t have drinkable water, heat, or air conditioning.

While the ruling class and their personal army in Baltimore City Police continue to get money, the people of Baltimore continue to survive as their public infrastructure remains ignored and crumbling.

What the workers need is a revolutionary change that is far-reaching and absolute. No president or agency has the answers; only the people know what the people need. The people stand with the workers, not with war profiteers or genocide enablers!

Long live Baltimore’s oppressed and working class, and long live international solidarity!



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# The siege of North Gaza

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
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## **U.S.-sponsored Zionist genocide makes Jabalia synonymous with Auschwitz, Treblinka**

For the last year, the United States and its Zionist partners have waged a brutal and unyielding siege on Gaza. The widespread devastation and death throughout the Gaza Strip has been widely reported on in both corporate media and alternative sources.

Neighborhoods are eviscerated. Water supplies are non-existent. Children burn in their hospital beds. And even with all of that misery, it seems that Zionist forces are escalating the genocide to yet another level. Currently, the Gaza Strip's northern section is suffocating under the weight of that escalation.

Since early October of this year, occupation forces have held the [Jabalia](#) refugee camp under siege. Jabalia is one of the oldest and largest refugee camps in Palestine. Jabalia is home to well over a hundred thousand people packed into an area of 1.4 kilometers. This makes Jabalia the most densely populated square kilometer in the world. The war has seen relentless occupation offensives against Jabalia since Oct. 7th.

However, it has only been in recent weeks that the IOF has entirely encircled Jabalia. Occupation forces have ordered Jabalia's residents to leave what is left of their homes or be killed. Fearing that they will never return home if they leave, tens of thousands have stayed. As the Zionist stranglehold has tightened, the conditions in Jabalia have become borderline untenable for human life.

Since the siege's start, Jabalia has been completely cut off from Gaza City and the rest of the strip. UNRWA reports that 90% of Jabalia's water is undrinkable. Zionist troops destroyed Jabalia's power grid completely, rendering the entire camp without electricity. As if this wasn't bad enough, Jabalia was also one of the epicenters of the recent polio outbreak in the Gaza Strip, the first of its kind in a century.

Unfortunately, the siege within the siege is not limited to Jabalia. The occupation air force and army have killed dozens in mere days in both Beit Lahia and Beit Hanoun camps. Both camps are similarly cut off from all aid like Jabalia. Beit Lahia is home to the last functioning [hospital](#) in northern Gaza. As such, it has been under constant IOF bombardment. The Zionists are intent on targeting all facilities and infrastructure that supply the people of these camps with the most basic human necessities.

In just weeks, the occupation has murdered [1,300](#) people throughout North Gaza, and that number is likely massively underreported.

The Zionists' goal in its siege on Jabalia and similar camps is [not a secret](#): Their goal

is to either murder or displace every single person in the area. There is a phrase for this sort of place: a death camp. If Israel in any way represented the values and history of Judaism, the so-called Jewish State would recognize a modern-day Treblinka when it saw one.

Instead, the Zionist regime plays the role of the modern-day Third Reich. In its new role, the Zionist regime is full steam ahead towards the entire extermination of Palestine's indigenous people. UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Joyce Msuya, stated the situation simply: "The entire population of North Gaza is at risk of dying."

The people of North Gaza and all of Palestine need the intervention of the world now. The United States and their Zionist dog must be isolated economically and militarily until they end this horror campaign against Palestine.

The lesson of the Shoah, or Holocaust perpetrated at the hands of Nazi Germany, was not the need for a fascist faux-Jewish ethnosestate but the need to prevent all forms of fascism and genocide in the future. The Zionists cannot be allowed to continue to operate modern-day Treblinka and Auschwitz in Gaza or anywhere.

Palestine must be free.

*Lev Koufax is an anti-Zionist Jewish activist.*



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# No votes for genocide!

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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Nov. 2 — Three days before the capitalist elections, people gathered in Manhattan's Union Square to say no to the mass murder in Palestine and Lebanon. Called by the Shut It Down 4 Palestine Coalition, the action was part of a National Day of Action to

say no votes for genocide!

"The U.S. government funnels billions of our tax dollars to Israel as they continue to commit genocide against the Palestinian people," declared the coalition. "During this presidential election, we won't forget the candidates' blatant support for the genocide."

Speakers at the Union Square rally demanded a ceasefire and stopping the endless baby-killing weapons shipments to the Zionist occupiers of Palestine.

People marched up New York City's avenues through Herald Square and Times Square before holding a final rally at the reference library on Fifth Avenue. No matter what happens on election day, the struggle for Palestinian liberation will continue.

Later, just before midnight, several dozen protesters gathered outside NBC Studios at Rockefeller Center to confront Kamala Harris, who made a surprise appearance on Saturday Night Live. As her caravan passed, they waved Palestinian flags and chanted, "100,000 people dead, Kamala, your hands are red" and "Democrat, Republican, genocide is by bipartisan."



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# From Cuba to Louisiana: Two paths after slavery's end

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
November 9, 2024

- [Part 1: Populists fought the ruling class](#)
- [Part 2: Populism or fascism?](#)
- [Part 3: The history of Black Populism](#)
- [Part 4: Two paths after slavery's end](#)
- [Part 5: A Cuban perspective on race and revolution](#)

In the [first installment](#) of this series, I argued that the populist movement of the late 19th Century was an advance for the progressive forces in U.S. society, given both the violent, counterrevolutionary overturn of Reconstruction as well as the ongoing consolidation of power by the monopoly capitalist class. Populism was a stand against both of these trends.

It should also be noted that the populist movement was one instance in U.S. history when two-party domination of the political system was undermined. The populist People's Party effectively challenged the Republicans and Democrats. This was no small thing at the time. And now, this bit of history is significant in light of the 2024 U.S. presidential election between billionaire-backed candidates Kamala Harris and Donald Trump. Today, many despair at the increasingly obvious anti-democratic nature of the political system.

The circa 1898 government in [Wilmington](#), North Carolina, was especially remarkable. It was a “fusion” government, that is, an alliance between the People's Party, on the one hand, and the Republican Party, on the other. At that time, the Republican Party was still the anti-slavery party. At the same time, the Democrats in the South represented the interests of the white ruling class against both Black and poor white people, with the latter making up the majority of the population. The Willmington government comprised Black and white officeholders, bucking the post-Reconstruction trend.

The progress in Wilmington was undone by a wave of violence orchestrated by a clique of white racists on behalf of the rich. Prefiguring today's social media

disinformation campaigns, they used the press to whip up racist hysteria with lies about Black men sexually assaulting white women. This should sound painfully familiar to us, as we have just witnessed the effects of Donald Trump and J.D. Vance's lies about Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, which led to a slew of bomb threats and school closures. And we have just seen Britain erupt into anti-immigrant violence, while the working classes of both the U.S. and Britain are under severe economic strain, exacerbated daily by the political leadership.

The remainder of this article will attempt to specify what Reconstruction was since that has not been addressed previously, even though it is essential to this whole reassessment of populism. In the next installment, I will describe how the Willmington racists orchestrated their propaganda and how people fought back while drawing parallels with the recent events in Ohio and Britain.

### **Reconstruction: one of the most democratic periods in the history of the country**

W.E.B. Du Bois' 1935 "Black Reconstruction in America" was one of the first systematic works of history to refute the prevailing view - in both academic and the broader culture - that Reconstruction was an erroneous undertaking and a disaster. When Du Bois' book came out, many historians of the Civil War championed the "lost cause" narrative, which painted the Confederate cause as just. They argued that the war was caused by anything other than slavery.

Du Bois marshaled the Confederate leaders' own words against that argument, showing that the Confederacy was founded upon the principle of slavery and that the war was very much fought over it, even if the Washington government's aim at the start of the war was to preserve the union, not to abolish slavery. Moreover, Du Bois showed that Black people constituted the greatest factor in their own liberation. A practitioner of Marx's scientific historical method, Du Bois presented ample

evidence for what he called the “general strike” of the enslaved. Masses of the enslaved left the plantations during the course of the war, withdrawing their labor and cutting the Confederate economy’s legs out from under it.

Not only that. These masses of Black people who emancipated themselves went over to the Union side and fortified the Union Army with their labor in agriculture and skilled trades. They forced the government in Washington to commit to emancipation. And through their determination, they induced the government to arm them so they could fight.

According to an [article](#) on the U.S. National Archives website:

“By the end of the Civil War, roughly 179,000 Black men (10% of the Union Army) served as soldiers in the U.S. Army and another 19,000 served in the Navy. Nearly 40,000 Black soldiers died over the course of the war — 30,000 of infection or disease.”

Du Bois saw that the Black freedom struggle was a revolutionary labor struggle with global significance. So did Karl Marx. In Black Reconstruction, Du Bois included Marx’s Jan. 28, 1865, [letter](#) to U.S. President Abraham Lincoln. Marx stated:

“The working classes of Europe understood at once, even before the fanatic partisanship of the upper classes for the Confederate gentry had given its dismal warning, that the slaveholders’ rebellion was to sound the tocsin [alarm] for a general holy crusade of property against labor, and that for the men of labor, with their hopes for the future, even their past conquests were at stake in that tremendous conflict on the other side of the Atlantic.”

## **The Freedman’s Bureau**

Various experiments in Black self-governance and cooperative economic activity

were carried out during the war. These anticipated aspects of Reconstruction, including the formation of the federal Freedmen's Bureau at the end of the war in 1865. Du Bois said of the Bureau:

"In the Freedmen's Bureau, the United States started upon a dictatorship by which the landowner and the capitalist were to be openly and deliberately curbed and which directed its efforts in the interest of a black and white labor class. If and when universal suffrage came to reënforce this point of view, an entirely different development of American industry and American civilization must ensue. The Freedmen's Bureau was the most extraordinary and far-reaching institution of social uplift that America has ever attempted. It had to do, not simply with emancipated slaves and poor whites, but also with the property of Southern planters. It was a government guardianship for the relief and guidance of white and black labor from a feudal agrarianism to modern farming and industry. For this work there was and had to be a full-fledged government of men."

The Freedman's Bureau organized the economy in the devastated South. It built schools, including many of the historically Black colleges and universities that still exist. It helped poor white people for whom the rich planters had never shown the slightest concern.

Reconstruction was one of the most democratic periods in the history of the country. It brought the first public schools to the South. Before this time, only the children of the wealthy were educated. With Reconstruction, masses of poor white children were finally able to attend school, along with their Black counterparts. The formerly enslaved who had been forbidden to read and write began learning by the thousands. Many schools were not segregated at this time. The Louisiana and South Carolina constitutions even prohibited segregation.

The extension of education to poor white Southerners demonstrates the universal

character of the Black freedom struggle. This labor struggle - as both Marx and Du Bois understood it - necessitated the uplift of all the oppressed and laboring masses. In Capital Volume 1, Marx wrote:

"In the United States of North America, every independent movement of the workers was paralysed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic. Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black, it is branded. But out of the death of slavery a new life at once arose. The first fruit of the Civil War was the eight hours agitation, that ran with the seven-leagued boots of the locomotive from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California. The General Congress of Labor at Baltimore (Aug. 16, 1866) declared: 'The first and great necessity of the present, to free the labor of this country from capitalistic slavery, is the passing of a law by which eight hours shall be the normal working-day in all States of the American Union. We are resolved to put forth all our strength until this glorious result is attained.'"

During Reconstruction, suffrage was extended to Black men. (U.S. women of any race were not able to vote until the movement won that right in 1920, three years *after* the socialist Bolshevik Revolution gave women the right to vote throughout the old Russian empire.) Not only did Black men vote, but they also held office. Sixteen served in the U.S. Congress, and over 600 in state legislatures. Hundreds served in other offices.

### **A necessary military occupation**

All of this was tremendous progress, which was ensured by the federal government's military occupation of the South, which lasted for 12 years. The last troops to leave the South withdrew from Louisiana on April 24, 1877, a date often cited as the end of Reconstruction. Proponents of the "lost cause" decry the occupation, but it is analogous to the Allied occupation of Germany after World War II.

To the East, the Soviet Red Army helped the people of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and several other countries build their own workers' states and begin the process of reversing the damage done by their Nazi-allied governments. The Soviet role in establishing the socialist German Democratic Republic is an especially apt comparison.

Germany - which had a long tradition of revolutionary working class struggle and one of the most powerful communist movements in the world - had been decimated by Hitler's rule. He had beaten back the working class revolution. Under Hitler, Germany had murdered 6 million Jewish people. But, the post-war socialist government in Eastern Germany was aiding the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and supporting the liberation fighters in Vietnam. The U.S. and capitalist West Germany supported apartheid. Washington branded Nelson Mandela a terrorist.

With guaranteed housing, child care, health care, employment, and more, socialist East Germany was a beacon for the revolutionary peoples of the world. This is an incredible transformation in a very short period of time. Again, the transformation was backed up by the early occupation by the Red Army and the later Warsaw Pact - the military alliance of the socialist camp in Europe. The Washington-led imperialists relentlessly plotted to overthrow these progressive workers' governments and used the offensive military alliance, NATO, to threaten them.

However, there are many big differences between what happened in the South after the Civil War and what occurred in Eastern Europe following WWII.

## **Land reform**

About a century separated Reconstruction and these events in Eastern Europe. These were quite different periods. A major difference is that with the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, a new global era of socialist and national liberation struggles had

been inaugurated. Starting in Russia, countries that had socialist revolutions carried out land reform. This involved breaking up the wealthy exploiters' big agricultural estates and dividing them among the peasants working the land. This was also true for the Eastern European countries after WWII.

Land reform destroyed the power of the old land-owning classes and empowered the peasants. This had also been the dream of the enslaved in the U.S. and should have been the foundation stone of Reconstruction. Land reform did not happen in any meaningful sense. It is not the case that nobody at the time understood this necessity. On the contrary, radical champions of Reconstruction democracy like U.S. Representative Thaddeus Stephens and Senator Charles Sumner articulated the problem. They knew that having *political* rights was not enough. Black people needed their own economic resources, most especially land.

Nevertheless, as Vince Copeland says in "Southern Populism":

"The revolutionary U.S. Freedmen's Bureau had distributed some 800,000 acres to ex-slaves during Reconstruction. But this was relatively, very small. It would have come to less than one acre per Black family had it all been evenly divided. Furthermore, most of this land was taken back by the ex-slaveholders after the 1877 counterrevolution, some of it even before that time.

"By 1880 there were over 6 million Black people in the South. According to Dr. Rayford W. Logan in his 'Betrayal of the Negro,' there were 120,738 Black-owned farms in the whole country, most of them in the South. There were three times as many Black tenant farmers, says Dr. Logan, as there were owners. Most of the tenant farms, too, were in the South. Few of the independent farms could trace their origin to any division of the land - least of all to the revolutionary expropriation of slaveholders' land that never really did take place."

The U.S. did not have the necessary revolutionary leadership, and thus, land reform

was a limiting factor in the Reconstruction process. The fact that this did not occur meant that a new white economic elite could assemble itself in the South, and masses of Black people were subjected to new forms of hyper-exploitation in tenant farming and sharecropping. So, despite the extensive political transformations opened up in this era, the material, economic basis for the oppression of Black people remained in place, and the new Bourbon Southern elite - with their Klan terror - were able to overturn Reconstruction.

All of this is to emphasize that the Black populists (and, by extension, the whole populist movement, which depended on organizing across race lines) was in a disadvantaged position from the outset.

Here is more from Copeland:

"The white Populists were land-hungry, especially in the West, where they saw the railroads and ranch-owners grabbing land a million or more acres at a time. But the Southern Black Populists needed land not only as a way of competing with big business and of growing prosperous. They needed it desperately in order to assert their human right to exist at all in the modern world - that is, in order not to sink into the same slavery that existed before the Civil War. This was only vaguely understood among the whites, who confined themselves to supporting the right of Blacks to vote and did not stir themselves to make an active alliance to help the Blacks get the land."

### **A note on Cuba**

The question of military occupation notwithstanding, perhaps Cuba is the workers' state whose experience is most apt to compare with the South. Like the U.S. South and Haiti, Cuba was part of a bigger Caribbean world dominated for centuries by slavery and the plantation system. Slave rebellions shook Cuba in the 1840s. One of the most famous insurrectionists was Carlota Lucumí, a Yoruba woman who led an

uprising at the Triumvirato sugar mill. She is counted in the immortal ranks of revolutionaries like Haiti's Toussaint L'Ouverture and Charles Deslondes, who led a slave rebellion in south Louisiana in 1811, inspired by the Haitian Revolution. But, the "peculiar institution" of slavery was not abolished in Cuba until 1886, 21 years after the end of the U.S. Civil War.

Cuban revolutionaries won independence from Spain in 1898. With the Spanish out, Washington and Wall Street took over, turning the country into a sugar plantation neo-colony. Havana became a mob-run haven for foreign sex tourism.

Dictator Fulgencio Batista's Cuba of the 1950s was a nightmare for the great majority; he was Washington's hand-picked stooge. Countrywide, per capita income was half that of Mississippi, the poorest state in the U.S. The average Cuban was living on 312 pesos or \$6 per week. Few rural areas had schools, and children often died early from infectious diseases. Most workers were employed on the huge farms and were out of work - suffering from malnutrition and other plights - during the off-season.

But between 1959 and 1963, Cuba's revolutionary socialist government carried out land reform, breaking the cycle of rural poverty. They did what the radical Reconstructionists dreamed of doing. So, even though Cuba has a very similar history of colonial genocide against the Indigenous people and enslavement of Africans, its social reality today is starkly different from the U.S. South. Cuba is as multinational as the U.S. but is infinitely further along on the road to racial equality and is not riven by economic inequality.

This author [visited](#) Havana as part of the U.S. Friends Against Homophobia and Transphobia delegation in May 2023. Being from southern Louisiana, this author was struck by how much the old city looked like the New Orleans French Quarter. The architecture is similar - Spanish colonial. But there was one tremendous

difference. The beautiful old houses were being used as homes. Colonial mansions were transformed into the headquarters of democratic mass organizations like the Federation of Cuban Women and the National Center for Sex Education (CENESEX). There were no homeless people.

New Orleans' French Quarter used to be residential, but today is an adult Disneyland. Very few people can afford to live there, and tourist shops and short-term rentals take up the historic buildings. Contrasting Cuba and the U.S. South - and U.S. society generally - shows what happens for the common people when the exploiting classes are expropriated vs. what happens when they are not.

### **The working-class unity that was needed**

The Civil War involved a tremendous revolutionary upsurge of the Black masses. It wiped away the power of the planters and advanced many of the unfinished bourgeois revolutionary tasks that were not on the agenda in 1776. But, the crucial economic task of land reform was blocked by a lack of political will. This great labor struggle of the Black masses posed the question of a broader revolution of the laboring classes against not only the retrogressive Southern planters but also Northern industry and finance.

This is perhaps a characteristic feature of revolutionary processes; they carry the seeds of their own overcoming within them. The bourgeois French Revolution necessarily relied upon the laboring masses whose interests did not perfectly coincide with the rising middle class (the bourgeoisie or capitalists) against the aristocracy. It thus posed the question of a laborers' revolution. This was realized some 70 years later with the Paris Commune of 1871 when the workers of Paris established the first workers' state, which lasted for 72 days. The second workers' state, the Soviet Union, lasted about 70 years. The workers' states of China, Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, and the DPRK are still standing.

There was a possibility inherent in the post-Civil War situation for freed Black labor, poor Southern white people, and Northern industrial laborers to form a solid bloc. This was the potential, *general* power of labor made possible by the Black freedom struggle. They could have made common cause with the Indigenous people, too; the U.S. government was carrying out genocide against them before, during, and after the war.

The entrenched nature of racial prejudice (stoked by the rich and their propagandists in the press), the lack of land reform, and other factors kept working-class and oppressed unity from fully developing. The defeat of Reconstruction in 1877 and the unleashing of Klan terror turned the clock *back* – not just for Black people but for the whole working class and all the oppressed. This meant the industrial capitalists could consolidate power, now unencumbered by the backward slave system. Just a few years later, the populist movement would come to challenge the capitalist dictatorship under the hard conditions of Jim Crow.

