

# AFGE is under a MASSIVE attack

written by Struggle - La Lucha

March 4, 2025



Billionaire Elon Musk recently appeared brandishing a chainsaw gifted to him by Argentine President Javier Milei. The chainsaw symbolized Milei's campaign promises to "shred" the government. The austerity measures under his administration have triggered rising unemployment and declines in real wages across the board. There's also been a surge in food insecurity, with at least 1 million children going to bed hungry every night.

*David Gonzalez, National Vice President of District 2 AFGE representing federal workers in New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island, discussed the Trump/Musk DOGE assault with the Teamster National Black Caucus (TNBC) on a podcast on Feb. 24. It was co-*

*hosted by Richard Hooker, Secretary-Treasurer, Teamsters Local 623, and Chris Silvera, Secretary-Treasurer, Teamsters Local 808. In addition to Hooker, guest speakers included Clarence Thomas, a third-generation retired member of ILWU Local 10. Following is an abridged account of the report by AFGE Vice President Gonzalez.*

First, I want to thank you and your organization, the Teamsters, for inviting us — to hear our plight. Yeah, we're in the crosshairs on the front lines. And we're out in these streets. We're going to stay out in these streets until these attacks cease on the federal workforce. It's not just the federal workforce, but the working people all over who are under attack. And it's a shame. We have to unite together as one party, one organization, and fight for the working-class people, especially our people.

AFGE is under attack. We are the biggest federal union, representing 800,000 federal workers across the United States and Europe. We also represent USAID, the Department of Education, the EPA, and other agencies. With the exception of the post office and a couple of others, the federal workforce falls under us.

Our union and our workers are fighting for our existence right now. Donald Trump attacked us in his first term. When he got elected the first time around, he tried to take away our collective bargaining rights. He took away union officials' time, the time that's needed to represent our workers and our members. He took away or tried to take away the office space allotted to us contractually inside facilities. That is the space we need to meet with our members when they have issues and problems with their jobs.

So we were aware of what Donald Trump could do if he was elected again. We just want to ask you and other labor leaders to do everything in your power to help us right now because we're in a fight for our existence, the federal workforce. Please speak out as loud as you can about what Elon Musk and Donald Trump are doing to destroy the federal government and the workforce. We've never seen anything like

this before.

Schedule F — he tried to institute this his first time around. It didn't get off the floor because of the COVID epidemic. But Schedule F, this action will transform the professional civil service into an army of political appointees loyal to only one person, and that's Donald Trump, and not the mission of our jobs. It dismantles the merit-based civil service, jeopardizing professionalism and impartiality in government.

[Editor's note: Trump's Executive Order 13957 in October 2020 — Schedule F — reclassified tens of thousands of federal employees, replacing qualified federal workers with political appointees whose only qualification is loyalty to the administration. The Biden administration rescinded the Schedule F executive order. In January 2025, Trump introduced a new version that expands the scope of the original Schedule F.]

They are intimidating government workers into accepting their crooked and corrupt resignation offers. As many know, this has been public. They sent out mass notices asking people to resign in the federal workforce in droves. AFGE is in the courts fighting this illegal action. We can expect worse to come from Trump.

He's showing that he will pay no attention to collective bargaining, even some that were enforced during his first term. We expect he'll follow the "Project 2025 Playbook" and try to end collective bargaining to bust the union, not just our unions, but unions in general in the name of fake national security.

Congressional Republicans will go after federal pay and benefits when they decide how to fund the government budget, which expires March 14. Just a couple of days ago, the House and Senate passed a budget resolution for fiscal year 2025, which did just that, which came after the benefits and the retirement of the federal workforce. So, they're already in motion with their plan.

Please use whatever leverage you have on the budget and the debt ceiling to save the Civil Service. Without functioning government agencies, there will be no way to undo the damage in two or four years. The damage will be done, and it will be too far gone. We ask that labor as a whole have our backs.

### **Hold the Line**

Can you please speak out and tell all federal workers not to quit? If you know a federal worker, tell them to hold the line and not quit. We've been doing what we can, but our members are only 15% of the workforce. There are managers and executives that we don't represent, so please help us reach everyone. Services will collapse if this is not stopped in its tracks. Departures will only lead to more departures. More work will be piled onto less people, which is already a common problem throughout government.

Government services have been understaffed for a long time. If you look at the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Veterans Administration (VA) and all the plights they've put out, even during the Bush administration and during the Biden administration, these and other agencies have been short-staffed for years.

This is going to affect every congressional district. It's food safety, it's Social Security payments, it's the VA benefits, and it's the safety of the flying public with TSA. Here's how you can help us. Please use mass media and social media to explain the work the federal workers do for you. We can help you identify powerful stories in your districts that show the critical work that federal workers do in the communities. Please caution federal workers not to resign. People are counting on them.

We need to speak up for this federal workforce in hearings and whenever you have the opportunity to speak at these high-level forums. Please consider submitting amicus briefs in support of lawsuits that AFGE is filing against the Trump administration to challenge its unjust and unfair treatment of the federal workforce.

We need to get the message out to stop Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and all those billionaires that he entrusts his loyalty to instead of the working-class people.

One of the things that Trump did was “the return to work directive.” Everybody knows that telework isn’t new. One of the things that occurred during the pandemic was that a lot of the workforce went remote and the government was okay with it. Smart telework enhances productivity, recruitment, and retention of experienced workers. Rolling it back disrupts operations and progress in the government.

### **A hiring freeze since the 1970s**

A hiring freeze was put in place beginning in the 1970s. The federal workforce hasn’t grown since then, while the U.S. population has skyrocketed. Bill Clinton did what Trump and Elon Musk are trying to do now, but in a different way. His cap on the workforce led to understaffing and has shortened skill gaps undermining vital government services. The hiring freeze does not on its face abrogate collective bargaining agreements. However, agency implementations must align with negotiated agreements. If violations occur, unions need to file grievances.

Now, Trump and Elon Musk are trying to dismantle the government without preemptive planning about its functions and what is needed for it to work. That is the difference now.

There’s a lot of misinformation about the federal workforce. They claim that the federal workforce is lazy, but the federal workforce is what makes this country work. When you retire and put in for social security, it’s a federal worker that will be processing the claim. When we go through the airport TSA, we expect to get on a safe airplane. It’s the TSA workers, the federal workers, that’s making our trip safe. When we eat or when we go to the supermarket, it’s a USDA worker, a federal worker, that’s inspecting that food and making sure that these companies that process our food are doing it in a safe and non-harmful manner for people. It’s a

federal worker at the VA that's taking care of veterans and aging veterans. So the federal workforce is important and they make this country thrive.

When you go to national parks and monuments, when you go to the Empire Building or the Statue of Liberty, it's a federal worker there that's keeping the grounds and giving you tours — making sure you have a good experience. So the federal workforce is broad and is out there.

So there's many broad ways that the federal workforce functions. I can go on and on with all these agencies. There's a lot of misinformation. When they talked about USAID buying condoms and stuff, that was misinformation. Elon Musk even came back and said something later, it wasn't true. He said: "there is going to be misinformation." So this is the Trump administration, and it's not normal politics.

The Trump administration wants to divide us, especially the working people, so we won't be on one accord, so we can't unite our power, get back our government, and make these politicians respect the workforce.

### **This is PATCO on steroids**

What Reagan did to the air traffic controllers is now being heaped on the entire federal system. When he fired the air traffic controllers who were on strike, the size of private sector unions between then and now shrank by half. Trump is trying to destroy unions. He's going to start with us. We're low-hanging fruit because he has control of the federal workforce. He's going to start with us, and then he'll come for you. This is why we need to unite as one in labor.

There's a lot of us in the federal workforce. Over the years, people have been given a misconception of federal workers. One of the things that people need to know is that the federal government was one of the first places where people of African descent could get decent jobs. Frederick Douglass's son worked in the federal government.

Trump and Musk are promoting this disinformation around the federal workers, that: There are too many of them, they're not doing any work, they're lazy, and what have you. It's important that we expose all these lies and talk about the importance of the federal workers.

If you cut the workforce in half, what happens? If you sketch out what that would look like and see what happens when Donald Trump and his kind can now privatize out of these jobs and give the contracts to his billionaire friends. They can make money off the federal government. It's no secret that most of Elon Musk's contracts come from the Department of Defense, whose civilian workforce belongs to AFGE as well.

Elon Musk gets a lot of contracts for his satellites and his space company from the Department of Defense. So Elon Musk has his hand in the pocket of the federal government. Now he's having a say on what the government does and doesn't do in the federal workforce.

AFGE is a part of the AFL-CIO. We've got to do our due diligence and get our voice out there to gain the support of the whole union movement. That's why we're in the streets. We had a massive rally in Washington, D.C. with a lot of support from other unions. We just held a rally in New York Federal Plaza. We held one in Boston, and another in Connecticut on Feb. 28. In my district, we're going to be in the streets. We will be in the streets by the thousands all over the country.

In the federal government, we're low-hanging fruit for Donald Trump and his cronies like Elon Musk. Once they're finished with us, they're coming for the rest of labor. Those of us who lived in New York, New Jersey, and in the Northeast, we knew Donald Trump. We knew what he did to Atlantic City — how he bankrupted Atlantic City. He didn't pay contractors. He made them go to court because his pockets were deep and their pockets were small. They didn't have the money to keep up with him in a court of law.

We need to stick together as one and fight for our cause, for our work, for our working families, the working man and woman. He targeted DEI when the plane went down in Washington, D.C. He didn't even console the families of those deceased on that flight. Right away, he blamed it on measures taken to end racism and discrimination. That was his press conference. It was terrible for him to act like that. It was one of his first executive actions. He came in and did an executive order to do away with DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) programs throughout the federal government in our workforce.

Federal employees are not rich people. A lot of people start at the minimum wage. Federal employees have been underpaid for a long time. It depends on what you do and the location you are in, what level you come into, and the positions you apply for. Take a young woman who had gotten a master's degree when she recently started work at the fish and wildlife department at base pay.

There's pay inequity in the federal workforce already. So when Trump takes away the DEI initiatives and policies, then that's going to create an even worse gender and racial pay gap.

We need a united front against Trump, Musk and his gangsters who want to smash the public unions. This is the agenda and program of Project 2025. We need actions.

Stand in solidarity with the federal workforce. When there's an attack on us, it is an attack on you. Educate your members and your people in the private sector, and let them know that our cause and our fight is just. Partner with us every chance that you get to support us, just like we would support you. If you ever need AFGE, we're there with you, just like I know that you will be here for us. We need to push back and push back hard.



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# U.S. financial warfare: Sanctions target Russia and China

written by Struggle - La Lucha

March 4, 2025

Donald Trump may appear to conduct the White House as if it were part of “The Apprentice” television series — he’s rumored to have said “You’re fired” to Zelensky. His Secretary of Education is Linda McMahon of World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE has been newly tapped to train FBI agents). But it’s not really a three-ring circus no matter how it looks.

It’s a no-holds-barred war machine with a ruthless manipulator at the helm — war at home and war abroad. To Zelensky, Trump said we want Ukraine’s rare earth minerals; that’s “the deal or we’re out.”

What you don’t see on the TV news or in the social media feeds, but you will find in the business press like [Bloomberg News](#), is a report that “Secretary of State Marco Rubio told European allies that the Trump administration would keep its Russia sanctions in place.” On Feb. 27, Trump issued an executive order that extended

Biden's sanctions against Russia for another year.

### **Sanctions are a key weapon**

The sanctions are a key weapon in the U.S. war on Russia ... and China.

The U.S. dominates the world's money system by controlling a network called SWIFT, which banks use every day for global transactions.

SWIFT is the main system for international money transfers. Without it, countries can't easily do business with each other. The U.S. has effectively weaponized access to SWIFT as part of its sanctions regime.

Many people call this method the "nuclear option" of sanctions. It means cutting off a country's access to SWIFT, which can seriously hurt its ability to trade.

As Foreign Policy magazine explained when Biden imposed sanctions on Russia, removing Russian banks from the SWIFT system has disabled Russia's international trade. ("[What does Russia's removal from SWIFT mean for the future of global commerce?](#)")

Because of the sanctions, Chinese banks are afraid of doing business with Russian businesses out of fear of being frozen out of dollar transactions through SWIFT.

### **Trade problems between Russia and China**

A report published on [InfoBRICS](#) (the joint website of the ministries of foreign affairs of the BRICS member states) outlined the problems the sanctions have caused in Russian-Chinese economic relations.

The report says U.S. sanctions have caused serious trade problems between Russia and China. Until recently, Russia and China claimed to have their "best relations in history." But now, [since mid-2024](#) when Biden imposed new sanctions on Russia and

China, Chinese banks have been rejecting and returning approximately 80% of Russian payments made in Chinese yuan. Chinese banks are even refusing money from other countries if the sender has a Russian name. This affects small businesses and huge projects like Arctic LNG-2, which produces natural gas. China is being careful because it doesn't want to lose access to U.S. and European markets, which are still very important to its economy.

Since 2014, Russia has been trying to develop ways to do business without depending on Western financial systems. This included using Russian and Chinese currencies instead of dollars and euros. In 2023, [about 95% of trade](#) between Russia and China used their own currencies instead of dollars. However, this didn't protect their trade relationship because they still rely on U.S.-controlled payment systems for most international transactions.

Russia and China have often discussed connecting their payment systems (SFPS and CIPS) but have yet to do so.

They are trying to solve these problems by using "workarounds" — like finding payment middle agents in other countries or trading goods directly instead of using money. Some try to work with smaller Chinese banks, but this doesn't always work. These methods all cost more money and time. Besides being unreliable and expensive, these workarounds also damage the relations of both countries.

China has experience working with countries under sanctions, such as North Korea and Iran. They could create special financial organizations just to work with Russia, but this would take time and money because Russia and China do so much business together. There's only one Russian bank branch in Shanghai, which can't handle all the business needs. Even though other Russian banks plan to open offices in China, this won't solve the bigger problem.

All these temporary solutions treat the symptoms but not the cause of the problem.

This situation shows how the U.S. can threaten relationships between independent countries. If a country challenges U.S. hegemony, its ability to trade with others can be severely limited — sometimes just through threats alone.

## **BRICS Pay**

The world is changing, with developing countries aligning through multilateral groups like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and now six more countries: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia). BRICS represents 45% of the world's population and 37% of the world's GDP. On Jan. 1, 2025, nine nations were announced as the first BRICS partner countries: Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Nigeria.

The report on InfoBRICS suggests that the payment problems between Russia and China might be solved by creating the BRICS Pay system. This system, built using blockchain technology (the same technology behind Bitcoin), could replace SWIFT.

BRICS Pay remains in the proposal and developmental stages. In October 2024, Russian Minister of Finance Anton Siluanov indicated that the details of the BRICS Pay system that would be acceptable to all participants should be ready within a year.

But BRICS Pay has not been agreed upon. There are significant technical, political, and regulatory issues yet to be worked out.

There is not yet any alternative to the Bretton Woods institutions based on the U.S. dollar, no alternative to the SWIFT system.

For now, U.S. sanctions are waging direct and indirect war on Russia and China, in particular through U.S. control and manipulation of the SWIFT system.



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# En Puerto Rico defienden su cultura

written by Struggle - La Lucha

March 4, 2025

En esta colonia caribeña, se amplía la lucha por la independencia y soberanía al producirse frentes de batalla que enfrentan nuevos ataques contra nuestra propia existencia e identidad como pueblo. Y es que a todas las luchas ya existentes, ahora se suma la de defender nuestra cultura.

Y es que el Partido en el gobierno, dominado por quienes sueñan desde la rama ejecutiva a la legislativa, por anexar Puerto Rico al imperio estadounidense, han sometido un Proyecto de Ley para destruir el ICP, el Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueño. El ICP desde el 1955, se reorganizó como entidad oficial autónoma, con el propósito de “conservar, promover, enriquecer y divulgar los valores culturales puertorriqueños y lograr el más amplio y profundo conocimiento y aprecio de los mismos” , según reza su misión.

Sin embargo, el nuevo Proyecto intenta por medios legislativos, borrar nuestra

historia, convirtiéndolo en una simple herramienta para un supuesto desarrollo económico, incluyendo la posibilidad de destruir o vender piezas y edificios de valor histórico.

Es vergonzoso lo que establecen como su misión: (y cito) "... aprovechar el patrimonio histórico, cultural y artístico de nuestra Isla como un recurso esencial para el desarrollo económico sostenible. Nuestra cultura, refleja el carácter único de Puerto Rico como parte de los Estados Unidos de América, integrando de manera armoniosa elementos culturales anglosajones con sus raíces indígenas, africanas y europeas."

Desde luego, ignoran lo que la Corte Suprema gringa afirmó en el 2016, que PR pertenece a, pero no es parte de los EUA, o sea una colonia.

Pero se les hará difícil porque inmediatamente se ha formado un poderoso frente de lucha, Todo PR con el ICP, con sindicatos, artistas y el pueblo en general que no descansaremos hasta derrotarlo.

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



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# **U.S. organizations call on Trump to stop U.S. war threats on Korea**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

March 4, 2025

## **Honor March 1: Stop the War Threats**

The annual U.S. war games are coming to Korea while the South is in crisis and the North rejects U.S.'s ongoing provocations. This is the WORST time for these destructive war games.

CANCEL FREEDOM SHIELD 25!

There will be three rallies on March 1 in New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Event details are as follows:

- **New York:** Saturday, March 1, 1PM EST @ Dag Hammarskjold Plaza (E. 47 St, New York, NY 10017)

- **San Francisco:** Saturday, March 1, 1PM PST @ San Francisco Comfort Women Memorial (651 California St., Saint Mary's Square)
- **Los Angeles:** Saturday, March 1, 1PM PST @ Vermont and Wilshire Metro Station in K-Town



US OUT  
OF KOREA!





US OUT  
OF KOREA!

HONOR  
MARCH 1<sup>ST</sup>:  
STOP THE  
WAR THREATS ON  
KOREA

STRUGGLE  
IN THE  
SPIRIT  
OF SAMIL!

CANCEL  
FREEDOM  
SHIELD!

**MAR 1**  
SAT, 1:00PM PST

**LOS ANGELES**  
WILSHIRE BLVD. & VERNONT AVE.  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90010



US OUT  
OF KOREA!



**MAR 1**  
**SAT, 1:00PM PST**

**SAN FRANCISCO**  
SF COMFORT WOMEN MEMORIAL  
651 CALIFORNIA ST  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94108

Struggle-La Lucha and the Struggle for Socialism Party are proud to endorse @Nodutdol's upcoming rallies on March 1st to protest U.S. war games in Korea. Join a rally near you in New York, Los Angeles, or San Francisco!

A massive series of U.S. war games known as Freedom Shield is about to take place in Korea at one of the worst possible times: South Korea is mired in political crisis due to President Yoon Suk Yeol's ongoing impeachment, and U.S. tensions with North Korea are at their worst point in decades.

While Trump claims to desire dialogue and diplomacy with North Korea, Freedom Shield shows that this is a lie. U.S. war exercises are a constant source of tension with North Korea. In 2024, the U.S. military spent 275 days conducting war games in Korea, rehearsing things like invading North Korea, carpet bombing Korean cities, and even using nuclear weapons against the Korean people.

For decades, the U.S. government has kept its people in the dark about its true role in Korea. By dividing the Korean peninsula against the will of the Korean people, the U.S. set the stage for the devastating Korean War—the longest war in U.S. history. It's long past time to end the Korean War and the U.S. occupation of Korea, and that has to start with de-escalation.

This March 1st also marks 106 years since the March 1st Movement, which ignited Korea's fight for independence from Japanese occupation. On that historic day in 1919, the people of Korea declared their sovereignty, launching thousands of protests against colonial rule. In response, over 7,500 Koreans were brutally massacred, and nearly 50,000 were arrested and tortured.

**Join us on March 1 as the fight for true Korean sovereignty continues.  
Cancel Freedom Shield! U.S. out of Korea!**



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# **Baltimore Harriet Tubman Center hosts tribute to Malcolm X**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

March 4, 2025

Members of the Peoples Power Assembly and the Struggle for Socialism Party gave special remarks on “What Malcolm Means to Me” to mark the 60th anniversary of his assassination. Pictured from left to right are Joy B, Colby Bryd, and Apryle Everly at the Baltimore Harriet Tubman Solidarity Center holding a special Struggle-La Lucha supplement. A packed audience viewed the film “Seven Songs for Malcolm X” and participated in lively discussion.



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# A vibrant Pride Day in DeLand, Florida

written by Struggle - La Lucha

March 4, 2025

DeLand, Florida, Feb. 15 — LGBTQIA+ community and supporters in Volusia County, Florida, resist bigotry, holding a vibrant Pride Day in DeLand's downtown. The Umbrella Brigade was one of the organizers for the national March to "Protect Trans Kids" in Orlando on Oct. 7, 2023.



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# **Valentine's Day: Baltimore loves Palestine**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

March 4, 2025

Baltimore, Feb. 15 — Organizers from the People's Power Assembly (PPA) initiated a city-wide takeover of banner drops on high-visibility street corners and overpasses both to demonstrate that the movement for Palestine hasn't slowed down one bit and to show Baltimore's love for Palestine on Valentine's Day weekend.

Other endorsing local organizations like Baltimore Peace Action, Baltimore CPUSA, Johns Hopkins Graduate Students for Justice in Palestine (JHG-SJP), Veterans for Peace, Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) Organizers & Activists (MOA), and PSL also participated; each group dropped its banners at locations of its choosing. The unity of Baltimore's movement for Palestine was on full display in an estimated 10+ locations around the city, with banners raising slogans like "Free Palestine! Divest from Genocide!" "ICE out of Baltimore," "Baltimore Stands with Palestine," "Say NO to Racism and War," etc.

In addition to holding banners, demonstrators also held cute heart-shaped signs that said “Palestine” in the middle and distributed literature to pedestrians about the upcoming film screening and special presentations at the Solidarity Center to honor the 60th anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X, held on Feb. 22.

People’s responses to the banner drops were very positive, as there were lots of friendly and supportive honks from cars that passed by, and very few demonstrators were either harassed by Zionist supporters or given a hard time by city or university police.

Following the success of the banner drops, the organizations all joined together downtown at McKeldin Square for a brief but powerful unity rally. PPA organizers passed out candy hearts with personalized messages that said “Love Not Genocide,” “Free Palestine,” and “Baltimore Loves Palestine” to other participating groups and passersby in the square.

Despite the chilly weather, rain, and sleet, the crowd at the rally passionately chanted in support of Palestine and Baltimore workers, demonstrating incredible spirit.

Organizers from both PPA and MOA gave speeches emphasizing the importance of continuing to build and sustain the mass movement by interconnecting all of our struggles and organizing against a common enemy.

This is the only way we win against the rising tide of fascism in this country. This action was our Valentine to Palestine.

Imperialism will die in Palestine! From the river to the sea, Palestine is almost free! Capitalism will face defeat when workers fight back and hit the streets!

Below is a series of images (with captions) from the banner drops taken by organizers at some of the locations across the city:



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# **Beyond the flames: military vehicles and food tents signal Altadena's oppressed status**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

March 4, 2025

I don't know how many people will read this article. As with so many things, we are at the mercy of the algorithm and the mainstream news cycle. Time goes on. Coverage fades. Interest wanes as corporate news outlets jump to the next story.

Because if we are allowed to look for too long, we might start to see the reality of the injustice, abandonment, and disinvestment that follow news of catastrophe. The current consciousness, or lack thereof, regarding the aftermath of the Palisades and Eaton fires, is a prime example of this phenomenon.

As usual with any crisis under capitalism, the news industrial complex saturates the airwaves and social media with harrowing stories of the destruction before inevitably declaring the crisis of the day to be over. As the homes of famous actors

and millionaires burned throughout northern Los Angeles County, CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, CBS, ABC, and an army of freelance journalists at their behest kept the public painstakingly up to speed on the inferno's onslaught.

The corporate media seems united in its message now: The crisis is over — everyone can move on with their lives. That might be true for viewers or the millionaires who have second homes in Malibu. But what about the working-class Black and Brown people who lived in historic Altadena? Is the crisis over for them? Will they get a happy ending?

Recently, I spent time in the Altadena area delivering supplies to a local church and distributing the LA Harriet Tubman Center's people's program on fire relief. I normally don't write in first or second person as I am in this article. However, I am unable to find the words to describe the devastation I witnessed in historically Black and immigrant communities without speaking directly from my perspective. Frankly, I had mixed feelings writing about or documenting what I saw at all. Walking among all the destruction, two other examples of destruction in oppressed communities drifted into my mind.

First, I was instantly reminded of my experience walking through what used to be the vibrant "Black Wall Street" in [Tulsa, Oklahoma](#). Over 100 years ago, a white terrorist mob launched a massive assault on Tulsa's thriving Black community. The racist mob targeted Black schools, businesses, churches, and any other Black community institution. The fires and violence left hundreds of Black residents dead and thousands displaced. In modern-day Tulsa, the Greenwood Rising History Center has marked the destruction of every Black business in 1920 with a plaque explaining the Black business or other building that once stood there.

This goes on for block after block - so much destruction born purely of Jim Crow apartheid and racism. While Altadena's destruction was not at the hands of a white terrorist mob, it's a different white terrorist mob that has refused and will continue

to refuse to invest in Altadena's recovery. That mob is the predatory capitalist developers and landlords who will ratchet up rents and buy burned properties for pennies on the dollar. That mob is the local city and state governments that have already closed their limited shelters and donation drop-off locations.

For decades, the historically Black community of Altadena has survived racist redlining practices and thrived in the face of racism and economic inequality. Nonetheless, it seems the ruling class and its government are happy to allow Altadena to lie in ruins.

Second, the number of World Central Kitchen food distribution tents I saw immediately took my mind to the Gaza Strip, where the WCK has been one of the only semi-consistent food providers as the Zionist siege rages. It was not uncommon in Gaza for the WCK's tents to be the only standing structure among piles and piles of rubble. The same is true in Altadena. Again, it is not bombs that have destroyed Altadena - but disinvestment and a failure to confront climate change. Something else that struck me as similar to Gaza was the conspicuous presence of military-grade vehicles parked at the entrances to neighborhoods. This is not the case in the wealthier parts of Pasadena and the Palisades.

These are people's homes, businesses, cars, schools, playgrounds, local dives, and even graveyards - all destroyed. Ultimately, the system of capitalism does not view this sort of destruction as a tragedy, but as an opportunity. Many people have analyzed capitalism as woefully inadequate to confront the tragedy that has played out in Altadena. This is true; however, this inadequacy is not a mistake. The capitalist system isn't designed to care for people's needs in crises but to exploit them.

We cannot forget Tulsa. We cannot forget Gaza. We cannot forget Altadena. The racist and classist oppression at the heart of all these events, one way or another, is still alive and well. The crisis of anti-Black apartheid in the United States is far from

over. The crisis of the Zionist occupation of Palestine is far from over. The crisis of climate inequality and uneven investment in oppressed communities is far from over.

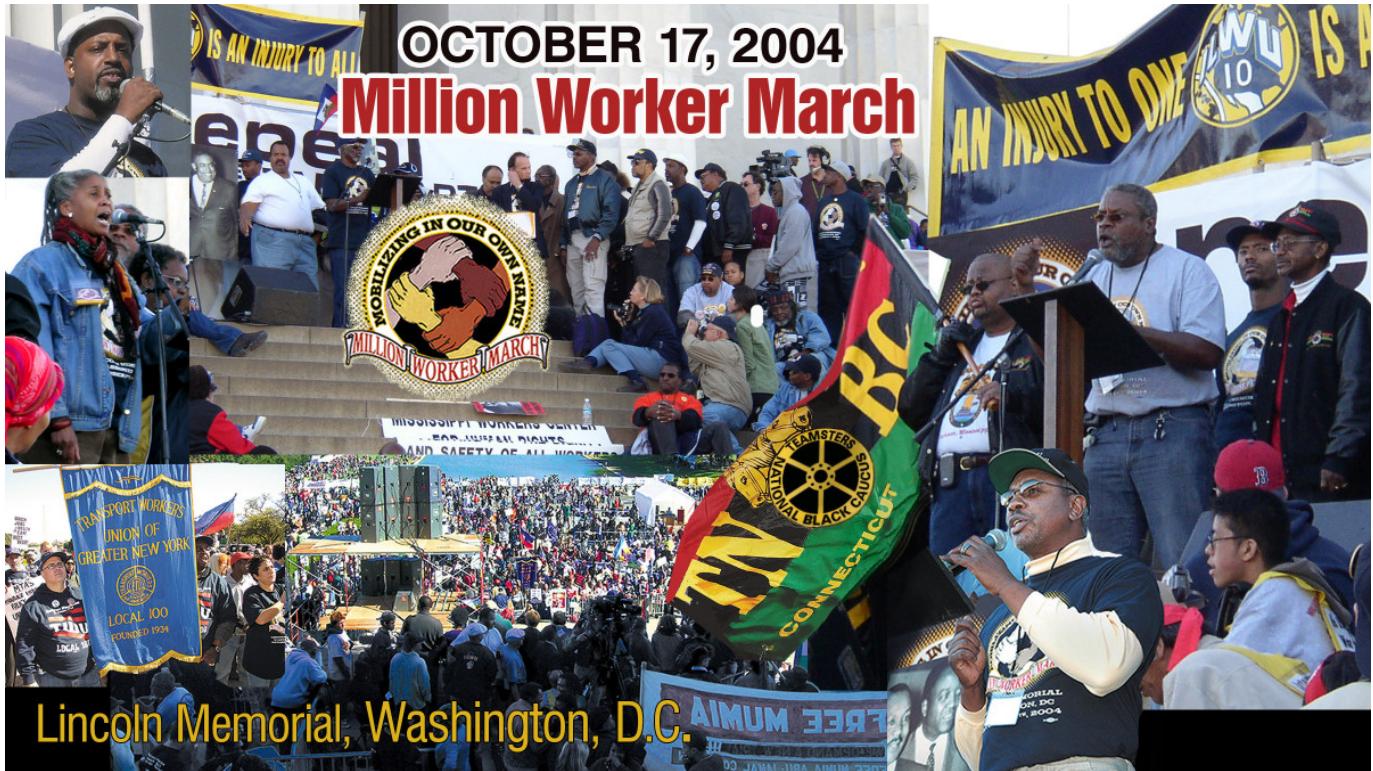
As the working class continues to struggle against escalating ruling-class violence, we have to resist the urge to “move on” from these crises that expose capitalism’s true nature. We know these crises will continue, and our fight for a working-class revolution will continue along with them.



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# **From Black Reconstruction to Elon Musk: A Black Labor History Perspective**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
March 4, 2025



*The following text is based on a talk given by Clarence Thomas, a third-generation retired member of ILWU Local 10, on a podcast for the Teamster National Black Caucus (TNBC) co-hosted by Richard Hooker, Secretary-Treasurer, Teamsters Local 623 and Chris Silvera, Secretary-Treasurer, Teamsters Local 808. In addition to Thomas, guest speakers included David Gonzalez, National Vice President of District 2 AFGE.*

Solidarity Greetings, sisters, brothers, friends and enemies. In fact, you know we would just be fooling ourselves to think there are no enemies present on this podcast. First of all, I would like to thank Brother Richard Hooker for having me on the show and all of those involved in making this podcast possible. I am honored to be with you all today!

The subject of my presentation today — “A Black Labor History Perspective” — could not be occurring at a better time, not just because of Black History Month but

also because of the current presidency of Donald J. Trump, a reckless, avaricious billionaire known for making racist comments, failing to pay his workers and outsourcing his manufacturing firms, in case anyone has forgotten. He is currently presiding over an unprecedented effort to exercise authoritarian rule over all branches of the U.S. government, with Elon Musk wielding unmitigated authority as head of DOGE.

There has been a long history in this country of trade union and white working-class intransigence against Black working-class advancement — alongside episodes of interracial class unity and the elusive promise of a radical future and a labor party.

Racism has genuinely undermined working-class democracy and power in favor of the meager protections of white privilege. Alongside the placement of occupational color bars by unions to the outbreak of wildcat strikes against the hiring of Black workers, history is also scattered with episodes of anti-racism and interracial unity. From the Knights of Labor, the International Workers of the World (IWW) to the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). From the League of Black Revolutionary Workers to the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), Black Labor militants appealed to white and other workers of color for solidarity.

More recently, in 2004, we witnessed the emergence of the Million Worker March Movement, initiated by African American trade unionists, which assembled at the Lincoln Memorial on Oct. 17, 2004, calling for all workers to break with the two ruling class parties and embrace a worker agenda.

### **Capitalism and racism go together like a hand and glove**

Slavery was capitalism on steroids! It provided free labor by an enslaved population that had no rights at all. Any child of an enslaved woman was born into a life of indefinite bondage. Efforts to enslave Indians were not successful; they could not adjust to the labor in captivity and often escaped to the familiar terrain of the

forest.

Free white laborers were scarce and were unwilling to work when cheap land was available — white indentured servitude was an important source of labor in some colonies. But, this limited term of bondage could not meet the growing demand for workers. Blacks could be forced into slavery more easily than whites because, once enslaved, they could not easily run away and mingle readily in strange surroundings. The Land Barons said, “A Black skin connoted, evil, and inferiority; Blacks were said to be destined to be slaves by the ‘curse of Ham.’” They were pictured as savages and infidels from a barbaric, dark continent without a civilization, and enslavement was judged to be an improvement to their way of life.

The number of Black slaves grew slowly in the 17th Century. In 1700, there were probably a little more than 25,000 Black slaves in colonial British North America. Slavery was suited to plantation agriculture and to the Southern economy generally. Slave labor could be maintained at a subsistence standard of living. The offspring of Black women added to the profits of the masters.

Many of the Africans carried to America as slaves brought with them skills in metallurgy, woodworking, and leather, as well as cultivation of rice and indigo.

Free Black wage earners were members of the labor force before the Civil War. But, from the time white workers formed the first trade unions in the 1790s to the Civil War, no free Black wage earner was a member.

The Colored National Labor Union, or the National Labor Union, was formed by African Americans in 1869 with the goal of improving working conditions and the quality of life for its members. It represented African American laborers in 21 states. Among the goals of the union was the issue of Farmland for African Americans in the South, government aid for education, and non-discriminatory legislation that would help struggling Black workers.

Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, in his book *Black Reconstruction*, describes how enslaved African Americans went on strike during the Civil War on the Plantations in the South. They frequently ran away and went to Union Army encampments. In some instances, they were led back to their plantations.

Du Bois says: "Slaves are workers, as workers constantly struggle with their masters, not only over working conditions but over their legal and social status as well." He gives a class analysis of how the enslaved contributed to their own freedom and were not just bystanders. There were thousands who fought and died as Union soldiers. He draws an analysis that better connects race and class. The enslaved increasingly ran away, took up arms against their masters, and intentionally sabotaged and disrupted global cotton production.

### **The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters**

In 1925, [The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union](#) (BSCP) was founded by A. Philip Randolph, an African American radical trade unionist, and avowed socialist at the time. It was the first union led by African Americans to receive a charter in the American Federation of Labor (AFL).

Beginning with the Civil War, the job of Pullman Porter had become an important means of work for African Americans. Randolph was its founder and President, Milton Webster, vice president, and C.L. Delum, vice president and the union's second president. Porters on regular assignment worked an average of 73 hours per week and earned 27.8 cents an hour. In the 1920s, groups as diverse as the Urban League, the Socialist Party of America, and the Communist Party began to focus on the rights of Black workers.

In 1941, The March on Washington Movement (MWM) was initiated by A. Philip Randolph. It was the most militant and important action in African American politics in the early 1940s. Its objective was to bring 10,000 Negroes to Washington, D.C., to

demand an end to discrimination in hiring in the defense industry and the discrimination in the U.S. military.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt cut a deal with Randolph unbeknownst to fellow organizers like William Patterson, a Black communist attorney, signing an executive order establishing a policy against employment discrimination as the nation prepared for war. Executive Order 8802 established the first Fair Employment Practices Committee.

In 1947, another March on Washington was planned to end segregation in the military. At that time, President Harry Truman signed an executive order to end discrimination in the military.

It wasn't until Aug. 28, 1963, that a March on Washington took place. A. Philip Randolph led it with the leadership of Bayard Rustin.

The next march was the Million Worker March, which took place at the Lincoln Memorial on Oct. 17, 2004, in Washington, D.C. This time it was initiated by radical trade unionists from the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 in San Francisco. The call was for workers, organized and unorganized, to embrace a workers' agenda which includes:

- Protecting Social Security
- Stop the dismantling of public education
- Repeal Taft Hartley
- Universal health care
- Slash the military budget
- National living wage
- Amnesty for all undocumented workers
- Workers' right to organize
- Tax relief for working class

- Stop corporate greed
- Enforce all civil rights

among other demands.

The MWM called workers to break from the two ruling-class parties and to form a Workers Party.

The Democratic Party and AFL-CIO both opposed the MWM. Prior to the 2004 Democratic Convention, a mini labor summit was held in Hyannisport at the Kennedy family compound. It was attended by many labor leaders, including those from the AFL-CIO, ILWU, SEIU, and the Teamsters. There it was established that the MWM was being held at the wrong time. A directive was sent to all AFL-CIO affiliates not to contribute any money, time, or resources to the march, even though they might agree with many of the MWM's demands.

Such a letter was received by the Teamsters. In spite of that, during the Teamsters National Black Caucus (TNBC) in August 2004, the delegates voted to have the International Brotherhood of Teamsters contribute \$10,000 to the MWM. General Secretary Treasurer C. Thomas Keegel, who was in attendance at the conference, said he would get it done. The Teamsters kept their commitment.

In fact, one year later, when MWM held its labor gatherings during the 10th anniversary of the Million Man March, aka the Millions More March, Bro. Hoffa donated another \$10,000 and wrote a letter supporting many of the demands of MWM and its participation in the Millions More Movement festivities. The MWM produced a video and sent a copy to the general president so that he could see Black labor's participation during that anniversary.

Chris Silvera, Patricia Ford of the Washington D.C. Labor Council, and myself all spoke at the Millions More Rally in Washington, D.C. Brother Silvera demanded that

President George Bush reinstate the Davis Bacon Act during the rebuilding of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. The Act requires that federal dollars appropriated on public works projects must pay prevailing wages to workers on the project. A couple weeks later Bush enforced Davis Bacon on federally funded projects related to Katrina.

Thank you.

**A question from the panel:**

**What is the difference between middle class and working class?**

In capitalist America, there is an effort to divide the class by the amount of money you make, occupation, and education. Let's take, for example, my former occupation as a dock worker, a longshore worker. Well, by capitalist definition, only 9.2% of workers in the U.S. had incomes exceeding \$100,000. Depending on one's skill level, job classification, and accumulated overtime hours, a dock worker's pay can well exceed \$100,000. Perhaps that would explain why you can find lawyers, accountants, teachers, and other highly educated people working on the waterfront. Are they not still working class? Of course they are, in fact, they are some of the most important workers to the global economy.

The middle class is made up of those who are not wage earners, who have their own income like doctors, lawyers, accountants, and so forth.

My point is, if you're a wage earner you are definitely working class. We recently witnessed people in the entertainment industry go out on strike over AI. Big-name Hollywood stars joined the picket lines and refused to go to work. They have consistently remained union members, no matter how much money they make or where they live. They make their income by working the same as those on the waterfront.

Lastly, the term middle class divides workers on the basis of race. Being that race is the basis of wealth, education, income, and other disparities. Folks who have certain occupations don't see themselves as part of the working class. I would conclude by pointing out that a significant number of the people teaching undergrad students are PhDs with no tenure and make far less than many skilled union workers.

*Clarence Thomas is an ILWU Local 10 retiree and co-founder of DeClare Publishing.*



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# **One year later: Remembering Aaron Bushnell's self-immolation protest against genocide**

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One year ago, on Feb. 25, 2024, 25-year-old Aaron Bushnell, an active-duty member of the U.S. Air Force, self-immolated in front of the Zionist Embassy in Washington, D.C., to protest against the genocide of tens of thousands of Palestinians. He said

that he refused to be “complicit in genocide,” and as his body burned in flames, he cried out six times, “Free Palestine.”

In Los Angeles, Palestine solidarity activists gathered in front of the Zionist consulate to honor Bushnell. Organizers from the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice, Code Pink, Justice 4 Palestine, and many individuals worked together to organize the action.

