

# **New Orleans marches for Palestine at start of Mardi Gras**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
January 7, 2026



Activists march for a free Palestine in front of the Joan of Arc parade. SLL photo: Gregory E. Williams

New Orleans, Jan. 6 – Marchers under the banner of “New Orleans for a Free Palestine” filled the street ahead of the Joan of Arc parade, the first of the Mardi Gras season. With a brass band among them – NOLA Musicians for Palestine – they

chanted “Gaza, Gaza, you will rise, Palestine will never die!” bringing the message of liberation to thousands gathered in the French Quarter.

The pre-Joan of Arc march is now a three-year tradition. They have marched every year since the current U.S.-Israeli genocide began following the Al-Aqsa Flood operation on Oct. 7, 2023, but is not the only such intervention in Carnival festivities.

For example, a Palestinian-led parade krewe – the Krewe of Chickpea – has also paraded in recent years on Lundi Gras, the day before Mardi Gras Day. (Lundi Gras falls on Feb. 16 this year.) Krewe of Chickpea takes inspiration both from New Orleans traditions (e.g., the Krewe of Red Beans that also marches on Lundi Gras) as well as Palestinian music and the pre-colonial spring festival of Mawsim in Palestine.

In a display of internationalist solidarity, Krewe of Chickpea parades with Krewe of Las Frijolitas (little beans), a Dominican-led krewe. They honor figures like Mamá Tingó, a farm worker and activist who fought for rural farming communities in the Dominican Republic starting in the early 1970s. They have also honored the Venezuelan environmental activist Tortugita, who was shot and killed by Georgia State troopers in 2023 during the Stop Cop City struggle in Atlanta.

Now and historically, Mardi Gras is suffused with the spirit of resistance in majority-Black New Orleans. It is more than the tourism-money bonanza promoted by state and city leaders. Raising the banner of resistance – for Palestine, for Latin America, for Black and working-class New Orleans – is especially urgent this year. The genocide in Gaza grinds on while our city is occupied by ICE and the National Guard. These things are connected. The same people are behind it.



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# New Orleans protest denounces ICE and National Guard occupation

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New Orleans, Jan. 2 - In downtown, dozens marched against Trump's National Guard and ICE occupation. The action started with a rally in front of Armstrong Park. The march went through busy parts of the French Quarter and Central Business District, briefly shutting down several blocks of Canal Street.

Unlike Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry - who asks "how high?" before Trump even says *jump* - these protesters are not happy with the federal government rampaging through our communities with armed agents.

This is happening as violent crime in the city continues to drop: 2025 saw one of the lowest violent crime rates [since the 1960s](#). And other crimes like burglary were down 50%. The National Guard is not here because of an out-of-control crime situation. Trump has sent them as a threat to the people. He has never made it a secret that he wants mass repression against anyone resisting his rule.

And they are here to protect ICE, which is clearly not going after violent criminals, either. Independent [analyses](#) have found that only 5% of the people ICE is kidnapping had a violent crime conviction. Seventy-three percent had no criminal conviction whatsoever. They are arresting parents bringing their kids to school and our neighbors who work hard for low wages, just hoping for a better life for their families. This is not about keeping anyone safe. It is about dividing and repressing working-class people.

And none of this is making grocery prices lower, by the way. Tech billionaires and private prison owners with ICE contracts laugh all the way to the bank when we fall for the lies and believe that our immigrant neighbors are the ones somehow keeping us down. But anything to keep us from looking at what said billionaires are doing.

At the rally before the march, Toni with Freedom Road Socialist Organization drew a connection between the occupation of majority-Black New Orleans and the violence committed by the declining U.S. empire abroad. She began with the chant, “No boots on the ground, no bombs in the air, U.S. out of everywhere!,” then continued:

“That includes Palestine, that includes Africa, that includes Asia, that includes New Orleans, because we don’t need military occupation. The white supremacist militarism that says that they can take their guns, bombs, and tanks, and GIs, and just send them all over this world and use them against the masses of the people – because they think they have divine right – that’s over.

“That time of empire and white supremacy is over. Now is the time of the people. Now is the time for us to take a stand.

“They like to say that us Brown people and people from oppressed nations in this country are a minority, to be subjugated to the rules of their racist minoritarian rule. But in New Orleans we are not a minority. Black people, Brown people – we are the

majority in this city!

“And in our movement, we take from the tradition of Malcolm X, who also fought for Black self determination. Brown people, Black people, we are not minorities. We are the majority of this world! We are the majority of this city! And we are not going to sit idly by while some few people want to pillage our city, pillage our nations for the benefit of the billionaires. That’s why we’re standing up and fighting back.”

This protest was endorsed by Freedom Road Socialist Organization, Party for Socialism and Liberation, Queer and Trans Community Action Project, Communist Party USA, Workers Voice Socialist Movement and other organizations.



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## **ICE shooting of unarmed man in Glen Burnie, Maryland, sparks**

# people's movement condemnation

written by Struggle - La Lucha

January 7, 2026

On Christmas Eve day in Glen Burnie, Maryland, ICE officers shot an unarmed man who was driving a van, causing him to smash into a tree.

The story the Anne Arundel Police Department tells is that Tiago Alexandre Sousa-Martins, a migrant from Portugal, tried to run down the officers with the van. Salomon Antonio Serrano-Esquivel, a migrant from El Salvador, was a passenger in the van and suffered injuries as a result of the crash.

ICE's official statement was its usual fascist rhetoric, run-on sentences and all:

"This incident, which is still under investigation, comes as the extremist anti-ICE rhetoric and outright lies of politicians, the news media, activists, and violent agitators continue to fuel a more than 1,150% increase in assaults against ICE officers. Our brave officers are risking their lives every day to keep American communities safe by arresting and removing illegal aliens from our streets. Continued efforts to encourage illegal aliens and violent agitators to actively resist ICE will only lead to more violent incidents, the extremist rhetoric must stop."

However, witness accounts reported by local media contradict ICE's characterization of a high-threat situation. According to the Baltimore Banner and other outlets, ICE agents followed Sousa-Martins from a nearby Walmart before confronting him in a parking lot where witnesses said he was playing a game on his phone. One neighbor who saw the shooting told reporters that Sousa-Martins was shot three times. The confrontation occurred in a residential neighborhood on Christmas Eve morning, with witnesses expressing shock at the level of force used in a populated area.

Baltimore's People's Power Assembly responded with a rally and press conference the following Monday, Dec. 29. The media advisory issued to local press strongly condemned ICE's brutal shooting and raised demands:

"It is time for the Maryland Governor's office and the Maryland General Assembly to act. Both institutions have the power to ban cooperation agreements between Maryland counties and ICE, like the joint ICE-Anne Arundel County police 'Criminal Alien Program.' Further, the State of Maryland should declare all 287(G) agreements between ICE and Maryland counties to be defunct as they violate the basic constitutional and human rights of Maryland citizens."

Adrian, a representative of Malaya Movement Baltimore, an organization also participating in the Tanggol Migrante (Defend Migrants) Movement, was invited to speak about how Trump's immigration policy affects the Filipino community. "ICE is a clear and present danger in our communities," said the representative. "They violate our rights, terrorize people based on their skin color, and once they detain us, subject us to inhumane living conditions."

"In line with Trump's fascist immigration policy," he continued, "the Customs and Border Protection have also struck fear into the hearts of Filipino cruise workers docking at the Maryland Cruise Terminal. Since September, CBP agents have unjustly targeted Filipinos and detained them over crimes they did not commit."

Members of the International League of People's Struggles (ILPS) Baltimore-DMV regional chapter, the Greater Baltimore Democratic Socialists of America, the Free State Coalition, and the Baltimore Party for Socialism and Liberation were also in attendance to support.

The crowd drew overwhelming support from passing cars and passersby.

All in attendance committed to building a fighting mass movement that can bring



down not only ICE, but the whole system that makes ICE both possible and profitable.



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# Comrade Lee Paterson ¡Presente!

written by Struggle - La Lucha

January 7, 2026

“We can no longer be in a situation where big business rules over the lives of poor, working and oppressed people.” – Comrade Lee Patterson

Comrade Lee will forever be a guiding light to me. He was a dedicated veteran member of the Struggle for Socialism Party and People’s Power Assembly. Lee was unapologetically Black. Lee told me once that over the course of being involved in the struggle, he has never felt more free to be himself, to be proud of his Blackness and fight for it with all he had than with the Party. The party empowered Lee to use all of his skills in art and design as well as organizing and speaking to contribute to the struggle with all he could. Comrade Lee was unwavering in his support for the global struggle to smash capitalism. He knew that it was and remains capitalism that

kills and enslaves the Black community.

Comrade Lee never backed away from a fight. He challenged all klansmen, zionists, sexists, and homophobes. He held the line with his comrades against Venezuelan fascists attempting to take over the revolutionary governmental embassy in DC. He battled white nationalists and Nazis in Charlottesville. He was one of the loudest supporters of Palestinian Resistance to occupation because he knew the struggles of the Black person in America mirror the struggles of the Palestinian in occupied Palestine. A real student of the great Malcolm X, comrade Lee truly understood and lived by the words, "By any means necessary."

In the hospital, Comrade Lee said that he will live to struggle against Trump. I say right now that Comrade Lee will get his wish. He will live on through his words and teachings. He will live on in the hearts and minds of those he called comrade and he will live on through the blood, sweat, and tears shed through continued struggle.

Comrade Lee helped me become a smarter revolutionary and he helped show me the power that exists in Blackness. His energy to never give ground in the fight for all working and oppressed people is an inspiration that keeps me going to fight harder and better my skills everyday.

Rest in Power Comrade Lee, we will carry your spark to help set the system ablaze!



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# Lee Patterson, five decades in Baltimore's class struggle, dies at 70

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Lee Patterson died peacefully in his sleep on Dec. 21, during a short stay in hospice care for complications from renal and heart failure. He was surrounded in his final days by loving comrades and family.

Until his last day, Lee remained a fighter. From his bedside, he recorded a message against Trump's visit to Baltimore, since he wasn't able to attend the protest in person. Patterson had dedicated his life to the struggle for the liberation of the working class and all oppressed people.

Lee was born March 27, 1955, in Baltimore, Maryland. His mother was a domestic worker, and his father a veteran of the Korean War. Over the next 70-plus years of his life, Patterson would give his heart and soul to the struggle for socialism.

After graduating from Northwestern High School in 1973, Lee worked at various jobs, including as a cook at McDonald's. He had a passion for Jimi Hendrix in his early youth and later set up street vending tables to supplement his income.

While working at Eastern Products, a local factory that manufactured Venetian blinds, Lee became involved with the United Furniture Workers Local 75. In 1977, Lee's shop steward approached him and asked Lee to attend a march for civil rights and affirmative action. Lee attended that march and spent the entire afternoon and evening marching through downtown Baltimore.

The revolutionary political struggle and Lee were a perfect match from the beginning. It was during this period that Lee met Vince Copeland, a co-thinker of Sam Marcy, who won Patterson to revolutionary socialism. Copeland was not only a revolutionary thinker but also an organizer, and became active in the union struggle of the workers at Lee's factory, advising young worker activists, of which Lee was one.

As a revolutionary socialist, Patterson became more broadly involved in fighting against all forms of oppression - advocating for the Black community and all oppressed groups. He helped to form the All Peoples Congress in Baltimore, which was founded in Detroit in 1981 to fight the Reagan administration's cuts to social services and jobs.

In his final days, Lee reflected on the different campaigns he participated in during the late 1970s - and through the 1980s - advocating for working-class power and the material needs of oppressed communities. Lee was particularly proud of his work on the campaign demanding rent control for the Black and working-class community and fighting against high utility rates.

About the March on Baltimore City Hall for rent control, Lee said: "I felt more powerful that day than I had ever felt in my whole life." Lee truly loved the working-

class struggle. Lee saw the oppression of the working class firsthand in Baltimore's Black community, and it drove him to embrace the struggle for a communist world.

During this period, Lee worked with the Welfare Rights organization, led locally by Rev. Annie Chambers. The group, which also included Sharon Black, Ray Ceci, Andre Powell, Stephen Millies, Doug Lawson and Bob Cheeks, formed the People's Campaign for Rent Control.

One of Lee's fondest memories was hand-drawing signs for not only the rent control campaign but almost every movement that took place in Baltimore City. "Those signs made me feel like a big human being. I couldn't wait to march downtown with those."

Lee took his advocacy and revolutionary spirit to the airwaves. Rarely a day went by where Lee was not calling into a local talk radio station to challenge homophobia, anti-abortion ministers, and pro-capitalist thought. Lee was incredibly proud to stand in solidarity with women fighting for their basic reproductive rights.

In 2012, after Trayvon Martin's murder, Lee and other Baltimore organizers, including Rev. CD Witherspoon, former president of the Baltimore Southern Christian Leadership Conference, founded the Peoples Power Assembly (PPA). Witherspoon became a lifelong friend of Patterson and his family.

Until his death, Lee marched, tabled, and organized fiercely with the PPA on a range of issues from public housing rights to police brutality to "serve the people" initiatives. 2015 saw Baltimore rise up against years of racist apartheid and police terror after the Baltimore police murdered Freddie Gray in northwest Baltimore.

There are a multitude of pictures of marches where Lee can be seen thrusting his fist in the air — pictured prominently in the media as symbols for the rebellion.

However, Lee wasn't just a fighter for the working class at home. He stood in

solidarity with the colonized people of the world. This solidarity extended to the people of Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, Russia, China, Nicaragua, Palestine, Grenada, Iraq, Vietnam, Burkina Faso, Angola, and many others, against imperialist exploitation and war.

Anyone who saw comrade Lee at a protest would immediately notice his myriad of buttons demanding “Disband NATO” and “U.S. out of everywhere.” This same sense of solidarity is what drove Lee to join the counter-protest against the Unite the Right nazi march in Charlottesville in 2017.

In 2018, Lee was a founding member of the Struggle for Socialism Party. As a member, Lee continued the fight in the streets for working-class liberation and socialism even as his health began to decline.

Lee Patterson brought much to the working-class struggle. He brought passion, humor, and fire. And he brought his self-taught artistic skills to countless drawings on banners and signs depicting messages of fightback. More than anything, Comrade Lee Patterson will be remembered for his unwavering dedication to fight for the working class at every turn.

Lee Patterson loved the working-class revolution. Lee Patterson loved Black liberation. Lee Patterson loved Jimi Hendrix. Lee Patterson will be carried in memory by his comrades.

Lee is survived by his spouse and companion, Hollee Patterson, two daughters, Valencia Spruell and Safayi Jackson, loving granddaughter Danasia Patterson and other grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He is also survived by his brother Leonard Patterson and by Terence Lambirth, a loyal and loving friend who acted as brother and his many comrades in the struggle who continue his legacy.

A commemoration of Lee Patterson’s life is set for Saturday, Feb. 7, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

at St. Mark's Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall, 1900 St. Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21218.

Lee Patterson iPresente!



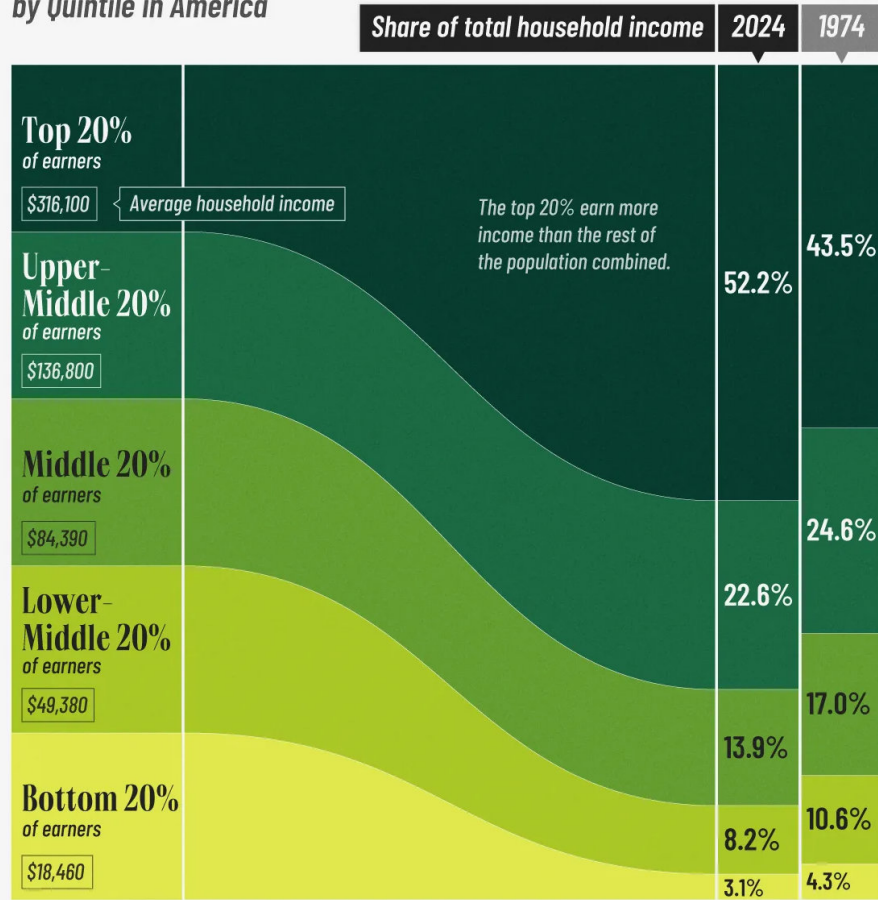
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# **The K-shaped economy is monopoly capitalism working as designed**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
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# Income Distribution

by Quintile in America



VISUAL CAPITALIST

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

What is being called a “K-shaped economy” is not a temporary distortion or the result of recent shocks, but the normal outcome of monopoly capitalism.

The image suggests two trajectories diverging from a common point—one arm rising, the other falling. The term has gained traction in economic coverage because it names the visible split between those who own and those who work, but it does not explain the system that produces that divide.



In the third quarter of 2025, the economy grew at an annual rate of 4.3%. Corporate profits rose by \$166 billion. Unemployment climbed to 4.6%. Real disposable income for households did not grow at all. These figures do not contradict one another. GDP growth records the expansion of value for capital, not improvements in living conditions. Taken together, the numbers describe an economy organized so that accumulation at the top proceeds even as conditions deteriorate for most working people.

The “K” image captures this split only at the surface. It describes two paths separating from a common starting point, one rising and one falling, without explaining why the split occurs or why it persists.

By framing the outcome as an imbalance or an unusual pattern, the metaphor suggests something temporary or accidental. Under monopoly conditions, however, this gap is neither. It is the routine operation of an economy in which profits are secured not by expanding employment or raising wages, but by cutting jobs, keeping pay flat, and shifting economic risk onto households — a process enforced through labor law, credit systems, and public policy.

This pattern did not emerge suddenly, and it did not begin with the pandemic, inflation, or recent policy shifts. The split now described as “K-shaped” has been widening for decades. What today’s figures make visible is the cumulative result of a long shift of income and power away from wages and toward profits. To understand how the economy came to operate this way, it is necessary to look at how income has been divided over the past half-century.

### **Fifty years of upward transfer**

The data on income distribution tells the story plainly. In 1974, the top 20% of households captured 43.5% of total national income. By 2024, their share had grown to 52.2% — a gain of 8.7 percentage points. Every other income group saw its share

decline. The bottom 20% fell from 4.3% to 3.1%, a drop of roughly 28% in their portion of national income.

This redistribution reflects monopoly capitalism's inherent drive to concentrate wealth, a tendency that was temporarily constrained from the 1940s through the early 1970s. Strong unions, laws that limited Wall Street speculation and made it harder to move factories overseas, and the political pressures of that period — including the existence of the Soviet Union, socialist China and the anti-colonial national liberation struggles worldwide — extracted real concessions from the ruling class.

Starting in the 1970s, facing overproduction and overaccumulation — more goods produced than could be sold profitably, more capital accumulated than could find profitable investment — the ruling class launched a sustained counteroffensive. Through union-busting, tax cuts for the wealthy, deregulation of finance, and the movement of production to where labor was cheaper and less organized, the ruling class broke that compromise. The widening divide visible in income data since 1974 marks not the beginning of a new trend but the success of that counteroffensive.

One-quarter of all U.S. households now report no job / wage income at all, according to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. These are not statistical anomalies. They represent millions of people living at the margins or entirely outside formal employment. Monopoly capitalism no longer requires a broad base of stable employment to generate profits. Profits can be sustained through price increases, cost-cutting, and through debt and finance, even as employment becomes more unstable and real wages fall.

## **Growth Without Jobs**

The current expansion makes this visible in sharp terms. The economy grew rapidly in the third quarter, yet hiring stalled and unemployment rose. Real disposable

income for households did not increase at all. This is growth detached from work.

Under monopoly conditions, output and revenue increasingly expand without corresponding growth in payrolls. Workers are pushed to do more with less, and hiring is held back even as production increases. What is labeled productivity is often just speed-up — more output demanded from fewer workers who have little power to refuse.

At the same time, consumer spending is being driven not by rising incomes but by basic needs. A significant portion of recent expenditure has gone to health care costs that cannot be deferred. People are spending because they must, not because they can afford to, and they are financing it by drawing down savings or taking on debt. This is survival spending, and it is unsustainable.

### **Debt as fuel**

Younger workers are carrying a particular share of this burden. Gen Z credit card balances have surged by 36 to 37%, while their credit scores have dropped to their lowest levels in years. They are relying on high-interest debt to cover basic costs that wages no longer meet, even though their pay, adjusted for inflation, is nominally higher than previous generations at the same age.

The gap between what workers earn and what they can actually afford reveals how inflation works under monopoly conditions. Prices rise because dominant firms control supply chains, housing, energy, and food, and use that power to raise prices in order to maintain profit margins, rather than allowing returns to fall.

Under monopoly conditions, inflation becomes a way of transferring income from workers to capital. Dominant firms control supply chains, housing, energy, and food, and use that power to raise prices in order to protect profit margins, even when demand does not justify those increases. Debt then keeps consumption going for a

time when wages no longer cover basic costs.

This arrangement is precarious. Gen Z's debt-heavy spending helps keep the economy moving, but only because they still have jobs and can make their payments. When the next downturn comes, those holding the most debt with the least cushion will stop paying first, stop spending, and deepen the collapse. The economy's stability depends on workers who are already drowning.

### **Profits under a divided economy**

Major firms operate within this split and profit from it. Coca-Cola sells lower-cost products to price-constrained buyers while relying on premium brands like Smartwater and Fairlife milk for higher profit margins. Delta reports that revenue growth is driven by first- and business-class tickets, while lower-income passengers are falling behind. Best Buy reports that two-thirds of consumption comes from the top 40% of households.

These practices reflect how profit-making adjusts to a divided economy. Profits are increasingly drawn from high-end consumption on one side and debt-driven spending on the other. The middle, where steady employment once meant steady spending, is shrinking. The wealthiest 10% of Americans own roughly 87% of all stock. When stock prices rise, their wealth increases automatically. The bottom 50% owns just over 1% of the stock market. When prices go up, they just pay more for rent and groceries while owning nothing that increases in value.

### **Not a recovery, but a structure**

What is being described in economic reports as unusual is actually characteristic of monopoly capitalism under conditions where profitable expansion has become difficult. Monopoly firms control enough of their markets to set prices independent of competition.

When profit margins are threatened, prices are raised rather than profits allowed to fall, with state policy tolerating or enforcing that outcome. At the same time, productive capacity expands faster than profitable markets can absorb. The response is not to raise wages or expand employment — that would cut into profits — but to eliminate jobs, automate, and rely on debt to sustain consumption for a time when wages fall short.

This produces the pattern now visible: GDP growth without job creation, corporate profits without rising incomes, spending without security. When you add it all up, the economy can look like it's expanding even as conditions worsen for most people, because the growth shows up in stock prices and corporate earnings rather than in paychecks or jobs.

Calling this a “K-shaped recovery” implies something temporary and self-correcting. In reality, it describes a structure enforced through law and state power. The result is an economy that concentrates wealth at the top while pushing the majority toward more unstable work, lower pay, and rising household debt.

The K shape is not an anomaly. It is a plain description of how monopoly capitalism actually works.



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# **The dollar's weakness is imperialism's weakness**

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The economic reports arriving in late 2025 point to a system in breakdown. Prices keep rising while jobs disappear. Factories sit idle or close even as corporate profits are maintained and expanded through higher prices and layoffs.

The dollar no longer anchors the world economy but forces other countries to absorb U.S. inflation, interest rate shocks, and financial pressure. These are not separate problems.

What gets called the “decline of the dollar” is not a market mood swing or a technical currency problem at all, but the expression of an imperialist system that can no longer organize production, prices, and employment on a stable basis — or sell what it produces at a profit without war spending, monopoly pricing, and debt.

Production has outrun profitable markets under monopoly capitalism. Productive capacity expands faster than profits can be realized, leaving goods unsold at prices that sustain profit rates.

To compensate, excess capacity piles up and prices are raised to maintain profit growth. Military budgets are expanded to keep factories operational and revenue to continue flowing. But fewer countries are willing or able to finance this system by holding U.S. dollars.

Dominant firms use control over energy, housing, food supply chains, and military contracting to raise prices rather than increase output. The permanent war economy reinforces this dynamic.

### **A hollowed productive base**

After World War II, the United States produced more than half of the world's manufactured goods. Today, its share of global economic output is less than 15%. The industrial base that once supported the dollar's international role has been systematically stripped back through deindustrialization — plant closures, outsourcing, and the diversion of capital away from domestic production.

The results are now visible. U.S. shipyards miss deadlines by years. Weapons systems are produced slowly and in limited quantities even as the United States arms multiple wars at once and prepares for further conflict. Factories cannot meet the demands of Ukraine, Israel, Taiwan, and domestic stockpiles at the same time. The military reach that once reinforced the dollar now exposes its weakness.

### **Military overstretch and inflation**

War spending has never been productive in any social sense, despite the myths used to justify it. It mobilizes labor, materials, and technology to manufacture destruction — goods that do not enter social reproduction or sustain society. Weapons do not feed, house, or transport people; they are built to be destroyed or to destroy.

Military production is insulated from normal price pressure. Long-term government contracts guarantee sales at high prices regardless of efficiency or social need.



Costs are passed on to the state, profits are secured in advance, and there is no competitive pressure to expand useful production. Capacity remains narrow, prices stay high, and resources are locked into weapons rather than goods that support everyday life.

In earlier periods, war spending did not generate productive growth so much as enable imperialist expansion — the violent seizure of markets, resources, and labor that temporarily offset capitalism's internal limits. That outlet no longer exists.

Today, military production expands spending while shrinking society's ability to reproduce itself. Money circulates and profits are booked, yet future production is not developed and the goods working people rely on are not produced in greater quantities.

The United States now pours resources into multiple wars and preparations for future ones without stabilizing accumulation or rebuilding industry. While military spending does create jobs, it does so by diverting labor into production that does not expand housing, health care, food, or infrastructure, leaving society poorer in real terms even as payrolls are temporarily sustained.

Sanctions intensify these pressures. They block access to energy, fertilizer, medicine, metals, and food inputs, forcing trade through longer, more expensive routes or cutting it off entirely. Fuel prices rise, transport costs climb, and essential goods arrive late or not at all. These measures are punitive by design. Sanctions are economic warfare, aimed directly at civilian populations, degrading living conditions in order to exert political pressure and reorganizing supply chains around military and geopolitical priorities rather than social benefit.

Tariffs compound the damage by functioning as taxes on imports. Although imposed at the border, their costs are passed through prices and ultimately paid by working people. The result is persistent price increases without an expansion of useful

production — higher living costs alongside layoffs, plant closures, and stagnant wages.

## **Weaponized finance and currency blowback**

As U.S. wars, sanctions, and deficits have expanded, holding dollars has become a political risk rather than a neutral financial choice. Dollar reserves are not stacks of cash, but government-owned accounts, bonds, and deposits held inside U.S. and allied financial institutions. Countries that once treated these reserves as a stable store of value have watched them turned into instruments of coercion — frozen, seized, or rendered unusable when political alignment breaks down.

The 2022 seizure of Russian reserves did not come out of nowhere. For decades, the United States had used control over the dollar-based financial system to isolate and punish governments it opposed, freezing state assets and cutting countries off from the international payment networks needed to sell goods, receive revenue, or access foreign currency.

Iranian assets were frozen beginning in 1979 and later paired with exclusion from global banking channels and oil markets. Venezuelan state assets and gold reserves were seized after Washington demanded a regime change. Afghan central bank reserves were frozen overnight in 2021 after the Taliban takeover, triggering economic collapse and creating conditions of mass hunger. In each case, access to reserves depended not on law or contract, but on political compliance with U.S. imperialist authority.

What changed in 2022 was scale. For the first time, these measures were applied to a G20 economy and a major nuclear power. The seizure of Russian reserves made the underlying rule unmistakable: Assets held inside the U.S.-controlled financial system are protected only as long as governments accept Washington's political terms. Economic size offers no immunity. Sovereign reserves function not as neutral

safeguards, but as conditional claims that can be revoked when geopolitical lines are crossed.

Central banks across Asia, Africa, and Latin America have sharply increased their gold holdings in recent years. The response has been material, not ideological, because states act on necessity, not belief.

Gold is being accumulated because it cannot be frozen or seized through sanctions, while dollar reserves — electronic balances inside U.S. and allied financial systems — can be blocked with a keystroke.

Gold prices pushing past historic highs reflect this shift: When dollar reserves can be frozen or confiscated for political reasons, states turn to an asset outside administrative control.

Countries are taking steps to reduce dependence on the dollar. China and Russia conduct trade in yuan and rubles. BRICS countries are developing payment systems outside SWIFT, the U.S.-controlled network that routes international payments. Bilateral currency swap arrangements have expanded, allowing countries to settle trade directly without converting through dollars. Saudi Arabia now accepts yuan for oil sales alongside dollars.

These are not comprehensive replacements for the dollar system, but they represent infrastructure being built to reduce dependence on a currency that now finances war, enforces sanctions, and carries the risk of confiscation. The dollar's declining dominance reflects that shift: Fewer governments are willing to hold reserves that double as leverage against them.

## **Stagflation and the assault on labor**

The instability exported through war, sanctions, and currency coercion does not stay abroad. It returns home as higher prices, job losses, and deeper insecurity for

working people. Stagflation is not a mystery or a policy failure; it is a class outcome.

It is the domestic form of an imperialist system that can no longer stabilize accumulation internationally and compensates by extracting more from labor at home.

Prices rise because monopolies use their market power to maintain profit growth. When workers win higher wages, this cuts into profit margins – profits fall because more of the value created goes to workers rather than capitalists. But price increases themselves are driven by monopoly control, not by wages.

The response to the last major episode of stagflation was to make working people pay. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Federal Reserve drove interest rates sharply higher, triggering deep recessions. Millions lost their jobs. Unions were weakened or broken. Wages were forced down. Inflation eventually eased not because the system was stabilized, but because unemployment rose, wages were forced down, and working people were made poorer.

The Federal Reserve now swings between two tools, neither of which resolves the crisis. When interest rates are raised, hiring slows, unemployment rises, and workers are pushed into weaker bargaining positions. When rates are lowered, as they have been repeatedly in recent months, the result is not renewed production but cheaper credit, rising debt, and asset inflation that benefits corporations and investors while prices remain high for working people.

In both cases, the burden falls in the same place. Jobs stay insecure, wages remain under pressure, and prices do not come down because the underlying problem is not monetary policy, but an economy that can no longer expand production profitably. Stagflation persists because capitalism under imperialist decline no longer has a policy path that restores stability. It delivers inflation and unemployment together.

## **From creditor to debtor**

The United States was once the world's main creditor because it produced a large share of the world's goods, ran trade surpluses, and lent capital to stabilize capitalism and consolidate U.S. dominance in Europe and Japan after World War II. That material foundation no longer exists.

Today, the United States is the world's largest debtor, running chronic trade deficits and borrowing continuously to finance consumption, war spending, and financial stability at home. This arrangement is sustained not by expanded production, but by issuing growing quantities of dollar-denominated debt — Treasury bonds, credit, and financial claims — that are absorbed globally because of the dollar's reserve role.

Since the early 1970s, the United States has operated without any gold backing for its currency. Before then, under the postwar Bretton Woods system, foreign governments could exchange U.S. dollars for gold at a fixed rate, which limited how many dollars Washington could issue without draining its gold reserves.

In 1971, President Richard Nixon ended that arrangement. From that point on, the dollar was no longer tied to gold at all. Its value rested instead on the power of the U.S. state, its dominance of global trade and finance, and its ability to enforce the dollar's use through political and military means.

This shift allowed the United States to run large deficits indefinitely. Rather than settling international obligations by exporting goods or gold, Washington could pay in dollars whose value declined over time. In practice, this meant financing wars, imports, and bailouts by simply printing more dollars — no longer backed by gold — and issuing debt, shifting the cost onto others through inflation and dollar depreciation instead of expanding production.

In effect, debts are settled with claims worth less in real terms — a modern

equivalent of paying obligations with clipped coins. The dollar's reserve role still props up this arrangement, but it now rests on the ability to export inflation and absorb global savings, not on the material strength of U.S. industry.

Money that once would have gone into factories and equipment is now poured into stock buybacks, real estate speculation, and financial markets. The AI boom fits the same pattern: Companies are valued on promises to replace workers and cut costs rather than on producing more goods people actually need. Productive capacity shrinks even as paper wealth, corporate valuations, and executive pay soar.

Earlier periods of dollar devaluation and deficit spending were used to restore profitability while preserving monopoly power. Those measures shifted losses onto workers and weaker economies but were backed by a growing industrial base.

### **Automation and the dollar's shrinking base**

The push toward automation is not driven by abundance or social benefit, but by capitalism's inability to expand profitably. Firms invest in machines because expanding production no longer reliably produces higher profits. Jobs are eliminated not because society needs less work done, but because wages are treated as a cost to be removed in an economy that can no longer expand profitably.

As automation spreads and more investment goes into machinery rather than labor, profit rates are squeezed because machines do not create new value. Only living labor does. The result is overproduction relative to profitable opportunities: more goods produced with less labor employed, while capital accumulates faster than it can find profitable outlets.

The dollar's reserve role once rested on U.S. capitalism's productive strength — its factories drew in investment and organized production worldwide. Automation under crisis conditions produces the opposite: fewer productive jobs, shrinking

opportunities for profitable investment, and an economy that spreads instability instead of growth. The dollar becomes a tool for debt and speculation, not for building anything.

Even sections of the ruling class recognize the impasse. Proposals for universal basic income reflect an awareness that automation under capitalism displaces workers faster than the system can provide wages or stable employment. Jobs are eliminated, incomes are cut off, and purchasing power shrinks, leaving goods that cannot be sold at prices that sustain profit.

Capitalism has no mechanism for organizing abundance without undermining the profit system itself. What remains is a reserve currency backed not by productive expansion, but by financial coercion, military force, and debt — a narrowing base that cannot sustain a stable global monetary system.

### **Imperialist decay**

The weakening of the dollar marks an advanced stage of imperialist decay. It reflects an economy that can no longer stabilize itself through production, but relies instead on debt, war, monopoly pricing, and coercion.

Imperialist profits increasingly come not from producing and selling goods in competitive markets, but from monopolizing energy, technology, shipping, credit, and payment systems — and using military force to maintain that monopoly.

The crisis of the dollar is inseparable from this broader breakdown of imperialism itself. It is not a technical malfunction or a temporary adjustment, but the unraveling of an imperialist system that can no longer expand on its own terms. It can only manage decline by transferring costs — through inflation, war, and austerity — onto workers and oppressed peoples worldwide.



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# **Reflections on Fidel Castro's internationalism in Cuba on ICAP's 65th anniversary**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

January 7, 2026

Some 240 activists and representatives of solidarity organizations and movements with Cuba from 32 countries highlighted today the internationalist thought and action of the historical leader of the Revolution, Fidel Castro.

Gathered at the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), the participants reflected on the legacy of the institution's founder, which will celebrate its 65th anniversary on December 30th, having promoted and coordinated international support for the causes of the world's peoples.

Speaking on the panel, René González, director of the Fidel Castro Ruz Center, emphasized that Cuba's commitment to solidarity arose and was strengthened in the struggles of Latin America and Cuba for independence, with the participation,



commitment and solidarity of Latin American patriots in those struggles.

These values, González pointed out, are part of the humanist essence of the Cuban Revolution, which drew on the thought of Cuba's National Hero José Martí and the ideology of Fidel Castro, who stated that "To be an internationalist is to repay our own debt to humanity."

For her part, the center's deputy director, Sissy Abay, recalled that Cuban solidarity was expressed from the very first moments of the revolutionary triumph on January 1, 1959, through concrete actions in various parts of the world, and today Cuba is a recipient of that support.

According to the president of ICAP, Fernando González, solidarity is a fundamental pillar of Fidel Castro's thought and action, and is understood here as a human duty and an unrenounceable principle of the Revolution, which continues to manifest itself in a practical and consistent internationalism.

At the event, representatives of solidarity organizations and movements from the United States, Australia, Europe, Asia, and several Latin American nations presented the actions they are taking to support Cuba in the face of its complex economic situation and the unprecedented intensification of the blockade and U.S. aggression.

Photos: Bill Hackwell

translation: [Resumen Latinoamericano - English](#)

Source: [Siempre con Cuba](#)



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# ICE targets Chicago union picket line, threatens all workers

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
January 7, 2026

It's no secret that Trump's attack on immigrants threatens all workers and their right to organize for better working conditions. Bob Reiter, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor, said Border Patrol agents questioned striking laborers on Chicago's Southwest Side and accused ICE Commander Gregory Bovino of "coming to our picket line to chill union activity."

ICE Commander Bovino often appears as the public face of Trump's deportation campaign. On Dec. 16, he - along with a squad of masked agents - pulled up to a Teamsters Local 705 picket line in Chicago and asked a worker if he was a U.S. citizen. The union was on strike at Mauser Packaging Solutions to demand decent pay.

Nicolas Coronado, an attorney for the Teamsters, said that the Mauser workers had been trying to negotiate immigration-related protections in their next contract,

including a stipulation that the company would not allow Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers on the property unless they had a judicial warrant.

“We know in many cases, the feds. ... they come in with just an administrative warrant and try to muscle their way in,” he said. “We saw it as a way to partner with the company to safeguard [workers’] rights. The company wanted none of that.”

The U.S. National Labor Relations Act stipulates the right to act with co-workers to address work-related issues. This includes talking with co-workers about wages and working conditions and participating in a concerted refusal to work in unsafe conditions. The [Act states](#): “Your employer cannot discharge, discipline, or threaten you for, or coercively question you about, this ‘protected concerted’ activity.”

Union attorney Coronado said: “It was very clearly [protected concerted activity](#), and [agents] took it upon themselves to start asking [the workers] and interrogating them about their status.”

A Department of Homeland Security (DHS) spokesperson claimed Bovino was telling the workers that it was not the boss but their co-workers who were to blame for starvation pay.

In this ridiculous and racist response, the DHS claimed that the union’s characterization of the encounter was “not true. During immigration enforcement operations in Cicero, the U.S. Border Patrol. DHS said that Chief Bovino engaged in a cordial conversation with them, explaining how ‘illegal aliens’ actually lower American wages. Nobody was interrogated or laughed at. In fact, no arrests were made.”

It certainly wasn’t cordial to ask for proof of citizenship and then attack those who might not be able to provide it. In fact, it was more than just menacing. The DHS statement becomes clearer with a closer look at ICE Commander Bovino.

Bovino himself could be part of the laughing stock of the Trump regime if its crimes weren't so grave. He often appears on television and in news interviews to promote Trump's crackdown on immigrants. He speaks out to provoke attacks on immigrant workers and defend the brutal ICE raids across the country.

Bovino arrived in Chicago in September with ICE's "Operation Midway Blitz." Thousands of arrests were made, fueling terror in immigrant communities. Resistance from the community was met with rubber bullets, chemical weapons like pepper balls, and car chases. Since it began, federal agents have shot at least two people, killing one.

Activists in Chicago have been fighting back against the ICE raids for months with massive protests. They roused their neighborhoods with whistles and shouts, at times wrestling neighbors back from the clutches of ICE. Demonstrations were held at ICE headquarters every week after Operation Midway Blitz began.

The protests grew, and the immigration raids were set back. They were noticeably subdued, with fewer confrontations.

Bovino left Chicago in November to command raids in New Orleans, Louisiana, and North Carolina. On Dec. 15, Bovino and the other agents were seen taking photographs of license plates and knocking on doors in Kenner, a town close to New Orleans.

Then, in mid-December, Bovino returned to Chicago. At a news conference, activists said they will continue to defend immigrant communities. They said 15 people, including day laborers and a tamale vendor, were detained on Dec. 16 in the city's Southwest Side and in suburban Berwyn and Cicero.

"We are tired but we are not weary," said Illinois State Sen. Celina Villanueva. "Every single time that they come, we are going to show up."

Victor Rodriguez II, a lifelong resident of Little Village, said he helped a woman when her husband was detained after a “caravan of masked agents began terrorizing our community,” including using pepper balls in neighborhood streets. Rodriguez accused Bovino of “targeted political theater.”



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## **Community runs to aid of older woman hit by speeding Baltimore cop**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
January 7, 2026

Baltimore, Dec. 17 – Today, an older woman was hit by a speeding Baltimore City cop. This reckless violence happened right by the Lexington Market subway station. People around the area who watched the accident say the woman was sent sliding across the street.

The community quickly rushed to aid her, but were met by armed police pushing them away. The cops attempted to put up crime scene tape to separate the people from the older woman.

However, the community, who vastly outnumbered the police, quickly broke through the tape barrier, moving in closer to film the incident and question the cops. BPD met them with immediate hostility, even though the crowd was solely focused on ensuring the safety of the older woman whom BPD nearly killed.

This life-threatening incident comes just months after Baltimore cop [Robert Parks](#) was seen in a viral video chasing a person with a police cruiser in late October. Parks has been charged with second-degree attempted murder, first- and second-degree assault, and reckless driving.

This incident also occurred only six months after [Bilal Abdullah](#) was brutally murdered by the BPD. In both the Bilal tragedy and this attack near Lexington Market, police immediately met a grieving community shaken by such acts of violence with more immediate threats of violence and the erection of barriers and barricades.

What played out near Lexington Market follows a well-known pattern: militarized forces treating civilian spaces as hostile territory.

That same pattern has been seen when Israeli occupation forces use tanks, bulldozers, and military vehicles against Palestinians, and when U.S. troops in Iraq used armored vehicles to intimidate, force civilians off the road, or run them down in the name of “security.”

Incidents like what happened near Lexington Market today are sadly normal in Black communities, and it is only through smashing the racist systems of this country that we end the systemic death of Black Baltimore.

