

From Sally-Tom to Charlotte Fosgate: populism and the fight for trans lives, then and now

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 2, 2025



Protesters confronted a fascist, anti-trans rally in Seattle's Cal Anderson Park on May 24. [Police attacked](#) the anti-fascists, arresting 23 people, with the backing of state and local Democratic officials.

In May, the Struggle for Socialism Party Los Angeles branch discussed the new book, “Against Fascism: Reclaiming Populism’s Legacy for Today’s Class Struggle,” compiled by Louisiana socialist Gregory Williams.

Following is the closing presentation for the series of classes, given by trans activist Melinda Butterfield on May 31.

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Since this is the eve of Pride Month, I thought it would be good to start with a little about the convergence of queer lives with the 19th-century Populist movement in the South. We know there were queer people involved in the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party, because we have always existed, and today's queer communities have strong roots throughout the South.

No doubt some of those who joined the movement were closeted, some were stealth, and some were accepted for who they were, as part of their community. But because there was no queer movement as we understand it today, it can be difficult to find direct information on these intersections. We have to suss them out.

This week I've been reading a new book by activist and scholar Eli Erlick, "[Before Gender: Lost Stories from Trans History, 1850-1950](#)." In this book, I learned about Sally-Tom and Mollie Wilson, trans women of color who lived in the South during the height of the Populist movement and the People's Party. I'm going to share a little bit of their stories:

Sally-Tom was a Black woman who lived the first 26 years of her life in slavery. She took the new opportunities opened up by Emancipation to start living more fully and openly as her true feminine self. In 1869, when she came before the Freedmen's Bureau on an unrelated matter, she was presented with the opportunity to choose her gender for the official records, and she chose to be legally recognized as a

woman. According to Erlick, Sally-Tom was probably the first trans person in U.S. history to have her gender officially recognized.

Sally lived in several Georgia towns over the next four decades, working as a cook and household help, as many Black women did. “Sally refused to discuss her life with reporters, so we do not have a single word of her self-narrative,” Erlick writes. “Those who knew her described her to papers at length, however. With a high and crackly voice, Sally reportedly hid behind her straw hat and left events before conflict arose.

“Her decision to avoid media made sense from the perspective of self-preservation; she likely did not want to draw attention to herself during such a violent era of increasing lynchings and attacks on the Black population.” She died on March 4, 1908, in Waycross, Georgia, at around the age of 69. According to a death notice in the local paper, none of her friends and neighbors knew she was trans.

Mollie Wilson was a Two-Spirit trans woman who was Choctaw and Black, born around 1865 in what was then the Choctaw Territory, which included parts of Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana. Originally, she spoke only her Indigenous language. At the age of 19, she barely escaped a lynching, killing several of her would-be murderers in the process. She fled from home and took the opportunity of her escape from these traumatic events to embrace her womanhood.

Erlick writes: “Eventually, she moved to Kansas City, Missouri. She reportedly had a large group of friends, mostly Black residents of the city. Mollie always wore a dark dress and fascinator, and with a tall and thin frame, passed with ease. Her transition allowed her to blossom into a social butterfly without fear of lynch mobs.” She married a man and later lived with a woman.

As Jim Crow’s noose tightened, Mollie was arrested twice on police claims that she was a sex worker. Shortly after one of these arrests, she died of tuberculosis in

1901.

These long-hidden lives show how trans and queer people found ways to live as their true selves during the same era that the Populist struggles were pushing back against reaction.

Trump attacks trans health care

But let's move to the here and now. Trump's "big beautiful" budget bill recently passed in the House and is currently before the Senate. It attacks housing, Social Security and public health care to transfer funds to the war machine, ICE, and the 1%. Some 20% of Medicaid recipients are to be cut - nearly 14 million people.

A rider attached to the House bill would eliminate all Medicaid and Affordable Care Act coverage for trans health care, both for youth and adults. At least [275,000 trans people](#) currently depend on Medicaid. The likely knock-on effect would be to allow private insurance companies to dump gender-affirming care, affecting many more.

In addition to Sally-Tom and Mollie Wilson, this week I have been thinking about [Charlotte Fosgate](#). Charlotte was a 17-year-old trans girl who lived in Oregon. She disappeared May 1 and jumped from a bridge in Portland the next night. Her death was confirmed last week.

Charlotte's final social media posts, made from the bridge where she leapt to her death, [became a lightning rod for bigots](#) posting hateful memes and messages.

Charlotte represents all the trans youth and adults who are being forced out of public life and losing their hopes for the future because of health care bans, bathroom bans, sports bans, doxxing and violence.

Populism is supposed to represent the interests of those who have been left out, who are marginalized. What kind of "populism" is it that doesn't include someone like

Charlotte Fosgate and other queer youth who are completely stripped of their right to exist, to be themselves, to even dream of a better future?

What the media and politicians term “populism” now is something utterly different. Where populism in the 19th Century represented the desire of people at the margins – small farmers, formerly enslaved people, agricultural workers and all those left behind by the growth of capitalism – to work together to better their futures, now it usually means appealing to the most backward, atomized, anti-social elements that have completely swallowed the small-capitalist, white supremacist mentality.

What they now call “populism” appeals mostly to the social base of fascism – the shock troops of the billionaire class.

Nazis co-opted socialist terms

It's not the first time this has happened. The classical fascist movements and regimes in Europe in the first half of the 20th Century adopted some of the anti-establishment and even anti-capitalist rhetoric of their enemies, the communists and socialists, to attract people to their cause. Hitler even called his organization “National Socialists.”

But they redirected the righteous anger at capitalism toward Jews, queers, people of color, and the left – much as we see ultra-corrupt capitalists like Donald Trump and Elon Musk railing against the “elites” and “Washington insider corruption” as stand-ins for marginalized communities, migrants, and the working class as a whole.

Like the followers of the Strasser brothers, who formed the “left” wing of the Germany Nazi movement, today we have formations like the so-called American Communist Party (ACP) and the Center for Political Innovation (CPI) that use leftist terminology and symbolism to draw disaffected people and those lacking class consciousness into the orbit of the fascist movement.

While claiming to be socialists or communists, they adopt the exact same racist, misogynist, anti-trans and anti-queer arguments and bigotry as their MAGA inspirations do.

Where is the united movement from the grassroots that will give a voice to people like Charlotte Fosgate or to Sam Nordquist, a Black trans man who was tortured to death in upstate New York earlier this year?

Where is the movement that will give a voice to the children whose parents are ripped away by masked ICE Gestapo at immigration hearings across the country? Or the migrants from Southeast Asia who were kidnapped and sent by the Trump regime to South Sudan?

What about Mahmoud Khalil, who is being held thousands of miles from his wife and newborn child in a Louisiana prison? Or the queer youth who are being thrown away by their families or pushed into state-mandated conversion therapy torture?

Building united movement is our task

This united movement of the dispossessed, of the workers and oppressed, is not going to come from the Democratic Party or the established nonprofits that cling to the broken system. Fighting back in the courts and with other “official” methods, while important, is not going to save us or build the movement we need.

It’s up to us. We have to build this movement, this unity. We have to refuse to be siloed. We have to reach out and find ways to collaborate, even when there is not 100% mutual understanding yet. Working together against our common enemies, in our common interests, is the way to build that understanding.

Queer rights are under attack everywhere, including California. Gruesome Gavin Newsom just this week began the process of excluding trans students from athletic competitions, after months of pandering to the worst anti-trans bigots on his

podcast. Trans youth have been under attack in schools throughout Southern California for the past few years. And last month, queer activists had to confront a fascist march in the streets of West Hollywood.

That brings us back to LGBTQIA+ Pride Month. This year especially, it's important for people from all sectors of the working class, all communities, and all organizations of the real left to come out in support of trans rights, trans lives, and all queer people. This is the time to take good sentiments about being an ally and turn them into contacts, joint work, and real efforts to build a united movement.

In Los Angeles, the Harriet Tubman Center, Struggle for Socialism Party, Trans Rescue Action, and others will be mobilizing for Pride events and queer resistance actions. If you're not in LA, talk to us, and we can put you in touch with others doing the work in your area.

Let me close with this thought from the conclusion of Vince Copeland's "Southern Populism and Black Labor," a classic Marxist work included in the book we're studying today: "[The Populists'] failure was not due nearly so much to the failure of their ideas, as to the failure to maintain their social position - to hold on to the material base of independent small and especially farming business, from which these ideas originated.

"The new class, the working class, does not yet have the ideas that correspond to its class position. But its class position is innately superior to that of the old Populists from the point of view of having the base to mount a serious and successful struggle. When the new 'people-ism' of the workers is born, it will soon grow powerful enough to really lead the people and rule in the name of practically the whole people - something the Populists could not have done, even if they had won."



Trump's huge military budget will accelerate U.S. economic decay

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 2, 2025

President Donald Trump delivered a rally-style commencement speech at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point on May 24, aggressively promoting militarism, nationalism, and his ongoing attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as well as transgender rights.

Addressing the graduating cadets, Trump glorified the U.S. military as “the greatest and most powerful army the world has ever known,” claiming personal credit for its expansion during his first term.

“I rebuilt the army and the military like nobody has ever rebuilt it before,” Trump boasted, putting military power at the center of U.S. global dominance.

Trump intensified his militaristic agenda: “We’re getting rid of the distractions and focusing our military on its core mission: crushing America’s adversaries, killing

America's enemies, and defending our great American flag."

Trump said that's why the U.S. will invest in new tanks, planes, drones, ships, and missiles. In addition, the U.S. will build the Golden Dome Missile Defense Shield, which has been described as a [\\$175 billion fantasy](#) and a boondoggle for Elon Musk's [SpaceX](#).

He also praised recent reactionary policies designed to dismantle DEI programs in the armed forces.

The Trump administration has moved to ban trans troops from the military — a decision the Supreme Court upheld earlier this month. Trump's policies have reintroduced a discriminatory ban on transgender military personnel and imposed new uniform physical standards aimed at severely limiting women's participation in combat roles.

Unprecedented military expansion

On May 2, Trump released his budget request for 2026, dubbed the "One Big Beautiful Bill." [Over 75%](#) of Trump's budget is allocated for the military and police.

In the budget proposal, military spending is \$1.01 trillion, accounting for approximately 60% of the total requested. For the non-military Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, and Veterans Affairs, the request is \$272.2 billion.

Funding for departments whose primary purpose isn't military, military-adjacent, or policing is \$409 billion, or only 24% of the budget.

The proposal includes \$163 billion in federal spending cuts, all of which target non-defense programs. For a breakdown of the cuts, see: [Trump's 'big beautiful' cuts to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and more.](#)

Military Keynesianism

Both Donald Trump and Joe Biden have argued that increased military spending and the production of armaments will reindustrialize the country and create jobs, using this rationale to justify historically large Pentagon budgets. And completely ignoring that military expansion is not, in any way, shape, or form, reindustrialization.

Trump has explicitly said it would provide unmatched military strength and support job creation through the purchase of new equipment and capabilities, mirroring the arguments made by Democrats, including Biden, about the economic benefits of Pentagon budgets.

The Biden administration promoted the jobs argument, especially when seeking support for military aid to Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan. Biden described the U.S. arms industry as the “arsenal of democracy,” emphasizing the economic benefits to states involved in weapons production.

Military Keynesianism is an economic policy approach that advocates for sustained, high levels of military spending as a primary tool for government stimulus and economic growth, based on the core principles of Keynesian economics.

Keynesian economics, developed by John Maynard Keynes, argues that during economic downturns, such as recessions and depressions, government spending (fiscal stimulus) injects money into the economy, creates jobs, and stimulates production.

Many capitalist politicians and economists argue that only World War II's massive government spending finally brought the Great Depression to an end. This suggests that sufficiently large stimulus packages — extensive deficit spending by the government — can overcome any economic downturn.

War economies do indeed trigger sharp increases in production as dormant factories

resume operations. Manufacturing surges and unemployment declines as workers join either the military or the defense industries. When depression conditions exist before conflict begins — as occurred before both world wars — economic downturns will end.

However, this “recovery” comes at a profound cost: the suppression of expanded reproduction — the essential process of capital accumulation that defines capitalism. Instead, the war economy imposes a state of *contracted reproduction*. Once the economy reaches full war capacity, production plateaus and inevitably begins a gradual decline as society consumes its existing resources without replacing them (no expanded reproduction).

In the United States, normal economic expansion following the collapse of the early 1930s didn’t resume with World War II, despite the end of the Depression. The wartime economic model represents a temporary transformation rather than a sustainable solution. While it can rapidly mobilize resources and eliminate unemployment, it does so by redirecting productive capacity away from civilian goods and long-term investment toward immediate consumption of military materials. This creates an illusion of prosperity while actually weakening the economic foundation necessary for sustained growth and innovation that characterizes healthy capitalist development.

The contradictions of monopoly capitalism

Under competitive capitalism, the profit motive drives firms to reinvest surplus value into productive capital, fostering technological advancement and market expansion. Marx’s analysis of expanded reproduction hinges on this cyclical reinvestment process, where profits fund new machinery, labor, and infrastructure.

However, the rise of monopolies has disrupted this dynamic. By controlling markets through cartels, patents, and economies of scale, monopolies replace price

competition with administered pricing strategies. This allows firms to sustain higher profit margins by extracting surplus value through inflated prices rather than productive efficiency.

The consequence is a structural surplus that cannot be absorbed through traditional reinvestment. If monopolies channel profits into new capital, they risk overproduction and the erosion of their pricing power, undermining the very basis of their profitability. This creates a paradox: the mechanisms that maximize short-term profits simultaneously stifle long-term growth.

Imperialist expansion serves as an outlet for surplus capital, channeling it outward through foreign direct investment and the exploitation of natural resources in less developed regions. The result has been a rigid global hierarchy that divides the world into dominant imperialist powers and the subordinated states, commonly called the Global South.

Commodities of destruction

Military spending means contracted reproduction, not expanded reproduction, the lifeblood of capitalism.

The goods churned out by the world's arms manufacturers are not commodities in the ordinary sense.

To understand what makes military goods so distinctive, we must first revisit what Marx meant by a commodity. In the classical sense, a commodity is a product of human labor created for exchange on the market. Its existence is defined by two essential qualities: use-value — the ability to satisfy a human need or want — and exchange-value — the price it commands, determined by the socially necessary labor time required for its production.

Under "normal" conditions, the production and circulation of commodities are

governed by the logic of supply and demand. Businesses compete to sell their products or services to consumers or other businesses, and profit is the driving force behind the entire system. This is the cycle that keeps the capitalist machine in motion: Workers sell their labor, receive wages, buy goods, and capitalists reinvest profits to expand production.

But what happens when the commodity in question is a tank, a missile, or a fighter jet? Here, the rules of the game change dramatically. The products of the military-industrial complex are not like bread, clothing, or even automobiles. They are unique in how they are produced, sold, and consumed.

First and foremost, military goods are not produced for a conventional market. The primary — and often sole — buyer is the state. Demand for these products is not determined by the needs or desires of private individuals, but by political decisions made in the corridors of power — the White House, Congress or the Pentagon.

The rationale is not “what does society need?” but “what does the state require to project power or pursue imperial ambitions?” As a result, arms manufacturers are shielded from the risks of competition. Their profits are secured by government contracts, often awarded without competitive bidding and structured to guarantee returns regardless of efficiency or actual need.

This artificial demand is only the beginning of what sets military commodities apart. Their use value is fundamentally different from that of ordinary goods. Where food nourishes, housing shelters, and clothing warms, military goods are designed for destruction or deterrence. Their utility lies not in satisfying human needs, but in their capacity to threaten, maim, or kill. The value of a cruise missile is realized not in peaceful exchange, but in its potential to obliterate a target. In this sense, military commodities are not just useless from the standpoint of social welfare — they are actively anti-social, their value rooted in violence. They are the means of destruction.

Marx's labor theory of value holds that the price of a commodity reflects the amount of socially necessary labor required for its production. Yet military goods routinely defy this logic. Their prices are often wildly inflated, thanks to cost-plus contracting, political lobbying, and the lack of market discipline. The state, not the market, determines what is produced, how much is produced, and at what price. This distortion severs any meaningful link between labor input and exchange value, turning the arms industry into a haven for waste and profiteering.

Perhaps most damningly, military commodities play no productive role in the ongoing reproduction of capital. Ordinary goods — whether consumer products or means of production, such as machines, tools, and factory equipment — circulate through the economy, enabling workers to live and capitalists to accumulate further profits. Military goods, by contrast, are “consumed” in war or left to rot in arsenals. They do not feed, clothe, or house anyone; they do not contribute to the expansion of productive capacity. Instead, they represent a colossal diversion of human labor and material resources into activities that, from the standpoint of human need, are utterly wasteful.

The products of the military-industrial complex are commodities only in the most superficial sense. The laws of supply and demand do not govern them, nor do they serve human needs.

This diminishes the economy and has been a central factor in U.S. imperialism's stagnation and economic decline.

Contracted reproduction and the crisis of imperialism

Contracted reproduction occurs when society's vital resources — labor, capital, and technology — are diverted to produce military goods and services. Unlike productive investments, which expand future capacity or meet human needs, these resources are ultimately wasted: consumed in warfare, stockpiled indefinitely, or deployed to

enforce imperial dominance. This diversion actively shrinks the productive sectors — those that create real social wealth (such as food, housing, and essential goods) — while the parasitic military sector expands at their expense.

This process reveals a core contradiction of monopoly capitalism: To sustain profits and imperial power, the system cannibalizes its foundations. By prioritizing the destructive needs of the military-industrial complex over the long-term societal vitality of the many, it trades long-term societal vitality for short-term dominance, thereby accelerating stagnation and systemic decay.



Tenants in Baltimore public housing threatened with eviction over bogus bills

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 2, 2025

Across public housing developments (also known as projects) in Baltimore, residents

are being charged up to nearly \$2,000 in utility bills. These bills, at baseline, are fraudulent and against the contractual agreement between the residents and the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC). By law, residents of projects are not supposed to be billed for utilities; they are only required to pay the monthly rent.

Currently at Douglass Homes, the residents find themselves on the frontlines in a struggle against the Housing Authority, the historic racist housing practices of Baltimore City, and American Conservation and Billing Solutions, a third-party property management firm being used to collect on illegal bills.

On May 19, the residents of Douglass Homes held a press conference to let the public know of the utility bills. This press conference itself was an act of defiance against the Housing Authority and the racist ruling class of the city. The lead organizer of the press conference, Reverend Annie Chambers, was threatened with eviction if she went through with the press conference. The Housing Authority also threatened other residents with punishment and eviction if they attended.

However, the conference went on and alongside the residents of Douglass Homes stood community organizations that pledged to stand in solidarity with them and fight for as long as there was a need to fight. As residents and community members took the microphone to speak about the situation, across from them stood the security of Douglass Homes. These security guards repositioned themselves to intimidate those who attended the press conference, laughing at residents and standing with their hands near their equipment and weapons. It was a clear sign to those who spoke out against this injustice and those who attended that the Housing Authority does not want to respect the residents and their contracts.

Following the press conference on May 27, residents of Douglass Homes, alongside community organizations, held an open meeting to discuss the next steps and how everyone can get involved in advancing the struggle against the Housing Authority and American Conservation. The residents agreed at this meeting to go forward with

legal action in Federal court. They are going to file an injunction against the Housing Authority to cease with the threats of evictions and these criminal utility bills.

Everyone present at this meeting also agreed on battling the fear campaign of the Housing Authority by talking to residents of Douglass Homes about their rights as residents of the Housing Development and the legal proceedings. It was also agreed to fight these criminal bills across the entire city and even beyond into county lines. Residents of Douglass Homes spoke of friends and family currently living in other Projects, like Latrobe and McCulloh homes, that are receiving similarly suspicious and criminal bills related to utilities.

It is worth detailing who American Conservation and Billing Solutions is. This property management company, which bills residents of Baltimore City, is located all the way in Colorado Springs, Colorado. They work for property managers and landlords, and their work includes increasing “the profitability” of the sites owned by their clients. A visit to [their website](#) tells you exactly what this company is and who they actually serve. They are nothing more than a weapon wielded by the ruling class to continue the economic and systemic oppression of poor and marginalized communities.

This type of attack has become more and more prevalent since the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. Huge sectors of society came to a complete halt, not only threatening profits for the bosses, but more importantly, cutting off wages and livelihoods for workers.

Despite the many lifeboats the federal government granted to businesses of all sizes, the businesses were desperate to recoup their losses. Property management companies figured out that, with a nominal fee to a legal or collections firm, they could sue people for amounts they were not owed — last month’s rent, a security deposit, you name it. And without the resources to lawyer up, the property

management companies win these suits easily.

These attacks through the bogus billing by American Conservation and the collective harassment and punishment by the Housing Authority are nothing new to these communities in Baltimore. Poor and working-class communities, especially Black communities, have always come under attack in Baltimore.

As the ruling class of the city wants to expand the creation of luxury apartments and developments to increase the city's tourist value, Black communities have historically been forcefully displaced and moved into smaller and smaller pockets around the city and its outskirts. However, these actions have failed to completely eradicate or remove the Black population, and they will fail again and forever as long as they try.

Power and Resilience to the Residents of Douglass Homes!

Power to all the Projects fighting these fraudulent bills!

Down with American Conservation and all agents and supporters of Redlining and Apartheid!

Long Live International Solidarity!

Long Live Baltimore!



Racist policing in Maryland: 41 deaths in police custody reclassified as homicides

written by Struggle - La Lucha
June 2, 2025



Nearly two weeks ago, Maryland Governor Wes Moore and Attorney General Anthony Brown [announced](#) that a Towson University audit reclassified [41 deaths](#) in police custody as homicides. The audit focused on the years 2003-2019, a period that aligns with the tenure of notorious racist medical examiner, David Fowler, who was trained in apartheid South Africa.

All 41 cases were initially classified by Fowler as “undetermined, accidental, or natural” during his tenure as Maryland’s Chief Medical Examiner. The murders, finally being called murders, include high-profile cases such as [Anton Black](#) and [Tyrone West](#). In both cases, the police brutally assaulted and killed a young Black man, and in both cases, David Fowler found the deaths to be accidental. Racism as a system could not function without a whole system of bureaucrats like Fowler who silence the community and rubber stamp racist murder.

Fowler’s heinous testimony in the trial of Derek Chauvin stirred public outrage when

he testified under oath that George Floyd died from a heart attack. According to Fowler, the police officer's knee on Floyd's neck for nearly 10 minutes was merely coincidental. Due to public pressure, the State of Maryland ordered the audit after 450 medical experts published a letter demanding a full review of Fowler's tenure.

Even as Governor Moore and AG Brown reflected on the audit results as "concerning," there was no announcement of charges against the perpetrators of the recently converted murders. All of these killings are documented in nauseating detail. The sad fact is that - Fowler, Chauvin, the Maryland State Attorney - are all cogs in a larger racist machine. They work to uphold and enforce modern Jim Crow.

Frankly, the working class is tired of hearing about audits, investigations and reviews. All this report did was confirm a fraction of what the entire city of Baltimore has known for years: The police and the medical examiner have coordinated to protect brutal, racist cops.

Justice for Marlyn Barnes

Many people died at the hands of the racist justice system who weren't on that list. For example, Marlyn Barnes was one of the 1,300 initial cases that Towson investigated but was not included in the cases officially reopened. Marlyn Barnes died under suspicious circumstances in the Harford County jail in Bel Air, Maryland, in 2019. It was Fowler's Medical Examiner administration that scuttled Barnes' mother's efforts to gain information about his death. Even to this day, Marlyn's mother Marilyn doesn't know the whole story. This is the sort of racist injustice enacted upon the Black community in Maryland and across the United States every day tenfold.

There is no better argument for the need for a socialist revolution than the horrendous police terror regime known as the U.S. criminal justice system. While Fowler's fall from grace and the reclassification of some of the murders is a positive

step – they are also indicative of the limits of justice under capitalism. Ultimately, capitalist bureaucracy isn't designed to genuinely assist working people, but to frustrate their efforts while maintaining a veneer of progress.

Anton Black, Marlyn Barnes, Tyrone West, Korynne Gaines, all prisoners, and all those who have suffered from racist police brutality deserve legitimate justice. What is really needed is not just a full people's prosecution of racist killer cops, but also complete community control of the police.

Please see Struggle-La Lucha's previous coverage of David Fowler, Marlyn Barnes, and the prisoner and police terror struggle more broadly:

- [Protest Demands Justice for Marlyn Barnes](#), Oct. 16, 2019
- [Bel Air, Md., Nov. 9: Truth and Justice for Marlyn Barnes and all Prisoners!](#), Oct. 30, 2019
- [Justice for Marlyn Barnes & Prisoners Solidarity Car Caravan](#), May 10, 2020
- [#FreeThemAll caravan honors Marlyn Barnes](#), May 23, 2020
- [Chauvin witness David Fowler: medical expert or racist liar?](#), Apr. 17, 2020
- [Baltimore: Reopen Marlyn Barnes' case, June 8](#), June 2, 2021
- [Cases reopened: Maryland's former chief medical examiner covered up police killings](#), Jan. 7, 2023
- [Baltimore demands justice for Tyre Nichols and end to police terror](#), Feb. 2, 2023
- [Nazi Billionaires: Fascism in the Elon Musk family tree](#), Jan. 26, 2025



NYC can't afford a \$3 transit fare

written by Struggle - La Lucha
June 2, 2025

The fare ain't fair!

New York, May 28 — A loud and militant rally was held this morning in front of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's headquarters in lower Manhattan to denounce the agency's planned fare increase to \$3. That's 60 times what it cost to ride the bus or subway in 1948.

The action was called by the Fare Ain't Fair Campaign initiated by the December 12th Movement. Volunteers have been leafleting and petitioning against the fare hike that the MTA is demanding to be implemented on Aug. 1.

Speakers at the rally were from the December 12th Movement; the New York Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression; the Party for Socialism and Liberation; and Struggle-La Lucha newspaper.

They pointed out that the fare increase is another attack on poor people. It goes

hand-in-hand with Trump's budget, which wants to cut 14 million people from Medicaid.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul and New York City Mayor Eric Adams are flooding the subways and buses with armed police. Last September, after someone allegedly jumped the turnstile at the Sutter Avenue L train station in Brooklyn, trigger-happy cops shot four people.

Without a subway, bus and commuter train system, all of Manhattan's skyscrapers would be worthless. To Wall Street, however, the MTA's most important function is to give \$2.8 billion in tax-free interest to bondholders.



The Elevator Action Group held an adjacent rally, focusing on the lack of accessibility on the subways. Less than a third of the stations have elevators.

Malaysia Goodson was killed on Jan. 28, 2019, because there wasn't an elevator at the Seventh Avenue B/D/E subway station in Manhattan. The 22-year-old Black mother died falling down the stairs while protecting her year-old daughter.

Trump's proposed trillion-dollar Pentagon budget could easily pay for free, accessible transit everywhere in the United States, as well as housing the homeless.

The fare ain't fair! We can't afford a \$3 transit fare!



What's next for student loans under Trump? Interview with young revolutionaries

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 2, 2025

The Struggle-La Lucha Baltimore bureau sat down with SLL writers Apryle Everly, Colby Byrd, and Jace Carter to understand what's happening with student loans.

What's going on with student loans?

AE & JC: We are officially in crisis mode. Starting back in early April, the Trump administration issued an executive order to dismantle the Department of Education (DOE), which, for those not familiar, was the primary institution through which federal student loans and grants get disbursed and collected. Although this EO couldn't be carried out without approval from Congress, most of the staff already got fired within days after this announcement.

Next, Trump ordered that the entire federal student debt portfolio, totaling up to \$1.7 trillion currently, be moved from the DOE to the Small Business Administration (SBA), which, on the surface, doesn't seem like such a major change, as the SBA is another federal agency, meaning we'd still be debtors of the federal government. Whether or not this move does actually occur remains to be seen; we have no clear answers yet. However, we do know that moving the student debt portfolio from the DOE to the SBA would be 1) illegal, 2) administratively and practically difficult, and 3) could lead to possible errors with people's loan servicer accounts.

Emphasizing the third point, for those still with outstanding loan payments, The Debt Collective (the first debtors' union within the U.S.) strongly recommends going to studentaid.gov to find your current loan details and downloading and/or screenshotting your payment history, to protect yourself against these potential errors.

Moving the student debt portfolio to the SBA also raises a serious concern regarding the privatization of federal student loans. We've already seen Trump's fascist administration, with the help of Musk's DOGE, carry out mass layoffs of federal workers and either make cuts to essential services for working people like Medicare / Medicaid, Social Security, SNAP, etc., or privatize essential services like the Postal Service.

Could the portfolio move from the DOE to the SBA be just the first step in a lengthy legal loophole to then fully privatize student loans by handing them off to predatory corporations like Sallie Mae, SoFi, College Ave, or Ascent? Per Education Data Initiative, the average private student loan interest rate in 2025 falls anywhere between 3.45% to 16.24%. The capitalist class has completely screwed over my generation, Millennials, and Gen Alpha and Beta after us.

On April 29, GOP members on the House Education and Workforce Committee introduced the most dangerous higher-ed bill in U.S. history, the “Student Success and Taxpayer Savings Plan,” which, as of the day this was written, May 22, has passed the House and is now pending Senate approval. This bill, which would be voted on as part of a budget reconciliation package, strips the DOE of virtually every authority to cancel student debt, eliminates every loan repayment program and subsidized student loan (specifically grad plus loans which allow grad students to cover the full cost of their attendance), and cuts Pell Grant eligibility. In other words, this bill is essentially saying that now only the wealthy few can attend college, while working-class students will receive **no** help from the federal government to learn or pursue a career.

But perhaps the most gutting update of all: Since May 5, the Trump administration has restarted student loan collections on default accounts after a five-year hiatus, affecting over 5.3 million borrowers. The DOE is only giving 30 days’ notice of collection, instead of the usual 65 days, and may be skipping normal collection procedures.

This means that borrowers could have their wages garnished, and almost 200,000 people are already being warned that their Social Security and other federal benefits could be seized as early as next month. Retirees are especially at high risk, as over 2.9 million people 62 years and older have student loans (**a 71% increase** since 2017!), and if they lose their Social Security benefits, they will not receive critical

essentials like food and transportation.

This all comes on the heels of a record-breaking \$1 TRILLION war budget for 2025, in addition to further tax breaks for all the bloodthirsty billionaires who endorsed Trump's 2nd presidency. Make no mistake, these progressively evil acts are nothing short of a declaration of war on the working class, particularly students, who have already faced immense repression from the ruling class for almost two years for protesting Israel's genocide and ethnic cleansing of occupied Palestine.

CB: Currently, I am paying \$600 a month on my student loans. My family is also paying on another college loan, where they are paying \$400 a month. Before I got these payments set up, I was paying near to and sometimes over \$1,000 a month on payments of one single loan. Other than the payments themselves, navigating the services and websites is a nightmare. Requiring multiple logins, and with different loans, you have to have multiple accounts and sign in to different portals.

How is it going to affect you?

JC: I currently owe roughly close to \$70,000 in federal student loans through both Nelnet and ECSI, with close to \$5,000 of that total being unpaid accrued interest through the day before this was written, May 21. I graduated from my undergrad program in May 2023 and went straight into my one-year master's program, and I graduated from that program in September of 2024. Both my undergrad and grad loans remained in deferment until this past February, and my first loan payment was due in March. I immediately put that loan in forbearance because, despite how low the monthly payment is (\$331.70) compared to the average for most people (\$500-700+), I simply can't afford to make consistent payments right now.

This is largely due to the fact that I've already been making \$448 / month payments to my dad since March for all the Parent Plus loans he took out during my time in undergrad to avoid either one of us having to pay off \$9-10,000+ tuition balances

per semester. It's total bullshit though because these loans are in his name, not mine, meaning he legally bears the responsibility.

Due to his extremely terrible economic circumstances, though, he's making me and my brothers pay up for what he can't afford. I don't have a good relationship with him, but unfortunately, I can't avoid paying him. I don't have time for unnecessary lawsuits right now. I have been making really small \$50 / month payments on my much smaller loan balance through ECSI, just to get rid of it quicker.

I'm extremely worried that should our loans collectively end up getting fully privatized in the near future, my loan interest rates could be jacked up even higher than what they already are now, making it damn near impossible to make any regular payments. Despite having a job that pays a fairly decent salary (by 2025's standards, at least), my monthly rent / bills / expenses far outweigh the net wages I've been pulling in. I'm also very worried at the fact that we can only receive loan forbearance for a total of up to three years before we're forced to make consistent payments or risk default and then collection, as described earlier.

And I know it won't stop simply at wage and benefit garnishment either; try debtors' prisons. The private prison industries are foaming at the mouth at the sight of another big profit-booster. As communists, we already know the endgame the capitalists want and have already been getting: for all the working class to be hopelessly indebted to them for the rest of their life. This student loans crisis is a disease that will continue to spread and will affect **everyone**, not just us, current or former students.

AE: So far, those who have recently graduated from college have had a decrease in the off-ramp time, the time between graduating college and the time where you have to start making payments for your student loans. For me, I graduated in May 2023, and I had to start making payments in November 2023. Personally, I have recently had a run-in with what can happen if you miss student loan payments.

My parents were the people making payments for my student loans since it started back in November 2023. They had stopped making payments without my knowledge, the loan provider switched without my knowledge, since the provider has no legal reason to contact you to inform you what has occurred. I was only made aware when I noticed, about two months ago, that my credit score had dropped almost 300 points.

This was gut-wrenching because there is no way to easily reverse this in the short term. I couldn't explain to the credit company that it was my parents who didn't pay because the loans are in my name. I did the responsible thing afterwards. I called the loan provider to place my student loans on forbearance. Loan forbearance is an interim period of time where you are not responsible for making loan payments. The maximum amount of time you can have forbearance is three years. I am currently in my first year now.

I wanted to call attention to this because so many young people need to understand just how much this debt can ruin your ability to move through life. For example, my friends and I are looking for a new place to rent, with my credit being affected by my loans. It now means I can't be on any primary lease, as most reputable places wouldn't rent to someone with my current credit score.

CB: The loans are obviously affecting the money I have to be able to afford basic necessities like food, clothing, rent, and to cover emergencies. They are also a slight detriment to my mental health. As I said in my previous answer, all of the different log-in portals and loans and emails are confusing and do not give good updates or a clear way to interpret everything going on. Also, the stress of paying my loans and rent keeps very little money in my pocket and destroys my ability to put money away for savings.

Luckily, I am not marked for collections on my loans like many other people paying loans off, but just the threat of being on the receiving end of state harassment over

my loans feels terrible, and I stand in solidarity with those who are going through that and worse right now.

What would you like to see happen?

JC: Nothing *less* than a total reversal of all policies and executive orders regarding student debt, going all the way back to the 1970s when Ronald Reagan notoriously proclaimed that “free college would create a dangerous, educated proletariat,” that have led us to this exact point. **No more student debt, and free, accessible college for all!** No human should be a “loan” to an occupier on stolen land, the same way that no human can be “illegal” on stolen land.

Biden had the opportunity at any time during his presidency to invoke the Higher Education Act of 1965, that would've forgiven student debt, the same way the government was swiftly able to forgive hundreds of thousands of dollars on average worth of PPP loans for the parasite class. But, in typical Democratic Party fashion, he simply paved the way for Trump and his fascist administration to further strip away our rights to an education, while simultaneously placing the blame on us, barely surviving working-class people, for not voting for his genocidal prosecutor-in-crime, Kamala Harris, as next president.

We cannot continue relying on this system - a system that is working exactly as it was designed - to simply fix and reform itself. This total reversal must be accomplished by all working-class people of this country, united and ready to fight back, by any means necessary.

AE: I would like to see the elimination of all student debt that people currently have, and for all higher education of public universities to be free for students. People need to understand that the majority of jobs in the U.S. that pay near a living wage require you to now have a master's degree. This means one to five years of post-undergraduate education. The average master's degree two-year program can cost

\$36,000-93,000. This is on top of what a student would already owe for undergrad. As a person who only holds a master's degree, I am finding it nearly impossible to find a job, even with experience and a degree that will pay me something worth coming into the office for.

CB: I would like to see loan forgiveness nationwide happen. Whether it be full loan forgiveness or half the total forgiven, any amount to alleviate the stress on both my wallet and mental health would be amazing. With any form of loan forgiveness or erasure, people, including myself, could put that newly opened up money into developing ourselves better for the future instead of being burdened and shackled to the past.



What's Steven Hatfill doing as a health adviser for Trump?

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 2, 2025

Remember Steven Hatfill? He was the main suspect in the 2001 anthrax deaths

before the FBI turned its attention to Bruce Ivins.

Five people were killed by anthrax being sent in envelopes through the mail. Among them were the Black postal workers Joseph P. Curseen, Jr. and Thomas L. Morris, Jr. These attacks, which terrified millions, began one week after the events of Sept. 11, 2001.

Hatfill has now been named an adviser to the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under Trump.

One of the reasons that Hatfill was under suspicion was his support for racist regimes. This included going to pre-liberation Zimbabwe in 1978, when the African country was run by white settlers who called it Rhodesia.

Their leader, Ian Smith, [declared](#), “I don’t believe in majority rule, black majority rule, not in a thousand years.”

Smith was no different than the white landowners from South Africa who are being welcomed as “refugees” by Trump.

When Hatfill arrived in so-called Rhodesia, a liberation struggle — or Chimurenga — was being waged by Africans against Ian Smith and his white minority dictatorship. Thousands of Africans died fighting for freedom. By 1980, the people of Zimbabwe had overthrown Ian Smith and colonial rule.

Hatfill was [already enrolled](#) in the Godfrey Huggins Medical School, which is now the University of Zimbabwe’s Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. He graduated in 1983 with a doctor’s degree.

It’s alleged that Hatfill claimed to have served with the Selous Scouts, a death squad that hunted liberation fighters and massacred many Africans during the

Chimurenga. These terrorists were blamed for an [anthrax outbreak](#) that killed 182 people and thousands of cattle.

Hatfill then went to South Africa, where the apartheid system was still in power and was keeping Nelson Mandela in prison. Its Nazi army was continuing its war against the People's Republic of Angola.

The war against Zimbabwe

Hatfill may have been exaggerating his racist activities, particularly whether or not he had any connection with the bloodthirsty Selous Scouts. But his bragging only burnished his credentials with the military-industrial complex. It certainly endeared him to Trump's aides.

Hatfill had no trouble getting hired by Science Applications International Corporation, a major military contractor. Or being employed as a researcher for the U.S. Army's biological [warfare laboratories](#) at Fort Detrick in Maryland.

Keeping Ian Smith and his fellow white settlers in power had been a holy cause for racists in the United States and Britain. Soldier of Fortune magazine encouraged mercenaries to volunteer to fight for the white minority government.

Writers for William F. Buckley's National Review magazine and the ex-or maybe not-so-ex CIA ghoul David Atlee Phillips formed the

American-Rhodesian Association. Many researchers believe that Phillips played a key role in President John F. Kennedy's assassination.

In 1971, the U.S. Senate lifted sanctions passed by the UN on chrome imported from Ian Smith's white supremacist regime. This was the senators' response to African delegates welcoming the People's Republic of China to its rightful seat in the UN.

The wealthy and powerful have continued their attacks against Zimbabwe. For 25 years, the U.S. has imposed severe sanctions on the African country, which include cutting off Zimbabwe's access to credit from Western financial institutions.

This was revenge for Zimbabwe's people taking back their land, which was stolen by white farmers. That's what should have been done after the U.S. Civil War.

Formerly enslaved Africans deserved the land that they had worked for centuries, along with members of Indigenous nations from whom it was stolen. The slogan "land back" echoes from Wounded Knee to Palestine.

Reopen the anthrax investigation

Hatfill also became an attractive job candidate for the Trump administration because he endorsed quack cures for COVID-19. The entire crew of Trump's health appointees — starting with Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. — are quacks.

This goes hand-in-hand with Trump's proposed budget that will cut 14 million people from [Medicaid](#) by 2034.

Another reason Hatfill was hired was his support for the phony claims that the 2020 presidential election was stolen from Trump. This big lie was the rallying cry of the fascist mob, which was allowed to attack the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

There's never been a satisfactory answer to who committed the 2001 anthrax attacks, despite the FBI hounding Dr. Bruce Ivins to commit suicide. The attacks helped drive through the misnamed Patriot Act — which gave U.S. spy agencies greatly increased power to wiretap and other violations of civil rights — through Congress.

The U.S. Army has had a long record of experimenting with anthrax and other

biological weapons.

The war criminals in the Japanese Army's Unit 731, who killed at least 14,000 people in biological warfare experiments, were given immunity from prosecution after World War II. This was in exchange for sharing their research with the Pentagon. ("Unit 731 Testimony," by Hal Gold.)

In [1968](#), 6,000 sheep were killed by a nerve agent near the Army's Dugway Proving Ground, 85 miles west of Salt Lake City.

The body of the U.S. Army's anthrax expert [Frank Olson](#) was found outside a New York City hotel on Nov. 18, 1953. The official story was that Olsen jumped out of a window because of an LSD experiment gone bad. His son Eric Olson believes his father was murdered.

The FBI claims that Dr. Bruce Ivins was guilty of the 2001 anthrax attacks. After Ivins committed suicide, the FBI closed the case.

Many people have doubts about Ivins' guilt, including his co-workers at Fort Detrick. Dead people like Lee Harvey Oswald or Bruce Ivins can be blamed, but can't testify.

If Ivins was responsible, that means the attacks came from within Fort Detrick using the U.S. Army's supplies of anthrax.

It's time to reopen the investigation into the 2001 anthrax deaths. And take another look at Steven Hatfill.



Trump's 'big beautiful' cuts to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and more

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 2, 2025

Following is a fact sheet about how Trump's "big beautiful" budget bill cuts essential services and benefits for workers to give to the wealthy. The fact sheet was put together by the Louisiana Workers Councils. Some examples relate to Louisiana, but most of the statistics are for the U.S. as a whole. A PDF version is available [here](#).

Louisiana Workers Councils Fact Sheet

Medicaid and ACA subsidized insurance

Medicaid is being ripped to shreds

The MAGA movement claims to support health care for vulnerable Americans, but their budget tells a different story. **13.7 million people will lose Medicaid** — nearly 1 in 5 current enrollees. Nationally, **72 million rely on Medicaid**, including **1.6 million in Louisiana** and **180,000 in New Orleans**. Another **500,000 low-income Louisianans** get subsidized ACA coverage. **Everyone on Medicaid or ACA plans will suffer from these cuts.**

Here's What They're Really Doing:

1. **\$715 billion slashed from Medicaid** — the biggest cut in history.
2. **13.7 million kicked off Medicaid immediately**, including **304,000 Louisianans**.
3. **States forced to pay double** — Washington currently covers **80%** of Medicaid costs, but Trump wants a **50-50 split**. Killing the **provider tax** (how states fund their share) means **massive cuts** — fewer covered, fewer services, more suffering. **Louisiana lawmakers will jump at the chance to gut care even further.**
4. **175,000 Louisianans already lost Medicaid** in the past year — not because they didn't qualify, but because of **paperwork traps**.
5. **New costs and fewer benefits:**
 - o Copays for doctor visits
 - o Fewer covered medications & services
 - o Lower pay for doctors (so fewer will accept Medicaid)
 - o Yearly spending caps (once you hit the limit, no more care)
6. **Rural & urban hospitals / clinics will close** as funding dries up.

7. **Red tape nightmare:** Recertification every **6 months** with stricter rules — many will lose coverage just from missed paperwork.
8. **Nursing home disaster:**
 - o Mass closures from funding cuts
 - o **No more minimum staffing rules** (elderly left neglected)
 - o Home health care slashed — forcing disabled & seniors into institutions
9. **ACA subsidies eliminated — 500,000 low-income Louisianans** will lose insurance. Most can't afford replacements.
10. **Work requirements = poverty trap:**
 - o Unemployed adults must work **80 hrs / month** to keep Medicaid
 - o Forces desperate people into **exploitative low-wage jobs**
 - o **21% of New Orleans youth (16-24) are unemployed** — where will they find work?
11. **Disabled people abandoned:** Cuts to in-home care will force many into institutions or homelessness.
12. **No more food / benefits** on Medicare Advantage plans.
13. **WIC & Meals on Wheels starved:** Severe cuts or total shutdowns — **hunger will skyrocket.**

The Bottom Line:

This isn't "saving money" — it's **a war on the poor, sick, and vulnerable**. Millions will suffer, hospitals will close, and families will be bankrupted — all to fund tax cuts for the wealthy. **These cuts are cruelty by design.**

Housing Assistance

The Trump administration's budget slashes billions from critical housing programs. In **New Orleans alone, 20,000 people** remain on the Section 8 and public housing waiting lists, which are now closed — meaning no new applicants can even get in line for help.

Key Housing Cuts in the Proposed Budget:

1. Gutting Section 8 & Federal Rental Assistance

- **\$26.7 billion cut** to federal rental aid, effectively **ending Section 8** as we know it.
- Shifts responsibility to **cash-strapped states**, leaving millions without support.
- Currently, only **1 in 4 eligible families** (2.3 million) receive vouchers due to funding shortages (actual need is closer to 10 million people).
- **645,000 fewer people** would lose assistance nationwide, including **14,000+ in Louisiana**.

2. Arbitrary Time Limits on Rental Aid

- Imposes a **two-year limit** for adults without disabilities, **kicking thousands off assistance**.
- **Thousands of children** will also lose housing when their parents are cut off.

3. Eliminating Affordable Housing Programs

- **Cuts \$3.3 billion** in **Community Development Block Grants**, halting construction and repairs nationwide.
- Ends the **HOME Investment Partnerships Program**, stripping funding

from affordable housing providers.

- **Consequences:**

- o More families lose homes due to **unaffordable maintenance/insurance costs.**
- o Due to tax and insurance increases, **rents in New Orleans rose 14% in 3 years.**

4. Slashing Homelessness Assistance

- Caps homeless aid at **2 years** and “consolidates” programs, leading to **massive job and resource cuts.**
- **166,000 permanent supportive housing units** for the formerly homeless would lose funding. • Homelessness already **rose 18% between 2023 and 2024** — a record increase — yet the budget **cuts homelessness prevention grants by 12%.**

5. Cutting Disaster & Emergency Housing Aid

- Reduces **disaster recovery assistance** (critical for hurricane survivors in Louisiana).
- **Eliminates 70,000 emergency housing vouchers** from the American Rescue Plan, hurting people at risk of homelessness and **domestic violence survivors.**
- Because emergency vouchers under the American Rescue Plan come as a block grant (meaning it has limited funding) funds are already running out more quickly due to **soaring rents** — now they'll vanish faster.

SNAP

867,000 Louisianians depend on SNAP benefits 86% are Children, Seniors, and Disabled People

- Nationwide, **1 in 8 people receive SNAP benefits**, which are already inadequate. At the maximum benefit, SNAP provides barely more than \$2 per person per meal. **Trump's proposed cuts would be the largest cuts to SNAP in history**, resulting in millions of people going hungry.
- **Congress wants to cut \$230 billion from food assistance** programs over 10 years.
- The budget also cuts **\$425 million from CSFP**, which provides food for low-income seniors.
- It raises the age limit for SNAP **work requirements** from 54 to 64.
- Previously, people with **dependents** under 18 were exempt from work requirements; now, that age is lowered to seven.
- Their budget **transfers SNAP costs to the states**, going from 50% federal money to 25%.
- Without funding or support, some states will stop providing SNAP completely. Over the next 10 years, **Louisiana would lose \$4.7 billion in SNAP funding**.
- These cuts will cause significant **job losses**, with about 143,000 lost nationwide and 78,000 losses in agriculture, grocery, and food processing.
- Over 600,000 students in Louisiana use the **free or reduced-price lunch programs**, which is 91.9% of students participating in school lunch programs.
- Following the lead of U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., many states are **restricting what food can be bought with SNAP or other food programs**. These restrictions, which include

limits on buying products made with flour, would limit food access in areas where “healthier” options aren’t available or affordable.

- The Trump administration is not actually interested in providing healthier food: they already ended two programs in Louisiana that brought fresh, local food to food banks, schools, and childcare centers. This was a cut of \$660 million nationwide, about \$12 million for Louisiana. They also added extra restrictions on food assistance programs, making it harder for schools to access funds by increasing the percentage of students from low-income families attending the school from 40% to 60% minimum. This will mean **12 million students will lose access to food aid**. In Louisiana, 469 schools no longer qualified.

Social Security

Social Security operates independently from the federal budget, funded by its two trust funds, which hold \$2.9 trillion in reserves. For 30 years, Social Security ran a surplus. But these funds have been repeatedly drained by the Treasury — often to finance military budgets.

Even after these withdrawals, the trust funds remain solvent — but the situation is getting worse. Under current law, the ultra-wealthy pay just one month of Social Security taxes, while the Treasury and Commerce Department continue siphoning money from the program.

Trump is aiming to sabotage the Social Security Administration, setting the stage to push for privatization. If privatized, Social Security funds could be invested in the stock market or cryptocurrencies instead of secure Treasury bonds — jeopardizing retirees’ financial security. In the recent Wall Street crash, many 401(k)

pension funds lost a lot of money. It is worth remembering that billionaires were pre-warned about tariffs that crashed the system and made billions selling stocks in advance.

The proposed budget bill grants \$4.2 trillion in tax cuts to millionaires and billionaires — without exempting Social Security from taxation. But the biggest threat is the deliberate sabotage of the system, endangering benefits for current and future recipients.

1. **No Increase for the Most Vulnerable**

- o Over **40% of Social Security recipients rely solely on their benefits**, with no other income.
- o **Rising living costs erode real income yearly** while poverty-level Social Security payments remain the same.
- o The decline of employer pensions has forced more retirees to depend entirely on Social Security.

2. **Office Closures Despite In-Person Requirements**

- o The Social Security Administration (SSA) is **shutting down offices** while **forcing new applicants to apply in person**, creating barriers to access.

3. **Sharing Sensitive Data with Elon Musk & DOGE Affiliates**

- o **Private entities, including Elon Musk and DOGE-linked groups, are being granted access to Social Security information**, raising serious privacy and security concerns.

4. **Severe Staffing Shortages**

- o The SSA has **cut thousands of jobs**, leaving staffing at **historic lows** — delaying services and worsening backlogs.

5. **Political Sabotage of Experienced Leadership**

- o **Qualified administrators are being replaced by Trump loyalists** who

aim to **dismantle and privatize Social Security** rather than protect its stability.

6. **MAGA Takeover**

o **Howard Lutnick**, Trump's Commerce Secretary overseeing Social Security, **mocked beneficiaries**, saying only "frauds" would care about missed payments after a court ruling threatened shutdowns.

7. **Deliberate System Disruptions by DOGE-Linked Groups**

o **Cyberattacks and system failures** — orchestrated by DOGE-affiliated gangsters — have **crashed phone and online services**, leading to **extended outages and wait times**.

War Budget

Survival Programs Get Cut, War Profiteers Get Rich

75% of Trump's proposed budget — our tax dollars — funds war and repression (DOD, DOJ, CIA, DHS, etc.). **Total spending on war and repression exceeds \$2.5 trillion** when including:

- The Department of Energy (which manages nuclear weapons)
- **\$952 billion in interest payments** on debt from past military spending

The U.S. maintains 900 foreign military bases — compared to China's **one** overseas base. **The U.S. military budget is larger than the next 10 countries combined.**

Budget Priorities: Guns Over People

- **Pentagon: \$1.01 trillion (+13%)**
- **DHS (Border Patrol, ICE, migrant prisons): \$107 billion (+65%)**
- **HUD (housing): -\$34 billion (-43%)**
- **Health & Human Services: -\$33 billion (-26%)**
- **Education: -\$12 billion (-15%)**

Who Profits?

The Treasury is looted by:

- **Oil / gas corporations**
- **Weapons manufacturers**
- **Big Tech**
- **Wall Street banks**

Many war-profiteering corporations pay \$0 in taxes. Many even get more in rebates than they pay in taxes. GE, for example, got **\$423 million in rebates** in 2023.

Billionaire Elon Musk Gets Rich By Stealing Our Tax Money

While Trump and Musk's **DOGE slash social programs** and lay off thousands, his company **SpaceX is set to receive \$25 billion** for Trump's "Golden Dome" space weapons program. As of February 2025, Musk has received \$38 billion in U.S. government contracts, loans, and subsidies (Washington Post).

Nuclear Madness

Trump demands **\$12.9 billion more for nukes** — despite the U.S. already having **5,000+ nuclear weapons** (enough to end human civilization many times over).



More liberation themes in Love, Death, & Robots' '400 Boys'

written by Struggle - La Lucha
June 2, 2025

[Part 1: An analysis of Love, Death & Robots' '400 Boys'](#)

The previous analysis of "400 Boys" was a breakdown of the show's major story beats and imagery. The following focuses on smaller details.

Don't give up on Crybaby

Up first is the character Crybaby. He is a member of the Black gang, the Slickers. While larger than the rest of the gang and other characters, he is the most scared when fighting the show's villains, the gods. In most of his scenes, he cowers with his arms covering his head, crying and wishing for the gods' onslaught to end. He is the

most cautious and urges the other Slickers to sit out the coming fight.

His actions and attitude have earned him the nickname “Crybaby.” He represents the most wounded of the oppressed communities. In his character are those who have seen the horrors of imperialism firsthand, narrowly escaping with their lives. He is the portion of society that just wants it all to end because there is so much death and carnage. Because he resembles the gods, Crybaby’s nickname also has a layer of irony.

Although they gave him that nickname, Crybaby’s gangmates still care for him. They treat him as an equal. Communities of solidarity help their own, bringing along those who may not be ready for progress, no matter how scary or hard the journey may be.

The Slickers know just how capable Crybaby is in a fight and how important he will be in the final battle. It is their mission as comrades to keep him safe, helping him to erase the fear keeping his immense strength shackled. In the final battle, when there is no more time for flight or freezing, Crybaby answers his brothers’ call. He gets up and impales a god with a gigantic wooden utility pole.

Crybaby represents the masses who are scared, who want to fight but do not know how. But once in the struggle, such people prove to themselves that there is no need to fear and that the occupier is not superior; and, moreover, that he can be defeated. Ultimately, these people prove to be the most decisive factor in achieving liberation.

He could symbolize those in oppressed communities (especially the Black community) who find themselves working within the systems of oppression, successfully institutionalized to stay in their lane and not fight the system. And yet, through revolution and liberation, Crybaby becomes this new man, leaving the humiliating nickname in the dead past.

More than just a razor

Next is the razor blade, the weapon of choice wielded by the sole survivor of the Sooooooots. This razor is not just for slashing enemies, it is a tool used by barbers to care for their communities. And yet, in the past, a white man used this razor to permanently scar the Slickers' leader, a man called Slash. A tool meant to help the community was wielded by a white man to harm a Black man.

When both sides squash the beef, putting aside old rivalries, this tool is used to defend the community against a common enemy. The razor and its owner represent the white working class, and the tools at their disposal granted to them by society.

Under imperialism and colonialism, the white working class is tricked into using its tools to aid and continue the oppression of their class siblings simply because they are different colors. However, through the process of casting out the ruling class, white workers are able to make amends with their counterparts and blood brothers by utilizing those same tools to aid in the fight against imperialism.

In the Algerian liberation struggle, the FLN recognized that it was not just Muslims and Africans who answered the call, but also Algeria's European / white minority. They not only joined the ranks but played a crucial and defining part in the struggle to see a free Algeria. Here in the Belly of the Beast, the wretched beating heart of imperialism - the United States of America - it will take every community coming together to stand against exploitation, division and oppression.

Not just roller skates

The roller skates worn by the Galrogs are also symbolic. I did not pick up on this during my first watch. My sister, however, immediately clocked the roller skates worn by the women's gang as significant. Those roller blades encompass the experience of all women. Skating embodies the experience of living as a woman (the

need to remain balanced, and all the extra work it takes to move proficiently on skates).

Every day, women battle what is around them (societal pressures, harassment, exploitation and ignorance). But at the same time, they are battling their own bodies because of social pressures only a woman can fully understand. Those skates symbolize just how much harder women have to work to be seen and treated as equals in society today.

The Galrog women can scrap and fight just as well as the Slickers and Sooooooots, but they can do it on roller skates. Women can work equally as hard as men, fight and crawl through the trenches and expel the occupier just as well as men. And they can do it while overcoming every lasting stigma against them.

These skates also symbolize freedom and intuition. The Galrogs are the only gang armored and fully prepared for a fight. It is due to their experience gained in fights before that they learned to be the most prepared, because they do not have the privilege to slip up as men do. The skates allow them to be faster, more agile and responsive, able - at a moment's notice - to pivot or move another way. This helps them evade and survive the gods' attacks.

In reality, these skates are the unshakable spirit within every woman to make it to wherever they want to be, and the foresight to prepare and see the plan through.

Blue power = revolutionary spirit

Lastly, there is the mythical blue power that the people are able to collectively wield against the gods in the finale. In the story, it allows the characters to inflict the first wave of damage on the gods, making them susceptible to normal attacks and damage. I believe this blue power is symbolic of revolutionary spirit and the mass movement in general.

This blue power is introduced in the beginning when the Slickers try using it to load a gun. They fail on their own because they are worn out and isolated. It is only when everyone joins together to manifest and wield the mythical blue power that they are able to severely wound all three gods.

No matter where the struggle is, if a sizable amount of the population is not on board, it will not succeed. If imperialism is able to continue to divide and conquer, it does not matter how much revolutionary spirit a small number of people have; it will not be enough. To bury a system, to move the last to become the first, will require every aspect of a society. It will require the masses to unite against division and destroy the conqueror wherever he resides.



Slaying the hydra: an analysis of Love, Death & Robots' '400 Boys'

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June 2, 2025

The people's struggle against colonialism and imperialism is a struggle of epic

proportions, wherever it takes place. No liberation struggle is waged without involving all aspects of society. Bridges once burned due to the symptoms of imperialism (like racism and misogyny) are rebuilt stronger, made unmovable, connecting people to march together to fight the real enemy - the common enemy.

That enemy takes many forms. In Algeria, it was French paratroopers. In Vietnam, it was the U.S. G.I. In Palestine, it is the Israeli occupation soldier. Inside the Belly of the Beast, it is the police officer. In waging a war against these forces, the people use everything at their disposal and every skill they have learned to defend themselves and expel the occupier.

Netflix series depicts liberation struggle

“400 Boys” is an episode of the anthology series Love, Death & Robots, portraying the remnants of British gangs working together to defeat gods that emerged from the depths of the earth. That is the surface, but peeling back the layers of this animated short reveals a story of a people’s struggle for liberation.

The show opens with the remaining members of a Black and Brown male street gang, the Slickers, attempting to use this mystical, blue power to load a gun. Their attempt to wield the power fails because everyone is worn down, and there simply are not enough people. There is plenty to unpack here.

Although political power grows out of the barrel of a gun, it needs the backing of the masses to be loaded and wielded properly. The attempt failed because right then, it was only one part of the community, symbolizing the Black and Brown male working class, attempting to wield this power.

The Slickers take refuge underground, planning their next move. They move underground because of the immense carnage and destruction happening above their heads, caused by the gods. The guerrilla, whether in Vietnam or Palestine,

utilizes such tactics to weather the fury of imperialist shelling and bombing.

Anti-racist unity needed

The Slickers are forced from their temporary reprieve when the ground above them is ripped away. It is revealed that the gods can unearth huge sections of the ground, similar to how the Israeli Air Force uses one-ton bombs - or bunker busters - to level whole residential blocks and refugee camps in Palestine and Lebanon.

The men head out looking for survivors and allies. But they find no one as they go block by block through territory once held by other gangs. It is not until they run into the sole survivor of the Sooooooots, a lone white male, that they are able to grow in numbers.

Through character interactions, it is revealed that these gangs were once bitter rivals. But they need to work together to fight the gods. The Sooooooots represent the white male working class. The long rivalry between the gangs results from the racism created by the gods, just as real-life communities are divided by the ruling class and kept from fighting the real enemy.

In the distance, destruction continues, but the characters are unmoved. Death and destruction are normal to them. They have dealt with the ravaging of their communities before these new gods emerged. Pillaging is pillaging, genocide is genocide. Whether it is carried out by settlers and soldiers, jet planes and tanks, billionaires and cops, or mythical gods of the underworld, makes no difference to those struggling for survival every day.

Women hold up half the sky

After coming together, they continue looking for survivors and allies. They decide to go to the turf held by the Galrogs, an all-women gang, knowing that if anyone

managed to survive this hell, it is them. They are not met with open arms by the women. In this interaction, the show-makers demonstrate that to win against colonialism and imperialism, there must be not only racial unity but unity of the sexes.

The Galrogs are hesitant to join the growing movement. Like real-life women, they are battling the symptoms of imperialism every day. Whether it is fighting the rival street gangs or any bigger opponent, they have carved out a space where they are in charge and cannot be harmed. It is up to the men to prove to the women that the old patriarchal and misogynistic ways will be vanquished through the collective struggle for liberation.

The Galrogs are apparently the only integrated gang, encompassing all women. Meanwhile, the Slickers and Sooooooots are all Black, Brown and white men, respectively, symbolic of how - compared to men - women have learned many of the needed lessons of liberation through their existence.

The Galrogs' leader is an elderly Black woman who explains what brought the world to this state. That detail speaks to how the most vulnerable and oppressed people - women and specifically Black women - are also the most educated and influential to the struggle for liberation because of their experience of fighting daily.

It is revealed that the gods emerged from the cracked surface of the earth after the world bombed and terrorized itself so much. This parallels the wars waged by Western imperialism. These wars are meant to create cracks or markets in societies that can be exploited by the capitalist ruling class to subjugate a group of people.

Once the three gangs come together, they can mobilize the individual and unaffiliated groups of survivors to take to the streets to fight. They bring instruments, farming and mechanical tools, different kinds of blades, a few guns, whatever they can get their hands on. The three gangs together symbolize the

working-class vanguard able to galvanize the masses into action. They are the FLN during Algeria's war for independence, or the different factions that make up the collective Palestinian Resistance.



Imperialism is a paper tiger

As the final battle draws near and the masses organized into a People's Army call out the gods for all the death and destruction they have caused, they are met with buses and buildings being thrown at them. The immediate response from the gods is mass violence on an industrial-sized scale — the symbolism there speaks for itself.

After the gods' opening barrage fails to break the people's will to fight, they are forced to step forward and show themselves. Stepping into the light, shaking the earth with every step, they are revealed as nothing more than three big babies, literally.

Colonialism and imperialism are meant to instill fear. But once fear is washed away and people realize they hold the power and have the right to self-determination, these systems are nothing more than paper tigers that can be defeated. Although wealth and hard power are being accumulated by fewer people, their base of power is the exploited communities and workers of the world, who increasingly possess the power to strike back. Western imperialism looks strong as it commits genocide in Palestine, but is revealed to be weak and defeatable in the waters of the Red Sea when fighting against a group better equipped to wage war.

Through their organization and newfound strength in the masses, the people are able to utilize the magical blue power to wound the gods and weaken them. Once their enemy is weakened, the army attacks with everything they have. The final battle depicts what it takes to win against such an enemy. The masses take heavy casualties as the gods topple buildings around them. The people use whatever they have to see liberation through to the very end.

The final words of the episode, “nothing ever ends,” spoken by the leader of the Slickers, are poetic because these communities, the working and oppressed people of the world, have dealt with enemies like these gods before. Be it militaries, police or any other state-sponsored thugs and settlers, the masses have battled and survived onslaught after onslaught, learning the needed lessons to claim victory. It is victory through expelling the occupier and oppressor, victory through surviving against all odds.

From Baltimore to Palestine, oppressed communities must find ways to fight back against forced displacement, redlining, segregation and ultimately genocide. The people resist by any and all means necessary to defend their places in the world against all odds, whether it is napalm or rifle butts and bullets, to reorganize and continue living, continue defying the colonizer and imperialist.

Part 2: More liberation themes in Love, Death, & Robots' '400 Boys'

