

Trump-inspired California recall effort stopped

written by Struggle - La Lucha
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Protesters gather outside McDonald's in Los Angeles, Calif., on Dec. 5, 2013. An unprecedented ballot initiative created by members of the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice in California in 2013 called for an immediate minimum wage increase to \$15 per hour.

California voters got another taste of the national effort by the Republican Party to disenfranchise the votes of working and poor people, especially the votes of people of color. But this time, regarding their initiative to recall Gov. Gavin Newsom, they were unsuccessful.

In spite of the policies that run counter to the interests of working people by both political parties, the Republican Party's romance with Trump, his fascist-minded initiatives and anti-science stance during a pandemic targeted the Democratic Party's Gov. Gavin Newsom.

The leading opponent of Newsom was rightwing radio talk show host Larry Elder, exposing once again the willingness of the two ruling class parties to use a person of color to push anti-Black and Brown policies – like his call for reparations for the slave owners and to deprive the communities hit most by the pandemic of the means to fight the virus.

Elder called for an end to mask and vaccine protocols called for by the medical and scientific community being utilized in the schools.

In regards to sexism, Elder has said that men are better equipped for politics than women, and would welcome the type of anti-woman legislation that occurred in Texas to deny woman the right to an abortion, advocating that those who have an abortion should be tried for murder.

In regards to workers' right to a living wage, Elder thinks there should be no minimum wage laws.

Many of the other rightwing candidates dominating the recall election hoped to launch their political careers, like Trump and Elder, by appealing to white supremacists and anti-science voters.

Newsom got about 64% in favor of his staying in office. The yes votes for the recall

were about 36%.

Many attribute this large victory for the governor having mostly to do with the voters' desire to end this pandemic. In fact, most counties with at least 45% to 48% vaccination rates voted against the recall.

Big money wins

Although the defeat of fascist-minded politicians must be considered a progressive development as a barometer of how the majority in California rejected those ideals, the amount of money spent by both parties once again exposed the importance, and usually primary importance, of big money in an election. Both parties and their allies raised about \$140 million in total, with Newsom raising \$90 million of that sum.

The top Republican Party donors for the recall included business owners and real estate developers. The top Democratic Party donors included mostly wealthy millionaire business owners that tend to vote for more liberal politicians, with the exception of the CEO of Netflix and his spouse — Reed Hastings and Patty Quillin — who donated over \$3 million to Newsom, exceeding the California Democratic Party donations, which were about \$2 million.

Other top donors on the more conservative side supporting Newsom include realtor associations and even the California Correctional Peace Officers Association.

What Newsom's support did include that wasn't included in the support for the Republican challenge was backing from unions, whose top donors included the California Teachers Association, Service Employees International Union Local 1000, American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees and the California State Association of Electrical Workers.

Excluding the union contributions, the donors both for and against the recall show that the ruling class is still divided on the best method of continuing the exploitation

of our class, and many were worried about a radical rightwing takeover in California.

Terms of recall would deny votes of majority

The terms of the recall were such that if it was successful, Newsom could not be considered a candidate for governor. With 46 candidates running, only about 15% of the vote could ensure victory. Those terms set for the recall would deny the votes of the majority and further the disenfranchisement of Black and Brown voters.

In socialist countries like Cuba, recalls are part of the constitution but are instituted to ensure the will of working people, not deny them. And the threat of rightwing extremism is often used by the ruling class here to further justify the denial of democratic rights to working people. This experience with the recall is included.

There are calls from some in the Democratic Party to stop the recall process altogether, instead of modifying it. This is similar to the legislation to limit access to filing ballot initiatives by raising the cost 10 times in 2015 to supposedly stop frivolous ballot initiatives after a rightwing homophobic initiative was filed.

However, it was probably more targeted at the unprecedented ballot initiative created by members of the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice in California in 2013 calling for an immediate minimum wage increase to \$15 per hour.

Undoubtedly initiatives like that, which are against exploitation and repression, are the real target of legislative “reform” by both the Democratic and Republican Parties.

Which is why, although the result of this recall was positive in the sense of denying fascist-minded ideologues even more seats in government, it will take the watchful eye of our class and the building of a genuine people’s movement against both political parties of the ruling class to maintain democratic gains and push the

struggle forward.



Is Sirhan guilty? Unanswered questions about RFK's assassination

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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Senator Robert Francis Kennedy had just won California's Democratic presidential primary when he was shot in Los Angeles shortly after midnight on June 5, 1968. He died early the next morning, less than five years after his brother — President John F. Kennedy — was gunned down in Dallas.

Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, a Palestinian immigrant who was convicted of killing Bobby Kennedy, [has now been recommended for release](#) by a parole board. California Gov. Gavin Newsom can either approve or deny his freedom.

Sirhan Sirhan has spent 53 years in jail. Some members of Robert Kennedy's family

favor Sirhan's release while others — including RFK's widow, Ethel Kennedy — are opposed.

In most countries a 53-year-long prison sentence is considered barbaric. As noted by the parole board, the 77-year-old Sirhan poses no threat to society.

A bigger question is whether Sirhan Sirhan was actually guilty of killing Bobby Kennedy. Paul Schrade, who was wounded by Sirhan, doesn't think so.

Schrade, a 93-year old former United Auto Workers union official, points out that all of Bobby Kennedy's three wounds came from behind. But almost every witness in the Ambassador Hotel where Kennedy was killed said that Sirhan was always in front of RFK.

There are many problems with the official story of Robert Kennedy's assassination. Evidence points to a second shooter.

Los Angeles coroner Dr. Thomas Noguchi testified that the mortal wound was fired behind Kennedy's right ear at point blank range.

None of the witnesses described Sirhan as being that close. Some said that Sirhan was three or more feet away.

Hotel maître d' Karl Uecker insisted: "There was a distance of at least one-and-one-half feet between the muzzle of Sirhan's gun and Senator Kennedy's head. ... Sirhan never got close enough for a point-blank shot, never."

How many bullets?

Then there's the path or trajectory of the three bullets that struck Kennedy and the one that went through his suit coat. While the fatal bullet fired behind his ear went

upwards at a 15-degree angle, the other bullet paths rose at steep angles of 59, 67 and 80 degrees.

As described in "Shadow Play" by William Klaber and Philip Melanson, this was "as though a gun had been pressed to the senator's back and pointed up so as not to protrude."

However, according to Edward Minasian's grand jury testimony, Uecker slammed Sirhan's shooting hand down onto a steam table after two shots were fired. The remaining shots fired by Sirhan were diverted away from Kennedy.

The greatest challenge to the police single-shooter theory is the number of bullets fired in the hotel pantry. Sirhan used a .22-caliber Iver and Johnson Cadet eight-shot revolver. All bullets were fired and Sirhan never reloaded the weapon.

Two bullets, including the fatal shot in Robert Kennedy's head, were recovered from his body. One bullet went through RFK's body while another bullet went through his suit.

That leaves four bullets. But five people were wounded: Elizabeth Evans, Ira Goldstein, Paul Schrade, Irwin Stroll and William Weisel.

The police solved this arithmetic problem by claiming the bullet that went through Kennedy's suit from behind without wounding him then struck Schrade. But Schrade was always four to five feet behind Bobby Kennedy.

As Paul Schrade asked LA Police Chief Daryl Gates in 1986, "How [can] a bullet traveling up and away from me can make a 90-degree turn and end up in my head?"

This is reminiscent of the "magic bullet" that the Warren Commission claimed to have struck both President Kennedy and Texas Gov. Connally in Dallas. This bullet supposedly went through both men before landing in Connally's thigh, making

impossible turns to do so.

Nina Rhodes, a witness to the assassination of Robert Kennedy, told the FBI that she estimated that 10 to 14 shots were fired. The FBI later falsified Rhodes' statement, claiming that she only heard "eight distinct shots."

Several reporters were recording when RFK was shot. According to Dr. Michael Hecker of the Stanford Research Institute, who analysed a tape, "No fewer than 10 gunshots [were fired]."

Destroying evidence and intimidating witnesses

Dr. Noguchi was photographed pointing with his fingers at two apparent bullet holes in the doorframe of the pantry doorway. The FBI later took a photo of these holes with the caption, "close up view of two bullet holes."

LA police officers Charles Wright and Sgt. Robert Rozzi were photographed pointing at another apparent bullet hole in a pantry hallway door frame. Wright later said he was almost certain that it was a bullet.

FBI agent William Bailey was in the pantry a few hours after the shooting and saw two bullet holes in a door frame. "These were clearly bullet holes," he told authors Klaber and Melanson, "the wood around them was freshly broken away and I could see the base of a bullet in each one."

Lia Urso was in the hotel pantry three hours after RFK was shot. She told author Philip Melanson that she saw what she thought were bullet holes in the ceiling tiles. If these holes did contain bullets it would mean more than eight bullets were fired and that there was a second shooter. Yet these door frames and ceiling tiles were illegally destroyed by police while Sirhan's initial appeal was pending.

The police claimed that they didn't have room for these items from what the media

were calling “the trial of the century.” Los Angeles City Attorney Dion Morrow told the LA City Council that “you can’t fit ceiling panels into a card file.”

The LAPD also destroyed 2,410 photographs that presumably could fit in filing cabinets.

The prosecution badgered one of its own witnesses, Larry Arnot, a retired Pasadena, Calif., firefighter. He was working the counter of the Lock, Stock ‘n’ Barrel gun store on June 1, 1968, when Sirhan Sirhan purchased .22 caliber ammunition.

Arnot identified the sales receipt for the ammunition that was found in Sirhan’s car and said there were two other individuals with Sirhan.

Who were these two people? An honest investigation would want to know if they were associates of Sirhan and if they were manipulating him.

Arnot’s truthful testimony angered prosecutor David Fitts. He reminded Arnot of a lie detector test given to him by police Lieutenant Enrique Hernandez. The cop intimidated Arnot into saying he didn’t remember Sirhan even though he did.

The browbeating given to Larry Arnot angered the gun store’s owners, Donna and Ben Herrick. Donna Herrick had seen Sirhan in the store previously with two companions.

But she wasn’t called as a witness. “They didn’t want her to testify, because she wouldn’t change her story,” said Ben Herrick.

Disappearing polka dots

Sandra Serrano was a 20-year-old office worker who was a volunteer with the Kennedy campaign. She was sitting on a stairway outside the hotel ballroom.

Around 11:30 p.m. three people pushed by Serrano to go up the stairs. They were a

young woman in a polka dot dress accompanied by two men, one of whom Serrano later identified as Sirhan.

After RFK was shot, two of the people ran down the stairs. The woman in the polka dot dress shouted: "We shot him! We shot him!"

Sandra Serrano told what she saw and heard to NBC reporter Sander Vanocur.

Vincent DiPierro, a part-time hotel waiter, had his glasses splattered with blood by the shooting. He observed the woman in the polka dot dress with Sirhan inside the pantry.

Police Officer Paul Scharaga drove to the Ambassador Hotel's parking lot after a radio report of trouble. The Bernsteins, who were an older couple, told Scharaga they had seen a woman wearing a polka dot dress and a young man. They were laughing and shouting: "We shot him! We shot him!"

Many other people observed the woman in the polka dot dress. An all-points bulletin went out to police departments across the country describing her.

It was soon withdrawn. Why?

Sandra Serrano was given the same third-degree treatment by Lt. Hernandez and his lie detector that Larry Arnot got. She was threatened by Hernandez into saying she was mistaken.

"I don't ever want to have to go through that again," said Serrano in 1988. "I said what they wanted me to say."

Show trial

Capitalist politicians in California insisted they didn't want "another Dallas." Lee Harvey Oswald, JFK's accused assassin, never got a trial. Police allowed the most

important witness in U.S. history to be killed by Jack Ruby, a strip club operator with ties to organized crime.

Sirhan Bishara Sirhan did get a trial, but it was a show trial. His defense attorneys—Emil Berman, Grant Cooper and Russell Parsons—admitted that Sirhan had shot Bobby Kennedy. They hoped to save Sirhan from the state’s gas chamber by pleading “diminished capacity.”

The prosecution initially agreed to a plea bargain that would have spared Sirhan’s life. In a rare move, Judge Herbert Walker rejected it. Prosecutors later double-crossed defense counsel by demanding a death sentence at the penalty phase of the trial.

Ballistics testimony was given by De Wayne Wolfer, who worked in the LAPD’s crime lab. Grant Cooper barely cross-examined Wolfer, who was later exposed as incompetent.

William C. Harper, a real ballistics expert, warned Cooper about Woolfer. The defense lawyer turned down Harper’s offer of assistance because Cooper didn’t question the police story of the shooting.

Sirhan’s defense attorneys instead put a parade of psychiatrists and psychologists on the stand who only confused the jury.

The Warren Commission never came up with a motive for Oswald to kill JFK. The Los Angeles prosecutors claimed that Palestinian Sirhan Sirhan killed RFK because of the senator’s support for sending 50 Phantom jets to the apartheid state of Israel.

The result was that the jury convicted Sirhan and voted to kill him. Fortunately the California Supreme Court overturned the state’s death penalty, although it was later reinstated.

Dallas vs. Los Angeles

The real difference between the assassinations in Dallas and Los Angeles were in the different aims of the U.S. military-industrial complex.

President John F. Kennedy was killed in a coup d'etat that put Lyndon Johnson in the White House. It occurred 13 months after the Cuban missile crisis when the Pentagon wanted to invade Cuba and possibly launch a nuclear first strike against the Soviet Union.

Having JFK assassinated gave the military brass a second chance by falsely portraying the patsy Lee Harvey Oswald as an agent of Cuba and the Soviet Union. But the coup didn't gel.

Many capitalists didn't trust their fallout shelters. A huge escalation in the Vietnam War was LBJ's consolation prize to the Pentagon.

The Tet offensive by Vietnamese liberation forces that began Jan. 31, 1968, shattered any illusions that the U.S. could win. Senator Gene McCarthy challenged Lyndon Johnson and nearly defeated him in the New Hampshire primary.

Johnson dropped out of the race while remaining in the White House. Bobby Kennedy began his presidential campaign.

A big split occurred within the ruling class. This wasn't between pro-war and anti-war forces.

Many on Wall Street felt that the U.S. was being "bogged down" in Vietnam. They thought a bigger threat to their rule was in western Asia where Rockefeller's and Mellon's oil fields were.

Meanwhile the Black liberation struggle was surging forward and so was a growing

anti-war movement. Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination on April 4, 1968, led to rebellions against racism in dozens of cities.

Washington, D.C., was on fire six blocks from the White House. A hundred Black communities had revolted in 1967.

The four month period when it looked like the U.S. would soon withdraw from Vietnam was terminated with Bobby Kennedy's assassination. A coup wasn't needed.

Those who plotted RFK's death knew the rub-out had to be done cleaner than the Dallas nightmare. Sirhan had to be brought to trial. A string of witnesses didn't have to be bumped off.

There was one possible exception. Former Congressperson Allard Lowenstein, who led efforts to reopen an investigation into Robert Kennedy's assassination, was murdered in his law office on March 14, 1980.

A Palestinian political prisoner

Over and over again, the prosecution and media brought up Sirhan's alleged notebooks with their bizzare writings. "RFK must die" would be written repeatedly. They point to this as proof of Sirhan's murderous intent.

Dr. Eduard Simson examined Sirhan 20 times when he was on San Quentin's death row. Simson was the prison's senior psychologist.

Simson noted that Sirhan's handwriting in these notebooks often differed drastically from his handwriting at San Quentin. Did someone else write these notebooks? Or did Sirhan write them under hypnosis?

To this day Sirhan Sirhan says that he doesn't remember shooting anyone in the Ambassador Hotel, which was torn down in 2006. How is that possible? Was Sirhan

being programmed?

That's not an impossible concept. Naomi Klein wrote in "The Shock Doctrine" about MK-Ultra and other CIA mind control experiments.

Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was four years old when his Palestinian Christian family was driven out of their Jerusalem (Al-Quds) home by the Nakba. This was the catastrophe of Palestinians being driven out of their homeland by the creation of the Zionist settler state. Sirhan's family eventually moved to the United States.

Sirhan was learning to be a jockey when his horse ran into the railing during foggy conditions. Although Sirhan wasn't seriously hurt, he continued to have headaches and fuzzy vision.

He consulted at least eight doctors but none could help relieve his pain. Sirhan turned instead to books and groups promoting mysticism and hypnosis. Some have asked if these conditions could be used to have him manipulated, even to the point of shooting people.

It was physically impossible for Sirhan to have shot Bobby Kennedy from behind. The more likely shooter was Eugene Cesar, who was employed part-time by the Ace Guard Service and was with Bobby Kennedy when he was assassinated.

Cesar, who died in 2019, hated the Kennedys and was a supporter of the super-racist George Wallace. He can be seen in Ted Charach's documentary



“The Second Gun.”

Cesar told Charach that “John [Kennedy] sold the country down the road. He gave it to the commies. ... He literally gave it to the minority.” He said that “the Black man . . . has been cramming this integrated idea down our throats, so you learn to hate him.”

Don Schulman, who was a runner for a Los Angeles TV station, told radio reporter Jeff Brent that he saw a security guard fire his gun three times. Cesar was right behind Kennedy with an unholstered gun.

Schulman’s account was carried on radio, TV and some newspapers. Yet the police were uncurious about Cesar. They didn’t check his gun to see if it was fired or even check its caliber.

The arrest and conviction of Sirhan Sirhan led to an outpouring of anti-Arab racism. This was a forerunner to the tidal wave of anti-Muslim hate following the 9/11 attacks.

The plotters who had Bobby Kennedy killed also stole 53 years of life from Sirhan Sirhan. He should be pardoned and allowed to come home to his family.

Unless otherwise noted, this article is based on [“Shadow Play. The Murder of Robert F. Kennedy, the Trial of Sirhan Sirhan, and the Failure of American Justice.”](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjOjsOKS4gs>



Crowd cheers removal of racist monument in Richmond, Va.

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After 131 years of lording it over Richmond, Va., and much of the country, the towering statue of slavery-defending Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee has finally been removed from his perch, to the cheers of a jubilant crowd pumped up by the Black worker who had just cut through the bolts holding the 21-foot statue to its 40-foot base.

The statue itself was cut into its original two pieces, loaded onto a truck and carted off to a state-owned facility for storage. (Fittingly, Richmond used a city sewer facility to accommodate the statues of Confederate President Jefferson Davis, Confederate generals Stonewall Jackson and J.E.B Stewart and Confederate Admiral Matthew Maury.

Despite sad attempts by local and state politicians to claim credit for this victory over a leading symbol of white supremacy, it is important to remember that it was a long, deliberate and growing movement of anti-racist, grassroots activists that

finally forced the state of Virginia — which has owned the statue since its unveiling in 1890 — to agree to take it down.

Richmond's Black community has always despised the statues honoring the slavery-defending traitors on Richmond's famed Monument Avenue. Many people have spoken about how they deliberately avoided driving or walking down that high-end real estate boulevard because of the terrible feelings it evoked in them.

But, until very, very recently, Virginia's state government has had no such feelings. Way back in 2007, the state spent \$450,000 to try and clean the statue, in preparation for the wide range of activities marking the 200th anniversary of Lee's birth. On the actual anniversary, Jan. 19, the Virginia State Conference NAACP and the Virginia Defenders held a press conference at the statue to denounce the state's wasting money on a statue that can never be cleansed of its arrogant racism.

In 2015, the Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality led a community campaign to demand the organizers of the prestigious UCI World Championships bicycle race change the race's course from Monument Avenue. Three of the race's organizing committee co-chairmen responded to media inquiries about the demand. "This is our heritage. This is who we are," said then-and-now-aspiring Gov. Terry McAuliff, a Democrat born in Syracuse, N.Y.

Two of the other three co-chairmen, then-Mayor Dwight Jones (Philadelphia) and U.S. Sen. Mark Warner (Indianapolis) made similar comments. Not responding to the demand was Thomas F. Farrell II, then the CEO of political powerhouse Dominion Energy, who in 2014 had produced the pro-Confederate movie "Field of Lost Shoes."

The issue of honoring Confederate symbols came to the fore after a Confederate fan and white-supremacist murdered nine African-American churchgoers in Charleston, S.C., on June 17, 2015.

Then came the deadly confrontation between white supremacists and anti-racists in Charlottesville, Va., on Aug. 11 and 12, 2017, centered around the Lee statue in that university town.

Within weeks, neo-Confederate groups began coming to Richmond to “defend” the statues of Lee, Davis, Jackson, Stuart and Maury. And each time they showed up, local anti-racists, including the Defenders, were there to confront them.

Meanwhile, a statewide effort called Monumental Justice, initiated by Charlottesville activists, was demanding a change in the state law that forbade the removal of “war memorials,” as the Confederate statues were officially known.

Then came the horrific police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, an event that proved to be the tipping point in the long-smoldering mass rage over police abuse in the United States. Millions of people took to the streets in massive protests that lasted some 100 days. In Richmond, the movement formulated seven demands, which included taking down the Confederate monuments — which had been gloriously tagged on the second night of the protests during a march of thousands down Monument Avenue.

Later, the statue of Davis was torn down by protesters, along with a statue of Christopher Columbus and a statue dedicated to police officers, both in Byrd Park, named after one of Richmond’s earliest slave owners.

After a change that February in the state law allowing the removal of the statues, it was the mass and militant anti-racist protests that finally moved local officials to take down the city-owned statues on Monument Avenue. Lawsuits by pro-Confederates and Monument Avenue property owners and a resulting injunction delaying the removal of Lee were finally rejected just last week by the Virginia Supreme Court.

And so it came to pass that today, Sept. 8, 2021, a Black worker cut through the bolts holding Lee to his pedestal, and the statue finally came down.

It was back in 1890 that "Fighting Editor" John Mitchell Jr. of the Richmond Planet wrote about the Lee statue going up, clearly explaining that it was meant to announce that the old white oligarchy was firmly back in charge and that Black folks had better accept that, or else.

Referring to the Black workers who actually did the manual labor of erecting the statue, Mitchell wrote, "He put up the Lee Monument, and should the time come, he'll be there to take it down."

And he was.

Yes, it's a symbolic change, but it represents a real shift in the balance of power between the white supremacists in state government and the growing mass movement against white supremacy. We must now seize this moment to strengthen and expand the ongoing struggles against evictions, gentrification, inadequate schools, poor housing, low-wage jobs — and the obscene military budget that drains our tax coffers of the money needed to address all these problems.

Further, the struggle to take down the Confederate monuments has always run parallel with the now-more-than-20-year struggle to reclaim and properly memorialize Richmond's Shockoe Bottom district, once the epicenter of the U.S. domestic slave trade. That campaign is now at a critical juncture, with the City finally agreeing to the Defenders' community-generated proposal for a Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park, but with questions remaining about how that development will concretely benefit the Black community.

The struggle continues.

Signed:

The Steering Committee of the Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality

Ana Edwards - Chair, Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project

Joseph S. H. Rogers - Public Historian

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Source: [*The Virginia Defender*](#)



Hurricane Ida blows away illusions

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I am from a small town in Louisiana's Tangipahoa Parish, now living in New Orleans. Professionally, I am a cook and am training to be a biological lab technician.

When I first began to understand that Hurricane Ida was going to be bad, I was afraid. But to some extent I had been lulled into complacency by the fact that New

Orleans has largely been spared from major hurricane damage for several years. On the other hand, the 2020 season was devastating for the western part of the state, which has still not fully recovered from those shocks.

Mentally, I was still unprepared as Ida made landfall as a category 4 storm near marshy Port Fourchon — the concept of “land” here is tenuous, and partly explains why the storm was able to maintain its strength.

I thought that by going 80 miles north of New Orleans I would be safe. After all, the biggest concern for us is always water. Parts of New Orleans are 8 feet below sea level, and the city now floods during regular rainstorms. I wanted to get out, and thought I would be safe as long as I was away from typical flood zones.

My assumptions were too optimistic. Based on the Saffir-Simpson hurricane wind scale, Ida was a Category 5 when it made landfall, with winds right at 157 mph. Unsurprisingly, when it barrelled through northern Tangipahoa Parish, where I was staying with family, the destruction was immense.

The problem here is the trees. Within one acre (43,560 square feet) of where I am writing, I have counted 10 fallen trees. Visually, the rest of the town looks similar. Trees have blocked roads and fallen onto houses. They have ripped down power lines, or else the electrical poles themselves have uprooted — sometimes twisted into splintered segments.

As in New Orleans and other parts of the state, people here are without power. Gasoline and groceries are in short supply.

This has been hard on my family, as one family member fell and broke his hip during the storm, and many of us had to be outside during the worst of it in order to help him. First responders were unable to come until the next day.

Takeaway messages

1. Climate change means that nowhere is completely safe. My plan of travelling 80 miles north was laughable, considering that at least 25 people were killed by the storm in distant New Jersey as of Sept. 4. Eighteen have died in New York. We cannot behave as if hurricanes are just a Southern problem, or even a coastal problem. This storm crossed a long stretch of the country, far inland.
2. Capitalist society — especially in this period of profound crisis and long-term decline — is completely unable to deal with stress of this, or really any, magnitude. On paper, this is the richest country in the world, but that wealth is hoarded by a few, while virtually all social and material infrastructure is deteriorating. Because of socialist planning, tiny Cuba is able to deal with storms far better than the U.S.

The whole of Cuban society is mobilized to deal with hurricanes, and the aftermath is about recovery, not greed. Regular preparedness drills are conducted everywhere. The focus is on risk-reduction with an integrated response from local fire departments, health, transportation and other public services.

Before storms occur, Cuban government officials, police and military personnel help people move their belongings to safer locations. The government also guarantees replacement of all lost property. Most impressively, they have a 100-year plan to move towns further inland in response to climate change.

Meanwhile, here, horror story after horror story is emerging in the aftermath of Ida. In New Orleans, the government — city, state and federal — did not provide transportation that would have allowed working-class residents without vehicles to evacuate. This is despite the fact that the city issued mandatory evacuation orders for areas outside the levees, and strongly advised other residents to evacuate. Some 35% of Black households do not own an auto, and about 20% of white households don't own autos.

In Independence, La., over 800 nursing home residents from facilities owned by Baton Rouge businessman Bob J. Dean Jr. [were thrown into a warehouse](#). These people were left in their own filth. At least four of them have died. This is all too similar to Hurricane Katrina.

The working class has no stake in this rotten society. Overthrowing capitalist rule is truly a matter of life and death.



Austin protests Texas governor's attack on women

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Austin, Texas - Around 100 people rallied at the Texas State Capitol on September 1 to protest against the statewide abortion ban that went into effect that same day. Texas abortion clinics have been forced to stop taking appointments in order to avoid what could be thousands of lawsuits against them. The new law especially affects low-income and working-class women who don't have the resources to take

time off work, since the ban forces women in Texas to drive an average of 248 miles one way to access an abortion clinic out of state.

Austin Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) organized Wednesday's action and co-led the rally along with the Feminist Action Project, another student organization based at the University of Texas-Austin.

The central demands of the protest were to stop Governor Greg Abbott's attacks on women, and to call for abortion rights and democracy. Chants included, "Governor Abbott, you can't hide! You don't care if women die!" and, "When women's rights are under attack, what do we do? Stand up, fight back!"

The protest began with a rally outside the capitol building, featuring many chants and speeches. Protesters then marched down Colorado and 11th Streets, and finally into the capitol itself, where chants echoed loudly throughout the building. The protest closed out with a call to action, urging all who attended to stay organized and join organizations like SDS or the Feminist Action Project to continue the struggle.

Source: [FightBack! News](#)



World Economic Forum targets Detroit

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The World Economic Forum (WEF) has announced plans to open a “Global Center for Urban Transformation” in Detroit in October 2021. The WEF is an international non-governmental organization (NGO) that describes itself as aiming to improve “the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas.” It has been in existence since 1971 and is based in Switzerland.

This won’t be the first time the capitalist corporate, banking and political power-brokers have focused on the Motor City to promote their plans to strengthen their exploitative system on the backs of poor and working people.

The Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice (MECAWI) and the Moratorium Now Coalition played a pivotal role in all of these earlier actions and are part of a growing coalition to once again confront them. .

Back in 2005, Detroit hosted a Conference on the Cities that brought together business and banking interests. Activists from a broad range of community and union organizations responded and held a “National Conference to Reclaim Our Cities” from November 11 to 13 at Wayne State University. The focus of this counter-conference was to demand “Feed the Cities – Starve the Pentagon.”

Opposing the 2009 National Business Summit that gathered at Detroit’s Renaissance Center was a People’s Summit that occupied Grand Circus Park in downtown Detroit (two years before the famed “Occupy Wall Street” came to that same location). The park was occupied from June 14 to 17. Hundreds of progressive people gathered daily to hear speakers, discuss strategies and launch marches to oppose the plots being hatched by the rich and powerful. A tent city sprang up for the four days.

In late October of 2017 the World Conference of Mayors met at the MGM Grand Hotel to supposedly celebrate the “revitalization” of Detroit. The mayors and the public were invited to attend a “Real Detroiters Speak Out” that was held on October 26. The Facebook page stated:

We invite all organizations in the City involved in the struggles against water shut-offs, foreclosures and evictions, police brutality, against union busting and for a living wage, immigrant rights, full access for people with disabilities, quality public education, deprivation of voting rights, and who are fighting racism, sexism and LGBTQ oppression in all its forms, to join the World Conference of Mayors, Real Detroiters Speak Out alternative....

The Speak-Out will fully expose the role of the banks, multinational corporations, the business media and political comprador elites in perpetuating the super-exploitation of the people of Detroit. The majority African American, working class and poor residents of the city are being totally left out of the so-called “rebirth of Detroit.”

Detroit's "rebirth" has meant that the public revenues generated through the process of taxation are being funneled to the capitalist corporations. [We] will discuss a real agenda for the rebirth and rebuilding of our neighborhoods and communities. Real development in Detroit would focus on the rehabilitation of neighborhoods, the guaranteeing of jobs, housing, water services, heating and quality education for all. The banks who are responsible for the destruction of our neighborhoods must be held accountable through criminal prosecution and the payment of reparations.

One year later City Lab Detroit: Global Cities Summit convened. From October 28 to 30, 2018 speakers like Mary Barra, Chairperson of General Motors and Michael R. Bloomberg, multi-billionaire, put forward their skewed vision of urban revitalization ignoring the real problems of the people of Detroit and other metropolises.

Refusing to allow these ruling class exploiters to define the problems and solutions, the Moratorium Now Coalition held a Teach-In on City Lab: Real Detroiters Speak Out on October 28. Literature to publicize the Teach-In observed:

As Detroiters we know that it is the banks, multinational corporations and their repressive bureaucratic agents which in effect run the city in the interests of ruling class billionaires. Despite its public relations rhetoric which claims that City Lab is concerned about improving conditions in urban areas, we witness on a daily basis the systematic dis-empowerment of the majority African American and working class population of Detroit.

The city has been underdeveloped by the financial institutions, the service sector and industrial plants. Over the last decade or more some 250,000 people have been forced out of Detroit through job losses, mortgage and property tax foreclosures, utility shut-offs involving water, heating and lighting, school closings and environmental degradation.

We have to build fightback movements which challenge the illegitimate right of the ruling class to govern at our expense by placing the interests of the masses at the forefront of any political and social program. We need to be organized at the grassroots levels to defeat the enemies which are continuously exploiting and repressing the people of Detroit and other municipalities throughout the state, the country and indeed the world.

Following the Teach-In the participants marched to the Marriott Westin Book Cadillac Hotel to join in solidarity with striking workers who had maintained picket lines around the clock starting September 18, 2018. Victory in the strike came only one week after the Teach-in.

The plans for the World Economic Forum to open a permanent office for their Global Center for Urban Transformation is a continuation of this series of prominent events promoting a ruling class vision for cities. WEF spokesman Jeff Merritt told the media:

Our view is that there is some great work that is happening, will be happening in Detroit. We want to help tell that story and how Detroit can be a model - an inspiration really - for other cities around the world.

What these vultures really ought to say is that Detroit is an example of how billions of dollars can be milked from the public trough without massive protests or uprisings. The truth is that Detroit's "renewal" saw the imposition of a dictatorial "Emergency Manager" from Donald Trump's law firm of Jones Day in March 2013. Then a fraudulent bankruptcy was rammed through Federal Court with the collusion of Judge Stephen Rhodes and his cronies that ended up taking over \$8 billion from City of Detroit retirees. An estimated 250,000 people have been forced from the city through criminal predatory lending practices of the banks along with 100,000 water

service shutoffs. Important assets owned by the City were taken including the City owned water and sewerage system, Belle Isle Park, the Detroit Art Institute and more. Over \$600 million was looted from homeowners in over taxation that those who benefited will never pay back.

These are some of the lessons that are being shared as they revel in a gentrified downtown Detroit while the neighborhoods continue to be devastated and the people suffer.

A mass mobilization of all progressive forces certainly should come together to expose and condemn the WEF's plans for Detroit. A real program of urban transformation can only come from the grassroots organizers across Detroit's neighborhoods. Such a program must include the demand for reparations to be paid to Detroit families by the banks and corporations.

Source: [Fighting Words](#)



Supreme Court says drop dead to 11 million tenants

written by Struggle - La Lucha
September 21, 2021



We have to fight back!

Six judges on the U.S. Supreme Court have overturned the federal ban on evictions. The Aug. 26 ruling threatens to throw 11 million families — with 30 million people — into the street.

The Alabama Association of Realtors that petitioned the court to overturn the eviction ban represents the same bigots who fought fair housing laws in the 1960s.

A moratorium on evictions and foreclosures was enacted by Congress in 2020 during the worst capitalist economic crisis since the Great Depression. Over 30 million people were made jobless while the coronavirus was killing hundreds of thousands of people.

Millions are still jobless and can't pay the rent or mortgage. Yet Congress let the absolutely necessary ban on evictions lapse.

It was only because of mass outrage — and a 5-day sit-in led by Representative Cori Bush — that forced the Biden Administration to act. The Centers for Disease Control issued a ban on evictions citing the new surge of COVID-19 cases and deaths.

As a public health agency, the CDC had every right to do this. Overcrowded housing is one the biggest reasons that the coronavirus death rate for Black, Indigenous and Latinx people is nearly three times the national average.

The six most reactionary judges on the high court claim that only Congress has the right to ban evictions, not the CDC. That's just an excuse to attack poor and working people.

In the 2013 case of *Shelby County v. Holder*, three of these judges voted to throw out a key provision of the Voting Rights Act passed by Congress. The three judges appointed since then would have agreed.

The recent Supreme Court action is as repulsive as its notorious pro-slavery 1857 *Dred Scott* ruling. It says in effect that “tenants have no right that landlords need respect.”

It echoes past court rulings that upheld child labor and union busting. It was the struggle of the people that overturned these obscene legal decisions.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal rightfully declared that extending the eviction moratorium “is a

matter of life and death.” Congress must reinstate the moratorium.

We can’t wait for Congress to act. We need to answer the landlords and banksters as we did last year when 26 million marched to demand justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery. Black Lives Matter!

When the sheriffs come to throw a family out of their home, a wall of people has to come to prevent it. Just like the wall of moms protected anti-racist protesters from the cops last year in Portland, Oregon.

The power of the people can beat back the big real estate interests — the landlords, realtors, banks — and their judges. Stop evictions and home foreclosures; defend the right to housing for all.



The growing poverty of the U.S. working class

written by Struggle - La Lucha
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Millions of working-class families in the United States are so poor they can't afford to shop at grocery stores any more. They're buying food at 99 cent stores instead.

Ohio resident Kyle Dishman told the Washington Post that he knows that "any food you can buy for only \$1 is not the greatest for you." But he has only \$40 a week to spend on groceries for his two-person family.

Like millions of workers, Dishman had his work hours cut since the COVID-19 pandemic started. Despite the stock market being at an all-time high, there are [5.7 million less workers employed](#) as compared to February 2020.

Dollar General, the largest dollar store chain, has 32% more customers than before the coronavirus. Some 1,650 new 99 cent outlets are expected to open this year.

Many of [the 34,000 dollar stores](#) are located in "food deserts," neighborhoods where the nearest grocery store is at least a mile away. That makes it harder for residents to purchase fruits, vegetables and other fresh food.

These conditions help steal years from peoples' lives. Residents in the well-to-do Battery Park development in lower Manhattan live on average to be nearly 86 years old. A subway ride away in the overwhelmingly Black and Latinx Brownsville community of Brooklyn, [life expectancy is 11.5 years less](#).

There's nothing new about working-class families being forced to buy lousy food. Frederick Engels — Karl Marx's co-thinker — described what was available to workers in Manchester, England, in the 1840s:

"The potatoes which the workers buy are usually poor, the vegetables wilted, the cheese old and of poor quality, the bacon rancid, the meat lean, tough, taken from old, often diseased, cattle, or such as have died a natural death, and not fresh even then, often half decayed." ([The Condition of the Working Class in England](#).)

The now-bankrupt A&P supermarket chain was boycotted in the 1960s and 1970s for its rotten food and racism in hiring. Activists followed an A&P truck carrying spoiled produce thrown out of a Massapequa store in suburban Long Island, New York, to be sold in Harlem.

Cutbacks everywhere

Food isn't the only item poor and working people can barely afford. Even during periods of "prosperity" millions buy used clothing and furniture at Goodwill or the Salvation Army.

In 2019, [7.5 million seniors couldn't afford medicine](#) prescribed by their doctor.

Between 2007 and 2016 bankers foreclosed — that is, stole — nearly [7.8 million homes](#) from families. Just in 2015 [landlords evicted](#) an estimated 2.7 million families..

Millions more face being homeless once the COVID-19 bans on evictions and foreclosures expire. We have to mobilize to cancel the rent and mortgages!

Those kicked out of their homes often turn to family members for help. Between 1980 and 2010, the number of these [doubled-up families increased almost four-fold](#), from 1.15 million to 4.3 million. (2012 U.S. Statistical Abstract, Table 59)

Overcrowded housing is a big reason why deaths from the coronavirus are two and three times as high in Black, Indigenous and Latinx communities. In the [East Elmhurst neighborhood of Queens, New York](#) — where Malcolm X lived with his family — one out of every 129 residents have died of COVID-19.

This is a housing crisis but there's no housing shortage. New York City landlords keep nearly [a quarter-million apartments empty](#) so the rent stays sky-high.

That's as criminal as hoarding food during a famine. The people united can take over these empty apartments and abolish homelessness.

Close to 43 million people [owe \\$1.6 trillion](#) in student loans. Most will never be able to pay it off. That debt needs to be wiped clean.

Wages have stagnated or even declined since the early 1970s. You would [need \\$12.77 in July 2021](#) to match the buying power of the \$1.60 federal minimum wage that was enacted in February 1968.

But the federal minimum wage is only \$7.25 per hour. That's \$5.52 stolen from poor workers every hour. If you're lucky to work an entire year of 40-hour weeks, the wage theft amounts to \$11,481.60 — almost a thousand dollars a month.

A 50-year holiday for the rich

Even the Harvard Business Review admits that hourly wages, adjusted for inflation, have increased just two-tenths of 1% per year since the early 1970s. Since then the share of the [national income for poor and working people has fallen](#) from nearly 65% to below 57% in 2017.

According to the [Brookings Institution](#) — an establishment think tank — average wages, adjusted for inflation, increased just 3% from 1979 to 2018. At the same rate real wages would increase less than 16% in 200 years.

The wage stagnation — and for many workers wage cuts — happened despite a fantastic increase in productivity. Meanwhile there are 724 billionaires in the United States according to Forbes magazine.

The three richest [U.S. billionaires](#) — Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk and Bill Gates — have a collective stash of \$452 billion. Three members of the Walton family, whose Walmart employees work for poverty wages, have a total fortune of \$181 billion.

At one pole of U.S. society you have several hundred billionaires, and at the other, 40% of people who [can't afford a \\$400](#) emergency expense. How did that happen?

The wealthy and powerful have enjoyed a reactionary holiday since the mid-1970s. An orgy of union busting erupted. In 1975, Wall Street demanded New York City Mayor Abe Beame fire 50,000 municipal workers.

Unions were pushed back not so much by broken strikes but by a tidal wave of plant closings. Thousands of union fortresses were shut down.

We weren't defeated on the battlefield. Our battlefields were taken away.

The workers of Flint, Michigan, made General Motors rich. In return GM closed nine of the ten plants there, making the city impoverished and its children poisoned by polluted drinking water.

Hardest hit were Black and Latinx workers. Median Black family income in the Midwest fell by 36% between 1978 and 1982.

Instead of young Black, Indigenous and Latinx workers getting jobs in the big plants, they were railroaded to the big prisons. The 2.2 million people in prison are workers, too.

The biggest defeat for poor people was the overthrow of the socialist Soviet Union, which had defeated Hitler and helped the African liberation struggle. The breaking up of the Soviet Union emboldened capitalists to attack us.

Now it's time for a fightback. The 26 million people who demanded justice for George Floyd shows it can be done.



LAPD explosion in South Central: Community demands justice

written by Struggle - La Lucha
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On June 30, residents of South Central Los Angeles were shaken by a thunderous boom like an aerial bombardment. Area residents are used to the sound of helicopters and police sirens, simulating a war zone. But this was even more intense. It was an explosion set off by the LAPD Bomb Squad.

Ignoring all safety protocols, the Bomb Squad decided to explode 42 pounds of fireworks confiscated from a home in a residential neighborhood. They did this during the day while people were in their homes and out walking. The explosion destroyed some homes on 27th Street and injured residents.

According to Comites de Resistencia, a Union del Barrio-initiated organization dedicated to community self-defense and empowerment in South Central LA: "The explosion is linked to two deaths, dozens of injuries, psychological trauma and millions of dollars worth of damage to homes, cars and local businesses. Many

residents have lost days of work and many were even fired due to missing days because of the explosion. Over 20 families had to be relocated because their homes were badly damaged. They are currently being housed by the city in a hotel in Downtown LA but they are being denied access to the swimming pool, gym and other facilities at the hotel.”

Six weeks have gone by since the bombing and the city has yet to fix the residents’ homes. Despite the families’ demand, the city has also not released the names of the cops who made the decision to detonate the explosives.

Needless to say, this would not have occurred in an affluent or predominantly white neighborhood. It occurred in a predominantly Latinx neighborhood.

These attacks on working people—especially Black and Brown working people—occur on a daily basis. There is a daily diet of police murder and terror in our communities; a daily diet of intimidation and lack of essential health care, especially now, during the COVID-19 crisis. Working people—disproportionately workers of color—are forced to work under dangerous conditions with little protection from the contagion. All of this is justified by systemic racism. It is an attempt to dehumanize oppressed peoples and justify even more heinous attacks. Police murder is said to be an unfortunate but necessary evil in Black and Brown communities, no matter how many children are gunned down by assassins with a badge.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki

And this month of August reminds us of another heinous act with racist rationalizations, a bombing of a much bigger magnitude: the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on Aug. 6 and 9, 1945.

At least 200,000 people, including thousands of children, were killed by the bombs dropped on these cities. Even decades later people died from radiation-caused

illnesses, and its effects are still felt.

The racist ruling class promotes the argument that those children and civilians in Japan were not as worthy of life as white people, or U.S. soldiers representing the interests of the ruling class. In the same way, the life of a cop is deemed far more important than the life of a Black child, whose killing is justified by law if a cop says they felt the least bit threatened.

This is why solidarity is so essential, especially from those who are not the immediate victims of imperialist aggression, whether the aggression be international or domestic (like the bombing carried out by the LAPD). It was the solidarity and community organization made possible by the Comites de Resistencia that forced some LA politicians to pay attention. Now they are feeling the pressure of the community and a growing movement demanding assistance for the victims of the LAPD's racist carelessness.

The police terror on our Black and Brown communities serves a purpose, and that is to keep down the inevitable fightback against this oppressive system that sacrifices our lives and livelihoods for the profits of the rich. But our struggle for social justice, just like the struggle intensifying here in LA, will not be shut down.

On Aug. 16, the families affected by the explosion will protest in front of City Hall and will deliver a letter with the following demands to Mayor Eric Garcetti. Union del Barrio and the Comites de Resistencia are assisting the community with this action. Other participating organizations include the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice and the Socialist Unity Party.

The families are demanding the following:

1. Fix our homes NOW!
2. Give us the names of the LAPD officers who gave the order to detonate the

explosives in our neighborhood!

3. Immediate financial assistance for everyone who was affected!
4. We want full access to all hotel facilities at the hotel in Downtown LA where we are being housed temporarily. We don't want to be treated like 2nd class citizens!
5. We want a written guarantee from the city of Los Angeles that the city will continue to pay for our housing until the city repairs our homes and it is safe for us to return.



Welfare Rights conference in New Orleans: 'Imagine a world where no one goes without food or affordable housing'

written by Struggle - La Lucha
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During the first week of August, the National Welfare Rights Union (NWRU) convened in New Orleans. The meeting brought together activists from around the country to study both history and current conditions, as well as to reaffirm their commitment to struggle.

This was a good time for a national meeting on welfare rights, given the extreme situation faced by millions of working-class people in the United States. For many, life has been made bleak by decades of low wages and austerity. The COVID-19 crisis is making things even worse. The country's largest hunger-relief non-profit, Feeding America, reports that some 50 million people were food insecure during the pandemic. On the eve of this conference, 11 million families were facing eviction or foreclosure. Biden only acted to extend the eviction moratorium after facing popular pushback.

In an address at the onset of the pandemic, NWRU President, Maureen Taylor, spoke of the difficulties caused by the cruelty of this system, but she also stressed the need to envision an alternative. Taylor said: "Working people—can't we imagine a world where universal healthcare is a right and cannot be tied to a job that may disappear? Working people—can't we imagine a world where preparation for pandemics are already in place because the next one is anticipated? Working people—can't we imagine a world where no one goes without food or affordable housing under any circumstances?"

The NWRU was established in 1987, growing out of the work of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO). The NWRO was a key part of the Poor People's Campaign organized by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. That movement terrified the capitalists. One organizer at this week's conference said, "The threat of Martin Luther King was that he was uniting the working-class." Indeed, when King was murdered in 1968, the militancy of the Black liberation struggle was spilling over to all groups fighting for their rights in this society.

The organizers with today's NWRU are carrying on the radical traditions of the NWRO founders, like George Wiley and Johnnie Tillmon, two giants of the civil rights era. In this week's discussion, conference-attendees stressed the need of getting back to basics, that is, to struggle led by poor, working-class people, not beholden to granting organizations and professional politicians. Elders shared radical history with the younger activists, while affirming the immense potential of today's youth, as demonstrated by the 2020 rebellions against white supremacist police terror.

A lively conversation took place about the necessity of basing struggle on revolutionary education and an analysis of changing conditions.

Rev. Annie Chambers of the NWRU, Socialist Unity Party, and other organizations, summed up much of this discussion in the following way: "Facing different conditions today, what else can we do but have revolution? Young people are fighting. But we've got to give it direction, to call what we're in a revolution to change this whole system. Piecemeal change isn't enough. This whole capitalist system must fall."

