

# Sojourner Truth: ‘And ain’t I a woman?’

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
April 8, 2020



Sojourner Truth

*Members of the Socialist Unity Party who knew, struggled with and loved lifelong revolutionary Rosemary Neidenberg thought that reprinting this sensitive and politically powerful article written by her in 1971 would be a heartfelt way to honor her memory following her recent death at the age of 99.*

“That man over there says that a woman needs to be helped into carriages, and

lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me the best place. And ain't I a woman? Look at me. Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me. And ain't I a woman? I could work as much as a man, when I could get it, and bear the lash as well. And ain't I a woman? I have borne 13 children and seen them most all sold off into slavery. And when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard. And ain't I a woman?"

— Sojourner Truth, speech before the Women's Rights Convention at Akron, Ohio, 1851

"Work hard and make your master happy and call on God for help." Thus an African American mother trained her child for survival. The child who would become Sojourner Truth lived by her mother's words. A New Paltz, N.Y., slave owner, John Dumont, said proudly of the six-foot-tall 13-year-old, "She'll do a good family's wash in the night and by morning she'll be ready to go into the fields where she'll do as much raking and binding as my best field hand."

After 29 years as a slave, however, Sojourner Truth experienced a dazzling surge of realization. She said, "The Lord didn't want me to be a slave." She gave a name to the tremendous will, the great tide of energy and purpose that rose in her. She called it "the Lord," but its real name was consciousness.

## **Remembering oppression**

Memories of inexpressible tragedy formed that consciousness:

A cellar. Loose boards over mud that turned to muck in rainy season. Her earliest remembered home.

Her mother. Singing songs taught by her African grandmother in a language she didn't know. Telling how 11 of her 13 children had been lost, either dead or sold

away. A boy, 5, a girl, 3, taken away by a man in a bright red sleigh on a bitter winter morning. The boy at first sat joyfully, “as straight as a jack-rabbit.” But then he knew. He ran and tried to hide. “My boy never ran to me,” her mother said. He knew it was no use. His mama couldn’t protect her own child.

Her mother. Given “freedom” when she was too old and sick to work for the slave owner. “I stumbled against something on the cellar floor, Belle” (Sojourner’s slave name), her father told her. “I felt it with my hands. It was your Ma. Her body was cold.”

Her father. “Freed” like her mother. Found dead in a hut without food or water. She always remembered him as a bent old man, but once he was so straight and strong that they called him “The Tree.”

Herself. A 9-year-old child on the slave block, auctioned with a flock of sheep for \$100. At 10 years, bound and beaten into unconsciousness. She recalled that she didn’t know what her alleged crime was.

As a young woman, she loved a man who was beaten to the brink of death for trying to visit her. The last sight she had of him was his unconscious body being dragged out of her master’s yard. His wounds healed in several months, but he died not long after. People said his spirit had died.

## **Born into slavery**

Sojourner Truth was born in 1797 on a Dutch-owned plantation near Kingston, N.Y. The New York State Legislature decreed in 1817 that all slaves over 28 were to be freed by 1827. The younger people had to work free for the slave owner until the age of 25 for women, 28 for men.

Two years before her freedom day, slave owner Dumont promised Sojourner Truth that he would free her a year earlier if she worked extra hard. So she did, working

prodigally, ignoring a scythe wound in her hand that kept opening.

When the time came, Dumont refused to let her go. Determined to keep Dumont to his word, Sojourner walked away from slavery one day after she had brought in the harvest. Taking the youngest of her five children — she had been forced into marriage — she moved in with an Abolitionist family in the neighborhood. They bought her freedom, paying Dumont \$20 for her services for the last year and \$5 for her baby.

After a time, she thought of returning to her older children and to the warmth and camaraderie of the other slaves who were caring for them. But when Dumont came to get her, another thought seized her. In later years, she described how, as she walked toward Dumont's carriage with her baby, she suddenly felt an overwhelming force block her path and heard a voice inside her saying, "Not another step." She heeded that voice and Dumont rode home alone in his carriage.

Her new confidence and sense of power were soon to be tested. Two years before her freedom day, Dumont had sold the "services" of her 4-year-old son. It was illegal to take a "freedman" out of the state, but Sojourner learned her boy had been taken to Alabama. She was illiterate and inexperienced, but dauntless in the fight for her son.

She said in retrospect: "Oh, how small I did feel. Neither would you wonder, if you could have seen me, in my ignorance, trotting about the streets, meanly clad, bareheaded and barefooted."

Sojourner prevailed. She harassed and hounded lawyers and courts until the slaver who had sold her son had to make a six-month journey south to bring him back. When she went to claim her son, the child screamed and said he didn't want to leave his "kind master." He had been terrorized, as Sojourner discovered when she took him home at last — brutalized so that the welts stood out like fingers on his body.

“Oh Lord, render unto them double for what they have done,” she said.

### **Felt her destiny**

In 1829, Sojourner Truth and her son went to New York City. There were no schools for African American children in rural New York. For 14 years Sojourner was a household servant. She worked in several religious and social work organizations, and found them futile or corrupt. Then the feeling about her special destiny, which had come upon her at the moment she had decided to be a slave no longer, burst out again. She said that the Lord told her no longer to be a servant of white people. She should do the Lord’s work and bring the truth to her people.

All her years as a slave, as a servant, the tragedies of her own life, all she knew about slavery in the South had formed her smouldering hatred of oppression. Now, in 1843, the winds of change and rebellion were blowing stronger. Abolitionist activity was growing. More and more slaves dared to win freedom through the Underground Railroad. She heard about the great women and men who were leaders of her people.

She had been named Isabelle, called Belle, and known by the names of a succession of slave owners. Now she discarded her slave name, as so many were to do over 100 years later. She was a sojourner, a traveller. Truth was “the name of the Lord” and so she took the name. She was 46 years old when she left New York City “to do the Lord’s work.”

### **Famous speech**

A large open-air religious meeting provided the first opportunity for Sojourner to speak to the people about the evils of slavery. Later, she stayed at a cooperative community where she met Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison and Olive Gilbert, the woman who collaborated with Sojourner on her autobiography. Her

book became a weapon in the struggle against slavery. She began to speak at Abolitionist meetings, selling her book, singing her “homemade songs.”

Abolitionist activity led her quite naturally into the women’s rights movement. In the same manner, the militant white women who arrayed themselves against slavery had become the nexus of the women’s movement. There was no conflict over priorities in those early days — each movement fed the other, each movement was stronger because of the other.

It was in 1851 in Akron, Ohio, that Sojourner gave her famous “Ain’t I a Woman” speech. The Women’s Rights Convention was chaired by Frances B. Gage. She said of that never-to-be-forgotten occasion:

“Through all the sessions old Sojourner sat crouched on the corner of the pulpit stairs, her sunbonnet shading her eyes. Again and again timorous trembling ones came to me and said, ‘Don’t let her speak, Mrs. Gage, it will ruin us. Every newspaper in the land will have our cause mixed up with abolitionists and n—s, and we shall be utterly denounced.’ There were very few women in those days who dared to ‘speak in meeting’ and the august teachers of the people [hostile clergymen] were seemingly getting the better of us.

“When slowly from her seat rose Sojourner Truth, I rose and announced Sojourner Truth and begged the audience to keep silence for a few moments. Rolling thunder couldn’t have stilled that crowd, as did those deep and wonderful tones, as she stood there with outstretched arms and eyes of fire. It was pointed and witty and solemn, eliciting at almost every sentence deafening applause. She had taken us up in her strong arms and carried us safely over the slough of difficulty.”

Sojourner was the only African American woman at those early conventions and some of the things that concerned the middle-class white women were puzzling to her. She asked, for instance, “Should a woman not have the legal right to retain her

own silver and jewelry if she divorces her husband?”

### **‘Speak upon the ashes’**

Through the pre-Civil War years, Sojourner kept on talking, kept on singing, kept on walking — to Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, back to Ohio and Michigan. Never resting, harassed, arrested, the 60-year-old woman kept on “bringing the truth to the people” about slavery. On one occasion she was told the Copperheads (Confederate sympathizers) had threatened to burn the meeting hall. “Then I will speak upon the ashes,” said Sojourner.

With the Civil War ending chattel slavery, Sojourner, nearing 70, continued to serve her people. She worked in a freedmen’s settlement in Washington and in a hospital for wounded soldiers. During that period she fought successfully to desegregate the horsecars in Washington. “The inside of those cars looked like pepper and salt,” she said after her victory.

The Emancipation Proclamation may have brought an end to chattel slavery, but it didn’t end the scourge of racism. The Black people, whose efforts had been decisive in turning the tide of war in favor of the North, were betrayed almost as soon as the war ended. Instead of the promised “40 acres and a mule” for ex-slaves, the plantations were restored to the former slaveholders. Sojourner’s people were jobless, homeless, hungry.

Sojourner, now 73, entered on her last great crusade to petition Congress to open up Western lands to ex-slaves.\* She retraced the path she had followed in her long fight against slavery, speaking, travelling, filling up petitions with names to be presented to Congress.

As the U.S. government made less and less pretense of being concerned with the rights of African American people, Sojourner realized it would be a futile gesture, so

the petitions were never presented to Congress. Yet even after defeat and disillusionment, as an 80-year-old woman she continued to travel and to speak against her people's oppression, for women's rights, for prison reform, and for the rights of working people.

Sojourner died in 1883. Once a slave who wanted to please her master, she had become a powerful servant of the people. She had lived long, but she did not, as we have not, seen the triumph of her two "beloved causes," the liberation of the African American people and the liberation of women. "They will have to give us house-room or the roof will tumble in," sang Sojourner in one of her "homemade songs." Since then, Sojourner's sisters and brothers, heirs in the struggle, have escalated her demand: "They will have to give us the house, or the roof will tumble in."

\* Given the record of cooperation between the African American and Native peoples during the centuries of slavery, we can visualize their sharing of Western lands to the benefit of both, and unity against the destruction of people and land in the interests of the ranchers and railroaders.

*This article first appeared in the August 1971 issue of Battle Acts, a publication of Women of Youth Against War and Fascism.*





# In response to President Maduro's letter to the people of the United States

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
April 8, 2020



The Network in Defense of Humanity - U.S. Chapter expresses our heartfelt solidarity with the people of Venezuela and its only legitimate President Nicolas

Maduro Moros in this hour of danger.

The U.S. administration is creating more conflict and aggression against Venezuela, while people all over the world are fighting a dangerous virus pandemic.

Two weeks ago, the Trump administration filed bogus criminal charges against the elected Venezuelan President and thirteen other Venezuelan officials including the chief justice of their Supreme Court.

A few days ago, on April 2nd, the U.S. deployed naval ships off the coast of Venezuela, the largest U.S. military deployment since the 1989 invasion of Panama.

This comes on top of ever increasing economic sanctions intended to increase the people's suffering and strangle the Venezuelan economy.

It is outrageous that the U.S. Administration is sending resources against Venezuela for war while being disorganized and inept at getting lifesaving equipment such as ventilators, beds, and even facemasks to its own population and medical workers on the frontlines.

President Maduro spoke to the common interests of people from both the United States and Venezuela. "The peoples of the United States and Venezuela are not as different as their lies try to make us believe." He spoke to the common dreams of a "more just, free and compassionate society."

President Maduro implored U.S. citizens "to not allow your country to be dragged once again into another unending conflict, another Vietnam, another Iraq, but this time closer to home."

While other countries such as Cuba, Russia and China are sending medical workers and equipment to assist internationally in the common fight against Covid-19, the Trump administration is sowing conflict and threatening war.

We demand an end to the U.S. policy of threats, sanctions and aggression.

We stand in solidarity with the people of Venezuela and the world.

[Network in Defense of Humanity, U.S. Chapter](#)

April 6, 2020



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# **Baltimore Housing Authority blocks elderly and disabled from receiving food**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

April 8, 2020

Peoples Power Assembly

For Immediate release 3/30/20

Contact Persons: Reverend Annie Chambers at 443-768-7682 or text or call her team at 410-996-4848

Today, Monday, March 30, at 12 p.m., the Housing Authority of Baltimore City staff members blocked the Franciscan Center and other food pantries from delivering essential groceries to families and senior citizens living in Baltimore's Douglas Homes public housing development.

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of last week the Housing and Urban Development Resident Advisory Board delegate for Douglas Homes, Reverend Annie Chambers, coordinated with several food pantries, including Living Classrooms, the Power House, The Free Farm and the Franciscan Center to deliver groceries to seniors, the disabled, mothers of newborns and other Douglas Homes residents that are unable to make it to a grocery store. Food was also distributed to those who cannot afford groceries, as no one was turned away. These groceries include bread, milk, diapers, infant formula, fresh produce, canned goods and more.

Today, an incident occurred around 12 p.m. Several housing authority staff members assembled on the corner of Bond and Orleans streets in Douglas Homes. They would not let the Franciscan Center deliver food to the residents of Douglas Homes. The Housing Authority's Cheryl Harrison Jackson said that giving away food on Housing Authority property violates Housing Authority rules. Food already delivered was instructed to be thrown away by Ms. Harrison, but the Housing Authority Staff members under her refused to comply.

The director of the Franciscan Center arrived to clarify that their center is an approved food pantry that is allowed by Baltimore City to distribute meals and food during this crisis. The Housing Authority staff still denied him access to Douglas Home and said they will not allow them or other pantries to make food deliveries even during this crisis.

The director of The Franciscan Center said, "My understanding is that the Housing Authority is saying that you can't give out food in a public housing setting. Our food consists of bagged lunches and vegetables, and that's what we're trying to give out."

The Franciscan Center is one of the many community locations designated by Baltimore City to provide food during this crisis.

The Housing Authority has made it clear that they will continue to deny drop-offs from food pantries. Reverend Annie Chambers, who is coordinating the food drop-offs, is vowing to do everything in her power to get these groceries to the people in need despite the Housing Authority trying to stop her. The Housing Authority has threatened to evict Reverend Chambers when she attempts to distribute food tomorrow (March 31st) even though no evictions are currently allowed due to the coronavirus crisis.

Reverend Chambers said, “We’re here in public housing with no help and no support. Just for giving out food today, they threatened to call the cops on us. They threatened to evict me. But I’ll be here again tomorrow to give out more food no matter what! We’re just trying to survive. People here have nothing.”

For more information, call Reverend Annie Chambers at 443-768-7682 or text or call her team at 410-996-4848. Her address is 247 North Dallas Ct., Baltimore, MD, on the corner of Bond and Orleans streets.



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# **Malaya Movement Baltimore: Repurpose U.S. military funds to coronavirus response**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
April 8, 2020



Although the United States federal response to the coronavirus pandemic seems inadequate and purposefully misleading, it pales in comparison to the response of the Philippines government. Instead of immediate measures to provide adequate care, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has mobilized the military and police, especially in urban areas, to enforce a lockdown on the entire island of Luzon.

The Duterte administration has deployed 40,000 military and police to set up checkpoints in all of Luzon — a policy that is not only ineffective in combating and containing Covid-19, but worsens the already difficult economic and social conditions that the people of the Philippines face. While self-quarantine and social distancing are necessary measures to limit the spread of a disease, it is not possible for the majority of the Filipino people, who struggle for regular income, decent

housing and adequate health care. Military checkpoints only serve to delay and prevent the majority of Filipino people from making their livelihoods — [three out of five otherwise employed people](#) in Luzon will lose wages due to the lockdown.

Making matters worse, the Duterte administration made [massive cuts to public health](#) for the 2020 budget. For example, the budget for the Epidemiology and Surveillance Program was cut by more than half of its original budget: from Php262.9 million in 2019 to Php115.5 million in 2020. The budget for the Health System Strengthening Program was also cut by Php6 billion in 2020. These are funds that could have been used to provide adequate hospitals, quarantine facilities and health care workers. Instead, the Duterte administration has enforced de facto martial law on the entire island of Luzon.

But why raise the situation in the Philippines amidst a crisis here in the U.S.? The answer is simple: the U.S. government can take immediate action to simultaneously release funds for public health measures and address the humanitarian crisis in the Philippines by completely cutting funding to Operation Pacific Eagle.

President Donald Trump's fiscal year 2020 defense budget dedicates [\\$72.3 million](#) to Operation Pacific Eagle. Operation Pacific Eagle, previously known as Operation Enduring Freedom, is a Department of Defense program that sends millions of dollars in police and military aid every year to the Philippines government. The Department of Defense claims that this aid is for the battle against ISIS in Mindanao, but in reality, it is the police and military who have carried out more than [27,000 extrajudicial killings](#) since Duterte's election.

Cutting off U.S. police and military funds to the Philippines government would effectively curtail the Duterte administration's militarized response to Covid-19 and force a public health-based response. Freeing up those funds in the United States federal budget would allow them to be repurposed for a robust medical response to our own Covid-19 crisis.



To summarize, Malaya Movement Baltimore issues the following demands:

1. For the U.S. government to immediately cut funding for Operation Pacific Eagle.
2. For the U.S. government to repurpose those funds for medical staff and equipment to contain and combat Covid-19.
3. For the Philippines government to immediately end the military lockdown of Luzon.
4. For the Philippines government to take a scientific, public health-based approach to containing and combatting Covid-19.

Malaya (“free” in Filipino) Baltimore will continue our campaign to end support for the Duterte administration in the Philippines and all forms of martial law and extrajudicial killings, and we call upon Filipinos in the U.S to join us in building both opposition to tyranny and support for the cause of freedom and democracy in the Philippines.

Stop the killings in the Philippines!

Never again to martial law!

Health care is a human right!

Malaya Movement Baltimore

Malaya.baltimore [at] gmail.com

(410) 625-0713



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# **‘We condemn all forms of racism, pledge to stand together in solidarity’**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
April 8, 2020



The Peoples Power Assembly strongly condemns the racism emanating from the highest levels of the U.S. government, which seeks to demonize and blame China during a world pandemic.

Targeting of Chinese and other Asian people constitutes a hate crime; it has led to horrific attacks on Asian people, both physical and verbal.

The virus is not the “China or Wuhan virus” any more than it is the “Italian virus” or anywhere else in the world that has been impacted. It is both shameful and cruel during a world crisis to use racism to divert workers and poor people from building badly needed solidarity.

One should remember that the “Spanish Flu” epidemic a century ago never originated in Spain but rather in the United States; it was first publicly recognized by Spain.

### **Racist neglect**

We also condemn the racism inherent in the disregard of those who are most vulnerable, who are mostly Black and Brown people, including prisoners, who already are disproportionately impacted by an unjust incarceration system referred to as “mass incarceration”; and immigrants who are locked up in horrific detention camps, rightly referred to as concentration camps by many Jewish groups.

We continue to call for the release of prisoners, especially older prisoners, those who have not been tried and are languishing because of lack of bail, and all prisoners convicted of nonviolent crimes. Iran, a country demonized by the Trump regime as repressive, released all of its prisoners. We continue to call to shut down all detention centers and end deportations.

### **Solidarity needed**

The antidote to racism is solidarity both at home and abroad. It is clear that, with most of the world’s people impacted, we live in an interconnected global world that calls for new solutions and global cooperation.

The U.S. sanctions and blockades have created hardship and suffering of people all around the globe, from Iran to Venezuela, from Cuba to Zimbabwe, and many other countries, especially during this pandemic. The occupation of Palestine and continuing war in the Middle East intensify death and destruction.

### **End sanctions**

Sanctions and blockades work in two ways — not only creating terrible hardships in the targeted countries, including death — but also preventing workers and poor here in the United States from benefiting from the successes of blockaded countries like Cuba. The immune-boosting antiviral drug Interferon alpha-2b developed by Cuba was used in China and now Italy to help save coronavirus patients. Nothing has been done by the U.S. government to work with Cuba to bring this medicine to patients in

U.S. hospitals.

The trillions spent on the Pentagon war machine could pay for health care for every single person in this country. It's time to end all sanctions.

If you witness or are a victim of racism, please call or text us at (410) 218-4835.



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## **Italy: Communist efforts in the coronavirus outbreak**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
April 8, 2020



*Joint declaration of the Popular Front, Italian Communist Party and “La Città Futura” collective*

Italy, like many other countries, is facing a severe health emergency in these weeks. Many people are in deadly danger and suffering from coronavirus infection. Others are in isolation in their homes, waiting for a complete recovery. There have been hundreds of deaths so far. We wish to express our warmth and closeness to the families and communities affected.

We address our sincerest thanks to all those who work in health care facilities as elsewhere. Every day, they expose themselves and commit themselves to protect public health and the functioning of services to the citizens. We extend our sincere solidarity to the many who continue to work in the current challenging conditions.

Our National Health System, our economy and our society face unprecedented pressure from the post-war period to the present. We shall not underestimate the commitment by the whole country to cope with the emergency: it is indeed a proof of the vitality of Italian society that we shall be proud of.

As communists, we carry now more than ever the responsibility to play a leading role, which means primarily to participate in the collective effort to face the emergency and overcome it.

Our militant community is at the forefront in helping to spread awareness of individual responsibility; in making the containment measures ordered by the authorities effective; and in carefully following the hygienic instructions necessary to avoid the further spread of the contagion. Each one of us feels the responsibility of participating in the prevention, and we must discourage any irrational behaviour. Noncompliance with the measures opens the way to dangerous mass psychosis that multiplies the infection.

In recent decades, communists have been among the very few to fight against cutbacks in public health care. We have called to fight against the model of “differentiated autonomy,” which promotes a de facto privatization by fostering “subsidiarity” with local and regional authorities. The events of these days dramatically show the validity of our concerns. Two dramatic examples are the institutional disorder created by regions-state overlapping competences, and the rush to mobilize the best energies of the country to recover the lost ground in the medical garrison of the territory.

Bringing back these questions today is an integral part of the responsibility we must assume in contributing to the management of the emergency. We must build the broadest awareness over the political and historical responsibilities of the ruling and élité classes. We must be vigilant, at the political and at the union level, on what is going on in these hours to fight the virus, resolutely supporting every measure that

strengthens the operational capacity of the health and health-related structures.

We also strongly call for measures to be taken to protect health in prisons, which have been condemned to overcrowding by the well-established repressive logic of recent years. We call for alternative sentences for prisoners with minor sentences and a low level of social danger.

For us, these considerations must be framed in the broader perspective of restoring and strengthening the democratic model, the formal equality among citizens, the pursuit of substantive equality and the exercise of popular sovereignty. All this has been repeatedly undermined in recent decades by reactionary constitutional reforms and the neoliberal influence of the European Union. For this reason, in the same spirit that led us to take a stand against reduction of the number of members of Parliament, we radically oppose the proposal to appoint an extraordinary commissioner to manage the coronavirus emergency. The democratic institutions are perfectly capable of working to protect public health with the legal instruments at their disposal. We must therefore firmly reject any instrumental attempt to take advantage of the situation to endorse an authoritarian and dangerous logic.

In situations of crisis, it is always clear which social forces are able to take responsibility for not surrendering to adversity and making progress in the interests of all. This role today, once again, belongs to the workers. As communists, we are at their side in facing the dangers of the moment, with the perspective to open the way to the progress that Italy urgently needs.

Milan, March 12, 2020





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# Philippines: Communists call for collective action against Covid-19

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
April 8, 2020



In the face of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic, and the threat of the epidemic rapidly spreading among the Filipino people, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) calls on the Filipino people and all their revolutionary forces to mobilize, organize and act collectively to respond to the emerging public health emergency.

This response must be organized and be led by the organs of political power comprising the people's democratic government (PDG), based primarily on the revolutionary village committees and mass organizations in the guerrilla zones, as well as by the revolutionary organizations under the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). The people's collective response must be both widespread and comprehensive. All possible resources must be mobilized and directed at supporting the collective response of the people to the threat of a Covid-19 epidemic.

The Party calls on all agencies of the PDG and the NDFP to activate and strengthen existing village health committees and build thousands of other health committees in factories and communities. These committees, composed of local health workers and volunteers, must help organize the people's collective response.

Health committees must lead in studying and raising awareness about Covid-19 in order to encourage a collective people's response. They must exert efforts to mobilize the broad masses in campaigns to prevent the spread of the disease through sanitation and community cleanup drives, as well as encouraging personal hygiene. They can facilitate the free distribution of face masks, alcohol, soap and other cleaning agents. They can mobilize people to produce face masks using other possible alternative material. They can help spread the use of herbal medicine to help strengthen the people's resistance to similar coronavirus strains.

In addition, the factory-based workers' health committees must push for other practical health and safety measures such as free provision of medical and hygiene

kits to workers, and other measures to improve working conditions and make them less vulnerable to the easy transmission of pathogens. Urban poor health committees must push for more efficient garbage collection, access to clean water, as well as free distribution of health kits and sanitation systems.

The Party calls for a humanitarian united front of all democratic forces to help mobilize all possible resources in order to extend the broadest support for people's actions against the threat of a Covid-19 epidemic. The Party calls on all enterprises, from big capitalists to small businessmen, as well as international humanitarian agencies and organizations, to extend all forms of support — including supply of face masks, alcohol and testing kits — to help people's health committees and local people's organizations to ensure the success of the collective response of the people.

The Party calls for strengthening the democratic organizations of nurses and doctors, and medical professionals and health practitioners, to ensure their welfare amid serious threats to their lives as they stand at the front line in the fight against the Covid-19 epidemic. They seek an increase in allocations for public health to help ensure funds both for raising salaries, improvement of medical facilities and scientific research. They must counter state policy support for health service-for-profit and medical tourism. They must demand the strengthening of public hospitals and stop the policy of commercialization where generating profits is placed at the center of their operations.

The Party also calls for further strengthening scientific research in order to develop testing kits and vaccines and antivirals. At the same time, there must be deeper study and understanding of the links between the emergence of Covid-19 and other recent viral outbreaks and the practices of big capitalist agriculture.

The Party directs all units of the New People's Army (NPA), its medical officers and red fighters, to assist the people and their health committees in the campaign of mass mobilization against Covid-19. Units of the NPA can guide the local health

committees in efforts to come up with a plan of collective response. Its red fighters can help in sanitation drives and cleanup campaigns in villages around the areas of operations of NPA units.

### **Criticism of response of Duterte regime**

Instead of coming up with an organized response to the Covid-19 threat, the Duterte regime has resorted to a lockdown which is causing further grave economic hardships on the people, without any provision for financial insurance during the one-month period. The measures have already caused widespread disruptions in economic and commercial activity. Many people observe that if the lockdown stubbornly persists for one month, it is likely that there will be more people who will die because of hunger than the disease.

The military and police checkpoints across the National Capital Region and other provinces where people's temperatures are taken and which have prevented people from going to their place of work, or to look for work, border on the stupid. Not only is it useless, it is resulting in chaos and creates conditions for the easy transmission of diseases. What the people need are testing centers, not checkpoints.

The lockdown and checkpoints are part of the standard solution of Duterte's martial law mindset. It covers up the government's failure to even ensure basic supplies of face masks, alcohol and sufficient numbers of test kits. Knowing the gravity of the disease, Filipinos are easy to convince to have themselves tested whenever they notice symptoms. Duterte, however, is obsessed with imposing his will, even on the matter of public health, even if this causes large scale dislocations.

The lockdown also covers up how the Duterte regime cut by half the 2020 budget for the Epidemiology and Surveillance Program (from P262.9 million to P115.5 million), which severely limits the capacity of the Department of Health to handle the outbreak of diseases. It obscures the grave state of the country's public health

infrastructure marked by dilapidated facilities and severe lack of state funding for public hospitals. The inability of the Duterte regime to provide a correct response to the emerging public health crisis (through the provision of medical and social and not military and police measures) thoroughly exposes the rotten fundamentals of the Philippine ruling economic system.

The threat of the Covid-19 epidemic has added to the grave public health conditions of the Filipino people. Last year, there were more than 150,000 cases of dengue fever where at least 650 died. There is also the grave problem of tuberculosis and other controllable and treatable diseases. These manifest the consequence of the miserable social conditions and state abandonment of the people's health.

March 17, 2020

Source: [Philippine Revolution Web Central](#)



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# The coronavirus has unmasked the

# **sick brutality of capitalism - only principled global solidarity will be sufficient to contend with this pandemic**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
April 8, 2020



Statement from [Unión del Barrio](#)

The coronavirus (COVID-19) health emergency is unfolding on a scale that has impacted all of us as a species. This moment represents a new global consciousness that is spreading across the world in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with people quickly coming to the realization that only as a species can we hope to deal with this crisis. Within the U.S. this pandemic has unmasked the moral and institutional bankruptcy of the most advanced for-profit healthcare system in the world as one that is designed primarily to maximize profit, while proving largely useless for addressing the foreseeable COVID-19 health emergency.

Parasitic U.S. private insurers and the healthcare industrial complex shamelessly double dip to grow their already overblown profit margins. Nearly \$4 trillion was spent on healthcare in 2019, making the U.S. model the most expensive, and least effective healthcare system in the capitalist world. Corporate executives and investors argue that this incredible sum of money was never intended to provide a viable health safety net for the entire U.S. population – much less so in a time of crisis. As the for-profit healthcare system is now faced with a national healthcare crisis, private medical interests once again turn to the public to pay the bill, and happily accept \$8.3 billion of public funds allocated by the federal government (March 6, 2020 H.R.6074 – Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2020). Furthermore, private medical companies and HMOs are ready to access another \$50 billion in public funds with the March 13, 2020 national emergency declaration.

This has been a publically enacted and politically sanctioned act of national insurance fraud. This fraud is being perpetrated and celebrated by Donald Trump and his minions, who convene press conferences and applaud the corporate C.E.O.s and the “public-private partnerships” that will save us from the coronavirus. Away from the cameras, central bankers have flooded private industries with “free” money to the tune of \$1.5 trillion dollars in order to prop up the collapsed stock market. Very soon the U.S. federal government will announce massive bailouts of private airlines, oil companies, and the cruise industry. These aggressive economic interventions need to be understood as focused entirely on the health of the capitalist system only – equivalent to the toilet paper hoarding and destructive individualism currently being displayed by so many regular people in our society, and none of it is intended to support the urgent healthcare needs of this society.

Indeed, when we take a minute to look past the buffoonish trumpian boasting and incompetence, the true nature of the capitalist system becomes apparent in times of crisis. The rotten core of individualist consumer culture is exposed and in the end



the only thing we can be sure of is that this grotesque system of monetized chaos and social inequity will likely condemn many of our communities to elevated levels of viral exposure.

We have no doubt that as this health crisis escalates, there will not be a sufficient level of political nor moral discipline demonstrated by elected officials to advocate for brown and black communities within the U.S. We must also recognize the lack of institutional motivation and organizational capacity needed to provide the necessary medical services to our barrios. Long before trumpista fascism took hold of this country, our communities have historically been denied institutional support and resources in times of crisis (during massive fires, earthquakes, and previous epidemics). We have no other option than to assume that trumpista fascism, especially when it is operating under a scarcity of healthcare resources, will intentionally deny institutional support to many of our communities during this healthcare emergency.

Therefore, the primary task for Unión del Barrio in the coming weeks and months is to implement as robust a set of emergency procedures we can muster. We must prepare ourselves to provide active solidarity to our members, our extended families, our political allies, and the neighborhoods where we have an on-the-ground organizational presence. To the degree that we can be disciplined in maximizing solidarity among those closest to us, will be the measure of how we can challenge the hysteria and neoliberal individualism promoted by the mainstream capitalist media. All of our organizational capacity must be channeled towards building community-based hubs of social solidarity. Unión del Barrio must do our part to advocate for the health and security of our barrios.



# Unión del Barrio Community Guidelines for Addressing the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic

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## ***Securing the wellbeing of UdB membership:***

1. Each member of UdB (and solidarity-minded people in general) should secure the following consumables and store them in our homes to prepare for a general quarantine-household “lockdown.” Any person that is not able to gather these materials, please inform your local leadership in order to request guidance and/or support for securing these materials:
  - 30-days of non-perishable food. For example, gather items such as canned goods, frozen foods, etc. that can be stored for a month.
  - 2 weeks of any required medications, if any.
  - 5 days of emergency drinking water.
  - Fill the gas tanks of all vehicles to which you have access.
  - Gather cash in hand, as much as possible up to \$500 per person.
2. Identify and check in with comrades who are unusually vulnerable, for example those members do not have access to medical services.
3. If you are a member that feels ill, inform your local leadership and self-isolate. Do not attend any meetings or events at least until you receive some form of medical advice and have spoken to your local leadership.
4. All UdB-led public events (community meetings, youth activities, rallies, protests, etc.) scheduled during the month of March should be immediately postponed. These postponements may have to be cancellations, and may also have to be extended to activities planned for April. All new updates that relate to this point will be available via this website: <[http://uniondelbarrio.org/main/?page\\_id=4368](http://uniondelbarrio.org/main/?page_id=4368)>.

## ***Securing the wellbeing of UdB allies and supporters:***

1. Unión del Barrio members and allies should immediately begin to centralize a list of allied organizations and collectives (as well as contact information for their leadership) that can be potentially mobilized if there is a need to bring together an organized mass-based community response to this health crisis. Email this information to <uniondelbarriocc@gmail.com>.
2. Unión del Barrio members and allies should begin to centralize a list of supportive medical workers and institutional services (as well as contact information). Email this information to <uniondelbarriocc@gmail.com>.

## ***Securing the wellbeing of our broader communities:***

1. Unión del Barrio members, allies and general community members should report to a centralized location any potential “security threat” perceived in our barrios that represent a risk to families or communities. This includes unusual movements of local, state, and/or federal police, ICE, or other governments agencies, as well as the presence of white supremacist/ fascist individuals and/or groups. Email this information to <uniondelbarriocc@gmail.com>.
2. Unión del Barrio members, allies and general community members should report to a centralized location a list of the following community services offered by school districts and/or local agencies that provide food distribution and no/low cost medical services. Email this information to <uniondelbarriocc@gmail.com>.
3. Unión del Barrio members, allies and general community members should report to a centralized location a list of the following community health

related “hot-spots” of vulnerable people within our communities. This list should be centralized at minimum for the Los Angeles and San Diego areas, and will serve as a guide for us to prioritize all of our public political and advocacy work. Of course all sectors of our communities are vulnerable, but we should expect these sectors will be intentionally marginalized (and potentially repressed) by local, state, and federal authorities. Email this information to <uniondelbarriocc@gmail.com>. We must remain vigilant if a need arises for UdB and allies to intervene as an organized force on behalf of these sectors:

- Large concentrations of undocumented gente.
- Large concentrations of vulnerable students.
- Large concentrations of older people.
- Large concentrations of homeless people, especially when these populations are within our barrios.
- Large concentrations of agricultural and industrial workers.
- Local jails, prisons, and immigration detention centers.

Unión del Barrio calls on our members, comrades, and allies to immediately implement this plan until further notice. We must demonstrate the best attributes of a people’s revolutionary organization to protect the health of our members, allies, and our working-class communities. We are guided by the fundamental principles of human solidarity and active rejection of bourgeois tendencies of hoarding, selfishness, and neoliberal individualism.

Email all questions, updates, or pertinent information to <uniondelbarriocc@gmail.com>.

UdB national phone number is 619/398-6648.

The primary UdB COVID-19 webpage for updates is: <[http://uniondelbarrio.org/main/?page\\_id=4368](http://uniondelbarrio.org/main/?page_id=4368)>.



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# **While millions here lack health care, U.S. bombs Iraq and invades Yemen**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
April 8, 2020



The coronavirus stalks the land. Millions in the United States are without health insurance or paid sick leave. The White House has cut funds to the Centers for Disease Control. It's also cutting food stamps. People are not getting tested for the virus because there are not enough kits.

But the Trump regime wants to bail out Wall Street and Big Oil. Not only with nearly \$2 trillion, but with war and sanctions, with bombs, missiles and blood.

[On March 12, U.S. planes carried out air strikes across Iraq](#), murdering members of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units battling ISIS and al-Qaida. An airport worker also died when the U.S. Air Force bombed a civilian airport under construction.

The Pentagon claimed it was retaliating for an attack on a U.S. military base, Camp

Taji, that killed two U.S. and one British occupation soldier. On March 14, rockets struck the base again.

Iraq's parliament and government have asked U.S. troops to leave their country. The Pentagon refuses to bring them home.

[On March 11, U.S Marines invaded Yemen](#) to back up Saudi-United Arab Emirates forces attacking that impoverished country. They are on the island of Socotra and in the port of Aden. Yemen is being [ravaged by hunger and cholera due to the U.S.-backed Saudi blockade](#). The United Nations has called the situation there "the worst humanitarian crisis in the world."

In Syria, Washington is trying to sabotage a ceasefire negotiated by Russia between the Syrian government and the invading Turkish NATO army. Turkey's forces are backing al-Qaida terrorist forces in Syria's Idlib province with U.S.-supplied F-16 fighter jets and Israeli Sabra tanks. U.S. troops occupy Syria's oil fields, denying Syrians the use of their own oil.

["Turkey is a NATO ally," said U.S. "special envoy to Syria" James Jeffrey.](#) "We have a very, very big foreign military sales program; much of the Turkish military uses American equipment. We will make sure that that equipment is ready. As a NATO partner, we share information intelligence. ... We are going to ensure that they have what they need there."

On March 4, the White House approved [a \\$2.4 billion deal to sell aerial tankers](#) to the racist apartheid state of Israel. The tankers would extend the range of the 50 F-35 combat aircraft the U.S. is giving Israel, making it easier for the settler state to attack Iran.

This is while brutal U.S. sanctions hinder Iran's fight against the coronavirus. Iran has called U.S. sanctions, which have killed thousands in the past two years,

[“medical terrorism.”](#) China is defying U.S. sanctions to send medical aid-test kits, medicine, ventilators and protective gear to Iran.

The U.S. State Department’s Defense Security Cooperation Agency said the Israeli tanker sale “supports the foreign policy and national security of the United States by allowing Israel to provide a redundant capability to U.S. assets within the region, potentially freeing U.S. assets for use elsewhere during times of war. Aerial refueling and strategic airlift are consistently cited as significant shortfalls for our allies. In addition, the sale improves Israel’s national security posture as a key U.S. ally.”

Meanwhile, on March 11, 15-year-old Mohammed Abdel Karim Hamayel became the 10,000th Palestinian murdered by the U.S.-armed Israeli military since 2000. He was shot by an Israeli army sniper while he and his friends were trying to defend their village, Beita near Nablus, from “Israeli” settlers trying to seize their land. U.S.-armed Israeli soldiers and settlers, often born in the U.S., terrorize and murder Palestinians daily in an effort to drive them from their homes. And people in the besieged Gaza Strip are still dying from the U.S.-Israeli blockade.

What’s all this got to do with the economic meltdown triggered by the coronavirus? Everything. War is capitalism’s answer to crises of oversupply and overproduction. That’s what this crisis fundamentally is. It is devastating the U.S. oil and gas industry and the U.S. fracking industry most of all.

Since 1990, the U.S. has waged war after war to save the oil industry and its bankers from a global crisis of oversupply, to keep their investments profitable. War and sanctions created an energy-price bubble that pumped up corporate profits and made the U.S. fracking boom seem like a gold mine. But no amount of blood sacrifice can forever appease the god of capital. It always demands more. The crisis always comes back.

The people of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Yemen and the entire region have made it clear that they do not want U.S. troops on their land, U.S. warplanes in their skies or U.S. warships in their waters. They are demanding that the U.S. leave. The people of Palestine need to be free of U.S.-funded Israeli occupation. Working-class and oppressed people in the U.S. also need to be free of U.S. financial-military capitalism and its permanent war economy. We need to build a mass people's movement to put an end to endless war.



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## **Feed the people, not the Pentagon: Hunger march to D.C. planned on King anniversary**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

April 8, 2020

On Feb. 20, the Peoples Power Assembly announced a campaign to roll back food-



stamp cuts and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) rule changes taking effect in April.

On April 4, on the anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the group will launch a “Hunger March” from Baltimore to the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C.

The Department of Agriculture must face the poor families, children and food industry workers who will suffer from its actions.

The people losing SNAP benefits (as food stamps are now officially called) are just the tip of the iceberg. Social Security Disability benefits and children’s school lunches will be cut, too.

But not the Pentagon! This year, the military got a \$130 billion increase. People will starve while billionaires like Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos pay next to nothing in taxes.

### **700,000 people to lose food stamps**

This April, some 700,000 people will lose food stamps. Millions more will get fewer benefits under USDA rule changes made by the Trump administration.

In Maryland, over 50,000 people will lose food stamps. In Baltimore City alone, 15,000 will be cut. Nearly 25 percent of the people in Baltimore — that is 1 out of 4 people, many of them children — already go to bed hungry.

Major cuts in food stamps will also mean that many small grocery stores that service the poor will have to close their doors. This is a crisis affecting not only big cities, but many small towns and rural areas across the U.S.

### **School lunch programs cut; children suffer**

The Department of Agriculture’s rule changes not only impact food stamp recipients,

they will also reverberate in cuts to free school lunch programs.

As of this writing, it remains unclear exactly how many children will lose school lunches. But, according to [USDA regulations](#), as many as 942,000 children could be cut.

### **Millionaire Sonny Perdue attacks workers' rights on the job**

Millionaire Georgia farmer and politician Sonny Perdue is the Trump-appointed head of the USDA. On top of food stamps and school lunches, the USDA also overhauled slaughterhouse rules that threaten the safety of workers.

These rule changes removed federal limits on pork-processing line speeds. While highly profitable for the meat industry, it puts workers in danger of higher rates of injury, both acute and long term. The United Food and Commercial Workers union has [filed a lawsuit](#) to suspend the rule change.

### **Activists say, 'Fight, don't starve!'**

On Jan. 18, during the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. birthday holiday, Miranda Bachman from Youth Against War and Racism participated in a March to Resist War and Racism, opposing U.S. war threats against Iran and Iraq and to stop the food stamp cuts.

She explained, "People were so angry about food stamps being cut that some of those watching our protest from bus stops and the sidewalk spontaneously joined the march."

She added, "Our phones started ringing immediately. April 4 is our next step. Please [sign our petition](#)."

Andre Powell, a Peoples Power Assembly organizer and retired AFSCME state

worker who helped to administer the food stamp program, explained: “We have to organize and march. It’s time to revive the Food Is a Right Campaign and the old slogan, ‘Fight, don’t starve.’”

Powell added: “The Trump administration, and more importantly the entire capitalist system, is determined to roll back every possible workers’ gain imaginable. But we can stop it if we organize and fight.”

March organizers are [inviting groups to endorse](#) and join in organizing the march.

“On April 4, we will put a face on poverty. We will march from Baltimore to the doors of the USDA,” concluded Powell.

