RACIST POLICING

a public health issue

Gloria Verdieu is a longtime San Diego activist, well known for her tireless work on progressive issues and especially her dedication to causes of particular importance to the African-American community. As leader of San Diego’s Committee Against Police Brutality, she was asked to speak at the “Ending Police Violence” shadow session at the American Public Health Association meeting held in San Diego from Nov. 10 through 13 (See the accompanying report). The Public Health Justice Collective convened the plenum “Health Equity Now: Ending Police Violence” as an addendum to the annual meeting. This plenum was held at the Centro Cultural de la Raza in San Diego’s Balboa Park and included a keynote address by professor Alex Vitale, author of “The End of Policing.”

Modern policing in the United States and Western Europe has two origins: the systems of controlling enslaved Africans and surveillance poor and working people. In both instances, policing has remained a tool to disrupt the survival and self-determination of oppressed people.

An encounter with the police could be a point of no return, especially for Black and Brown, or poor people. It could mean losing your driver’s license, job, jail time, months and possibly years of litigation because you have no money for legal representation.

The effects all of this has on families and close relatives can be devastating.

“Police killings and brutality damage mental health of Black communities,” is how policing should be treated like a public health issue, forcing the entire system of recruitment and training to change. Boston University’s School of Health and the University of Pennsylvania released a study that found that the high rate of unarmed African-Americans being killed at the hands of police has caused more incidents of depression, stress and other mental health issues among Blacks. In other words, overwhelming police brutality is damaging the mental health of African-Americans — even those who have no direct connection to men, women and teens who have lost their lives at the hands of police. This report was released two days after 17-year-old Antwon Rose II was shot, June 19, 2018, by police in East Pittsburgh following a traffic stop.

Here is a recent Facebook post by a Black man in San Diego: “Today I was in America, driving an American car with American license plates down an American road when a Border Patrol agent stopped and asked me what country I was from.” Even though I did not have information to determine if this stop was right or wrong, I was relieved that no one was killed, locked up, tazed, choked or beat up.

I thought about the times that I was followed and/or stopped by the police. I recalled how nervous and stressed I became, wondering what I did wrong. Checking the passenger seat to make sure I had my purse where I keep my driver’s license and that my registration and insurance cards were in the glove compartment, and, at the same time, reminding myself to stay calm. You know the things to do if stopped by the police.

For all of the people — Black, Brown, Asian, indigenous and white — who can’t calm down or for whatever reason don’t have insurance or registration? They may know their rights, but express them in the wrong tone, because they haven’t been trained on representation. They may know their rights, but express them in the wrong tone, because they haven’t been trained on how to do it. I know how to do it.

The number multiplies when we consider those who were killed, locked up, tazed, choked or beat up. Twenty-year-old Sonsera Holloway was killed by a Border Patrol agent in the San Diego neighborhood of City Heights in 2000. She was 5 months pregnant. Her mother, Chery, who became an activist for years following the murder, has now moved away. The last time I spoke with her, she said, “My life and my other children’s lives will never recover.”

Bililey Vonauthe, Anastasio Hernández, Victor Ortega, Valeria Tachiquin, Alfred Olango, are only a few of over 100 people killed by the police in San Diego since 1999 when CAPB started recording people killed by the police. It’s a partial list, because we will never know exactly how many because the state has no comprehensive database that lists the names of those killed by police.

These are people who paid the ultimate price when stopped or confronted with law enforcement. The number multiplies when we consider those who were killed, locked up, tazed, choked or beat up. Their families paid the cost and did the time along with them.

A documentary on Native American health and healing said that the primary source of health issues is stress, emotional stress, family stress, time related stress and the many other things that can cause mental stress in the mind and body. It went on to say that stress affects every tissue in the body — the digestive system, the cardiovascular system, diarrhea, heart disease, the list goes on. This is a concern especially for Black, Brown and Black and Brown people face high doses of stress daily just driving or walking while Black or Brown.

Policing has a negative effect on the health and safety of our communities because many of us see the police as a force that intimidates and harrasses the communities who pay them to protect and serve. Policing is a public health issue!!
The humanitarian crisis in Yemen demands, as a first step, the unconditional withdrawal of U.S. weapons and military aid—not excuses to justify remaining a partner in genocide.

It doesn’t matter whether Washington calls it a political structural democracy and another country a dictatorship or failed state. These are words used by the powers—that-be to vilify their targets and ease public acceptance of imperialist war.

What actually matters is the fact that a much more powerful imperialist country is using its power to secure a sovereign nation for the ultimate purpose of profit.

V. I. Lenin, leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, wrote when analyzing World War 1: “The struggle for markets and for plundering foreign lands destroys the freedom of all countries, the urge to deceive one another, to inveigh against the slaves of one nation against the wage slaves of another nation for the profit of the bourgeoisie—that is the only real content and meaning of the war.” (August 1914)

We have both Republican and Democratic Party politicians—even some who call themselves socialists—pushing for wars in Libya, Afghanistan, or whipping up fear about the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea). Yemen is no exception to their targets.

For years, Saudi Arabia has been violating the sovereignty of the people of Yemen in their fight against U.S. and Saudi imperialism. The movement of resistance, Ansar Allah (called Houthi rebels in the U.S. media), at one point successfully overthrew the government tied to Saudi Arabia and the U.S. It was then met with attacks from both al-Qaida and the coalition forces of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

How’s a CBS news report from Nov. 28 described the situation: “With weapons supplied by the U.S., Saudi Arabia is capable of much greater damage. The Saudi-led coalition has hit weddings, markets and greater damage. The Saudi-led coalition imposed a month-long blockade of Yemen just for self-determination and the immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces after the revelations came out last March about mass starvation from the U.S.-assisted war in Yemen, and especially after Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi’s murder at the Saudi Arabian consulate in the capital, June 4. And the following week, people began to respond with anger and shock. A way of appealing that had to be manufactured. Not with a bill that would actually stop U.S. assistance vital to the Saudi war against Yemen—but with a bill that could calm the opposition while continuing to block self-determination for the people of Yemen, which would likely threaten U.S. profits.

As Lenin explained in his scientific analysis of capitalism’s final, imperialist stage, the constant acquisition of land, resources and increased exploitation of labor is required to fend off a continual decline or decay in its ability to maintain the ruling-class profit mechanism. This requires more war and denying the working class even more of the wealth created through its labor. Taking basic services like food, healthcare, and education away from workers is a direct consequence of the trillions of dollars necessary to prosecute imperialist wars. Dollars that could be spent on our communities, the wars that steal the wealth of workers abroad, lead to more police and immigration and Customs Enforcement brutality here at home, to keep the people in fear so they won’t demand the wealth that they created.

As the world is being satisfied with whatever piece of legislative rotten meat is thrown our way, let’s come together and make our own solutions. Let’s work on shutting this system down and demanding that not one more child die in criminal wars for profit.

School bus bombed in Yemen.

What Sanders won’t say

Built-in U.S. war drives fuels genocide in Yemen

By John Parker

According to the report: “Almost four years since the brutal conflict in Yemen escalated, the U.N. says that more than 13 million people are at risk of famine. That number has increased dramatically since the Saudi involvement in Yemen, joining the coalition that would eventually become the de facto government of Yemen (al-Qaeda and the coalition).” (Dec. 19)

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On Sept. 19, 2016, the Washington-Post announced it was likely the U.S. gave white phosphorus weapons to Saudi Arabia to use in Yemen. The Sanders’ campaign publicly didn’t do anything to stop the use of these types of weapons against the children of Yemen simply because they threatened the complicity of the Democrats and their supporters, whose talents and abilities set off a continual decline or decay in its ability to maintain the ruling-class profit mechanism. This requires more war and denying the working class even more of the wealth created through its labor. Taking basic services like food, healthcare, and education away from workers is a direct consequence of the trillions of dollars necessary to prosecute imperialist wars. Dollars that could be spent on our communities, the wars that steal the wealth of workers abroad, lead to more police and immigration and Customs Enforcement brutality here at home, to keep the people in fear so they won’t demand the wealth that they created.

On Dec. 19, President Donald Trump announced plans to withdraw U.S. ground troops from Syria. This long overdue acknowledgement of the long overdue acknowledgement of the imperialism’s strategy to dismember the Syrian Arab Republic set off a firestorm in Washington. Defense Secretary James “Mad Dog” Mattis announced his resignation over the decision.

This has led to much confusion on the left, with some groups even calling for continuing the illegal U.S. occupation to “protect” Kurdistan Rojava. Struggle-La Lucha will write more about this situation. For now, we take the view of the Sanders campaign in the letter written after the 1991 U.S. war against Iraq. Marcy’s article gives a historic perspective on the Kurdish struggle for self-determination and the imperialist role in the Middle East.

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By Sharon Black

Jakelin Amei Rosmery Caal Maquin was barely 7 years old when she died on Dec. 12 following her detention by U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

She had traveled with her father, Nery, from the village of Retalhuleu, about some 2,000 miles from Alta Verapaz, a rural Indigenous community in Guatemala, to seek asylum in the U.S.

A full, independent investigation has yet to be conducted. What we do know from her father’s statement to the media is that Jakelin had eaten and had water prior to being taken into custody by the Border Patrol. She and her father were among a group of 16 asylum seekers detained at Anacostia Wells, in a remote area of the New Mexico desert.

Life-threatening circumstances for migrants are created by the federal policy that places border sentries on international bridges to block people from entering the U.S., forcing them to cross at much more dangerous and remote spots.

Both were first detained at the Bounds Forward Operating Base, one of 17 military bases recently constructed in Texas, Arizona and New Mexico. The purpose of these outposts is to catch people, including children. They are not staffed to respond to medical crises even though they deal with large numbers of refugees and migrants in a harsh environment.

Department of Homeland Security investigators earlier found that the bases were plagued with contaminated and potentially unsafe drinking water. “They found ‘excessive amounts’ of chlorine, iron and dirt in water at the bases,” according to their report,” according to the Daily Beast.

It took 8 hours before buses arrived to take the asylum seekers, including Jakelin and her father, Nery, to their next destination at the Border Patrol Processing Center in Lordsburg, N.M. It was another 90 minutes before Jake- lin was transported for emergency medical treatment. By then her temperature was 105.9 degrees Fahrenheit, and she was having convulsions, according to the Daily Beast.

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The Guardian reported Maquin’s Grandfather said the Guatemalan family lived on $5 per day earned harvesting avocados, and Jakelin’s father, Nery Gilberto Caal Cuz, hoped to be able to send money home from the U.S.

In another example of the cruel hardships and separations that migrants and refugee families face, a Guatemalan man, Neó Aguilera, was recently denied a visa by the Trump administration to attend the funeral of his 13-year-old daughter in North Carolina. The child, Hania Aguilera, was kidnapped outside her mother’s home and murdered.

No borders in workers’ struggle

Struggle—La Lucha spoke with Greg Akili of Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, a leader of the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice in Los Angeles. Parker and his group recently traveled to the Mexican border to deliver aid to the refugee caravan, along with the American Indian Movement SoCaL, #MeToo International March Movement, Cosecha and others. These groups continue to collect aid and travel regularly to the border.

“As a father, I found the news of Jakelin’s death to be deeply painful and troubling,” said Parker. “The rights of all asylum seekers are being violated. Frankly, all walls need to be torn down, from Mexico to Palestine.”

“asked why he felt so passionately about this issue, he explained that his son, who like Parker is Black, is at risk daily of experiencing police terror in Los Angeles. He worries every time his son leaves the house. “So I understand what it means to be a parent who could lose a child.”

Parker exclaimed, “There are no borders in the workers’ struggle.”

Justice for Jasmine!

Rally supports Black mother and infant assaulted by cops

By Greg Butterfield

Brooklyn, N.Y.

More than two dozen people gathered outside a New York City Human Resources Administration office in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn, on Dec. 11, for a rally and demonstration in support for Jasmine Headley.

“endangering the welfare of a child”

“We are here today to demand jus- tice for Jasmine Headley and all the unknowing Jasmine Headleys — Black women who are victimized for simp- ly trying to live like human beings and tell their children, ‘Don’t care if we die, but they do come out and get arrested for taking photos before Jazmin’s body is incrimined upon all of us to continue this fight for Jakelin so her death isn’t in vain.”

President Barack Obama had record deportations of migrants and his administration assisted the coup in Honduras and led the wars against Libya and Syria, causing a worldwide refugee crisis.

Graywolf, who emceed and repre- sents AIM SoCaL, said that we must educate ourselves about how the U.S. causes the problems, but then wants to blame everyone else.

The vigil was covered well by the media and coverage by RTLA news can be seen here.

New York State Assembly member Latrice Walker said she had spoken to Headley’s mother, who was car- rying 18-month-old Damone: “The baby is traumatized and still seeking medical attention.”

Walker said: “I remember what it was like as a child, the long lines and long wait. Enough is enough. Poverty is not a crime.”

Under intense public pressure, Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Goni- zalez and Mayor Bill de Blasio lat- ter dropped all the charges against Jasmine Headley. After five nights in jail on Riker’s Island, she was finally released at 9 p.m. on Dec. 11.

But the struggle for justice for Jasmine and her son isn’t over. They are examples of the millions of workers whom the capitalist system is unable to provide with jobs and decent living conditions, and instead criminalizes based on racism and poverty.
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STRUGGLE ★ LA LUCHA

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Dec. 20 – After negotiating with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) for 20 months, and without a contract for a year, 35,000 members of United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) have set a strike date of Jan. 10. Strong community and labor support is mobilizing for the teachers.

LAUSD is the second largest school district in the country. There hasn’t been a strike since 1989.

In the union’s strike vote, 83 percent of membership participated with 98 percent voting in favor. Three hundred unions in the County Federation of Labor have voted their support, and LASchoolReport.com has announced that the California School Employees Association also representing LAUSD workers — has asserted their right to carry out a sympathy strike.

On Dec. 15, a mass rally and march in downtown Los Angeles — estimated at up to 50,000 people — illustrated union members’ determination and support in a big way. Thousands wore red shirts, balled drums and snaked through the streets. Chants of “UT LA!” “Union power!” and “Beutner! Beutner! You can’t hide! We can see your greedy side!” echoed from the walls of the city’s business center.

Who is Austin Beutner?

The face of LAUSD’s intransigence in bargaining is the newly appointed superintendent of schools, Austin Beutner. His May 2018 appointment to that position drew an outcry from educators, staff and parents. His appointment was made through the support of Los Angeles billionaire developer Eli Broad, Netflix billionaire Reed Hastings, the Walton Foundation and others who are funneling and funding the national campaign to “Charterize” and privatize public schools.

Beutner is a former investment banker with a reputation for breaking up companies and selling off the parts. He worked in Russia to help sell off all the workers’ socialized property of the former Soviet Union. He was also the publisher of the Los Angeles Times until he was fired in 2015. He plans to break up LAUSD into 32 “neighborhood networks.” According to UTLA’s website, in July he reportedly told a group of corporate supporters that the school district may “be no more” by 2021.

With Beutner’s addition as superintendent, the Los Angeles School Board is dominated by pro-charter and privatization forces. UTLA’s membership knows that they are fighting not only for fair wages and working conditions, but for the survival of a public school system serving 90 percent students of color and 85 percent low-income.

The money’s there

LAUSD claims that there is not enough in the budget to meet the union’s demands of a 6.5 percent salary increase, smaller classroom sizes, more nurses and mental health counselors, and more school supplies. UTLA negotiators point to the district’s $1.7 billion reserve fund, which would be more than sufficient to make all the improvements that educators say must be made.

CABLE MONOPOLY

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Check out the strikers’ website at www.cutthecordspectrum.org.

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Así fue el primer encuentro de trabajadores de los servicios de transporte en el Distrito Escolar Los Ángeles. No hubo acuerdos, pero se han fijado el día del 10 de enero para una huelga de solidaridad.

Por Scott Scheffer Los Ángeles

20 Diciembre – Después de veinte meses de negociaciones con United School District (LAUSD) de Los Ángeles, y sin haber tenido un contrato por todo un año, 35,000 miembros del United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) han fijado el día del 10 de enero para comenzar una huelga. Un fuerte apoyo comunitario y sindical se está movilizando para las y los maestros.

LAUSD es el segundo distrito más grande de todo el país. No a habido apoyo comunitario y sindical se está movilizando para las y los maestros.

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With Beutner’s addition as superintendent, the Los Angeles School Board is dominated by pro-charter and privatization forces. UTLA’s membership knows that they are fighting not only for fair wages and working conditions, but for the survival of a public school system serving 90 percent students of color and 85 percent low-income.

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On Feb. 6, 2019, Indigenous political prisoner Leonard Peltier will mark the beginning of his 44th year in prison. Now 74, Peltier is Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) and Lakota from the Turtle Mountain Reservation and was framed... www.struggle-la-lucha.org/leonard-peltier/