Act now to stop coronavirus pandemic

A PEOPLE’S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

By Greg Butterfield

We place no confidence in the anti-science, climate-change deniers of the Trump administration, that economically, scientifically, and morally inadequate for profit U.S. health care system, or Big Pharma and Wall Street to address the Covid-19 (novel coronavirus) crisis. The truth is that only a socialized health care system that provides equal access and quality care for all, regardless of ability to pay or immigration status, can address this situation, which is causing fear and anxiety for companies, individuals and families.

The Affordable Care Act of 2010 actually imposes financial penalties on those unable to afford health insurance, an estimated 27 million people still have no coverage. That’s not counting the millions more undocumented workers, and those whose coverage is so minimal as to be useless. The infrastructure required to contain and treat outbreaks such as Covid-19 exists in countries like China and Cuba, but is sorely lacking in the United States, the richest country in the world, where the disparity of rich and poor is also greatest.

In New York, workers at Chipotle restaurants have held picket lines and walkouts to protest the company’s refusal to honor sick days. In Ohio, police in riot gear attacked University of Dayton students to prevent them from using a gas and pepper balls on March 11, when they were protesting being abruptly evicted from student housing as the college shut down. Housing activists in Boston rallied on March 12 to demand a moratorium on evictions.

In Baltimore, community organizations led by the Peoples Power Assembly held a news conference and rally on March 7 to outline a people’s response to the Covid-19 crisis and demand action from city officials to protect the poorest and most vulnerable. Two days later in New Orleans, activists from the Hospitality Workers Alliance disrupted a mayoral press event, demanding that workers be provided with paid sick leave, health insurance, and free testing for the virus.

In Chicago, Augusta, Ga., and several California cities, National Nurses United held rallies at hospitals on March 11 to protest new Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations rolling back protections for health workers and patients.

Given the potentially life—or-death consequences, it’s no wonder that workers, students and communities are starting to take action across the country. What is urgently needed is to unite these local initiatives into a broad national movement whose demands address all the urgent needs of the workers and oppressed.

Can’t wait for November elections to respond

For an effective response to Covid-19 to succeed, it must involve the leadership of health care workers and members of the affected communities at all levels. The response to the Covid-19 crisis cannot wait for the outcome of the November elections.

As workers, organized and unorganized, unemployed and underemployed, Black, Latina, Asian, Arab, Indigenous and white, undocumented people, women, LGBTQ+ people, students and youth, prisoners, homeless and disabled people, we must apply all forms of pressure to force the government to take the necessary measures for control and treatment of Covid-19, while ensuring that anti-Asian racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination against our communities or attacks on other countries are not substituted for real solutions.

If the government fails to respond, what can be done? We must be prepared to take direct action to protect our class and communities, including taking over health care and other facilities in cooperation with health care workers and their unions, requisitioning medications and supplies, distributing food stores, and imposing a moratorium on rent and layoffs.

We must demand that all candidates for the U.S. presidency and other elected officials, as well as current elected officials, take a clear position. In particular, Bernie Sanders, who advocates Medicare for all, and the Sanders 2020 campaign, which has the most progressive stance on health care of all the Democratic and Republican campaigns, should be encouraged to participate on this question.

We will not allow local, state or national “emergency declarations” to be used as an excuse for repression: for banning protests and strikes; for increasing the police occupation of Black and Brown communities; for jailing or deporting immigrants; or for the deployment of the National Guard or other military forces to prevent “looting,” that is, the liberation of the necessities of life and health from profiteers.

We demand that the U.S. government institute cooperation and assistance to other countries fighting the spread of Covid-19. We have seen how the Trump administration used the outbreak in Wuhan to score political points against China while sitting on its hands and doing nothing to assist in stopping the spread of the virus either here or abroad. This is unacceptable. The Covid-19 crisis is an international crisis and solving it requires international cooperation.

The post-pandemic period is critical. A new government must demand an international agreement that redirects the trillions of dollars the world has spent on “national security” to invest in meaningful programs that meet the needs of a global society in crisis.

We have a chance to build mass movements to demand a people’s response to COVID-19. We need to unite now to demand that our leaders take action and that our communities respond.

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

Baltimore People’s Power Assembly

As health care workers and advocates and as community, civil rights and union organizers, we call on City and State officials to begin preparations to protect the people of Baltimore, especially those most vulnerable, for a COVID-19 outbreak in our community.

We believe there are special considerations to be addressed in Baltimore. For instance, most of our population are low wage workers living paycheck to paycheck, close to 25% live below the poverty line; and a large number of people regardless of age have chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease that put them at greater risk for death.

Concerns for the elderly and the poor, the homeless, prisoners and our immigrant population need to be addressed sooner rather than later.

These considerations are not only critical for Baltimore but for workers and the poor across the State of Maryland. As such, we are disseminating this to the Governor, State and Senate Delegates also.

We therefore request a meeting with the Baltimore City Health Department — and other political officials and leaders so that we can jointly address our specific concerns and our proposals.

Concrete proposals and questions:

• Full paid sick and childcare leave to all impacted workers for the duration of the time that workers are forced to be off their jobs. This includes workers who are sick or quarantined and also school workers including teacher support staff, custodial workers, etc. It includes parents who are forced to stay home with children.

• No reprimands or job losses for workers who are sick, quarantined or taking care of school children or family members.

• Halt evictions and foreclosures for those who are sick, quarantined or cannot work due to the crisis.

• Develop a plan on how food can be distributed and delivered to vulnerable families and individuals who cannot stockpile supplies.

• A large number of school children in Baltimore City depend on school provided lunches. Implement a plan in each school to deliver lunches to children in the event of school closing. Include teachers, their union, and parents in this plan.

• Provide a phone hotline staffed by medical professionals so that those who do not have primary doctors or nurses can get clear health instructions so that testing and other home services can be coordinated.

Continued on page 4
Dinner honors revolutionary activist Tomás Soto

By Bill Dores

One hundred and fifteen people packed a restaurant in the Dominican Republic city of Santiago on Feb. 29 to celebrate the life and legacy of Puerto Rican revolutionary activist Tomás Soto. Reservations had been made for 50. Soto now lives in Santo Domingo, but friends and colleagues packed a restaurant in the Dominican Republic capital to honor the revolutionary.

The highlight of the evening was a slideshow presentation by Soto. Reflecting his love of science, the slide show started with the origins of the universe and life on earth, including everything that makes us human. "The story of every human being stems from every corner of the world," Soto said. He then went on to describe Soto's own fascinating life, which embodied many of the iconic working-class struggles of the 20th century.

Soto's father and his family were Independentistas. He was raised in the barrio of Ensenada, where U.S. troops landing at Balita Bay were received. During World War II, Soto's father joined the merchant marine and the National Maritime Union. His mother and her family were Independentistas. He was raised in the barrio of Ensenada, where U.S. troops landing at Balita Bay were received. During World War II, Soto's father joined the merchant marine and the National Maritime Union.

Soto was among the first U.S. soldiers sent to Vietnam. He was with Black soldier Eliaḥ Elijah Seabrook on Sept. 9, 1968. They were among the 1,000 Black and Latinx seamen who had joined the merchant marine and the National Maritime Union in a protest against the Vietnam War. During the Cold War, Soto worked in the Dominican Republic. In 1999, he moved to New York City and joined the Prison Solidarity Committee.

Soto was also involved in community struggles in his Washing
ton Heights neighborhood. In 1969, he was assaulted and stabbed by a landlord's goons for leading a rent strike for heat and hot water in the building he lived in. He spent 9 days in the hospital. He returned to Puerto Rico in 1999, where he took part in the independence movement and the fight against U.S. naval shelling of the island of Vieques. In 1999, he moved to the Dominican Republic.

Marlyn Ramirez, who helped organize the Feb. 29 dinner, described Soto as "a living legend, a great human being whom I admire and respect — a2caring and humble man of great accomplishments." Radhames Morales, the U.S. coordinator of the Dominican left party Fuerza de la Revolución, also attended the event. He said, "I have the honor of knowing Tom Soto for many decades and I can testify that he has been a lifelong revolutionary mili
tant. Tom worked on many fronts of struggle in New York City, but what stood out most was his ongoing work for the independence of Puerto Rico. His fight against the war in Vietnam, in which he played a protagonistic role, and support for the Salvadoran guerrillas with their FMLN was outstanding. Tom also stood out in the student struggles in New York universities, but the front in which he contributed most was the defense of the tenants rights in the Dominican community of upper Manhattan. For me, Tom Soto is an international militant who has demonstrated once again that the brotherhood knot that unites Cuba, Bori
quen and Quisqu
ey is inseparable."
California graduate students expand strike for cost-of-living adjustment

By John Parker

If you go on the website of University of California graduate student workers who are now fighting for a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to manage extremely high rents, you will see daily updates like this:

"UC Wide Blackout – today, March 5. At UCSC, both entrances to campus have been closed since 5:30 a.m. No class, no work! Come to the picket for food and community. Wear black! ... class, no work! Come to the picket for food and community. We are fighting for a COLA, and the UC administration is fighting us!"  

Those graduate student workers at U.C. Santa Cruz, members of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 2865, representing 19,000 student workers at the U.C. system, began a wildcat strike in December after fruitless negotiations with administrators. They are demanding a $1,412 per month COLA to meet skyrocketing rents in the area.

That militance reflected the anger of the late Feb. 28. U.C. Santa Cruz had issued a letter to 54 graduate students and the frustration of student workers across the U.C. campuses who pay well over 50 percent of their salary on rents, leaving little for food, health care and transportation, especially if they have children.

Veronica Hamilton, vice president of U.C. Santa Cruz’s graduate student association and chair of the campus union, Local 2865, was quoted in the Los Angeles Times on Feb. 28 regarding the challenges of workers: "Housing is expensive in Santa Cruz, and student workers have a difficult time living on the typical stipend of $2,400 a month before taxes.”

According to the Cost of Living Adjustment White Paper done by U.C. graduate students, a one bedroom apartment in the city of Santa Cruz costs over $1,800 per month, eating up 75 percent of that $2,400 stipend.

According to a Cost of Living Adjustment White Paper done by U.C. graduate students, a one bedroom apartment in Santa Cruz costs over $1,800 per month, eating up 75 percent of that $2,400 stipend. The strike continues. Together, we win! See you on the picket.

The U.C. administration, in an attempt to break the strike and solidarity, offered $2,500 for one year instead of the $1,412 requested. The money goes to all Master of Fine Arts and Ph.D. students at U.C. Santa Cruz only, excluding other master’s programs and applies to graduate students in general, not to graduate student workers, allowing the offer to fail under a union contract.

In a statement regarding that offer, UAW Local 2865 President Ravita eyngar writes: "While we are glad to hear this news [of the $2,500 stipend offer], it is not enough, for three reasons: first, because it is not under the framework of a union contract and thus not legally enforceable, it is not guaranteed. Second, it is limited to workers at Santa Cruz. As our framework for a COLA demonstrates, workers at every single campus are rent burdened and need this relief. And third, even with these funds, student workers are still rent burdened.”

To get caught up on the strike, you can visit the various social media sites for the nine U.C. campuses participating, found on the website https://payusmoreucsc.com/.

The Social Evolution of Humanity
Marx and Engels were right! by Bob McCubbin

This study of the evolution of humanity focuses on human social/sexual relations and, in particular, the changing social status of women. It offers a selection of scientific evidence that updates and augments the viewpoint expressed in Frederick Engels’ masterful work ‘Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.’

McCubbin is the author of ‘Roots of Lesbian and Gay Oppression: A Marxist View.’ First published in 1976, during the first flush of the modern LGBTQ2S movement. McCubbin’s unparalleled achievement was to offer a historical analysis of when, where, why and how LGBTQ2S oppression developed.
Covid-19 in Baltimore: ‘This is a people’s issue’

By Daniel G. Cardwell

Over a dozen community organizers and health care workers met to raise concerns over the city’s response to Covid-19. Members of the People’s Power Assembly (PPA) and National Nurses United (NNU) called upon city officials, the Baltimore City Health Department and city residents to work together to protect the community’s most vulnerable people.

Standing in front of Baltimore City Hall, Sharon Black of the PPA read a list of demands. They included paid sick and childcare leave for all low-wage workers impacted by the illness. That means no reprisals or job losses. Those who are sick, quarantined or taking care of school children or family members. The activists also called for the city to halt evictions and foreclosures for those who are sick, quarantined or cannot work due to the crisis and for government distributions to students in case any Baltimore City schools are forced to close.

After the demands were read, Jennie Lu of NNU spoke to the importance of nurses having a constant voice in running hospitals and health care — not just during times of crisis. She pointed out that an "abnormal" 29 percent of nurses nationwide said that their employers had a plan to deal with Covid-19. “If nurses aren’t protected, then nobody is protected.”

‘Patients should not be afraid to seek care’

The NNU also demanded Johns Hopkins cease suing patients for medical debt, which deters people from seeking care in the first place. When people can’t get treatment, they remain sick and have a higher chance of passing on illness. As Lu pointed out, medical debt hurts everyone, not just the poor.

Longtime Baltimore Civil Rights leader Marvin “Doc” Cheatham responded to the City Health Department’s recommendations for prevention: “We don’t need you to tell us what needs to be done. We need you to come work with us.” Cheatham also stressed the importance of neighbors banding together, not waiting for the government to respond.

Bonnie “Raven” Lane also gave practical demands to help address the concerns of Baltimore’s homeless people. She called on city officials and shelters to provide public washing stations and increase sanitation of public spaces, like buses and public parks.

Solidarity with people of the world

Black and Indigenous and Latinx communities are even more endangered by this pandemic because of poverty and racist policies. The millions of over rates of health insurance coverage and less access to medical care. As the capitalist health care system fails us, Cuba offers to send doctors to the most vulnerable communities around the world. In Baltimore, labor unions, community activists and socialists are taking the lead in making progressive demands of city and state officials, while directly organizing people to defend themselves from a crisis sparked by Covid-19 and a falling market.

Act now to stop coronavirus pandemic

A PEOPLE’S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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✓ Iran is suffering a severe outbreak and its efforts are being hampered by U.S.-imposed economic sanctions. All U.S. sanctions and blockades against other countries must be ended, including against Cuba and Venezuela, whose exemplary health care system and population health indicators in the face of natural disasters are recognized as some of the best in the world.

✓ In December 2019, the U.S. Congress, including most representatives and senators of Republican and Democratic parties, voted to give President Trump a $2.5-trillion budget increase for the Pentagon. We demand that this money be rerouted from the bloated U.S. war machine to the international effort to stop the Covid-19 crisis and to create the infrastructure to deal with future pandemics.

✓ The many university research and development programs that operate in cooperation with the U.S. military industry should be repurposed to produce critical treatment of Covid-19, to save lives now and to improve the response to outbreaks in the future.

✓ Before President Trump signed off on any health officials and abruptly subordinated them to Vice President Mike Pence on Feb. 26, the Centers for Disease Control issued some advice to the public concerning Covid-19. One was for people to stock up on at least 2 to 3 weeks’ worth of nonperishable food items in case of Covid-19. They include paid sick and childcare leave for all low-wage workers impacted by the illness. That means no reprisals or job losses. Those who are sick, quarantined or taking care of school children or family members. The activists also called for the city to halt evictions and foreclosures for those who are sick, quarantined or cannot work due to the crisis and for government distributions to students in case any Baltimore City schools are forced to close.

✓ What about the prisons? The U.S. has by far the largest prison population on earth, with some of the worst conditions, particularly when it comes to health care. Communities disproportionately affected by mass incarceration and the prisoners themselves must be put in charge of determining the necessary measures to adequately protect them.

✓ According to Wall Street and the corporate media, the dramatic drop in the stock market was caused by fear of Covid-19. But the profit system has been teetering on the brink of a recession for at least a year. Mass layoffs or wage cuts cannot be allowed to take place by blaming the virus. The government must institute an immediate moratorium on layoffs and wage cuts.

These are just some examples of the measures that are required. Others will surely be raised and must also be addressed. Labor unions, community organizations, activist groups and socialists should take the lead in organizing people at every workplace, school and neighborhood to fight for these demands.

On March 11, the city of San Francisco and the state of Washington banned “large gatherings,” while Washington, D.C., recommended cancelling or postponing any events of 1,000 people or more. The town of New Rochelle, a suburb of New York City, has been put under a “containment zone” for 14 days by New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who deployed the National Guard there.

Of course, many organizations, both mainstream and in the progressive movement, have postponed public events and closed event spaces to help contain the spread of the coronavirus. This is laudable. But the time may come soon when the risks of not taking action are greater than the risks of mass gatherings. And even after the current crisis is passed, workers and communities will likely have to fight to maintain and expand their right to protest, strike and organize.

The money, people-power and technology to respond to the threat of the Covid-19 outbreak and future dangers to the health and well-being of the people. But those resources must be taken over and mobilized by the people and for the people, not for the interests of the profit-hungry 1% who have shown themselves time and again that they don’t care if we live or die.
Cuba: Better than ‘not all bad’

By Cheryl LaBash

March 10 was primary election day in Michigan. One of the major issues brought forward in the Sanders campaign among many important ones like eliminating cash bail and racist mass incarceration, is Medicare for All.

Sanders was vilified for daring to say that Cuba is “not all bad.” The return to Cold War stereotypes about socialism and communism is a relic that has lost its punch with the younger folk.

As we experience the chaos reigning across the U.S. as the capitalist economic system and neoliberal government structures deal with the Covid-19 virus epidemic, let’s reflect on how Cuba’s medical system might handle this differently.

First, of course, health care is a human right in Cuba. Everyone is covered for everything up to and including heart transplants. The U.S. blockade has made it difficult or impossible to get some equipment, replacement parts, medicine and more, but everyone is covered.

This is the aspect that compares with the U.S. most directly. All the health care systems in all imperialist and former colonizer countries reportedly have this universal health coverage — with the lone exception being the United States.

Cuba better than ‘not all bad’

But Cuba also has family doctors who live in the neighborhood — every neighborhood, urban and rural. The health care challenge faced by the human beings in their community. They are the first line in preventing sickness, together with the Committees in Defense of the Revolution block organizations.

Why does Cuba have fewer infant and child deaths than in the U.S. per capita? The key is prevention before cure.

If we had Cuban-style health care, our neighborhood doctors would be knocking on doors in New York, Washington, Maryland, California and other centers of the outbreak to test and interview everyone.

A general announcement in the U.S. has now declared that everyone over age 60 should stay indoors. But what if they work? Need to use a bus or subway for transportation? Who will tell their employer? Will they be paid even if they have no sick time? Will their job and income be there when the threat passes? How will they get food? In the U.S., the only safety net is the one we create for ourselves with our families and neighbors, our union and co-workers. But that isn’t enough.

What should you do if you are feeling sick? We are told “call your doctor,” but don’t go there. Most people don’t have a doctor, just an urgent care clinic run by a variety of drug stores or other companies or their health plan center. Visiting these centers potentially brings more people into contact with the virus, increasing the epidemic. How many places do you call before you get the contact number you need? How do you do this if you are sick and scared that a potentially deadly virus is attacking your body?

This kind of question and insecurity do not stress the lives of Cubans because the responsibility to deal with social crises is not left to each individual to navigate. Solidarity and unity are their key to a life better in many ways than in the U.S., although with fewer material things.

An ounce of prevention

An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure, except in the capitalist system, where the pound of cure rakes in mega-profits from Big Pharma and the corporate medical industry.

Cuba’s lower infant and maternal mortality and life expectancy equal to or better than that of the U.S. highlights the human improvement due to prevention-focused health care. And at a fraction of the cost spent in the U.S., where the cost is more than $30,000 per capita.

Medicare for All and a prevention focused health system is not the end of the story. Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla called for international solidarity to defeat Covid-19. The foreign minister’s tweet reported by Cuba News Agency “expressed the need to strengthened cooperation among the world’s nations, as well as the need to see health as a human right for all and not as a business in the hands of a few.”

The article pointed out that “Cuba has already defined strategies to contain the risk of entry and spread of the virus in the country.” But also, according to the press conference statement, “Dr. Manuel Romero Placéces, director of the Pedro Kouri Institute of Tropical Medicine (IPK) in Havana, warned that Covid-19 is one of the most virulent coronaviruses and is genetically stronger, and if protective measures are not taken, the consequences of the epidemic could be disastrous.”

On a March 9 television program explaining Cuba’s special health preparations, Manuel Marrero Cruz reiterated “that Cuba is standing beside the Chinese government and people.” He mentioned Cuba’s modest contribution in providing Interferon Alpha 2b, with proven results.

In addition to following health procedures, U.S. residents must uplift the call to end economic warfare against Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, Zimbabwe and all other countries blockaded by U.S. imperialism. Medical and pharmaceutical research on a vaccine will benefit from open collaboration. China recognized this by internationally sharing the entire genome sequence for public health authorities, laboratories and researchers.

According to Dr. Trevor Bedford, quoted on Seattle’s Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center website, “Basically, a week after registering that there’s this new thing, the amazing scientists in China have a genome for the novel virus that had never been seen before. ... That first genome has been amazing for people developing rapid tests to be able to actually confirm cases.”

Baltimore People’s Proposals for Covid-19

Continued from page 1

- Provide free broadband internet service through Comcast so that all city residents including students without service can be connected for emergency communication and school work.
- Develop a free app that can be downloaded to phones and computers so that alerts can be sent out to individuals and deliver people oriented preventative health education.

- Make sure everyone is fully covered for all medical treatment including testing and suspending debt in the advent of a major crisis.
- Protect all health care and frontline workers, consult with union representatives from the National Nurses United, 1199 Healthcare Workers United, Food and Commercial Workers and with workers directly. Make sure that there is adequate personal protective equipment for all frontline workers.
- Develop and distribute an app for all willing and able health care providers, nurses, doctors, EMS from the broader community so that there may be up to 10 as frontline teams if needed.
- Make special provisions now for undocumented and immigrant families who may be fearful in reporting illness due to fear of deportation. This includes suspending all deportations and consulting with the immigrant community.
- Make sure that plans are being made to specifically service the homeless both in shelters and in the street.
- Address the rights of those who are incarcerated, especially those in city jail, to make sure that loved ones who are locked up are not forgotten and at risk.
- What is being done by the Mass Transit Administration to ensure commuters and bus riders are as safe as possible i.e. frequently cleaning?
- We ask that the city and state government dispel racism and racist stereotypes that have been promoted during the pandemic and that accurate medical information be made widespread to the public now rather than later through TV and radio ads. It is critical that no community is targeted or blamed.

The people of Baltimore and the many organizations that they belong to are a tremendous resource that can be drawn on in a time of crisis. The city and state government has the power to declare a State of Emergency to provide for the people and take action to promote not only people’s health and safety, but to protect people from evictions, job and wage losses, and much more.

Addressing these proposals protects the health of the entire population. Unless low wage workers, the poor and those most vulnerable are insured that they will not be stigmatized or suffer great losses, they will be less able and willing to self-quarantine. Unless we involve frontline health care workers and community organizers in being part of the solution, we will be hampered in fighting an epidemic.

- Baltimore People’s Power Assembly
While millions here lack health care, U.S. bombs Iraq and invades Yemen

By Bill Dorian

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 or treated 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 Forces and al-Qa’ida. 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 soldiers. 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 point of capturing 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 between the Syrian government and the invading Turkish NATO army. Turkey’s forces are backing al-Qa’ida terrorist forces in Syria’s Idlib province with U.S.-supplied F-16 fighter jets and Israeli 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 the 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 arms to the racist apartheid state of Israel. The tankers would extend the range of the 90 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 (DSCA) tells Israeli tankers to support “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.”

Many of these cities are sanctuary cities with limits that cooperation between federal and local authorities. Moreover, it’s clear that this is an onslaught from beyond their communities. Moreover, it’s clear that this is an onslaught from beyond their communities. Moreover, it’s clear that this is an onslaught from beyond their communities. Moreover, it’s clear that this is an onslaught from beyond their communities. Moreover, it’s clear that this is an onslaught from beyond their communities. Moreover, it’s clear that this is an onslaught from beyond their communities. Moreover, it’s clear that this is an onslaught from beyond their communities. Moreover, it’s clear that this is an onslaught from beyond their communities. Moreover, it’s clear that this is an onslaught from beyond.

ICE deploys paramilitary units against sanctuary cities

By Daniel G. Cardwell

In the wake of peacefulclothes Immigrating and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents shooting an unarmed tourist from Mexico, President Donald Trump deployed hundreds of members of the Border Patrol Tactical Unit (BORTAC) — the Border Patrol’s equivalent to SWAT police — to cities.

Most of these cities are sanctuary sites that limit cooperation between local and federal enforcement and federal police like ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Armed with stun grenades and sniper training, these units are now tasked with invading migrant communities around the country. Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Newark, N.J., New Orleans, New York and San Francisco are all targets.

As Democratic politicians rebuke Trump, what is this about? A paramilitary attack against the liberal policymakers of sanctuary cities, they gruesomely line their own pockets with funds from Trump’s Operation Relentless Pursuit. The initiative increases federal police presence and distributes an additional $71 million towards federal law enforcement in Albuquerque, Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, Kansas City, Memphis and Milwaukee.

It seems that liberal policymakers at sanctuary sites are more up about the lack of federal policing money than they are about the assault on their communities. Moreover, it’s clear that this is an onslaught on migrant communities and Black communities alike.

And as if this all-out racist attack on our cities wasn’t enough, the Supreme Court has continually affirmed the state’s right to terrorize oppressed communities.

On Feb. 25, the Supreme Court dismissed a civil case by the family of 15-year-old Mexican citizen Sergio Adrián Hernández Gómez against U.S. Border Patrol agent Jesus Mesa.

In 2010, the border police agent fired his weapon over the border from Texas, killing the unarmed teen as he stood on Mexican soil. Despite video evidence to the contrary, Mesa’s claim to self-defense against “thrown rocks” was upheld by the U.S. criminal justice system, and the U.S. denied Mexico’s request for Mesa to be extradited to face criminal charges in Mexico.

But the facts of Hernández Gómez-ca’s murder weren’t at issue last week. Instead, the Supreme Court ruled on whether federal agents could be subject to lawsuits from foreign citizens in the case of cross-border shootings. Considering national security concerns, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that federal agents are constitutionally immune to being sued for killing people in foreign countries. Considering that the U.S. partes in thousands of criminal attacks on foreign countries every year, the Supreme Court’s affirmation over “national security” seems well-warranted.

The ruling had an immediate rip through the U.S. criminal justice system. The ruling had an immediate rip through the U.S. criminal justice system. The ruling had an immediate rip through the U.S. criminal justice system. The ruling had an immediate rip through the U.S. criminal justice system. The ruling had an immediate rip through the U.S. criminal justice system. The ruling had an immediate rip through.

ICE Border Patrol Tactical Units (BORTAC) are carrying M4 rifles with silencers.
Don't let Wall Street panic get in the way of a much-needed coronavirus response

By Cheryl LaBash and Gary Wilson

Holy cow! The Wall Street roller-coaster ride has taken a big plunge. By March 2, Wall Street stockholders had lost $2.6 trillion since the Feb. 19 market high. The percentage drop is changing too frequently to keep up.

The media call it the Covid-19 induced stock market crash. But how could that be?

Historically, the COVID-19 coronavirus can be devastating, more devastating in the United States than in other industrialized countries because there is no universal health care system.

Economically, the impact of a pandemic will be a temporary slowdown. There is a fall in production as workers take time off sick. School closures increase the reduction in labor supply, as workers are forced to take time off to care for children.

According to a study published in Health Economics, the fall in production is generally short term and is usually restored when workers come back and work overtime. That might raise costs, but only temporarily.

The Wall Street bankers wouldn't panic over reports of a pandemic. The COVID-19 coronavirus has caused an economic slowdown in China. China’s remarkable response fighting the coronavirus appears to have contained the spread of the virus.

The March 9 stock market nose dive partly reflected the price war in the crude oil markets. “Oil prices fell through the floor in early trading Monday, tanking as much as 30 percent after Saudi Arabia slashed its crude prices for buyers,” CNBC reported.

“This has turned into a scorched Earth approach by Saudi Arabia, in particular, to deal with the problem of chronic overproduction,” John Kilduff, founding partner of Again Capital, told CNBC. The overproduction has plagued Big Oil since 2018 and is not related to the drop in demand during the coronavirus epidemic.

The virus-related drop in demand, however, is not a permanent condition and the industry normally has the “elastic” adjusting to known falls or rises in demand.

The continuing fall of the stock market reflects the general instability. The United States is the world’s largest market for production and for profit. The economy was already slowing, contracting. Capitalist economies periodically fall into crises of overproduction, a major downturn, a full-on recession or even depression.

A Wall Street reporter on the day after a 7 percent stock market fall, “while the COVID-19 outbreak itself is unlikely to drive an economic collapse, the virus is being described as a ticking time bomb for some time.”

-Growth has declined over the last two years despite higher government spending and a $2.3 trillion national debt.

-While the labor market has boomed, many of the jobs added have been hourly service-industry positions that offer limited scope for savings or health insurance.

-44 percent of all U.S. workers earn barely enough to live on, a Brookings Institution study found in 2019.

Bernie Sanders and Big Pharma

Business Insider reported on Feb. 26 that some on Wall Street say that the Bernie Sanders win in Nevada triggered the stock market fall. “If this stock market reversal is due exclusively to the virus, then why is United Healthcare down far more than [the S&P 500]?” Jeff Gundlach asked CNBC’s Scott Wagner in an email. “Why is health care as a sector broadly not outperforming? Answer to these questions: The market is digesting a better than 50 percent chance of Bernie getting the nomination.”

The pharmaceutical-health care industry is maybe the most profitable in the U.S. The pharmaceutical companies have the highest profit margins in health care and some of the highest profit margins for any industry.

Health care is an industry, not a service. And its primary purpose is to produce a profit. Capitalism has predominated over health care in this country, maybe more than anywhere else on the planet. The insurance giants have blocked universal health care for more than a century.

More than a hundred years ago, in the 1912 elections, former President Theodore Roosevelt ran as the Progressive Party presidential candidate and included platform a platform that included support for national health insurance. Roosevelt came in second in the popular vote, behind Democrat Woodrow Wilson but ahead of Republican Howard Taft. Socialist candidate Eugene Debs, who won 6 percent of the popular vote that year, also supported universal national health insurance. The country has suffered without it.

U.S. public health care is not only by far the worst system among rich countries, it is much worse than that of many middle-income or poorer countries when it comes to confronting a fast-moving epidemic. And it is by far the most expensive per capita with poorer outcomes than countries with national health care systems, including economically blockaded Cuba.

Distributing a vaccine is not that difficult — World Health Organization workers managed it with smallpox even in the poorest regions of the world in the 1970s. Mobilizing medical professionals to administer in-home COVID-19 testing nationally or a hotline to effectively direct individuals who feel unwell are possible. But how can that be done with a health care system geared to price-gouge sick people out of as much money as possible?

Of course, Medicare for All would fix some of the worst abuses being seen in the U.S. health care system. And everyone knows it. Bernie Sanders, calling his platform democratic socialist, is campaigning for Medicare for All, as well as ending student debt, stopping deportations and a $15 minimum wage. But it’s not the politician and his promises that Wall Street heard, it’s the move behind the campaign. Millions came out to vote, seen by many as a vote for socialism, a vote that says we’ve run out of the old way. It’s time for a change. That change re-ereos in on Big Pharma and corporate health care profitiers.

Trump’s response

CNBC reported March 8 that “as confirmed cases of the coronavirus continue to rise, President Donald Trump has quickly embraced the pharmaceutical industry.” The solution, Trump says, will come from Big Pharma.

The Trump administration has decided to make the workers pay the cost of the coronavirus epidemic. The capitalist solution! It’s something like his Afghanistan policy, where Trump wants to privatize the war, that is, to turn it over to for-profit contractors like Erik Prince, making a deal with the Taliban that allows the U.S. to withdraw troops, but leave contractors in place.

The Trump administration has already made deep cuts in the funding of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC is the leading national public health institute of the United States. It should be at the head of any national response to an epidemic. Trump not only cut its budget, he has put a toadstool politician, Mike Pence, in charge of the response to COVID-19 and has overridden several CDC recommendations for responding to the coronavirus. The virus has been practically pushed out.

Meanwhile, workers are being made to bear all the costs of the epidemic: health care costs, lost work days, even loss of jobs. Most are not paid enough to be able to take on the extra expense of the high-cost U.S. health care system. This, by the way, can only increase the spread of the virus and make the illness worse.

What’s needed

The U.S. needs to make tests available and free for all. It must also deliver the necessary health care free of charge. That means everyone, including the jobless, prisoners and immigrants, no matter what status.

With a U.S. administration noted for crudely inflaming racism and anti-foreign bigotry, solidarity must triumph over any demonization of the sick or scapegoating of China or Asian people in general.

There needs to be full pay for sick leave, with complete job protection. People must make a living wage to be able to meet the requirements of a health emergency.

The fight for free universal health care and a living wage has become even more urgent as the novel coronavirus COVID-19 sweeps through our cities. It’s a movement whose time has come.

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NEPAL

Mass march challenges U.S. military scheme

By Greg Butterfield

Have you heard of the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)? Yes, it sounds like a company that produces cheesy reality TV shows. But the truth is more dangerous. And it has workers and peasants in Nepal fighting mad.

On Feb. 25, thousands of people marched through the streets of Kathmandu, Nepal’s capital, to demand that the country’s Parliament reject participation in the MCC. Many carried banners and signs in Nepali and English denouncing the MCC, while others carried red flags. The action was organized by the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP).

The angry crowd marched to the U.S. Embassy, where they were confronted by lines of police. After a standoff, a delegation of NWPP leaders was able to deliver a letter of protest addressed to U.S. President Donald Trump. Embassy staff refused to meet with them, sending out a security guard to take the letter.

At that moment, Trump was being wined and dined by the far-right prime minister of neighboring India, Narendra Modi. Trump’s visit to India unleashed a wave of violence against Muslims and supporters that left at least 24 people dead.

Trump and Modi also signed a $3 billion arms deal. The NWPP has led many protests against Indian military encroachment on its much smaller northern neighbor.

The letter addressed to Trump, signed by Parliament member Prem Suwal, says: “The [MCC] agreement is not only against the national interest of Nepal but also harms the sovereignty and national freedom of the country. Nepalese people refuse to accept the compact as Nepal and their allies always adhere to the nonalignment policy in the international sphere. It’s an open secret that MCC is a project under the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the U.S. government.”

Denouncing the MCC compact as a prelude to subordination to the Pentagon, the letter continues: “The people of the world are quite aware that the presence of U.S. military bases in different parts of the world is the main source of threat to world peace. … The MCC compact is starkly juxtaposed with the sentiment of the Nepalese people, who have long been struggling for national freedom, safeguarding sovereignty, peace and prosperity.”

What is the MCC?

The MCC was established by President George W. Bush in 2004, as a way of placing more stringent requirements on poor countries to receive U.S. financial aid. At least 45 countries currently have MCC compacts or threshold agreements — mostly oppressed countries in the global South.

The MCC is supposed to be independent of institutions like the IMF, the World Bank and multilateral organizations, but the selection process and program administration are overseen by right-wing organizations like the Heritage Foundation, Freedom House and the Brookings Institution, which loyally serve U.S. imperialism, and its criteria are largely based on countries accepting market-driven economies, austerity budgets and cooperation with the U.S. military.

On Feb. 28, the government of Sri Lanka rejected an MCC agreement on the recommendation of an expert panel, which said it would damage the country’s sovereignty and was incompatible with the constitution.

’Springboard against China’

Struggle-La Lucha spoke with Surendra Gosai, an educator and leader of the NWPP from Bhaktapur. He was part of the delegation that delivered the protest letter to the doors of the U.S. Embassy.

“The MCC and Indo-Pacific strategy is aimed at making Nepal a springboard against China,” Gosai explained. “The U.S. and India are both preparing for a new war against China. The provisions in the agreement will make Nepal a new colony of the U.S.”

“We have been opposing the MCC in Parliament and in the streets,” he said. “Today, some 5,000 youths, teachers, peasants, workers and people from different walks of life participated in the protest. We walked two hours and around eight kilometers through the capital city to the U.S. Embassy, where we handed over the protest letter. Many people in the capital expressed their solidarity with us.”

Asked how poor and working people in the U.S. can help Nepalis resist the MCC, Gosai replied: “Joining hands and intensifying the anti-imperialist struggle would be a good way. Nepalese need solidarity and it’s important to share with the workers and peace-loving people of the world how we are resisting.”

Since the march in Kathmandu, Gosai has continued to travel around Nepal, participating in rallies and marches against the MCC in several cities and towns.

Don’t starve, fight!

By Stephen Millies

Ninety years ago, on March 6, 1930, over a million people demonstrated across the United States for unemployment relief. The Great Depression had broken out a few months before, punctuated by the stock market crash of October 1929.

By the time 110,000 people gathered in New York City’s Union Square to demand help, the number of jobless had almost tripled. By 1933, 13 million people were unemployed, a quarter of the workforce.

Those were “the good old days” before unemployment insurance and SNAP benefits (food stamps) were won. If you didn’t have family members able to help, you faced homelessness and hunger. New York City hospitals reported 94 deaths from starvation in 1931.

The Communist International called for an International Unemployed Day on March 6, 1930. In the United States, the Communist Party and the Trade Union Unity League organized protests.

“Don’t starve, fight!” was the famous slogan used. A leading demand was “work or wages.”

“Last hired, first fired!” is still the rule for Black workers in the U.S. It was worse 90 years ago. By 1934, 60 percent of African American men were jobless in Detroit.

Black and white organizers in the Communist Party made special outreach efforts to African Americans. Black, white and Latinx workers rallied together on March 6, 1930.

Children were among tens of thousands of communists and unemployed who marched on New York’s City Hall in a similar protest in 1932.

In Detroit’s Cadillac Square, 100,000 people gathered. Fifteen thousand people turned out in Flint, Mich., despite the police arresting the organizers before the demonstration.

Chicago’s police chief claimed that communists were threatening “bombings and assassinations.”

Continued on the next page
By Scott Scheffer

Disillusioned former CIA operative Philip Agee wrote a book exposing the CIA’s record of spying, sabotage and murder in 1975 called “Inside the Company.” But until recently, there was an actual profit-making company, owned by the CIA, that has been one of its most important tools in espionage.

Long-held suspicions of the joint operation between the U.S. CIA and Germany’s spy agency, the BND, stole access to communications of adversaries and allies alike have now been acknowledged in a Feb. 11, 2020, Washington Post article by Greg Miller. The information theft was accomplished through a Swiss company called Crypto AG, which the two spy groups secretly purchased in 1970 and ran for nearly five decades. The spying was deemed “Operation Rubicon.”

The CIA is rotten to its core and its military wing today more deadly than just spying. The Washington Post article is based on one CIA document, but there is a massive body of long-de­layed acknowledgments, evidence and well-grounded suspicion that has been building up since the CIA’s foundation.

The CIA’s bloody footprints were clearly visible in the early 1950s, when they overthrew elected President Mohammad Mossadegh of Iran and President Jacobo Árbenz of Guatemala. In 1961, they were complicit in the murder of President Patrice Lumumba in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Months later, they were defeated by forces led by revolutionary leader Fidel Castro in their full-scale invasion at Cuba’s Bay of Pigs — and are suspected by many of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963.

During the Vietnam War, the CIA’s “Operation Phoenix” hunted down and murdered sympathizers of the North Vietnamese revolutionary struggle throughout the south. They were caught spying on anti-war and Black liberation activists here in the U.S. in the 1970s. From 1989 in Afghanistan, they armed and funded the Mujahideen to overthrow the government of what was then the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan — a new born, but short-lived socialist country. In the 1990s, they helped to dis­mantle Yugoslavia by funding and training the counterrevolutionary Bosnian Army and Kosovo Liberation Army. These examples are just a mere fraction of their crimes. We can only speculate as to how much of the information stolen by Crypto AG was used to help carry out much of it.

Crypto AG gave backdoor access

Until it was taken over by imperialist allies, Crypto AG gave government to governments that encrypt­ed their communications with their own systems for trading and war.
When CIA/BND took over, new technologies enabled backdoor access so they could read everything being sent by client countries. The encrypted information was then decoded by the U.S. National Security Agency.

In 1972, a major difference between the two capitalist states prompted the CIA to buy the German share in 1992. According to Miller, Germany became concerned about the scope of the U.S. espionage, and the CIA was annoyed by Germany’s interest only in profit. Under sole CIA stewardship, and up until its 2018 dissolution, Crypto AG still netted millions of dollars and remained an espionage nuclear weapon for U.S. imperialism.

Miller’s article revealed that, through Crypto AG, the U.S. spied on Spain, Italy, Turkey, Greece, Argen­tina, India, Pakistan and the Vatican. Progressive author William Blum wrote in “Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower,” that Iran, Iraq, Libya, Yugoslavia and other countries were targets as well. Lib­ya was the first to act on its suspi­cions and started buying encryption equipment from a different company. Iran took note of that, which led to the 1992 arrest of Crypto AG’s top salesman. After he was released, he was fired by Crypto AG and was forced to pay back the money for his bail.

Over the decades, 120 countries used Crypto AG’s equipment. The So­viet Union and China were wary, and both developed their own encryption systems. But the imperialists gleaned secrets about them from other coun­tries’ messages. They gained an edge on the Palestinian leadership and shared information with Israel in the days leading up to the Camp David talks. They shared information with Britain as it warred with Ar­gentina and seized Argentina’s Islas Malvinas in 1982. They were aware of numerous right-wing, Latin American dictatorships targeting leftists for assassination — presumably this would have included the Pinche­ro regime’s 1976 assassination of Or­lando Letelier in Washington, D.C. — and they did nothing to stop them.

In an NPR follow-up interview with Miller, when asked how high up in the U.S. presidential adminis­trations the knowledge had reached, his answer revolved around the Camp David Accords and indicated just as an example that President Carter was fully aware.

U.S. media outlets are owned by giant corporations and report on capitalist government and corporate activities to maintain the facade of a free press. Their allegiance, howev­er, is to capitalist rule. Regarding the exposure of “Operation Rubicon,” it’s noteworthy that much of the rec­ent coverage spreads the lie that the Chinese company Huawei, the world’s leader of 5G technology, will open the door to Chinese espionage via technology similar to what Crypt­ o AG has been doing. This is the line of the $1.5 trillion U.S. telecommunications industry. This myth is part of the competitive U.S. corporate war against Huawei that has gone as far as to pressure Canada to arrest Hu­awei CFO Meng Wanzhou and attempt to extradite her to the U.S. to stand trial on trumped up charges.

The CIA’s cryptographic apparatus — Switzerland

From 1979 to 1989, the CIA ran for nearly five decades. The spying was accomplished through a Swiss company called Crypto AG, that has been one of its most profitable company, owned by the CIA, that has been one of its most important tools in espionage.

Disillusioned former CIA operative Philip Agee wrote a book exposing the CIA’s record of spying, sabotage and murder in 1975 called “Inside the Company.” But until recently, there was an actual profit-making company, owned by the CIA, that has been one of its most important tools in espionage.

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A widespread myth is that President Franklin Roosevelt gave the people Social Security, unemployment benefits and the right to organize unions. None of these concessions were given. People had to fight for them.

Uncounseled employees led by the Communist Party fought evictions and demanded jobs. During one struggle to keep a family in their home, Chicago police killed the black activist Mary Gray, John O’Neill and Frank Armstrong on Aug. 3, 1931.

Thirty thousand people marched to protest this atrocity. Chicago May Day 1931 was a massive and deadly confrontation of the working class to shoot the bosses. The strike against “Little Steel,” the smaller rivals of U.S. Steel — was drowned in blood. “A plague on both your houses,” Chicago’s Democratic Mayor Ed Kelly had his cops kill 10 striking steelworkers on Memorial Day in 1937. President Roosevelt’s cynical answer was to quote Shakespeare: “A plague on both your houses,” meaning that both the labor movement and big business were responsible for this bloodshed.

But how could any unions be organized at all when a fifth of the country was jobless? The 19th century railroad tycoon Jay Gould bragged that he could hire one-half of his workforce to do nothing. Chicago’s Democratic Mayor Ed Kelly had his cops kill 10 striking steelworkers on Memorial Day in 1937. President Roosevelt’s cynical answer was to quote Shakespeare: “A plague on both your houses,” meaning that both the labor movement and big business were responsible for this bloodshed.

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Cyclical Capitalist Crises: Behind Stock market turmoil

By Gary Wilson

March 5 — The Dow index just fell 12 percent in one week, the worst week for stocks since the 2008 financial crisis. Many wonder if this could become a full-on stock market crash.

Among socialists, there is always a temptation to paint a fall on Wall Street in terms of an imminent economic or political collapse. And while that is a possibility, a market crash nevertheless seems like a collapse. It’s more like a symptom of capitalism’s economic instability.

On the other side, apologists for the Wall Street system are saying that the momentous drop is merely a “correction.” The capitalist economists claim that the global stock market fall is unrelated to the fundamentals of the economy, that the market has been gripped by coronavirus-inspired market fall is unrelated to the funtionist explanation of overproduction.

A crisis of overproduction refers to cyclical crises of the capitalist system, the economic anarchy of capitalist production.

Marxist economists often use the terms overproduction and overproduction crisis. But what exactly is overproduction?

A common conception of overproduction is based on an incomplete understanding of Marx’s theory of surplus value. Workers get in wages and benefits only a fraction of the value they create during the workday. In effect, they work for themselves part of the day in return for wages (paid labor) and for the capitalist the rest of the day free of charge (unpaid labor).

According to this view of overproduction, workers cannot purchase all the commodities they produce and that is what causes the crisis. This is called “underconsumption.”

The underconsumption explanation says that a capitalist crisis can be overcome by raising wages and expanding credit. When workers take on debt, it expands demand for housing and enables them to buy major purchases. Raising wages and expanding credit can temporarily solve the “underconsumption-ism” inherent in capitalism, allowing the economy to expand.

Some have suggested that the current crisis is related to the unprecedented expansion of consumer debt — mortgages, car loans, credit cards, student loans — to over $14 trillion, and the potential for default payments, that is, nonpayment of debt that has now reached a level last seen in the 2008 economic crash. Keynesian economics is based on an underconsumption theory, that recessions are the result of inadequate consumer demand. A major flaw in this underconsumptionist explanation of overproduction crisis is that it ignores why that idea is only, or mainly, workers who are the buyers of all goods and services. However, capitalists as well as the prototypes of surplus-value (private) institutions, including the government, especially the Pentagon, are also buyers. The capitalists are the users of the machinery and raw materials, the robotics, the computer systems, and the labor power that is required for production. And debt is not just consumer debt, but business debt, capital investments.

Overconsumption, Karl Marx said, is sheer redundancy and a result of crises that are produced by the lack of paying consumption or paying consumers. The capitalist system produces only for consumption and that is why they are in constant conflict with the exclusion of those in receipt of poor law support. ... When crises are by any means avoidable, it means simply that there are no purchasers, or consumers, for them.

“When people attempt to give the redundancy an appearance of some deeper meaning by saying that the working class does not receive enough of its own product and that the workers would be dispensed immediately if it received a greater share, i.e., if its wages were increased, all one can say is that crises are invariably preceded by periods in which wages in general rise and the working class receives a relatively greater share of the annual product intended for consumption,” Marx concluded.

A crisis of overproduction comes about because of the anarchy of capitalism’s production. Individual capitalists are in competition among them for increases in the means of production, goods and services with no guarantees that a competitor’s product being cheap or the competition of the goods and services allow the economy to expand. When workers take on debt, it expands demand for housing and enables the economy to expand. Capitalists expand production seemingly without limit and are free to collapse, they do it themselves to do that, but the markets expand only slowly if at all.

Since under capitalism, production, consumption, and the market, this contradiction is periodical resolved through a massive contraction of production, destruction of existing productive forces and mass unemployment. This resolution is only temporary. And the crisis can become a sometimes years of stagnation, production enters a new powerful expansion that leads once again to a new flooding of the economy.

Current crisis no exception

Most if not all capitalist crises since 1825 have tended to begin in the consumer goods sector, especially residential construction. Other durable goods and fast-moving industries, such as the auto industry, which became important during the last century, also tend to turn down before the rest of the economy does. The current crisis is no exception. The U.S. housing crisis is a construction crisis, a crisis of overproduction.

There are more than 53,000 homeless people in Los Angeles, yet there are more than 100,000 vacant apartments and houses there. The demand is needed, but it remains vacant because it can’t be sold for a profit. The auto industry is similarly in the grip of an overproduction crisis. As CNBC reported last November, “Global car sales expected to slide by 3.1% in 2020, deepest drop since Great Recession.”

Automakers are slashing the workforce at the fastest pace since the Great Recession. The crisis of global overproduction in the car industry, sharpened by the end of the expansion of consumer credit to electric and hybrid vehicles, triggered the latest gigantic merger, that between the France-based PSA (Peugeot) and Fiat Chrysler.

The aircraft industry was in a crisis of oversupply, as the financial press put it, which was relieved somewhat when the Boeing 737 MAX was grounded. The financial press is now warning that the return of the 737 MAX will trigger a crisis. “There could potentially be as many as 1,000 surplus aircraft next year,” Reuters reported.

Since 2008, the U.S. could be headed into recession.

A new recession will only increase the growing interest in socialism. The Bernie Sanders campaign. Socialism, of course, is the only way to put an end to the economic system that means replacing capitalism with socialism. Modifying capitalism can relieve some of the pain, but it won’t stop the pain.

Capitalism is a virus that can’t be fixed. The disease is built into the system. Capitalism must be replaced for the good health of all humanity.
Robert Seth Hayes, freedom fighter

By Stephen Millies

Robert Seth Hayes was a freedom fighter who fought for all Black and oppressed people. The Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army member passed away last year on Dec. 21. Hayes was a grandfather and political prisoner who spent 25 years in New York prisons until he was finally released in July 2018. On March 1, the People’s Forum in midtown Manhattan was filled with his comrades, friends and supporters to honor his memory.

The celebration of Hayes’ life was called by the National Jericho Move- ment for Recognition and Amnes- ty for All U.S. Political Prisoners. Co-sponsors were the ProLibertad Freedom Campaign, Call to Action on Puerto Rico, Holyrood Church Ministry of Solidarity with the Peo- ples; and NYC Free Peltier. Claudia de la Cruz, executive direc- tor of the People’s Forum, welcomed people to the tribute. She reminded the audience that it was the 66th anniversary of when the Puerto Ri- can liberation fighters Lola Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Irvin Flores Rodriguez and Andres Figueroa Cordero attacked the U.S. House Rep- resentatives on March 1, 1954. Messages were read from politi- cal prisoners David Gilbert, Russell Maroon Shoatz and Leonard Peltier. Gilbert, who had been locked up with Hayes, mentioned how Hayes would work in the tiny garden that prisoners were allowed to care for. Russell Maroon Shoatz has been incarcerated for 48 years, including 22 years in solitary confinement. Shoatz described how Hayes experienced a lot of suffering but was known for his smile. Anne Lamb, of the NYC Jericho Movement, spoke of how prison au- thorities “spent 20 years trying to kill Seth.” They refused to provide adequate medical care for Hayes, who developed hepatitis C and dia- betes as a result. Hayes lived just 17 months after being released. Shoatz’s daughter, Teresa Shoatz, said her father had stage 4 cancer, a condition that could have been pre- vented by earlier medical testing. Leonard Peltier, a leader of the American Indian Movement, also wrote in remembrance of Robert Seth Hayes. Often described as the Nelson Mandela of Indigenous peo- ple who fought in the U.S., Peltier is beginning his 42nd year of imprisonment. Mandela spent nearly 28 years in apartheid prisons. The jailhouse “democracy” of the United States has a worse record.

Robert Seth Hayes, Russell Shoat and Leonard Peltier have spent more than 40 years in jail. So did Janet Af- ric, Janine Afrika and Muriel Afrika, who were in the audience. David Gil- bert has spent nearly 40 years being locked up.

Free them all!

Pam Hana, who was a comrade of Hayes in the Black Panther Par- ty, described what a skilled per- son he was, including being a good cook. Hayes later conducted cooking classes for his fellow revolutionary prisoners. Cultural performances were giv- en by Ngoma and SpiritChild. While Hana performed “Music for My Soldiers,” people shouted out names of political prisoners.

Brother Sheep, a Black Panther Par- ty leader, offered a poignant move- ment response to keep them and their loved ones safe: a response that puts families first to stimulate the economy.

By putting his administration’s emphasis on bailing out the oil in- dustry, John Noël, a senior climate campaigner for Greenpeace USA, said the president is doing the oppo- site of putting people first.

“Trump’s response to a global pandemic is to put billionaires and corporate polluters ahead of Ameri- can families. There’s no evidence that this handout would protect jobs, pen- sions, benefits, or ease the hardships this handout would protect jobs, pen- sions, benefits, or ease the hardships facing fossil fuel workers or com- munities confronting the COVID-19 outbreak right now. It’s nothing more than a gift to the industry that creat- ed the climate crisis.”

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“Where is the relief for workers grappling with caring for their fam- ilies, retail workers risking expo- sure every day, families grappling with debt and mounting bills while their livelihoods are put at risk?” he asked.

“No, today President Trump focused on propping up polluting in- dustries and putting out CIOs to sell their wares.”

Despite the criticisms from those focused on the needs of families, it appeared the announcement during what was dubbed Trump’s “Shock Doctrine press conference” had the desired result.

As CNBC reported, following Trump’s late-day announcement, “crude futures jumped 5%” in the last hour of market trading. Source: Common Dreams tinyurl.com/1u3s324x

Trump bails out oil industry as coronavirus crisis intensifies

By Jon Queally

Climate action groups and pro-gressive critics expressed disap- pointment and outrage on March 13 after President Donald Trump— despite a continued failure to of- fer far-reaching support to the U.S. public—moved to bolster the bottom lines of oil and gas companies by an- nouncing a massive federal purchase for the nation’s Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR).

“Based on the price of oil, I’ve also instructed the Secretary of Energy to purchase at a very good price large quantities of crude oil for storage in the U.S. strategic reserve,” Trump announced during a White House press conference—surrounded by CEOs from major corporations, including Walmart, CVS, and Target—in which he also declared an official national emergency in order to com- bat the outbreak of the coronavirus.

“We’re going to fill it right up to the top,” he said of the SPR, but criti- cists were quick to point out that move has everything to do with helping his wealthy friends and cronies in the fossil fuel industry, and nothing to do with helping average people now under threat from the spread- ing pandemic.

“Trump has once again put the interests of oil and gas executives ahead of the interests of people and communities,” said Alex Doukas of Oil Change International. “With this move, Trump has rolled out a plan to prop up U.S. oil companies before he has even bothered to guarantee paid sick leave for US workers who are going to be on the frontlines of the coronavirus crisis for weeks to come.”

The news came Friday as additional school closures were announced for states nationwide, grocery store shelves were wiped clean, and worry continues to spread about just how extensive the outbreak will become.

Greenpeace warned that the total cost of the oil purchase “could ex- ceed $2.6 billion in public funds,” a stark comparison when put next to the proposal put forth by House Democrats just hours earlier. Intro- ducing the “Families First Corona-

virus Response Act,” which calls for an estimated $7.7 billion aimed at helping working families and chil- dren to weather the public health crisis, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said, “The American people expect and deserve a coordinated, sci- ence-based and whole-of-government response to keep them and their loved ones safe: a response that puts families first to stimulate the economy.”

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Rafael Cancel Miranda, ¡PRESENTE!

En la noche del lunes 2 de marzo Rafael Cancel Miranda, líder indiscutible del nacionalismo puertorriqueño, pasó a la inmortalidad. Y se podría decir que con la frente en alto, tal y como vivió su vida, dando un último grito al nacionalismo yucuqui. Su férrea voluntad le permitió cumplir con sus deseos: morir después del 1ro de marzo, aniversario de aquella fecha que en 1954, junto a Lolita Lebrón, Irvin Flores y Andrés Figueroa Cordero subiera las escalinatas del Congreso estadounidense para defender a Puerto Rico, sobre todo en estos tan difíciles momentos históricos de neoliberalismo y la participación en una dictadura de un Junta de Control Fiscal. Terminó este día como su último, por lo que ahora, en vez del día de que ese país entrara en la Primera Guerra Mundial, 16 de marzo de que ese país entrara en la Primera Guerra Mundial, 16 de marzo, se celebrará una misa en la Catedral de la ciudad, oficiada por el obispo de Mayagüez. Escuchan palabras del�obispo de Mayagüez. Quién es el enemigo? ¡El imperio yanqui!

La bandera de Puerto Rico siempre estuvo presente en la catedral. El hijo de Don Rafa, Rafael Cancel Vázquez, (derecha al frente con guayabera blanca) ayudaba a llevar el féretro de su padre.

Janitors, friends and the people in general accompanied him to his final resting place. Former Puerto Rican political prisoners, the leadership and the bases of the different parties and organizations that fight for independence, friends and the people in general acompañaron a Rafael Cancel Miranda con mensajes de agradecimiento. ¡Hasta siempre, Comandante! y “Se llega más pronto a la República, las Lolitas (grupo de mujeres que lucharon en el levantamiento del 1950), la República, las Lolitas (grupo de mujeres que lucharon en el levantamiento del 1950), las bases de los diferentes partidos y organizaciones que luchan por la independencia, amistades, y el pueblo en general acompañaron a su líder indiscutible del nacionalismo puertorriqueño, Rafael Cancel Miranda, en nuestro corazón, en nuestros corazones. Y ahí seguiré. Lo que sí les pido es que sigan en el camino, que no se dejen engañar, que no sean zombis, que nos controlan la frente en alto, que no se dejen engañar, que no sean zombis, que nos controlan la frente en alto, que no se dejen engañar, que no sean zombis, que nos controlan la frente en alto, que no se dejen engañar, que no sean zombis, que nos controlan la frente en alto, que no se dejen engañar, que no sean zombis, que nos controlan la frente en alto, que no se dejen engañar, que no sean zombis, que nos controlan la frente en alto, que no se dejen engañar, que no sean zombis, que nos controlan la frente en alto, que no se dejen engañar, que no sean zombis, que nos controlan la frente en alto, que no se dejen engañar, que no sean zombis, que nos controlan.