CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC: Free prisoners from these death cells!

By John Parker

It appears that the U.S. government — headed by Donald Trump and enabled by Democrats who refuse to seriously check the most egregious actions of this fascist-minded, racist and sexist president — is using the coronavirus crisis to erode any democratic rights under capitalism that haven’t already been wiped out by law. In the midst of the economic and health insecurity that Covid-19 is exacerbating for working and poor people, the Department of Justice has already asked Congress to allow indefinite incarceration without trial. And to deny housing to any immigrant testing positive for the virus — a death threat to many immigrants escaping the chaos produced by the devastation of their countries of origin and the hijacking of their country’s political process by Washington and Wall Street.

According to Politico, this request from Attorney General William Barr referred to “any statutes or rules of procedure otherwise affecting pre-arrest, post-arrest, pre-trial, trial, and post-trial procedures in criminal and juvenile proceedings and proceedings." This is the exact opposite of what the scientific community, human and civil rights organizations and public defenders are saying is needed to help fight the spread of the virus. Prisons and immigration detention centers are incubators for disease. These institutions have now been transformed into death rows for all incarcerated or detained people.

Prison conditions in the U.S. have always been inhumane, with hygiene facilities and medical care dangerously lacking, encouraging sickness and death. Inmates are now far more dangerous — with facilities refusing soap and running water, and no possibility for social distancing during this crisis.

Crisis in Cumberland prison

Calling for solidarity and support, many of those incarcerated at North Branch Correctional Facility in Cumberland, Md., have contacted activists with the Peoples Power Assembly in Baltimore demanding that the Federal Bureau of Prisons release prisoners who are at high risk from the virus. That rate is also much higher than most countries.

As of 2015, over 2 million people are incarcerated at over 1,700 federal prisons in the U.S. By comparison, China, with a population three times larger than the U.S., not only holds a much lower percentage of its population as prisoners — less than 2 percent — but the actual number is nearly 650,000 less than in the U.S.

Most pertinent to the dangers of Covid-19 is the overcrowding or occupancy level in U.S. prisons. That rate is much higher than most countries. U.S. prisoners are crammed into cells at over 100 percent capacity. On April 7, the American Civil Liberties Union sued the Oakdale Federal Detention Center in Louisiana after five people died there. The ACLU is demanding that the Federal Bureau of Prisons release prisoners who are at high risk from the virus.

So far, Attorney General Barr has ignored countless requests that he begin depopulating prisons in earnest to prevent the mass killing of prisoners and detainees through neglect during this viral crisis.

This is why Lisa Freeland, federal public defender for the Western District of Pennsylvania and co-chair of the Defender Services Advisory Group to the U.S. courts; David Patton, executive director and attorney in chief of the Federal Defender of New York; and Jon Sands, federal public defender for the District of Arizona, wrote an opinion piece in the Washington Post on April 6 demanding Barr of the life-and-death consequences of his continued inaction.

They point out: “The number of Covid-19 cases in the Bureau of Prisons are rising exponentially, at a pace far surpassing the U.S. population at large.

We are just being left in our cells to suffer." (Land of the free: the prisonhouse of nations) Prisoners and detainees in the U.S. remain isolated and invisible. The inhumane conditions of animals in zoos are covered much more by the corporate media than the conditions of human beings in a country that, by far, the greatest number of residents behind bars.

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FREE THEM ALL!

Health care workers stand up to fascists.

When the workers of the world awaken on May 1, 2020, they will confront a global situation that is very different from just a year ago. Then, the latest capitalist crisis was only taking shape. Now, the U.S. and global economy are in free fall. The rapid collapse, rooted in the periodic capitalist crisis of overproduction, is spurred on and compounded by the deadly Covid-19 pandemic. By May 1, alone, over 26 million workers lost their jobs in a mere four weeks, with more to come.

MAY DAY 2020

Workers are falling ill in large numbers as bosses and federal, state and local governments fail to provide them with adequate safety measures and personal protective equipment (PPE). The toll is being felt not only in hospitals, Amazon warehouses and grocery stores, but increasingly in meat-processing plants in the South and Midwest. The specter of fascism hovers over states capitals with a wave of armed, white supremacist, anti-worker demonstrators egged on by Trump and other right-wing demagogues. The specter of fascism is also rising in confusion produced by the devastation of their country’s basic functions.

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Health care workers stand up to fascists.
How Covid-19 shows U.S. dependence on workers

By Gary Wilson

Health care workers, nurses, farmworkers, grocery store clerks, warehouse packers, delivery workers, truck drivers, dockworkers, restaurant order takers, call center workers, service and industrial workers form the backbone of the U.S. economy. When the coronavirus pandemic struck, the public health system was functioning at a minimal level. Cutbacks in health care services accelerated after the 2008 Great Recession and the giant bank bailout. Under the slogan “Repeal and Replace Obamacare,” the cutbacks became more pronounced under Trump. The system was not prepared or able to respond to the pandemic. Without adequate public health care system, the only possible response left to contain the contagion was social distancing and self-isolation. The shutdown has exposed that workers are essential. Life would grind to a halt without them.

The shutdown has also exposed some who aren’t essential. For example, a Wall Street hedge fund billionnaire hiding out on a yacht doesn’t do anything we find to be essential. Completely nonessential, in fact.

Karl Marx, writing about the value of work, noted that “Every child knows that any nation that stopped working, not for a year, but let us say, just for a week, would perish.”

Yes, today there has been a general shutdown of all businesses and everyone told to stay secluded at home. But there is an exception and that is for so-called essential workers. That includes not just health care workers, but also anyone producing food as well as transportation, electrical power and other services. Labor is essential or we would perish.

The unemployment benefits system is overwhelmed. Many unemployment offers are not open to the public. Phone systems are overloaded and understaffed. State unemployment websites are no better, if you even have a computer with broadband access at home. (A study by Microsoft in 2018 estimated that about half the U.S. population — 163 million — have no high-speed internet service at home.)

Jobless, no paycheck, unemployment benefits unreachable. What has been government’s response?

When the most urgent need was to protect jobs, pay unemployment benefits to anyone without a job, halt evictions and foreclosures, and suspend all rent and mortgage payments, Trump and Congress passed a “stimulus” package that was mostly a giveaway to the Wall Street banks and financiers. About $454 billion was given directly to the Federal Reserve Bank. Another $340 billion went to small business loans. Some of $250 billion went to unemployment insurance and a one-time payment to all adult taxpayers.

The one-time $1,200 check was not enough to carry anyone through a three-month shutdown. But even that was tied into the banks, who are able to claim any or all of the $1,200 for so-called debt payment. The $1,200 payments have been made only to those who have a bank account registered with the IRS.

The Paycheck Protection Program small business loans are supposed to be forgivable if the small business maintains current employee and compensation levels. But first, the program was set up in a way that encouraged businesses to lay off workers before applying for the loan. The loan program was riddled with backdoors and loopholes, and the level of corruption was staggering.

Benefits system overwhelmed

Cuts to unemployment benefits for so-called essential workers are better off staying in prison, they argue that not only is this a death sentence for the inmates but also for the entire population, far more than if they were at home. Of course Marx also showed that labor power is the source of capitalist profits.

Workers are essential, so why aren’t they protected?

The money came in, but they’re not getting it.

Coronavirus Pandemic:
Free prisoners from these deathcells!

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On March 20, the bureau’s website reported just two Covid-19-positive inmates and staff; two weeks later, it reported 174 confirmed cases. That’s an increase of 8,600 percent (my emphasis — dp), a much steeper rate of increase than has been observed among the general population. And because testing has been grossly insufficient, these numbers are almost certainly an undercount.

Refuting the argument that prisoners would be better off staying in prison, they argue that not only is this a death sentence for the incarcerated, but the ramifications of infecting the virus in this huge population will adversely affect the general population, far more than if the number of prisoners was drastically reduced.

Freeland, Patton and Sands go on to mention the obstruction to releasing prisoners by prosecutors, judges and Barr himself.

“It is too late for the crisis to be entirely averted, but the worst can be prevented if Congress and Attorney General William P. Barr act with urgency. So far, however, Barr and federal prosecutors have opposed even modest efforts to reduce the prison population. In courtrooms across the country, when lawyers seek bail or compassionate release for vulnerable people accused or convicted of nonviolent offenses, federal prosecutors have vigorously opposed the requests — even in cases where people’s sentences are near completion. In nearly every case, prosecutors are making the same argument that Barr advanced in a recent statement: that inmates are safer in prison than they would be at home.

It is an absurd claim, contradict- ed by evidence and fact. The CDC’s guidance is unequivocal: social distancing, hand-washing and cleanliness are key to reducing spread of the coronavirus. Furthermore, credible public health experts have observed that overcrowded prisons with communal living; shared toilets, showers, and sinks; poor sanitation; and wholly inadequate medical care would allow Covid-19 to sweep through the prison population far more quickly than the general public — with devastating consequences.”

Free them all!

According to public defenders, Barr has the authority to do what is necessary with the additional powers given to him by the passage of the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) in March.

The solution of the problem does not require rocket science or resources that the U.S. lacks. However, this capitalist government and policy have thought and argued by the monopoles would rather commit mass murder in the prisons than use the trillions of dollars earmarked for the military or to bail out Big Business.

Iran has already released over 85,000 prisoners to save them from the virus. Instead of following Iran’s example, the U.S. continues to enforce sanctions that greatly limit the Iranian government’s ability to deal with the pandemic. U.S. sanctions apply to Cuba, Zimbabwe, Venezuela and many other countries trying to deal with this crisis. In the case of Cuba, Venezuela and China, these countries are also actively engaged in resisting many other countries in combating this threat to humanity.

There’s not much to figure out here. Of course, housing, health care and other facilities to house those who are a danger to themselves or others will have to be provided to those who are released. The U.S. has the resources and ability to do that — if only profits were not priority number one.

Instead, billions of care for released prisoners cannot be used as an excuse today to delay or refuse their release, which amounts to practicing genocide against our human family members who are now being further tortured and failing as casualties in the war on working-class, poor and oppressed people here in the belly of the beast.

It will take a united and militant movement to change this deadly direction of inaction. 
Coronavirus central in Queens, N.Y.

By Stephen Millies

As of April 25, some 9,925 people in five adjoining zip codes in the Queens borough of New York City have the coronavirus. About 350,000 people live there. One out of 38 has the virus.

This writer lives in one of these zip codes, 11372, the Jackson Heights neighborhood. Within its 475 acres are 1,935 people who've tested positive for Covid-19.

People line up, sometimes for an hour, to enter supermarkets and drugstores. They wear masks or other face coverings and try to stand six feet apart.

I can’t recall seeing anyone wearing a Trump hat. Some “essential” stores, like bodegas and even Dunkin’ Donuts franchises, have closed because the owners are worried about catching the virus.

Just about every Chinese restaurant has shut down, even for take-out and delivery orders. Was this due to health concerns or because of the danger of racist attacks fueled by Trump and Fox News?

The 545-bed Elmhurst Hospital is the closest hospital for almost all of the third of a million people who live in these five zip codes. Refrigerator trucks there hold the dead. A line of people wraps around the building to get tested.

In the richest city on earth, there are less than two hospital beds per thousand people in the borough of Queens with its 2.3 million people.

Despite the vicious U.S. economic blockade of socialist Cuba, that country has almost three times as many beds as Queens.

Overcrowded housing = death

Next to Jackson Heights is the Corona neighborhood where Louis Armstrong lived. Its 11368 zip code has 3,211 cases of Covid-19, the most in Queens.

A block from Armstrong’s house, Manuel “Manny” Mayi was beaten to death by a white racist mob with baseball bats and a fire extinguisher on March 29, 1991. None of the lynchers of the 18-year-old were ever indicted.

Across Northern Boulevard from Corona is East Elmhurst, zip code 11369, which has 1,391 cases. Malcolm X and his family lived in East Elmhurst at 23-11 97th Street.

Northern Boulevard is still a death trap for pedestrians attempting to cross. The local chapter of the Black Panther Party helped lead a struggle to get stop lights installed on this busy thoroughfare.

Elmhurst, zip code 11373, has 2,274 people who’ve tested positive for the coronavirus. Zip code 11370, which includes the Rikers Island jail complex, has 1,114 cases.

New York City is a densely popu-

lated metropolis. But the reason this seven-square-mile area in Queens has so many people who are ill is because of overcrowding.

The five zip codes have an average of over 8,500 people per square mile. That’s high and may seem to be unbelievably so to most people living in the U.S.

But there are some pretty ritzy Manhattan neighborhoods that are even more dense. A lot of people can fit comfortably in a luxury high-rise.

Manhattan, of course, has many neighborhoods with poor and working people, including Harlem, El Barrio (East Harlem), Washington Heights, Loisaida (the Lower East Side) and Chinatown.

Black and Latinx communities in the Bronx and Brooklyn have also been hard hit.

What sets neighborhoods like Corona and Elmhurst apart is the number of families and individuals who are forced to live in just a few rooms or just one room.

These are largely immigrant communities with people from all over the planet. From the notices taped, sometimes one on top of another, on almost every light pole, the cheapest monthly rent for a single room is $600. That’s with a shared bathroom.

The least expensive one-bedroom apartment might be $1,500. That’s a big increase from 2011, when $1,100 was the going rate for renting a one-bedroom apartment.

Meanwhile there are at least 200,000 apartments in New York City that landlords keep empty in order to increase their income and keep just overcrowding that helps transmit the virus. Many of the people living here are considered to be “essential workers” and have to continue to go to work.

Seventy New York City transit workers have already died from the coronavirus. The Number 7 train that goes through Corona, Elmhurst and Jackson Heights continues to take thousands of hospital and supermarket workers to their jobs.

Trump spits on these workers, many of whom are Asian, Black, Latinx and immigrants.

Inequality spinning reaction

If the entire U.S. had the same infection rate as these zip codes in Queens, it would have 9 million cases of Covid-19. Thirty-two states have fewer cases than this slice of Queens.

The fascist organizers of the white mobs protesting in Lansing, Mich., and other state capitols to “Reopen America” are taking advantage of this un unevenness.

New York City isn’t the only place that’s been devastated by the pandemic. Seven thousand people have died in nursing homes.

Thousands of meatpacking and poultry workers across the country have fallen ill. So have incarcerated workers at Chicago’s Cook County jail and hundreds of other prisons.

Covid-19 has swept through Black communities in Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis and New Orleans. Over a thousand members of the Navajo Nation have the virus. Forty-one have died.

Trump supports the concentration of deaths among Black, Indigenous and Latinx peoples to spread the lying message that it’s just a disease for “them.” Forty percent of Michigan’s deaths from the disease are of African Americans while only 14 percent of the state’s population are Black.

The racial disparities against the necessary public health measures needed to contain the virus are not grassroots efforts. These astroturf events are funded by billionaires like Michigan’s DeVos family. They’re attempts to divert attention from the wholesale failure of the capitalist state to protect people against pandemics.

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem is one of those who wants to lift the health restrictions. She ignores over 500,000 workers, largely immigrants, who have fallen ill at the Smithfield Foods pork plant in Sioux Falls.

Not all white workers believe the garbage spewed out by Trump and Fox News. The tragic progression of the coronavirus, spreading to largely white suburbs and rural areas, will challenge the belief that it’s just an inner city problem.

Nurses and their unions will serve as a political connecting rod between the oppressed communities and many of the segregated white neighborhoods. The people united will defeat the Trump virus.

Nurses protest at Wyckoff Heights Medical Center near Brooklyn/Queens border on April 10.
As Sanders ends campaign, ‘Don’t mourn, organize’
Build a movement to fight for socialism!

By Sharon Black

On April 8, Sen. Bernie Sanders suspended his presidential campaign. Many, if not most, who moved in a way that was widely expected, Sanders endorsed Joe Biden as the “least bad” Democratic Party nominee. While this moment is very painful for Sanders’ campaign supporters, it’s important to examine the larger developments to determine which way the movement should go next.

Let’s recognize the Sanders campaign didn’t win the nomination, but for what it did accomplish. It was unprecedented in bringing the issues of race and justice, and human rights into the mainstream; and it began to open the discussion on socialism. It tackled issues like medical care, bail reform and the climate crisis. It energized a large, multination- al, working-class movement of mostly young people who are fed up with the status quo.

No one should forget that the Democratic Party establishment con- nived to undermine the Sanders campaign, along with the big business media and every conceivable mouthpiece for the bankers and capitalists. The idea that workers are entitled to even the most basic rights like health care, food, a job, a home or even the right to live with unhindered access to their communities.

What these agents for the billion- aire and bankers feared was not so much Sanders as the candidate, but rather the campaign’s potential for raising working-class expectations — expectations that could have gone beyond the narrow confines of the electoral arena.

Several months ago, we took the position of critically supporting the Sanders movement, not based on the candidate, with whom we certainly have differences, especially on imperialist foreign policy, but based on supporting the working-class movement, especially younger workers, whose aspirations found expression in this electoral arena.

Question: is what's next the step?

“There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks when decades happen.” These words, attributed to V.I. Lenin, the architect of the Russian Revolution, aptly de- scribe the upheaval the world is experiencing during the coronavirus pandemic, upheavals that have already taken place and those that are still to come.

The capitalist economy down turn precipitated by the overpro- duction of oil and gas, percolating prior to the coronavirus pandemic, is necessarily rooted in a system that is global in character, and when the coronavirus pandemic eases, it will be all the more apparent.

Capitalism has no solutions

The Democratic Party has been conducting a campaign to exploit fear, fostering the slogan of “return to normalcy” and fueling the argu- ment that Sanders was unselectable and too radical. Its message is aimed at suffocating the entire workers’ movement.

Younger activists have roundly rejected this. In a #YouthVote Letter to Joe Biden penned by a number of groups, including the Sunrise Move- ment, the signers explained that normalcy means going back to “endless war, skyrocketying inequality, crushing student loan debt, mass de- portations, police murders of Black Americans, and more.”

If there is one urgent message to the movement at this juncture, it is:

this: not to be squelched, muf- fered or herded into the Biden penumbra — the path that is as deadly as the virus.

If the movement disbands or follows the Democratic Party establishment, it will become disarmed in the face of bigger crises that cannot be addressed from within the capitalist electoral parties.

Recent events in Lansing, Mich., and other state capi- tales illustrate the danger of the capitalista- tion of the electoral system. In other countries, even capitalist ones, the Sanders movement would have had propor- tional representation.

There are millions of people who cannot even vote, including immi- grant workers — documented and undocumented. Exploited labor superizes capitalist profits. Black, Brown and poor pris- oners populating the ever-growing, for-profit, prison-industrial com- plex are stripped of voting rights. Add the overwhelming influence of billionaires and fraud aimed at de- priving the oppressed of their voting rights, and you get a system that is rigged from top to bottom.

We should remind ourselves how deeply undermined the U.S. de- toral system is. In other countries, even capitalist ones, the Sanders movement would have had propor- tional representation.

Capitalism has no solutions

The capitalist system by definition depends on exploiting labor. It must expand for its very survival. There is a deep contradiction between this need and the health needs of the world’s poor. Donald Trump has made clear to the world that there is no money for the unprofitable. There is no profit in the prevention of tuberculosis. The struggle in this country and globally for the 126 million to die of TB every year, is being fought in the street with a will that is only comparable, in a world that is more than a million times more deadly, to the will of the two million who were locked up in the U.S. to prevent TB.

We’ve already seen workers’ ac- tions that have averted thousands of deaths and prevented the spread of TB. But what we’ve got to do is push the system to the breaking point, to force the government to let the workers in the workplaces that are killing them.

We have a history of workers’ action and solidarity that has not been lost on anyone.

We urge the entire movement to embrace these calls and to organize and promote “No work! No shopping! No rent!” on May Day.

The Democratic Party Convention has been rescheduled from July to May 1. The Powers People Assembly in Baltimore and the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice in Los Ange- les are actively organizing in both the community and at workplaces. We urge the entire movement to embrace these calls and to organize and promote “No work! No shopping! No rent!” on May Day.

Danger of imperialist war

There is an ever-present danger of imperialist war — but that danger is multiplied during a worldwide eco- nomic crisis. Any widening of war will intensify racism, jingoism, an- tiblackness, and the militarism and bigotry against LGBTQ2 people. The Democratic Party, with few excep- tions, is a party of war like the Repub- lican Party before it.

We urge the Sanders movement, particularly the youth, to join with the protests at the DNC.

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What Lenin can teach us about this historic moment

By Greg Butterfield

For a momentary anniversary like the 150th birthday of V.I. Lenin on April 22, 2020, it's tempting to try and write some overarching summary of his enormous revolutionary contributions: building a revolutionary party; fighting against imperialist national oppression; the state and revolution; the construction of a socialist society; and more. But that group is too vast for Lenin right now — amidst a global pandemic, rapid economic and social changes, and revelations encouraged by a sitting U.S. president, the precipitous end of the Bernie Sanders election campaign?
The current global revolutionary outlook is confirmed by the success of countries with revolutionary socialist foundations like Cuba, where the revolution has been confronting the devastating coronavirus pandemic among their own populations, and seeking ways that international medical support around the world. This, even after long decades of setbacks to the socialist movement, the world revolutionary process have forced these countries to take backward steps in order to survive.

This can't help but open the eyes of many working-class and oppressed people to the alternative that Lenin's revolutionary Marxism represents to decaying world capitalism.

"The name of Lenin is a kind of syn- onym for revolutionary class struggle. The failure to agree on that is, in reality, a line of demarcation between communism and social democracy, with its various hues." So said Sam Marcy, an accomplished student of Lenin and the Russian Revolution, at an international communist conference in 1944 after the Second World War.

Marcy's co-thinker and fellow or ganizer Vincent Copeland (writing under the pen name David Grey) noted: "Lenin's leadership and contributions to the theses of his enemies and detrac tors, was not primarily in the force of his personality and the acquisition of 'power,' but in the educating of a party of revolutionaries with the same understanding of the world and world revolution and in the nature of the struggle dictated by this understanding.

"While he had unusual talents and was much more intense about his objects than most — if not all — of his contemporaries, everything was rational and understandable and therefore the revolutionaries of today have the possibility of learning just how, he did it in his time and take it as a handbook, if not a blueprint, for doing it themselves in their time."

Rich and varied experience

Perhaps the most important thing Lenin has to teach us right now is the social and political conditions — including abrupt and dramatic changes like those we are living through — offer revolutionaries new challenges and new opportunities to advance the struggle for socialism.

In his book "Left-Wing Commu nism: Infantile Disorder" written in 1920 to help educate the interna tional communist movement on the lessons of the Russian Revolution, Lenin described "The Principal Stages in the History of Bolshevism": the years of preparation for revolution (1903–1905), the years of revolution (1905–1907), the years of reaction (1907–1910), the years of revival (1910–1914), the First Imperialist World War (1914–1917), the second revolution in Russia (February to October 1917), and the third, triumphant socialist revo lution (October to November 1917).

Each of these periods offered unique experiences and challenges to the revolutionaries and their party (the Bolsheviks, as the communists in Russia were known), from setting up a newspaper and participating in bourgeois elections to street protests and armed struggle. Each phase required different tactics and strategies to educate and mobilize the workers and oppressed to fight for their own interests against the exploiting ruling class and its repressive state.

Without this rich and varied experience Lenin explained how without these ups and downs in the struggle, filtered through an organized, disciplined, revolutionary party, guided by a Marxist world outlook, the victory of the revolution in Oc tober-November 1917 and the con struction of socialism in the Soviet Union would not have been possible.

Lenin continued: "The fundamental law of revolution, which has been confirmed by all the epochs and especially by all three Russian revolution in the twentieth century, is as follows: for a revolution to take place it is not enough for the exploited and oppressed masses to realize the impossibility of living in the old way, and to demand changes; a revolu tion to take place it is essential that the exploiters should not be able to live and rule in the old way. It is only when the workers have a definite plan of what they want to live in the old way and the ‘upper classes’ cannot carry on in the old way that the revolution can proceed.

"This truth can be expressed in other words: revolution is impos sible without a nationwide crisis (affecting both the workers and the exploiters). It follows that, for a revolution to take place, it is es sen tial, first, that the exploited and opp ressed workers (or at least a majority of the class—conscious, thinking, and po litical workers) have activity which had really realized that revolution is necessary, and that they should be prepared to die for it; second, that the ruling classes cannot go on in the old way that they have created by the coronavirus, but the pandemic acted as a catalyst, accelerating the inevitable collapse created by worldwide capitalist overprodu c tion and exposing the hollowness of the U.S. economy in particular. As a result, workers in the U.S. and across the earth face a painful, prolonged period of misery and dispossession.

"The governing bodies of the cap italist state are in crisis and con flict, while millions of workers who avoided politics in the past, especial ly youth, recently supported the re visionists, and then the majority cam paign of Bernie Sanders, and are now expressing the feeling that things cannot go on in the old way.

Yet there is much work to be done in uniting existing revolutionary socialists and communists, scattered then the socialists, communists and workers, and making it possible for the revolutionaries to take advantage of the opportunities that are rapidly developing.

At that 1994, communist gathering in Belgium, Sam Marcy said: "The need is for all revolutionary communists to unite on the basis of a common struggle against capitalist exploitation and imperialist oppression. It is not necessary for any grouping to abandon its propaganda in support of the views of individual leaders.

"What is needed is the broadest united front of revolutionary com munist groupings, as long as they adhere to the spirit of revolution ary class struggle as generally promoted by Lenin in his writings on admission to the Communist International."
We must never forget Reagan’s shameful legacy, the lack of leadership he showed in the fight against AIDS. Reagan is to blame for the thousands who died and continue to die as a result of his cowardice, his fear of the powerful religious right and the “immoral majority,” who gave Reagan his road to the White House.

These included the misogynist Rev. Jerry Falwell, who used AIDS as the tool and gay men as the target for the politics of fear, hate and discrimination. Falwell said, “AIDS is the wrath of god upon homosexuals.” And Reagan’s communications director Pat Buchanan stated that AIDS was “nature’s revenge on gay men.”

On April 28, 1987, as his second term was coming to an end, Reagan finally spoke on the issue of the day. But not before 36,058 people in the U.S. had been diagnosed with AIDS and 26,849 had died.

Although the Centers for Disease Control reported that HIV could not be transmitted by casual contact and Reagan knew this, he continued to fan irrational fear by saying: ‘And yet medicine has not come forth unequivocally and said, ‘This we know for a fact, that it is safe.’ And until they do, I think we just have to do the best we can with the people who can understand both sides of it.’ By both sides he meant parents who were demanding that children with AIDS be kicked out of their schools — including kindergarteners.

That is what I remember Reagan for, wiping out a whole generation of gay men, many of whom were my dear friends! When I visit a gay bar today, I’m struck by the lack of gay men my age. Most are in their twenties, thirties, some in their forties, or in their seventies. Very few are in their fifties or sixties. A whole generation is gone due to Reagan’s unequivocal indifference towards the lives of the poor and the oppressed.

It was the activists and freedom fighters of the 1980s and 1990s and even today that made the U.S. government provide housing, health care, financial assistance, needle exchange, treatment and many of the services that people with AIDS have today, though it is still far from sufficient. The fight is not over.

“Today we see much the same murderous response from the ruling class and all its cronies to Covid-19. They show the same callousness towards all of us that they did to people with AIDS. Some on the right want to blame Covid-19 on the so-called ‘acceptance’ of the gay community. Racist 45 started calling it the “Chinese virus” and condoned violence against us.”

Cuba’s victory at Bay of Pigs made medical solidarity possible

By Miranda Etel

Fifty-nine years ago, on April 17, 1961, Cuba defeated a U.S.-backed invasion at Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs). The invasion’s purpose was to destroy the Cuban Revolution. The CIA armed, trained and transported the right-wing Cuban force to Playa Girón. Because of the Cubans’ strong political will and powerful leadership, the U.S. effort suffered a massive defeat.

The accomplishments of the Cuban government and people should not be underestimated. The revolution of Cuba dramatically reduced illiteracy, homelessness and joblessness in less than a decade. Cuba nationalized all U.S. properties on the island in 1960 to provide for Cuba’s people. Fidel initiated the Latin America School of Medicine (ELAM), which has trained doctors from all over the world.

Cuba has sent medical brigades to more than 37 countries to treat the sufferings of the affected peoples’ lives. Cuba has sent medical brigades to more than 37 countries to treat the sufferings of the affected peoples’ lives. In addition to KC, a cluster of gay men, many of whom were my dear friends! When I visit a gay bar today, I’m struck by the lack of gay men my age. Most are in their twenties, thirties, some in their forties, or in their seventies. Very few are in their fifties or sixties. A whole generation is gone due to Reagan’s unequivocal indifference towards the lives of the poor and the oppressed.

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Cuba’s victory at Bay of Pigs made medical solidarity possible

By Miranda Etel

Fifty-nine years ago, on April 17, 1961, Cuba defeated a U.S.-backed invasion at Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs). The invasion’s purpose was to destroy the Cuban Revolution. The CIA armed, trained and transported the right-wing Cuban force to Playa Girón. Because of the Cubans’ strong political will and powerful leadership, the U.S. effort suffered a massive defeat.

The accomplishments of the Cuban government and people should not be underestimated. The revolution of Cuba dramatically reduced illiteracy, homelessness and joblessness in less than a decade. Cuba nationalized all U.S. properties on the island in 1960 to provide for Cuba’s people. Fidel initiated the Latin America School of Medicine (ELAM), which has trained doctors from all over the world.

Cuba has sent medical brigades to at least 59 countries to fight disease and poverty worldwide. There may be no better example of heroic medical internationalism than Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. Every person in Cuba receives free medical care for their entire life. Despite the brutal U.S. blockade that has been using to treat Covid-19. Cuban-Chinese venture, Changhe, said, “We have been using it to fight the virus, and it is produced by a joint Cuban-Chinese venture, Changhe. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration should immediately approve distribution of alfa-2b in the U.S. to save peoples’ lives during this crisis. Fifty-nine years after the revolutionary victory at the Bay of Pigs, U.S. aggression toward Cuba continues. The U.S. has relentlessly tried to destroy socialism and progress in Cuba. Yet Cuba continues to prioritize improving the lives of its people and of people around the world. The U.S. government has made heroic efforts during the Covid-19 crisis. It is time to end the blockade on Cuba and start using interferon alfa-2b in the U.S. to save peoples’ lives. We will not die for Wall Street! We demand:

- Freedom for all prisoners, including political prisoners;
- Provision of a healthy and safe place for released prisoners;
- Release of immigrants from all concentration camps;
- Unemployment insurance or income for all workers;
- Health care for all;
- Increase in food stamps;
- A minimum Social Security Insurance benefit and for the disabled;
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) for all workers required to stay on the job;
- Paid medical leave for all.
**What will it take to halt climate change? Socialism!**

By David Card

Among the greatest threats to the people of the world today and our ability for future prosperity is the threat of human-caused climate change. The vast majority of the developed countries in the capitalist world, many in the media, political and business establishment call the concept a hoax because they believe that investing profit from the industries that are making the planet uninhabitable for human beings.

In the early 2000s, the ruling parties believe in the science of climate change and are taking steps to prevent it. In fact, the so-called green parties are doing more to prevent it than many capitalist countries with far greater resources. Their systems of public ownership and planning are what give them the power to do it.

First, what is climate change? What causes it? And why is capitalism so bad at preventing it? What is referred to as “climate change” is the alternation of the planet’s climate caused by the burning of fossil fuels. The main mechanism that causes this is the burning of fossil fuels, which release carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that traps the sun’s heat in the atmosphere and warms the planet. At the dawn of the industrial revolution, the power of rivers was used to supply energy to the new factories spinning cloth in England. But before long, steam engines began a transformation of the energy. Power was the primary source of energy. Eventually, electricity was discovered, but the primary source of energy to make electricity was still coal. A very dirty and polluting form of energy, and it remains one of the largest sources of energy, today augmented by oil and natural gas.

Due to hundreds of years of infrastructure and development, coal and oil are fuels at the center of so much of the industrialized world and represent some of the cheapest forms of energy that can be continu- used to supply power to the primary sources of energy. In the 20th century, electricity was discovered, but the primary source of energy to make electricity was still coal. A very dirty and polluting form of energy, and it remains one of the largest sources of energy, today augmented by oil and natural gas.

Nuclear power has been shunned by most countries of the West for decades. The high upfront costs represent too high of a risk for the private monopoly banks of Wall Street despite their high lifetime output and lack of carbon emissions. A powerful and righteous anti-nuclear movement rebelled against dangerous capitalist abus- es of nuclear energy and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Socialist China, however, believes it can use its collective wealth to plan for a long time and build these plants while watching the accommodating growth in a way that prevents pollution.

**Groundbreaking efforts in Cuba**

While the People's Republic of China is the socialist country with the largest economy and most resources at a national level, other socialist countries and cooperatives have made their own contributions to fighting climate change. Many of these efforts were undertaken out of necessity due to the countries’ positions as nations oppressed by U.S. imperialism, but embraced for the positive effects it had on their economies.

In the 1990s, Cuba went through an incredibly difficult time in what is called the “Special Period” after the dismantling of socialism in the Viet Nam and the dissolution of the state. Nearly overnight, Cuba’s largest- est export, sugar, was viewed as worthless due to the U.S. imposed blockade, foreign imports of oil and fertilizers were no longer available to the island nation, and Cuba had no wealth to survive and in the process reduced their dependence on fossil fuels.

With fuel to run tractors and trucks in short supply, agricul- tural products on large farms became difficult to harvest and ship to the cities, so the government launched a campaign to produce more car- to reduce their demand for fossil fuels.

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For these reasons, the Baltimore caravans demanded proper care for prisoners during the coronavirus pandemic.

What follows was the first action by the people to try to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In all likelihood, we could have saved many lives if we got rid of the bank- ers and CEOs that are responsible for our nation’s current situation and decided to use our wealth for human needs, including preventing climate change.

By Lev Koufax

On April 18, progressive working-class activists in Baltimore held a car caravan in solidarity with those currently incarcerated in Maryland jails and prisons. The caravans were organized by the Prisoners Solidarity Committee and the Peoples Power Assembly, demanding that Gov. Larry Hogan immediately begin to release prisoners from facilities that have become Covid-19 hotspots.

The situation developed even though local news outlets warned for over a month that prisons were prime candidates for spread of coro- navirus outbreaks. Since that time, over 100 cases of the virus have been reported in Maryland prisons. One prisoner in Baltimore County has tested positive, though local news outlets warned for over a month that prisons were prime candidates for spread of coronavirus outbreaks. Since that time, over 100 cases of the virus have been reported in Maryland prisons.

Individuals inside Maryland prisons have delved into terrible condi- tions and a complete lack of preparedness. Prisoners have been denied soap, showers, any person- al protective equipment (PPE) and medical care. Prisoners with symp- toms have been left to their own de- vises inside solitary cells.

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Mensaje del ICAP en tiempos de Covid-19: BLOQUEO NO, SOLIDARIDAD SI

La Habana, 9 de abril de 2020

Estimados amigos y amigas:

Con profunda convicción humanista, el gobierno y pueblo de Cuba ofrecen al mundo, una vez más, el ejemplo de solidaridad militante en momentos en que el planeta se enfrenta a la pandemia global del nuevo coronavirus Sars Cov-2, la Covid-19, la cual ya ha cobrado la vida a más de 70 mil personas en el orbe en muy poco tiempo.

En época de Covid-19 los ojos del mundo observan con esperanzas a Cuba y Cuba, en medio de un bloqueo inhumano y genocida, no ha dudado en responder: un ejército de batas blancas integrado por más de 593 profesionales de la salud, de ellos 338 mujeres, organizados en 15 brigadas del Contingente Henry Reeve, ya prestan sus servicios en Europa, América Latina y el Caribe, fieles a la máxima martiana y fidelista, ratificada por nuestro Presidente Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez: “Cuba no anda de pedigüeña por el mundo, anda de hermana”.

Contrariamente a nuestro desinteresado gesto, el Presidente Trump fomenta injuriosas campañas a través de mujeres, organizar importantes contingentes de salud para intentar desacreditar los principios de humanidad y solidaridad sobre los cuales descansa nuestra colaboración médica, defensora de la atención a la salud como un derecho humano.

Este momento pone al descubierto la fragilidad de las sociedades de consumo del sistema capitalista y las deficiencias de su sistema sanitario; resultado de las políticas antipopulistas implementadas por los gobiernos de las naciones capitalistas, que gastan enormes presupuestos militares en detrimento de las condiciones de vida de sus poblaciones, fomentando el miedo, el odio y la desesperanza.

Asimismo, apreciamos la permanente solidaridad de Cuba, respondiendo al llamado del gobierno cubano y esparciendo la semilla humanista que nos legaran Martí y Fidel, en contraposición a las acciones como las de Estados Unidos y otros países de la OTAN, que gastan enormes presupuestos militares en detrimento de las condiciones de vida de sus poblaciones, fomentando el miedo, el odio y la desesperanza.

Por nuestros galenos también nuestra especial reconocimiento, respeto y admiración donde quiera que se encuentren. Ellos están enfrentando esta pandemia con altruismo dentro y fuera de Cuba, respondiendo al llamado del gobierno cubano y esparciendo la semilla humanista que nos legaran Martí y Fidel, en contraposición a las acciones como las de Estados Unidos y otros países de la OTAN, que gastan enormes presupuestos militares en detrimento de las condiciones de vida de sus poblaciones, fomentando el miedo, el odio y la desesperanza.

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Asimismo, apreciamos la permanente solidaridad de todo el Movimiento que, ahora en tiempos del nuevo Coronavirus, no ha dejado de accionar para exigir el levantamiento del bloqueo a Cuba, ahora más criminal en las circunstancias actuales, demandando también la aplicación plena de la Resolución “Necesidad de poner fin al bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero impuesto por Estados Unidos de América”, aprobada en el 2019 en ONU por la inmensa mayoría de sus miembros.

Juntos ganaremos esta batalla que hoy pone a prueba la solidaridad entre pueblos y gobiernos y, cuando suceda, nos abrazaremos con gran alegría por la victoria contra la pandemia que hoy nos azota, para darle un viva a la vida y celebrar en hermandad el 60 aniversario de nuestro ICAP.

Fraternalmente,

Fernando González Llort
Presidente, Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos (ICAP)

ICAP message in the time of Covid-19: BLOCKADE NO, SOLIDARITY YES

Havana, April 9, 2020

To the World Movement of Solidarity with Cuba

Dear friends,

With deep humanistic conviction, the government and people of the world, once again, the example of militant solidarity at a time when the planet is facing the global pandemic of the new coronavirus Sars Cov-2, Covid-19, which has already claimed the lives of more than 70,000 people in the world in a very short time.

In the time of Covid-19 the eyes of the world look with hope at Cuba, and Cuba, in the midst of an inhuman and genocidal blockade, did not hesitate to respond with an army of white coats, consisting of more than 593 health professionals, of which 338 are women, organized in 15 brigades of the Henry Reeve Contingent, already providing their services in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, faithful to the maxims of Martí and Fidel, ratified by our President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez: “Cuba is not a beggar to the world, but a sister.”

Contrary to our humble gesture, President Trump encourages insulting anti-Cuban campaigns to try to discredit the principles of humanity and solidarity on which our medical collaboration defending the human right to health care rests.

This moment reveals the fragility of the consumer societies of the capitalist system and the deficiencies of its health system, as a result of the anti-popular policies of neoliberal governments subordinated to big capital and U.S. imperialism.

Humankind demands solidarity as never before. It is urgent to unite and promote international cooperation.

Our institute proudly recognizes the support of the friendship associations, political organizations, members of parliament, trade unionists and other political forces that make up the world movement for solidarity with Cuba, our collaborators in the countries where they are already campaigning against Covid-19, as well as the messages of appreciation sent to the government of Cuba and its people for the solidarity, humanitarian and altruistic dimension of the Revolution.

For our doctors also our special recognition, respect and admiration wherever they are. They are confronting this pandemic with altruism inside and outside Cuba, as a response of the call of the Cuban government to spread the humanitarian seed of Martí and Fidel, in opposition to actions like those of the United States and other NATO countries, which spend huge military budgets to the detriment of the living conditions of their populations, fostering fear, hatred and hopelessness.

In the same vein, we appreciate the permanent solidarity of the entire movement that, now in the times of the new coronavirus, has not stopped acting to demand the lifting of the blockade against Cuba, much more criminal in the current circumstances, also demanding the full application of Resolution “Necessity to end the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba,” approved in 2019 at the UN by the vast majority of its members.

Together we will win this battle that today tests solidarity between peoples and governments and, when it happens, we will embrace with great joy the victory against the pandemic that is striking us today, to give life to life and celebrate in brotherhood the 60th anniversary of our ICAP.

Fraternally,

Fernando González Llort
President, Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP)