Impeachment = WHITEWASH

By Sharon Black

For the second time, Donald Trump has been acquitted in an impeachment trial that was doomed from the beginning. Both the Democratic Party elite and the Republicans refused to call witnesses during the Feb. 9-13 Senate trial, which would have, at a bare minimum, exposed the extent of the Jan. 6 crisis. Rather than invoke the 14th Amendment or jail Trump and his accomplices for treason, the Democratic Party instead took the impeachment route, which guaranteed Trump an acquittal. They spent many hours and wasted time engaged in this overblown charade rather than get down to the needed business of quickly mandating major relief for the people.

Immediately after his inauguration, at a time when most of the reactionary elements of the House and Senate seemed to be in disarray, President Joe Biden could have used his powers to push through measures that would have strengthened the condition of the working-class.

The impeachment process ultimately obscured the depth and the white supremacist, anti-working-class coup attempt, orchestrated primarily to overturn the election results.

Independent people’s inquiry into role of state

What was most needed and is still needed is an independent “people’s inquiry” to thoroughly unravel the extent of what really took place, not only on Jan. 6, but also before those events.

Why were National Guard units blocked from securing the Capitol? To what extent were elements of the military involved? Who gave the “reconnaissance tours” of the building? There is enough evidence to show that the FBI and other surveillance agencies knew that there were plans to try to stop the certification of the election by force. How then could the Capitol Police, FBI, Homeland Security, Pentagon and so many others be so unprepared?

The working class must play a leading role in an investigation aimed at weeding out all of the white supremacist, fascist elements from top to bottom in every part of the state. This includes all police agencies, from federal to local, as well as the military and all of the politicians who were complicit or participated. Biden and the Democratic Party could have easily used this opportunity to get every Klanisman, Proud Boy, Oath Keeper, etc., out of police forces and government positions by decree. Such a mandate would have had the support of the masses, especially the most oppressed.

While such an act would not eradicate the role of the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state in general, it would have been a concrete measure to set back the more organized fascist forces. Who could have argued against it?

Without a thorough and public accounting, coupled with action and the intervention of the working-class, the threat of the kind of fascist movement that was seen on Jan. 6 will continue to grow.

So-called “transfer of power”

The major media continually rings a false alarm that the transfer of power has occurred. The one thing that must be made clear is that the White House is still in the hands of the same class of billionaire bankers and bosses, which has characterized this era . . . and which may prove useful for them and the ruling class at a later date. The Democratic Party leadership does not want to unleash the working class against the fascists, since doing so would considerably strengthen the movement to demand free health care, cancel rents and mortgages, raise wages, end the obscene war budget and so much more.

The unfished revolution

The capitalist system continually erodes its own bourgeois democracy — and it will continue to do so, just as the parasitic apparatus of violent repression grows.

The one thing that must be made

Continued on page 7

remember Malcolm X

Malcolm X was assassinated at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem on Feb. 21, 1965, with the collaboration of the FBI and New York Police Department.
Today, we remember Malcolm as a militant community organizer, revolutionary internationalist, and fighter for Black liberation by any means necessary:

“We are living in an era of revolution, and the revolt of the American Negro is part of the rebellion against the oppression and colonialism which has characterized this era . . . It is incorrect to classify the revolt of the Negro as simply a racial conflict of Black against white, or as a purely American problem. Rather, we are today seeing a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter.”

“I believe that there will ultimately be a clash between the oppressed and those that do the oppressing. I believe that there will be a clash between those who want freedom, justice, and equality for everyone and those who want to continue the systems of exploitation.”

“... You can’t have capitalism without racism and you happen to get that person into a conversation and they have a philosophy that makes you sure they don’t have this racism in their outlook, usually they’re socialists or their political philosophy is socialism.”

“Revolution is never based on begging someone for an integrated cup of coffee. Revolutions are never fought by turning the other cheek. Revolutions are never compromising... Revolutions overturn systems.”

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> St. Louis prisoners rebel
> Black workers matter
> Amazon workers: UNION
> Biden – Trump
> Hank Aaron
> Corporate virus news
> No sanctions on Venezuela!
> Texas
Prisoners rebel against COVID spread, hunger

By EXPO-St. Louis

Sometime in the early morning of Feb. 6, the inmates at the St. Louis City Justice Center (CJC) staged an act of civil disobedience because of the inhumane treatment by CJC management concerning COVID-19 along with other issues.

EXPO (EX-Incarcerated People Organizing) works to end mass incarceration, eliminate all forms of structural discrimination against formerly incarcerated people and restore them to full citizenship. EXPO-St. Louis was made aware that more than 50 inmates participated in a peaceful protest that took place on Dec. 29. Nothing was done to address those issues and this morning’s uprising was the natural evolution of the actions of living and feeling human beings.

Here now is a communication received from inside the Justice Center itself:

On the morning of Tuesday, December 29, 2020, around 10 a.m. CT, myself (Cortez Easterwood-Bey IMN #6694) and more than 50 other inmates on at least two floors within Missouri’s St. Louis Justice Center stood together in solidarity outside of our cells as a form of peaceful protest to exercise our First Amendment right to free speech in a peaceful attempt to voice our grievances to be heard by CJC management that have gone unanswered after months (anywhere from 2-6 months or more) of following the established procedures for filing complaints and grievances.

We recently learned from sympathetic guards/correctional officers (hereafter referred to as COs) that these complaint and grievance forms rarely go past the CO whom the form was given to, let alone to their supervisor nor an outside entity or CJC official. Our peaceful protest was unequivocally matched with resistance by CJC staff akin to the pre-Civil Rights Movement — we were subjected to tear gas, hosed down with strong water, and placed face down in inches of now contaminated water in order to be handcuffed, transferred to the known dilapidated Medium Security Institution (MSI) nicknamed the “Workhouse,” and placed “in the hole” without proper heat, dry clothing and new face masks.

All this because we were trying to tell jail staff and management that we don’t want to DIE, we are hungry, we want proper ventilation, we are tired of being cold without being given winter clothing, we want proper PPE for COVID-19, we are tired of being price gouged in the commissary and vending machines, we want the mandated six “recs” per day, and we want visits from family and friends since there is a glass barrier between them and the inmates.

How long do we inmates have to go without before one stops adhering to socially acceptable civil norms when they are blatantly and continuously being denied such — not only the ability to live but also other basic (prison) rights such as the ability to breathe uncontaminated air?

Because of this incident, jail staff have threatened to destroy and discard our personal belongings, religious and otherwise, as punishment. Their purported excuse for this action is because the tear gas they used has contaminated said belongings. So, we will no longer have our legal documents nor anything we or our family or friends purchased for us — food, clothing, toiletries, religious documents/books/items, photos, etc. This is our punishment for asking not to be infected with COVID and to have proper and adequate food, PPE, etc.

To my knowledge, there are at least 12 lawsuits filed by other inmates due to the outcome and actions of jail staff at CJC for this initially “peaceful protest” that has been quelled by correctional officials so the media and public are kept unaware.

On New Year’s Eve, there were already 51 of us in the hole in one “pod,” which was supposed to hold a maximum of 60 people pre-COVID, that were healthy and uninfected with COVID. However, prison staff decided to add 11 more inmates, some of whom were visibly infected with COVID.

This is genocide. Read the full letter: tinyurl.com/cxgn3bgl

Support Bessemer Amazon union

By Los Angeles Workers Assembly

On Feb. 19, Los Angeles union activists and community groups held a rally in front of the office of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius. This giant union-busting law firm was hired by Amazon to defy health experts, and live up to all other long-established standards of safety.

Amazon has historically neglected the safety of its workers and has not only seen an increase in worsened working conditions, but an increase in the corporate giant’s profit margins during a global pandemic. Jeff Bezos has hired Morgan, Lewis & Bockius to turn back the will of the workers at Bessemer — a workforce that is 85% African Americans struggling for respect in a so-called “right to work” state.

We demand Amazon pay its workers a living wage, hire enough staff to ease the impossible work quotas, pay hazard pay during the pandemic, abide by measures recommended by health experts, and live up to all other long-established standards of safety. Most important, Amazon must negotiate with the collective voice of its workforce.

We call on Morgan, Lewis & Bockius to stand down! Stop targeting Black workers! End the deceitful and unfair union-busting tactics against these hard-working warehouse workers and allow a free and fair vote for union representation! 

PETITION:

Support Bessemer Amazon union

We are proud union members and supporters, and we stand in solidarity with the thousands of Amazon workers in Bessemer, Ala., during their historic union election.

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PETITION:
Deliberate deindustrialization

Capitalists didn’t like the growing power and influence of Black workers. The Jefferson Avenue plant sparked a revolt of Black and white, largely Polish-American, workers against unsafe working conditions at Chrysler’s Lynch Road Forge plant. (“Detroit: I Do Mind Dying” by Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin)

The United Auto Workers contracts got how African Americans shook the ruling class. The United Auto Workers contracts also members of the multinational auto and steel, Black workers were now. Black workers were the rock of the labor movement. Organizing drives among hospital and textile workers were deepening, and Black Americans were employed in the workplace. Black women were leaders in these struggles. (“Upheaval in the Quiet Zone” by Alphonse and Arlene Ross, “The Politics of Healthcare Unionism” by Leon Fink and “Hiring the Black Worker” by Timothy J. Minchin)

Capitalists considered Black lives a dangerous source of social control. The destruction of millions of factory jobs wasn’t just the result of automation and super-exploiting workers in other countries. Nor was it simply the declining rate of profit in heavy industry as discovered by Karl Marx.

Deliberate deindustrialization was a political decision targeting Black workers. Wall Street never forgot how African Americans took auto plants in the 1960s and 1970s. The League of Revolutionary Black Workers led wildcat strikes in Detroit. There was a Black Panther Party caucus in GM’s Fremont, California, plant, which is now a non-union Tesla plant.

Forty years ago the communist leader Sam Marcy described the hated by billionaires for Black workers: “The ruling class now looks at the Black population differently than it did in the days of the Underground Railroad... It now fears it will lose its Black workers in particular as a surplus population along with the unemployed white workers.”

“It looks upon them with disdain as a drain on their government budget, as a drag on their system and as a dangerous source of social convulsions. The ruling class dreams of replacing all blue-collar workers with a minimum of white-collar technicians in white coats.”

The wholesale destruction of heavy industry in the Midwest caused the median income of African Americans to drop by 20% between 1978 and 1982. (Census Bureau, Historical Tables)

The capital’s坐-down strike economically destroyed Detroit, just as it left Black people drownd and starve in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

Black workers are essential

Instead of concentrating African Americans in large plants, the capita state sent Black youth to big prisons. The 2.2 million poor people who are incarcerated in the U.S. are also members of the multinational working class.

The super-rich can’t get away from their dependence on Black labor. This is shown by millions of African American essential workers during the coronavirus pandemic. U.S. capitalism was built on the labor of enslaved Africans. It became the banksters for the slave masters.

It was enslaved Africans who paid the bills for the United States. Until the Civil War, two-thirds of U.S. exports were produced by slave labor. Cotton alone accounted for half of U.S. exports in 1860. Thousands of miles of railroads were built by unpaid Black labor, like the prisoner John Henry.

Reparations are overdue. As the December 12th Movement says, “They stole us, they sold us, they owe us.”

Black workers today are joined by millions of Asian, Indigenous and Latinx workers. Like a helper loco-motive pushing a freight train over a mountain grade, the other oppressed workers will help overcome white racism. Millions of poor white people need a socialist revolution, too. All eyes are on the Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama, where an 85-percent Black workforce is conducting a union drive. Whatever happens there, the freedom drive of Black workers is unstoppable. [8]

Sending our solidarity to Alabama union drive

Open letter to Jeff Bezos and the Alabama Amazon workers from former Amazon workers

Dear Bezos and Amazon workers,

We are sending all of our support, love and solidarity to the Bessemer, Alabama, Amazon workers in their fight for a union and for workers’ power. Trust us, we know how brutal workplace conditions are: the impossible quotas and pressure to keep up; the lack of safety and concern for workers who are risking their lives during this pandemic without hazard pay; the constant monitoring of our every move; breaks that are way too short and bathrooms that are way too far; and so much more.

Like Rosa Parks and the civil- rights movement, Bessemer workers are leading the way. We salute your courage, given everything that the company has done to discourage, intimidate and stop workers from having a fair vote. Shame on you, Amazon, that you would oppose mail-in votes! Win or lose, no one will forget this battle against workplace injustice. What will be remembered, Jeff Bezos, is your greed and callousness during this pandemic. You made $13 billion ($3 trillion) in one day after the pandemic caused Amazon’s stock price to surge. This set a record for the largest single-day increase in individual wealth ever recorded.

Yes, Bezos, corona cash has been good for you, despite the fact that 20,000 Amazon workers have tested positive for the virus, and that you withdrew hazard pay while you were cashing in. You could have taken that one—day corona windfall and paid each of the 876,000 Amazon workers $1,420 bonus. (Bezos’ one day gain of $13 billion divided by 876,000 workers.)

The Alabama workers’ battle is truly a fight between David and Goliath, taking place in the birthplace of the civil-rights movement. We must all pick a side; as the union song goes: “Which side are you on?”

We urge everyone to pick the side of the Bessemer workers! Yours for United Workers Action, Sharon Black, Rasika Ruwanpathirana, Steven Ceci

Former Baltimore Amazon warehouse workers
Why does Biden continue Trump's anti-people policies?

By Greg Butterfield

You've probably heard the saying, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." This isn't really true, of course. The environment, people and society are constantly changing, even down to the subatomic level. And when enough small changes accumulate, they can lead to sudden, dramatic changes — even a revolution.

But one month into the Biden administration, you could be forgiven for thinking of that old platitude. Because the new Democratic President Joe Biden's administration is laying a course to continue many of Donald Trump's anti-people policies, only with some cosmetic changes.

Why?

Politicians and mainstream media often speak of the change of presi- dents as a "transfer of power." That was certainly the case in the transition between Trump and Biden, coming after months of The Donald and his allies trying to sup- press democracy so that Joe Biden could win the Jan. 6 coup attempt at the Capitol.

But it's not really a transfer of power. Only the office holders change. The capitalist system, and the super-wealthy bosses who profit from it, continue to hold real power whether it is a Republican president in the White House or which fac- tion has a majority in Congress.

All the way back in 1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels hit the nail on the head when they wrote in the Communist Manifesto, "The ex- ecutive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the com- mon affairs of the whole bourgeoi- sie" — that is, the capitalists.

Those capitalist politicians elected to high office, whether a Trump or a Biden, do so with the expectation that they will carry out the interests of the capitalist class. Whether Democrats or Republicans, politicians are nothing but "enforcers of the capitalist system."

So Biden, the new "administra- tor," is expected to carry on. As he told a Wall Street fundraising event during his campaign, "it's obvious that nothing fundamentally will change." That's good news for Big Capital. For the rest of us, not so much.

A cage or "overflow facility"? In a November interview with his in- auguration, Biden said he would put a "cage" at the border to keep migrant parents and children separated. Many capi- tnalists hated it too. It was bad for their bottom line and undermined their PR for the U.S. as "champion of democracy." The preservation of the "DREAMER" program for undocumented adults who arrived in the U.S. as children is also welcome.

But while the president and First Lady Jill Biden announced their in- tention to reunite hundreds of mi- grant parents and children victim- ized by Trump's "family separation" policy, under Biden the Border Patrol, Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Border Patrol continue to deport hundreds of families and immi- grants, including children.

On Feb. 8, amidst the mass protests against governmental repression in Haiti, ICE deported 72 refugees back to the country — including 22 children, the youngest a two-month-old baby. After the executive order to tempo- rarily suspend some deportations "pending review" was hailed by a Trump-appointed judge. But the de- partment's assertions on Haitian families would not have qualified, even if the order was in effect.

"The concurrency in 2018–2019 over Trump keeping children in cages? Biden's team has announced plans to reopen an "overflow facility" for unaccompanied minors (children) captured by the immi- gration enforcement goons. In case you're wondering, "overflow facility" is just a polite term for "cage." In an op-ed published by The Hill on Feb. 13, "Biden has not done enough to end family separation," wrote attorney Clara Long and Elora Mukherjee. They wrote: "As attorneys who met with hungry, dirty, desperate children separated from their fami- lies at the southern border during the height of the kids-in-cages calamity in 2019, we had hoped President Biden would quickly fix the problem. So far, we've been disappointed.

"The Biden administration may be choosing to drag its feet on ending Trump border abuses because it doesn't want to encourage more people to come. This isn't new. For the Trump administration, the State De- partment labeled it a crisis at the border with the canard that such treatment will de- ter future migrants from coming. "But after months of mass separa- tions of parents from their children in 2018 — the cruelest policy ever rolled out in the name of deterrence — border apprehensions surged in 2019."

What about Breonna Taylor?

Most workers know how Biden backedtrack on his promise of a new $2,000 stimulus payment. That was in February, when many analysts said the $2,000 stimulus check (and are currently predicting $2,000 "down payments") would be included per family. The $600 payment sent out in mid-December was a smaller version of what Biden campaigns had committed to. But no. The pittance $600 payment sent out in the name of deterrence — bor- der abuses would not have qualified, even if the order was in effect.

During their campaign, Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris condemned the grand jury decision that let off the police who murdered Breonna Taylor. Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron deliberate- ly and blatantly sabotaged the case. Given how much the Black Lives uprising contributed to mass Black voter turnout and his election suc- cess, one might imagine Biden would immediately order his Justice Department to take action to put the killers behind bars. But no. Breonna Taylor and the ep- idemic of racist police terror against Black and Brown people dropped off the radar after Election Day. Sensing which way the winds were blow- ing, Taylor's mother Tamika Palm- er penned an open letter in December, blaming the grand jury decision that let off the police who murdered Breonna Taylor. "You're looking at the settling of a case."

Even Biden's heralded decision to end U.S. support for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen is deceptive at best. The U.S. will continue to arm and aid the House of Saud for so-called "defensive" purposes and build up the anti-Iran, anti-Yemen alliance in the region. On Feb. 5, while millions of people were desperately waiting for the promised stimulus check (and are still waiting today), the Pentagon announced its $75 billion arms sale to the U.S. war in Yemen — a combined $150 million in spy tools for the NATO military alliance and missiles for the right-wing regime in Chile.

Break with the system

Nothing the Biden regime has done is new or surprising. Every Democratic administration of the past 30 years has continued and deepened the anti-people policies of the prior Republican government, and vice versa.

Bill Clinton continued and deep- ened the anti-poor austerity and racial repression of the Reagan–Bush foreign policy moves have been es- pecially ugly.

- Continue Trump's propaganda war and military threats against China.
- Tell Iran that the U.S. will honor the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action "nuclear deal" only if Tehran goes back to observing it first — even though it was Trump that torpedoed the agreement. U.S. pi- rocy continues against Iran–con- nection ships.
- Keep the U.S. Embassy to Israel in Jerusalem, where Trump unilater- ally moved it despite international protests. Continue unfettered funding, arming and political support for the apartheid regime's suppression of Palestinians.
- Continue to recognize self-ap- pointed "president" Juan Guaido while refusing to open discussions with the legitimate Venezuelan government led by President Nicolas Maduro.
- Appoint many veterans of the Obama administration State De- partment responsible for for- right-wing coups in Honduras, Libya and Ukraine.
- Even Biden's heralded decision to end U.S. support for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen is deceptive at best. The anti-Iran, anti-Yemen alliance in the region.
- On Feb. 5, while millions of people were desperately waiting for the promised stimulus check (and are still waiting today), the Pentagon announced its $75 billion arms sale to the U.S. war in Yemen — a combined $150 million in spy tools for the NATO military alliance and missiles for the right-wing regime in Chile.

Continued on page 5
HANK AARON: A hero of the anti-racist struggle

By Lev Koufax

The world lost a revered baseball hero and an icon of the Black liberation struggle on Jan. 21: Hank Aaron. In 1974, Aaron broke Babe Ruth's record of 714 career home runs. At the time, Ruth's record was the holy grail of baseball.

A Black man, Aaron was raised in the Jim Crow South. He joined the Milwaukee Braves in 1954, but he and his teammates had to travel the long game long enough to have played for the Indianapolis Clowns of the Negro leagues. 

Aaron was already a well-established player by 1974. He was a Most Valuable Player (MVP) with the Braves and a shining star of the Atlanta Braves. He earned a Most Valuable Player award in 1974.

Nonetheless, as Aaron strode closer and closer to 714 home runs, the level of racism directed towards him intensified to a fever pitch. The racist violence Aaron faced during this stretch can be best described in his own words:

"It really made me see for the first time a clear picture of what this country is about. My kids had to live like they were in prison because of death threats. I had to live like a pig in a slaughter camp. I had to duck. I had to go out the back door of the ballparks.

"I had to have a police escort with me all the time," Aaron recalled in a 1994 interview. "I was getting death threats every single day. All of these things have put a bad taste in my mouth, and it won't go away. They carved a piece of my heart away.

In 1973, Aaron received 930,000 pieces of mail. Most of these letters were hate mail, racist rhetoric and death threats. Even the reporters who covered Aaron positive coverage were met with racist rage and condemnation. 

Amidst this horror, Aaron nevertheless pushed forward. "Hammerin' Hank" as he was called by then-Senator Joe Biden, finally broke Ruth's record on April 8, 1974. This milestone did not quiet the racists, but Aaron would continue on to hit a career total of 755 home runs.

Still, the experience was so awful that it led Aaron to ignore the game he loved for nearly decades after he retired.

Aaron made his historic achievement as a member of the Atlanta team that still takes its name from an anti-Indigenous slur. Hammerin' Hank's passing has renewed calls to finally do away with that racist name and rechristen the team in his honor as the Atlanta Hammers.

Hank Aaron should be remembered forever as a warrior against racism and a home run champ. Rest in power! 

Corporate virus ‘news’ and capitalist irrationality

By Greg Butterfield

On any random day in February, you can visit the New York Times, Washington Post, CNN, and local media from Los Angeles to Chicago, and see several stories side by side:
1. Schools should be reopened immediately, even before teachers and other school workers are vaccinated. So say the cherry-picked “experts” and President Joe Biden.
2. Governors are relaxing restrictions around the country on indoor dining, gyms, etc., as there is some decline in new COVID-19 cases, though the rate of infections and deaths is still far above what it was last summer and fall.
3. There are several new, more infectious variants of the virus spreading abroad that have started to reach the U.S., as well as possible U.S. variants. Experts say a “perfect storm” of new infections is brewing — some of which may be more dangerous to children. People should start to double mask and be extra cautious about maintaining social distancing.
4. There is no effort by the champions of corporate nationalism to recognize these glaring contradictions, which replicate exactly almost the situation under Donald Trump with a shiny new Biden sheen. (What it looks like)

Meanwhile, President Nicolás Maduro stressed the UN expert’s recognition of the impact on the country of the economic strangulation implemented by the White House and its allies.

"This is the irrationality of capitalism writ large: 500,000+ deaths in the U.S. and climbing."

UN expert denounces damage caused by U.S. sanctions on Venezuela

Feb 13: The negative impact of the coercive and unilateral measures of the United States on the Venezuelan people has made it into the news this week.

After several days of official visit to the country, the special rapporteur of the United Nations, Alena Douhan, confirmed that the policy of economic asphyxiation has accentuated the scenario of crisis and internal tensions, with direct impact on health, migration, separation of families and all aspects of social life.

At a press conference in Caracas, the UN independent expert urged Washington to reconsider and remove all sanctions against the Venezuelan public sector and to refrain from imposing blockades on the South American nation.

Douhan asserted that the punitive actions implemented by the United States have slowed down Venezuela’s development due to the severe impact on its economy, causing a 99% drop in foreign exchange earnings in recent years.

In parallel to the official’s visit, representatives of the Latin American Foundation for Human Rights and Social Development (Fundala- tin) and the Venezuelan Civil Association (Sures) presented the negative impact of the blockade to the National Assembly last Thursday.

Pasqualina Curcio, advisor to Fundalatin, said that the country has lost more than $794 billion as a result of the sanctions, which were supported by the previous National Assembly.

For her part, Lucrecia Hernández, director of Sures, pointed out that these sanctions have violated the fundamental rights of Venezuelans, and called for those responsible to be held criminally and administratively liable.

Meanwhile, President Nicolás Maduro stressed the UN expert’s recognition of the impact on the country of the economic strangulation implemented by the White House and its allies.

The UN rapporteur has called on the United States and the European Union to review and lift the sanctions against Venezuela because they have exacerbated an enormous humanitarian crisis against the people.

Maduro recalled that the Bolivarian government has repeatedly denounced the severe impact on social, cultural, educational and economic life caused by the systematic adoption of a blockade policy.

Source: Resumen / teleSUR
Texas tragedy wasn’t inevitable:
Take over the utilities!

By Stephen Millies

Feb. 20 — Millions of people in Texas are living in misery after a winter storm hit the state. For days they have been without heat, light and water.

The loss of electricity caused food and medicines, like insulin, to spoil in refrigerators. Many homes and hospitals still don’t have water because the pumps froze.

Hundreds of people may have died, including at least three people in Abilene. One of the victims was a homeless man found on the street.

Thousands of prisoners in Houston are being held in freezing cells with clogged toilets. Many haven’t been convicted of anything but are too poor to post bail.

Gloria V. of the Socialist Unity Party reports from Dallas that “people are helping each other to survive. Some have opened their homes to neighbors.”

“The utilities have rolling shut-offs without notifying residents when power will be turned on and off,” said the SUP organizer. “Internet service has also been interrupted. People trying to warm up in their cars have died of carbon monoxide poisoning.”

How can this be happening in the biggest energy-producing state in the country? This tragedy isn’t a natural disaster. The culprit is a capitalist system on steroids that places profits ahead of human life.

Not everyone suffered. Hundreds of thousands of people living in the dark in Houston could see the downtown skyscrapers brightly lit. Eleven-year-old Cristian Pavon froze to death in his family’s trailer home while U.S. Senator Ted Cruz flew from Houston to a luxury resort in Cancún, Mexico.

The soaring gas and oil prices were “like hitting the jackpot,” bragged Robert Burns, a top executive at Comstock Resources. Comstock’s biggest investor is billionaire Jerry Jones, the owner of the Dallas Cowboys football club who attacked Colin Kaepernick.

Blame deregulation, not windmills

Four hundred years ago the novelist Cervantes wrote about Don Quixote attacking windmills. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Fox News are blaming wind and solar power for the catastrophe.

That’s more than a fable. It’s a lie. Wind normally produces just 10 percent of the electrical power in Texas. It was when former President George W. Bush was Texas governor that the state started harvesting wind power.

More important than frozen blades on wind turbines have been frozen natural gas pumps. Even coal-fired power plants stopped running because the coal froze. One of the state’s four nuclear reactors shut down.

Gov. Abbott is now trying to divert people’s anger by breaking contracts to sell natural gas to Mexico. That’s another colonial attack that’s forcing over four million Mexicans to go without heat.

The old pharaohs would have been better prepared even without electric power. They planned ahead for floods and famines. Food was stored in warehouses so people wouldn’t starve and the rulers wouldn’t be overthrown.

The capitalist utilities in Texas refused to build enough backup power because doing so would cut into their profits. The Lone Star State has its own electrical power grid so its utilities wouldn’t be subject to the Federal Power Commission.

That also makes importing power from other states much more expensive. Homeowners are now being socked with electric bills as high as $10,000.

Electric companies in northern states regularly operating in cold weather are forced to invest in more insulation, heated pipes and crushers to break up frozen coal. Wind turbines can be equipped with heaters and insulated gearboxs.

Texas utilities can get away without spending money on this stuff because of deregulation. The current disaster is the result.

Another consequence was the $40-billion-plus Enron utility bankruptcy two years ago. This was the biggest financial scandal in U.S. history. Among the cheerleaders of Enron’s corrupt management were members of the Bush family and their political associates. Former Secretary of State James Baker and former Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher — both members of President George Herbert Walker Bush’s cabinet — were put on Enron’s payroll.

Baker was even awarded the “Enron Prize” for public service.

Utility shut-offs are just as deadly. Among those killed was a 7-month-old baby.

The family had been disconnect ed by Baltimore Gas and Electric because they couldn’t afford a $808 back bill. That’s eighty dollars for each victim of BG&E greed.

Just as all housing foreclosures and evictions should be banned, so should all utility shut-offs. We need to cancel rent, mortgages and utility bills. Our water should be safe and free!

Despite regional outages, the utility industry wasn’t even willing to upgrade its power grids. There was no profit in doing so. Billions had to be included in President Obama’s 2009 stimulus bill to begin this necessary work.

Congresswoman Cori Bush, who was pepper sprayed at a Black Lives Matter demonstration, declared: “Corporations shouldn’t be allowed to profit off our suffering. Utilities need to be public goods.”

To hell with Ted Cruz! The tragedy in Texas shows we need a people’s takeover of the utilities.
Lawfare threatens to derail presidential election in Ecuador

By William Camacaro and Frederick Mills

On Feb. 7, the progressive presidential candidate for the Union of Hope Alliance (UNES) party, Andrés Arauz, won first place in Ecuador’s presidential election; this is uncontested. Arauz garnered 32.71% of the vote, topping former banker Guillermo Lasso 19.74%; and the “Indigenous” candidate, Yaku Pérez 19.38%.

Since Arauz’s margin of victory was less than the required 40% plus at least ten points more than the closest competitor, a runoff is scheduled for April 11. With the UN calling for transparency and Pérez contesting the outcome, Ecuador’s National Electoral Council (CNE) has agreed to conduct a partial recount to verify the second-place contender.

This election will have enormous consequences for Ecuador as well as the entire region. After four years of President Lenin Moreno’s neoliberal turn, which reversed the economic and social gains of former President Rafael Correa’s Citizens’ Revolution, the majority of Ecuadorians have opted for a change of course.

An Arauz victory would once again prioritize social investment over IMF-imposed austerity and resume Ecuador’s leadership in the movement towards regional integration. If the ultra-right in Ecuador and Colombia have their way, however, Arauz will not make it to the run-off election.

Just a week prior to the first round, with Arauz ahead in most polls, Ecuadorian President Lenin Moreno, who is a fierce opponent of the UNES candidate, met with the notoriously right-wing former bank- er Guillermo Lasso 19.74%; and the “Indigenous” candidate, Yaku Pérez 19.38%.

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On his Facebook page, Arauz categorically denied this accusation: “I have no link with the ELN. This lie has just one purpose, to prevent the Arauz-Rabascall ticket from participating in the second round.”

They will not fool the people’ Prominent voices of the Ameri- can Left have denounced these efforts as fabrications designed to sabotage democratic procedures in Ecuador. Nobel Peace Prize Winner (1980) Adolfo Pérez Esquivel tweeted: “They will not be able to fool the Ecuadorian people with judicial and media operations from the well-known Lawfare manual. Democracy will prevail. Ecuador has suffered a great deal and needs a return to common sense. Our support is for candidate Arauz.”

Former Colombian President Ernesto Samper, in response to an article published in the ultra-right-wing Colombian magazine Semana, alleging that Arauz had links to the ELN, wrote: “The people of Ecuador should be the alert that the enemies of progressivism in our countries are intent on stopping by any means the transformations for which the people demand.”

In the face of criticism of the unsubstantiated charges made against Arauz in the article, the director of Semana, Victoria Avila, remarked in an interview: “I want to make it very clear. I do not want to say that this information is absolutely certain.”

The Puebla Group, which brings together several former presidents of the region, including the Brazilian Luiz Inacio “Lula” Da Silva, issued a statement in which it categorically rejects the attempt to link Andrés Arauz with the National Liberation Army (ELN).

Former President of Bolivia Evo Morales, who himself was forced into exile by an OAS-backed coup in November 2019, tweeted: “We sound an alert about a plan by the right and the U.S. in Ecuador to try to prevent the triumph of Arauz in the second round, using the Attorney General of Colombia, right-wing parties and the OAS. We have the obligation to defend democracy and our regional integration. Be alert!”

The outcome of the presidential election in Ecuador will no doubt have a significant impact on the politics of the entire region. As Correa points out, these elections provide an opportunity “to recover UNASUR.”

If elected, Arauz has promised to champion the revival of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and return Ecuador to the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA). There is also a growing consensus in South America in support of these regional integrative and cooperation mechanisms.

With the election of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) candidate, Luis Arce, for president of Bolivia last October, an Arauz victory in Ecuador would fortify UNASUR at a most critical time. In the face of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the benefits of multilateralism have become obvious in efforts throughout the Americas to obtain urgently-needed medical supplies and vaccines from a variety of countries.

Given the return of progressive governance in Argentina, Mexico and Bolivia within the last three years, a victory in Ecuador could signal a new pink tide.

Fred Mills is co-director of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA). William Camacaro is senior analyst at COHA.
Señor Presidente Joe Biden:

Como hondureña-estadounidense, le escribo para pedirle con urgencia un cambio de la política de EE. UU. hacia Honduras, para que mi país pueda recuperar su democracia.

Usted era vicepresidente cuando en 2009, el gobierno de su parti- do encabezado por el presidente Barack Obama y la Secretaría de Estado Hillary Clinton, apoyaron el golpe de Estado en Honduras contra nuestro presidente Constitucional Manuel Zelaya Rosales.

En 2010, el gobierno de Estados Unidos nos impuso a Porfirio Lo- bósosa, cuyo hijo Fabio Lobo está preso en EE. UU. por tráfico de co- caína. En 2013, también nos impusieron al narco dictador Juan Orlando Hernández y cuyo hermano Antonio (Tony) Hernández se encuentra preso en Nueva York por tráfico toneladas de cocaína y armas hacia EE. UU. En 2017. EE. UU. también nos impuso por segunda vez a Hernán- dez, en una reelección ilegal y clara- mente fraudulentamente, como reconoció la propia Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA).

Fue desde el momento en que nos impusieron esa violenta narco-dictadura del Partido Nacional que nuestro país, Honduras, se hundió en la pésor crisis social, económica y política de nuestra historia. Es por ello y ante la desesperación, que el pueblo hondureño ha vivido en los últimos años, la pobreza, la violencia y el exódo masivo e inhumano de familias enteras desplazadas.

Usted ha sido electo en un mo- mento de profunda crisis de división racial, inequidad, crisis económica y de salud por el COVID-19. Por tanto, debe comprender lo difícil que es que cuando se entra en un proceso elec- toral bajo esas circunstancias.

Al igual que usted y el pueblo hondureño, nosotros en Honduras estamos luchando para recuperar la democracia, la justi- cia y la paz, que fue destruida por el golpe de Estado de 2009. Y ese último mes de noviembre de 2021, vamos a elecciones presidencia- les por tercera vez después de ese terrible momento histórico que nos cambió la vida. Por tanto, lo único que exigimos de su gobierno es que no intervenga. Y le aseguro, que de esa forma, su presidencia no tendrá el futuro que se merece.

El gobierno de Trump firmó acu- tos de Guatemala y México para que las fuerzas represoras les impid- ian el paso a las víctimas desplaza- das para que no lleguen a la frontera de EE. UU., que es su destino final para buscar asilo y refugio.

Así que presidente Biden, las cara- vanas son el resultado de las políti- cas fracasadas de su administración “cap- italista salvaje” como bien lo dijo el Papa Juan Pablo II, que EE. UU. impone en la región latinoameri- cana y el mundo. Y si usted y su gobierno desean que el “problema” de la inmigración cese, entonces le pedimos un alto a la intervención de EE. UU. en nuestros asuntos internos. El modelo económico neoliberal que este país, EE. UU., impone en la región, no ha funcionado en otros países. Al contrario, ha producido y profundizado la desigualdad ex- trema, la pobreza, la violencia y el exódo masivo e inhumano de familias enteras desplazadas.

Los venezolanos que no pueden pagar ni las consultas médicas, ni el alquiler, ni la comida por el COVID-19, van a elecciones presidenciales sin el derecho de escoger a su futuro. Por tanto, no el pueblo, sino el gobierno de Trump, quien demoró en impugnar el escrutinio que garantizó que el pueblo elegiría a su siguiente presidente. Y el pueblo hondureño está huyendo hacia los Estados Unidos por la imperdonable trama de seres humanos que los impone por segunda vez después de esa forma, su presidencia no tendrá el futuro que se merece.

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Lucy Pagoada-Quesada habla en Baltimore, enero de 2019.

Venezuela: Denuncian daños del bloqueo de Estados Unidos al pueblo

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