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Struggle-La-Lucha.org

Vol. 9, No. 4 • Feb. 23, 2026

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Struggle for Socialism Party

Partido de la Lucha por el Socialismo

# Struggle for Socialism Party stands with Cuba: END THE U.S. BLOCKADE!

**To President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez,**  
*First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, to the government and the people of Cuba:*

The members of both the Struggle for Socialism Party-Lucha por el Socialismo and Women in Struggle-Mujeres en Lucha (a member of the Women's International Democratic Federation), both based in the United States, jointly send you our unwavering solidarity.

We also condemn Donald Trump's latest executive order, an illegal escalation of the blockade designed to strangle your nation through collective punishment. It is unacceptable that Washington dares to declare a "national emergency" regarding Cuba while our own people lack housing, health care, and food; while Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) abducts migrant children; and while government violence claims lives in our own streets. But this is not surprising. The empire always invents emergencies abroad to distract from the crises it manufactures at home.

Ten million people. A small island. Cuba sends no armies of occupation and has no overseas bases. No history of attacking the United States. Yet Cuba is deemed an "unusual and extraordinary threat"? Let us name this lie for what it is: projection. Every accusation the U.S. hurls at Cuba is an admission of its own crimes against your sovereignty.

The United States occupies 80 countries, maintains 700 military bases, and commands a \$1.5 trillion war budget – more than the next nine nations combined. Washington has overthrown governments in Nicaragua, Guatemala, Grenada, and beyond. This government – which claims to represent us, but really just represents the billionaires – has funded death squads, waged psychological warfare,



and now holds Venezuela's president hostage to steal its oil. And still, Washington dares to lecture Cuba about "regional instability."

This latest order is not new. It is the same policy of punishment that has defined U.S. relations with Cuba for 64 years. It is not a trade embargo – it is a global blockade. A systematic campaign to intimidate any nation that dares to befriend Cuba. A crime against international law and human decency.

And what has Cuba done to deserve this?

Cuba sends doctors. When Ebola ravaged West Africa, Cuban physicians were on the front lines. When COVID struck Italy, Cuban brigades answered the call. When Hurricane Katrina drowned New Orleans, Cuba offered aid. The United States refused. This is the "threat" Washington cannot abide: a small, socialist nation that heals the world while the empire bombs it.

We will not allow Cuba to be slandered, starved, or bullied into submission.

We demand:

- An immediate end to the 64-year blockade.
- The return of Guantánamo Bay to Cuba.
- Remove Cuba from the fraudulent State Sponsors of Terrorism list.

- An end to U.S. threats against nations that trade with or aid Cuba.
- An end to the violence the United States exports abroad and inflicts at home.

**Long live the Cuban Revolution.**

From the belly of the beast – our hearts are with you.

Our fight is with you. Until the blockade falls, until the land is returned, until Cuba is free.

**¡Hasta la victoria siempre!**

**A Century of Black History**

**Baltimore janitors fight back**

**Jesse Jackson warrior for justice**

**CUBA's Mariela Castro Espín: 'Principles are not negotiable'**

**International activists announce FLOTILLA MISSION for Cuba solidarity**

**Bad Bunny's halftime show went against climate of hate**

**Defend CUBA Actions: March 8 – March 15**

**At Mardi Gras: 'F\*\*\* ICE!'**

**NYC NURSES, SF TEACHERS,**  
Labor takes on ICE and bosses

War Dept. shuts El Paso sky

Dow 50,000, workers sell blood



**GAZA:** 'ceasefire' = bombs and real-estate

The permanent war economy and Munich

**IRAN war:** Big Oil's 'biggest opportunity'

**Michael Parenti** helped clarify the class war

# Commemorating a Century of Black

By Gloria Verdieu

## Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950): Father of Black History

“Those who have no record of what their forebears have accomplished lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history.” – Carter G. Woodson

Carter G. Woodson played a pivotal role in advancing the education of Black individuals within the field of history. His efforts led to historians worldwide recognizing the study of African American and African descendant histories as an important and legitimate academic discipline.

*The year 2026 will commemorate a century of Black history, a legacy founded by Carter G. Woodson. It presents the perfect opportunity to honor Woodson's remarkable intellect and dedication, which gave rise to the field of Black history.*

Woodson pioneered Black history, bringing academic rigor to its study. He dedicated his career to documenting and promoting African American achievements, believing that knowing one's history inspires future generations.

Born in 1875 in New Canton, Virginia, Woodson grew up in poverty as the child of recently freed slaves. Despite limited schooling opportunities, he graduated high school at 20 and earned an honors Bachelor of Literature from Berea College, Kentucky. He worked as a school supervisor in the Philippines for four years, traveled through Asia, North Africa, and Europe, and studied history at the Sorbonne University in Paris, becoming fluent in French.

After returning to the U.S., Woodson earned a master's degree in history from the University of Chicago in 1908. He completed his Ph.D. in history at Harvard in 1912, conducting research in Washington, DC at the Library of Congress. His doctoral thesis reflected his view that history should encompass culture,



Carter G. Woodson #7 in the USPS Black Heritage series stamps that began in 1978.  
Date of first issue: Feb. 1, 1984.

circumstances, and social conditions, stating, “If a race has no history, if it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated.”

He helped found the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915, along with its quarterly publication, now known as “The Journal of African American History.” Initially, Woodson had several white philanthropists, such as Julius Rosenwald, elected to the board of the Association. Woodson preferred white patrons such as Rosenwald who were willing to finance his Association without being involved in the research. Some of the white board members that Woodson recruited were not content to play the passive role that Woodson wanted. Woodson emphasized that only Negroes research and write about Black history. Those white board members who did not agree resigned.

Woodson served as Dean and Head of Graduate Faculty at Howard University from 1919 to 1920. In 1926, he established Negro History Week, which evolved into Black History Month.

Woodson described the aim of Negro History Week as follows:

“It is not so much a Negro History Week as it is a History Week. We should emphasize not



Carter G. Woodson

Negro History, but the Negro in History. What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race hatred and religious prejudice.”

Black educators and Black United Students at Kent State University first proposed Black History Month in February 1969. The first celebration of Black History Month took place at Kent State a year later, from Jan. 2 to Feb. 28, 1970.

Six years later, Black History Month was being celebrated all across the country in educational institutions, centers of Black culture, and community centers, both great and small. President Gerald Ford recognized Black History Month in 1976, during the celebration of the United States Bicentennial.

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# History

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Carter Woodson's organization, now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), designates a theme each year. The theme for 2026 is "A Century of Black History Commemorations." This theme encourages reflection on how Black history has been commemorated over the past century.

This writer examined the last hundred years through the lens of U.S. Postal Stamps featuring Black American faces, beginning with Booker T. Washington's stamp issued in 1940. Early stamps mostly recognized conservative figures, but the introduction of the Black Heritage series, starting with Harriet Tubman, issued in 1978, broadened the honorees to include prominent activists like Pan-Africanist W.E.B. Du Bois, Human Rights activist Malcolm X, Anti Lynching crusader Ida B. Wells, and Civil Rights activist Martin Luther King Jr. The seventh stamp in this series, Carter G. Woodson, was released in February 1984. Today, there are 49 Black Heritage stamps, including one for Phillis Wheatley, which was issued on January 29, 2026. There are over 150 U.S. Postal stamps with Black faces.

Did Woodson hope that Negro History Week would someday become unnecessary?

While opinions vary, there is currently no national curriculum requiring Black history to be taught from elementary through high school. Ethnic Studies is becoming increasingly popular in school districts across the country. Thanks to the internet and AI technology, people are sharing historical achievements of Africans worldwide. Each day brings new opportunities to learn with just a few keystrokes, yet much more progress is needed to make the teaching of Black History vital to the survival of Black people – both physically and intellectually – within society at large.

Woodson died on April 3, 1950. He left behind such important published works as "The Negro in Our History," "The History of the Negro Church," and most famously "The Miseducation of the Negro," in addition to more than 30 other books, more than 100 published articles, and 125 book reviews. The NAACP awarded Woodson its distinguished Spingarn Medal in 1926, honoring outstanding Black Americans. The National Council for the Social Studies established the Carter G. Woodson Book Awards in 1974.

Woodson dedicated his life to his mission, having said, "I don't have time to marry. I'm married to my work." And while he left no children to survive him, he was literally the Father of Black History. #

# Janitors fight for fair wages and dignity



CVVY janitors and their union on the picket line fighting wage theft, management retaliation, and union busting. Photo: People's Power Assembly Instagram

By Kat Davis

Baltimore – On Wednesday, Feb. 11, janitors working for CVVY Enterprises, SEIU Local 32BJ, local activists and church leaders met in front of the Department of Labor office on 100 S. Charles Street to make a simple demand: that workers be treated with respect and dignity.

CVVY Enterprises contracts with the Department of Labor office and those of some other state agencies. The company has withheld wages, threatened workers, attempted to reclassify them as "independent contractors," fired employees, and cut hourly pay to below minimum wage. The company hired union contractors but failed to disclose pay rate decreases, pay stubs and schedules. While this took place, they pushed for classifying workers as contractors to escape the legal responsibility of giving workers overtime pay and benefits.

Union Local 32BJ has worked together with CVVY janitors to fight back against this exploitation by filing a complaint to both the Baltimore Wage Commission and the National Labor Relations Board.

Wednesday's events began with a noon picket line, which transitioned into a press conference. City council members Odette Ramos and John T. Bullock attended to support the workers with words of encouragement. Union leader Francisco Riviera chaired the rally.

Two former CVVY employees – Ms. Mary and Ms. Viviana – gave testimony on how CVVY Enterprises impacted them and their families. Mary is a 63-year-old former union worker. She is responsible for taking care of her disabled child while also dealing with her own health issues. CVVY Enterprises fired her with no explanation, though she felt it was in retaliation for advocating for herself and co-workers' rights.

Ms. Viviana is also a single mother with a daughter off at college. Unexpectedly, family members passed away, leaving her with bills and in debt because of funeral expenses. Without warning, CVVY fired her, after losing medical benefits, vacation time and sick days. This was also retaliation for wanting to reform a union.

While the capitalist economy may be working fine for CVVY owner Ryan Nguyen, employees struggle to pay bills, always looking for another means to get by. In Baltimore, the cost of living has skyrocketed, with increased fees from BGE (Baltimore Gas and Electric Company) and the national increase in food costs.

It is important for workers to realize that their labor matters. It is an investment into society. Workers keep society running. All workers, no matter what sector, deserve basic human rights and dignity. Unfortunately, we see that only 9.9% of the working class is unionized. That needs to change. It is important to fight against the bosses taking advantage of labor and tax money, especially when they are contracted for public purposes like maintaining state buildings and offices.

This is the time for us to realize that corporations are not looking out for their workers, so we must band together to look out for ourselves.

"Worker's rights and civil rights are interconnected because this is a fight for economic justice." – Francisco Riviera.

Currently, a bill to provide workers with more protections against underpayment and wage theft is making its way through Maryland's state legislature – House Bill 1096. The next hearing for the bill is Thursday, Feb. 26, at 1:00 p.m. at the Maryland General Assembly House in Annapolis. #

# Nurses, teachers, strikers: Labor takes

By Gary Wilson

In California, 31,000 Kaiser health care workers have been on strike since Jan. 26, with 4,000 more pharmacy and lab workers joining as of Feb. 9. In New York, 15,000 nurses have held the line for nearly a month. In Minneapolis, teachers won contract language barring ICE from schools, and a general strike on Jan. 23 forced the federal government to pull 700 agents out of the state.

Across the country, the people who care for us – who teach our children, who keep us alive in hospitals – are drawing a line against the deportation machine. What connects these struggles goes deeper than shared outrage. Unions are sharing tactics through established channels. National Nurses United, with 225,000 members, is functioning as a connective backbone linking health care worker resistance from coast to coast.

Labor is absorbing immigrant defense into its own struggles. Through strikes and collective bargaining, workers are doing what courts and legislatures will never do: keeping ICE out of hospitals, schools, and workplaces

## Kaiser: From staffing strike to anti-ICE

The Kaiser Permanente strike began over staffing and wages, but it did not stay there.

When Customs and Border Protection agents killed Alex Pretti – an ICU nurse at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center acting as a legal observer during an ICE raid – on Jan. 24, the Kaiser picket lines transformed. National Nurses United launched a week of action from Jan. 26 through Feb. 4, and Kaiser facilities across California became the infrastructure for a nationwide anti-ICE mobilization.

Vigils and organizing actions rolled through Kaiser Oakland, San Jose, San Leandro and Vallejo on Jan. 26. San Francisco's Geary Boulevard facility on Jan. 27. Roseville and Sacramento on Jan. 28, followed by actions in Southern California and the Bay Area on Jan. 30. These were not memorial services. NNU explicitly framed each action as an organizing step toward abolishing ICE.

NNU President Mary Turner captured the mood: "ICE messed with the wrong profession. Nurses want ICE abolished. Not one more penny for their crimes."

Thirty-one thousand workers already on the picket line gave NNU something no other organization had at that moment: a ready-made mobilization network stretching the length of California and into Hawaii. Nurses who had walked off the job over short staffing and burnout were now using that same collective power to confront the federal deportation

machine. And with 4,000 pharmacy and lab workers joining the strike on Feb. 9, that network is still growing.

The Richmond Kaiser rally on Jan. 30 showed how the strike is catalyzing broader resistance at the local level. Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia warned of \$300 million in annual health funding cuts under a pending House bill. The county launched a \$4 million "Stand Together" program providing rapid response legal services and deploying a mobile legal van to reach immigrant communities. The picket line became a rallying point for the whole county's resistance to ICE terror.

Karen Sanchez, an RN at California Hospital in Los Angeles, put the health care framing bluntly: "ICE is bad for patients, bad for communities, and bad for health care workers. Our hospitals need to be sanctuary spaces for people who need care, and the presence of ICE in the facility severely impacts how safe patients feel here."

## NYC nurses bring ICE to the bargaining table

If Kaiser nurses are turning their strike into an anti-ICE mobilization, New York's nurses have gone a step further: They are demanding that ICE exclusion become a binding term of their labor contracts.

The 15,000 NYSNA nurses, on strike since Jan. 12 against Mount Sinai, New York-Presbyterian and Montefiore – the largest nurses strike in New York City history – are fighting for safe staffing ratios, workplace violence protections and wages. But they are also demanding that their contracts explicitly bar ICE agents from their hospitals.

This demand did not appear overnight. Throughout 2025, NYSNA nurses worked with the Committee of Interns and Residents (CIR/SEIU) and 1199SEIU to push hospital administrators to voluntarily adopt ICE protections. Management refused. In September 2025, the nurses moved ICE exclusion into formal contract negotiations. Management refused to bargain on it. When the nurses struck in January 2026, sanctuary was on the table alongside staffing and pay.

"One of the nurses' priorities in contract negotiations is to have ICE officers not be allowed into our facilities," Montefiore nurse Michelle Gonzalez told Democracy Now! on Jan. 21.

As Struggle-La Lucha reported on Feb. 4: "Nurses are not asking elected officials to pass new laws. They are not waiting for courts to intervene. They are asserting through collective bargaining that safe patient care requires keeping ICE agents out of hospitals."

The hospitals have tried to dismiss this demand as a "distraction" from "unreasonable

economic demands," insisting their existing law enforcement cooperation policies are sufficient. In plain language: Management wants nurses to cooperate with ICE under a general "law enforcement interaction" framework. The nurses refuse.

If NYSNA wins ICE exclusion in a binding contract, it creates a template that health care unions anywhere can replicate – sanctuary enforced through collective bargaining rather than legislation that can be overturned or executive orders that can be rescinded.

## Immigrant workers defending immigrants

The demographics of this fight matter – in New York and in California alike.

Over 28% of all registered nurses in New York State are immigrants. More than two-thirds of NYC nurses are people of color – 35.4% Black, 20.9% Asian American and Pacific Islander, 10.7% Latine. These are immigrant workers using their professional power to protect immigrant patients.

NYSNA President Nancy Hagans, herself an immigrant, put it plainly on Jan. 28: "ICE's presence endangers our patients, our nurses, and our larger communities. As an immigrant nurse and a leader of a union with many members who are immigrants or raised by immigrants, this issue hits deeply."

Mount Sinai nurse Lillian Espinoza described the chilling effect already underway: "We know that the fear of encountering ICE already caused our Mount Sinai patients to delay or stop seeking care."

This is the concrete reality behind the abstract debate over sanctuary policy. When ICE operates near hospitals, people stop going to the doctor. Pregnant women skip prenatal visits. Diabetics ration insulin rather than risk a pharmacy trip. Children with fevers stay home. The nurses – in New York emergency rooms and California Kaiser clinics – see this every day.

## The murder that connected everything

Pretti's killing on Jan. 24 is the event that fused these parallel struggles into a single, nationally coordinated movement.

National Nurses United's week of action turned Kaiser picket lines into anti-ICE organizing actions across California. In New York, NYSNA nurses held a vigil at the VA NY Harbor Healthcare Center on Jan. 29, organized jointly with NNU, the Canadian Federation of Nursing Unions and AFGE.

"Last week, federal immigration agents in Minnesota brutally murdered ICU nurse Alex Pretti," NYSNA declared. "Like NYSNA nurses, he fought for and protected his patients and community."

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# on ICE

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In Minneapolis, health care workers were already providing mutual aid through Signal chat networks, with warnings circulating about ICE activity near Hennepin County Medical Center. The Minnesota Nurses Association set up rapid response infrastructure, coordinating with Unidos MN and the Working Partnerships mutual aid network and operating a direct hotline for detained members.

Health care unions issued a joint statement that drew the connections explicitly: “Allowing ICE undue access to hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, and other healthcare institutions is both deeply immoral and contrary to public health. New York’s healthcare workers are focused solely on providing the highest quality of care to our patients. We must never be put into positions where we are expected to assist, or be disrupted by, federal agents as they sweep into our institutions and attempt to detain patients or their loved ones.”

## Teachers draw the same line

The convergence extends beyond health care. In Minneapolis, the Federation of Educators won contract language in November 2025 requiring schools to refuse ICE entry without a judicial warrant, along with data privacy protections for students and mental health support for staff dealing with ICE-related trauma.

Minneapolis organizing director Nat Anderson-Lippert credited the Chicago Teachers Union’s sanctuary schools model: “The level of infrastructure and organizing is so impressive and humbling.”

In San Francisco, the United Educators of San Francisco are striking with sanctuary city protections and emergency housing for educators among their contract demands. The district has resisted both, claiming they create “significant liability.” The same strategy the Minneapolis teachers pioneered – embedding immigrant defense in labor contracts – is now spreading along the West Coast.

The logic is the same one the nurses articulate: You cannot teach children who are too traumatized to learn because ICE raided their neighborhood last night. You cannot provide patient care when the patient is too terrified to walk through the hospital door. Immigrant defense is a workplace issue.

## Minneapolis: Mass action forced a drawdown

The Jan. 23 Minneapolis general strike provided the proof of concept for this convergence in action. More than 100,000 people marched in temperatures that hit 30 below zero. Seven hundred businesses were closed. Major school

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# AT MARDI GRAS, New Orleanians say ‘F\*\*\* ICE!’



By Gregory E. Williams

New Orleans, Feb.18 – “F\*\*\* ICE” might as well have been an unofficial motto of Mardi Gras 2026 – graffitied around the city (along with “ABOLISH ICE”), printed on signs, and even stitched into the costumes of carnival-goers. Some parading groups or krewes, like Krewe du Vieux, integrated anti-ICE messaging into their floats and walking contingents.

The people of New Orleans and other parts of Louisiana have seen our communities terrorized by ICE’s gestapo tactics. And New Orleans has been under National Guard occupation since December. It should hardly be surprising that people chose to express their righteous anger during the holiday, when thousands are out in the streets, and many local traditions reflect long histories of people’s struggles – Black, Indigenous, working class, queer, trans, immigrant.

The state’s right wing likes to paint New Orleans as an aberration – an enclave of ‘coastal liberals’ in a sea of red. But outside Orleans Parish, people have been organizing against ICE in St. Tammany, Jefferson, Tangipahoa and other parishes. Mothers new to activism are conducting daily ICE watches after seeing agents operate in their towns. Neighbors are sharing rapid-response alerts. Small community networks are forming to document raids and show up when families are targeted.



SLL photos: Gregory E. Williams

## New Orleans, Mardi Gras Day.

Those opposing ICE down here are in line with trends across the country. A February poll by PBS News/NPR/Marist found that a majority of people in the U.S. disapprove of what ICE is doing. Almost two-thirds, or 65%, say that ICE has gone too far. A majority say that ICE is making communities less safe.

This poll was conducted in the days after the highly public killings of Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti by federal paramilitary forces in Minneapolis, as well as Keith Porter in LA along with much less visible deaths of immigrants in ICE custody.

Over this same time period, thousands in New Orleans have marched against ICE. High school students staged walkouts at three schools, at least. People here have participated in a country-wide movement, where the general strike in Minneapolis is like a beacon showing the immense power of the working class; workers can shut the economy down, including in New Orleans.

So, yes, Mardi Gras 2026’s “F\*\*\* ICE!” current was right on time. It shows where a lot of people are at. So, let’s promise that Carnival won’t be the last time we meet each other in the streets. #

## AGAINST FASCISM Reclaiming populism’s legacy for today’s class struggle

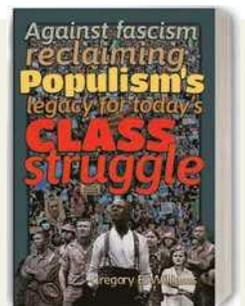
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# NYP nurses hold the line: 78% reject deal without enforceable

**Update (Feb. 20, 2026):** After 39 days on strike, 4,200 NewYork-Presbyterian nurses reached a tentative agreement early Friday, Feb. 20. Nurses held the line through bitter cold, rejected an earlier proposal by a 3,099–867 vote, and forced the hospital back to the table for stronger, enforceable staffing standards and targeted hiring commitments in the emergency department and the cardiac catheterization lab.

The nurses secured commitments to hire more nurses in key understaffed units, including the emergency department and the cardiac catheterization lab (cath lab), where heart procedures are performed. The deal also includes improved enforceable staffing standards, workplace violence protections, and 12% raises over three years – with no additional out-of-pocket health care costs for frontline nurses. The union said the tentative agreement also adds new guardrails on the use of artificial intelligence and strengthens protections for immigrant nurses.

Nurses at NewYork-Presbyterian voted overwhelmingly on Wednesday, Feb. 11, to reject a tentative contract agreement and continue their strike, now in its 31st day. Out of roughly 4,200 eligible nurses, 3,099 voted against the deal, and 867 voted in favor – a 78% rejection that repudiated hospital management and directly challenged the union’s top leadership.

The rejected agreement included the same 12% raise over three years that nurses at Mount Sinai and Montefiore ratified. But it did not include enforceable staffing ratio language – the central demand of the strike and the provision that makes the NewYork-Presbyterian fight different from the other hospitals.

The NYP nurses are trying to win enforceable ratios

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## Who decides? NYP nurses challenge

By Gary Wilson

Nurses at NewYork-Presbyterian are fighting a battle on two fronts. For four weeks they have stood on picket lines in freezing temperatures demanding enforceable staffing ratios. Now they face a ratification vote forced by their own union leadership – a vote their elected executive committee has already rejected.

The New York State Nurses Association announced tentative agreements with Montefiore and the Mount Sinai system on Feb. 9, covering roughly 10,500 of the 15,000 nurses who walked off the job on Jan. 12 in the largest and longest nurses strike in New York City history. The deals include 12% raises over three years, preservation of health benefits, workplace violence protections and new language on artificial intelligence.

But the approximately 5,000 nurses at NewYork-Presbyterian campuses – Columbia, Allen Hospital and Morgan Stanley Children’s Hospital – found themselves in a different situation. Their executive committee, made up of union members who sit at the bargaining table and know the contract language inside and out, rejected the tentative agreement because it fails to include the enforceable staffing ratios that are the central demand of the strike.

The dispute has roots in the 2023 nurses’ strike. In that strike, the NewYork-Presbyterian nurses settled before the walkout began. The nurses at Mount Sinai and Montefiore went on strike and won a major gain: enforceable staffing ratios with a mechanism to fine hospitals that violate them. The NYP nurses never won that provision. So while the current tentative agreements at Mount Sinai and Mon-



**Striking nurses hold a mass picket outside the Milstein Hospital Building, NewYork-Presbyterian’s main campus and headquarters. Nurses voted 78% to reject a tentative agreement that lacked enforceable safe staffing ratios.**

tefiore preserve language those nurses already had, the NYP nurses are trying to win it for the first time – and the tentative agreement offers them only a commitment to hire 60 new full-time employees, half the 120 the nurses proposed.

NYSNA leadership overrode the executive committee’s rejection. The union began circulating ballots by email and text message on Tuesday, with executive director Pat Kane telling members in a video: “The simple fact is that we’ve reached the end of negotiations.”

The response from rank-and-file nurses has been furious. The @presbynurses Instagram account, which has more than 6,000 followers, blasted the move as a betrayal, writing that the executive committee does not endorse

the proposal and that NYSNA “went over our heads to force a ratification vote.”

Beth Loudin, president of the local bargaining unit at NewYork-Presbyterian, called the decision “deeply unsettling.” On Instagram, nurse Krizia Daya voiced the question on many nurses’ minds: “How could NYSNA upper management get with Presbyterian to say, okay, the nurses are gonna now vote when our nurses are actually still outside picketing?”

Some nurses are now calling for NYSNA president Nancy Hagans to resign.

The role of Gov. Kathy Hochul in this outcome deserves scrutiny. Three days before the strike began, Hochul issued Executive Order 56, declaring a “disaster emergency” that sus-

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# staffing ratios

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for the first time. The rejected deal offered only a commitment to hire 60 new full-time employees – half the 120 the nurses proposed – with no enforcement mechanism and no job protections for existing staff.

“I can’t even call it a memorandum of agreement, because there’s no signature on it,” said Beth Loudin, a neonatal nurse and president of the bargaining unit at NewYork-Presbyterian. “This is a rush job to get a vote out, because it’s in alignment with the other hospitals.”

## Rank and file vs. union leadership

The vote came after the New York State Nurses Association pushed the contract to a

# forced vote

*Continued from page 6*

pending New York licensing requirements and allowed hospitals to hire out-of-state replacement nurses without state certification. She has renewed that order six times, keeping it in effect for the entire duration of the strike. The three hospital systems have spent a combined \$100 million on temporary replacement labor, paying travel nurses as much as \$10,000 per week.

The governor claimed the order wouldn’t affect bargaining. In fact, it strengthened management’s hand. By making it easy and legal for hospitals to staff around the strike, Hochul insulated management from the economic pressure that gives a work stoppage its power. Nurses marched to Hochul’s Manhattan office on Feb. 2, chanting “Kathy Hochul, shame on you” and demanding she stop extending the order.

Meanwhile, NewYork-Presbyterian CEO Steve Corwin collected \$26.3 million in total compensation in 2024. The hospital system is currently under a Department of Justice antitrust probe for allegedly colluding with insurers to inflate prices for New York City patients.

Voting closes at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 11. If the tentative agreements are ratified, nurses would begin returning to work by Saturday. Three nurses fired from Mount Sinai on the eve of the strike – terminated by voicemail in what NYSNA says was retaliation – will not be among them; their cases remain in arbitration.

Whatever the vote’s outcome, one fact is clear. The nurses who fought hardest for the demand that matters most – safe staffing with teeth – are being told by their own union leadership, in collaboration with a mediator and the governor’s office, that the fight is over. The nurses at NewYork-Presbyterian disagree. #

ratification vote over the explicit objection of the nurses’ elected executive committee at NewYork-Presbyterian. That committee, elected by the unit and directly involved in bargaining, had already rejected the deal. NYSNA leadership overrode them.

Hours before the results were announced, more than 50 nurses marched from Macy’s on 34th Street to NYSNA headquarters a block south on West 33rd, delivering a petition signed by over 1,500 members demanding a formal disciplinary investigation into NYSNA President Nancy Hagans and Executive Director Pat Kane. Nurses chanted, “We are your nurses! Listen to your nurses!” Neither Hagans nor Kane came down to meet them.

Loudin was visibly emotional as she handed the petition to NYSNA’s general counsel in the building’s lobby. “It’s been truly painful personally that my union decided to go against my leadership and my nurses,” she said. “We’ve been fighting for this for six months.”

Nurse educator Cagatay Celik told THE CITY he felt “betrayed” by union leadership. “I do want to go back. I miss my patients. I miss my job. And we are all out of money.” But he said taking a bad deal was not worth an expedited return.

## What the 2023 strike won – what NYP missed

The roots of this fight go back to the 2023 nurses’ strike. In that walkout, NYP nurses settled before the strike began. Nurses at Mount Sinai and Montefiore walked out and won enforceable ratios backed by financial penalties for hospitals that violate them. The NYP nurses never secured that language. The current tentative agreements at Mount Sinai and Montefiore preserve what those nurses already had.

The rejection came even after nurses at Mount Sinai and Montefiore ratified contracts that included widely praised protections for transgender and immigrant patients and staff, including language shielding nurses from being forced to cooperate with ICE inside hospital walls. Those provisions were significant. But for NYP nurses, without enforceable staffing ratios, they did not address the core issue of patient safety and working conditions.

At the other hospitals, nurses ratified their contracts by wide margins: 87% at Mount Sinai, 96% at Mount Sinai Morningside and West, and 86% at Montefiore. Those roughly 10,500 nurses will return to work by Saturday. The three fired Mount Sinai labor-and-delivery nurses remain in arbitration.



**Nurses strike outside New York-Presbyterian Hospital.**

## Hospital wealth, executive pay and state-backed strikebreaking

NYSNA said the unfair labor practice strike and bargaining at NewYork-Presbyterian will continue. Hagans called on the hospital to “agree to a fair contract and bring all our nurses back to work.” A NewYork-Presbyterian spokesperson said the hospital was “disappointed” and willing to honor the rejected proposal for reconsideration. When management is eager to keep a deal on the table that workers just rejected by a 4-to-1 margin, that tells you whose interests the deal served.

The strike’s financial backdrop exposes the gap between hospital austerity and executive wealth. NewYork-Presbyterian CEO Steve Corwin made more than \$26 million in total compensation in 2024, according to tax filings cited by NYSNA. While the hospital says it cannot meet the nurses’ demand to hire 120 additional staff, NYP reported a \$97 million surplus on \$2.7 billion in revenue in early 2025.

The three striking hospital systems have spent a combined \$100 million or more on replacement labor during the walkout. That strikebreaking apparatus was enabled by Gov. Kathy Hochul’s Executive Order 56, which declared a “State Disaster Emergency.” By suspending state licensing requirements, Hochul allowed out-of-state travel nurses – some reportedly earning as much as \$10,000 per week – to fill hospital shifts. The order functioned as state-assisted strikebreaking, insulating management from the normal economic pressure of a prolonged walkout.

## DOJ probes NYP’s monopoly power

The strike comes as NewYork-Presbyterian faces a federal antitrust investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice. Investigators are examining whether the hospital used its market power to squeeze insurers and drive up health care costs across the city. The case underscores a broader reality in the hospital industry: Expansion and consolidation come first, staffing comes second. For the striking nurses, it confirms what they have said all along – that NYP prioritizes market control and profits while claiming it cannot afford enforceable safe staffing ratios.

The NYP nurses remain on the picket line. A 78% rejection shows a rank-and-file majority that understands its power and refuses to trade enforceable staffing ratios for a settlement pushed through over their objections. #

# NYC nurses take the fight to the bosses' doorstep

By Gary Wilson

On Day 25 of the largest nurses strike in New York City history, 13 nurses walked up the steps of 555 West 57th Street in Manhattan, stood in front of the doors with arms linked, and walked off chanting as they were loaded into the police wagons.

The building houses the Greater New York Hospital Association, the lobbying arm that coordinates contract negotiations for Mount Sinai, Montefiore, and NewYork-Presbyterian – the three hospital systems whose nearly 15,000 nurses have been on strike since mid-January. The nurses knew the police were coming. They had announced their intentions. And when the NYPD warned them through a megaphone to clear the entrance, they stayed.

All 13 were issued criminal court summons for civil disobedience and released the same day. But the point had been made – and it reached far beyond that stretch of West 57th Street.

“For the first time in my life, I’m gonna deliberately break the law,” ICU nurse Jarrett Murphy told the crowd before the action. “I know there’s a proud history of people submitting to arrest when they see something that’s wrong. And what we’ve seen over the last three and a half weeks on the strike line from this association and our hospitals has been really, really wrong.”

The decision to target the Greater New York Hospital Association rather than an individual hospital picket line reflected a sharp tactical calculation. For weeks, hospital management had presented its refusal to meet nurses’ demands on staffing, wages, and workplace violence protections as the independent decisions of separate institutions. The action at 555 West 57th Street said otherwise. The nurses went straight to the body that ties those supposedly independent hospital systems together as a single employer class, acting in concert against the workers who keep their emergency rooms and ICUs running.

## Fight with deep roots in NY labor history

It was not the first time workers confronted power at that address. In 1959, hospital workers – many of them Black and Puerto Rican – struck many of the same institutions and squared off against the same League of Voluntary Hospitals. That strike, one of the landmark labor actions of the civil rights era, helped establish collective bargaining rights for hospital workers in New York. Nearly seven decades later, nurses returned to the same building, fighting for the same basic demand:

**Nurses rally outside 555 West 57th St. in Manhattan on Feb. 5, the headquarters of the Greater NY Hospital Association.**



that the people who do the work have a say in how it gets done.

The historical echo was no accident. The Feb. 5 action opened that morning with a rally at Mount Sinai Hospital timed for Black History Month, featuring NAACP New York State Conference President L. Joy Williams, New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, and leaders from the state AFL-CIO. Speakers emphasized that more than a third of New York City’s nurses are Black, with significant Latine and Asian representation – nurses who come from the same neighborhoods as the patients they treat. The strike is not only a labor fight. It is a fight waged by working-class communities of color against an industry that extracts enormous wealth from those communities while refusing to staff its facilities safely.

Emergency department nurse and New York State Nurses Association organizer Judy Sheridan-Gonzalez put it plainly: “We’re speaking out against these hospital executives at their home base. They’re constantly putting profits, and their own pockets, ahead of our humane care for our patients.” She described conditions at Montefiore as “inhumane overcrowding and total lack of privacy, not to mention infection violations and psychological trauma in our ERs, packed together like cattle.”

## Understaffing is a profit strategy

The overcrowding Sheridan-Gonzalez described is not a problem of bad management. It is the outcome of conscious decisions by hospital executives to understaff units, knowing that every nurse not hired increases profits while patients and workers absorb the risk.

Executives keep staffing as lean as possible because every nurse not hired frees money to flow upward – into executive compensation, real estate portfolios, and the financial engineering that has transformed hospital systems into powerful corporate enterprises. The nurses are not asking these executives to be more gen-

erous. They are demanding the power to enforce safe staffing and patient care standards through their own collective action. They are demanding that the wealth nurses create through their labor be directed back toward patient care, and that they have the power to enforce it.

The hospitals’ own spending during the strike tells the story. According to the nurses’ union, hospital management spent more than \$100 million on replacement nurses before the strike even began and paid temporary staff as much as \$10,000 a week – many times what striking nurses earn. Mount Sinai was advertising new temporary contracts for mid-February even as negotiations continued. The money was always there. It simply was not meant for the nurses who show up every day.

Hospital executives countered that federal reimbursement rates leave them squeezed, claiming Medicare pays only 83 cents for every dollar they spend. They pointed to the expected fallout from the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” which could strip coverage from 1.5 million New Yorkers. But the nurses have heard this arithmetic before. They see the compensation packages that flow to the top floors while the emergency rooms overflow. The claim of scarcity is selective – it applies to bedside staffing but never to executive pay.

## Escalation as negotiations stall

As the arrests took place, the strike was far from resolved. The day before, negotiators had reached a tentative agreement on protections against the use of artificial intelligence in clinical settings – a significant gain. But the core demands around safe staffing ratios, workplace violence protections, wages, and health care benefits remained on the table. And hospitals had begun floating the threat that returning strikers might find their positions filled by the very temporary workers management had spent millions to recruit – an attempt to break

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# San Francisco educators begin first district-wide strike in nearly 50 years

By Gary Wilson

Feb. 8 – More than 6,400 educators in the San Francisco Unified School District are set to begin a district-wide strike Monday morning, Feb. 9, following more than a year of failed contract negotiations. It will be the city's first teachers' strike since 1979 and is expected to close schools serving roughly 48,000 students.

Members of United Educators of San Francisco voted overwhelmingly to authorize the walkout, with 97.6% approving strike action. A total of 5,202 educators cast ballots. Picket lines are scheduled to form across the city Monday morning.

At issue are wages, health care costs and working conditions that educators say have become unsustainable in one of the wealthiest metropolitan areas in the world. The district

## NYC nurses

*Continued from page 8*

solidarity by making nurses fear for their jobs.

NYSNA responded directly: "The strike will not be over until all members return to work."

The Feb. 5 action did not take place in isolation. The same day, San Francisco teachers announced they would strike on Feb. 9. The week before, Minneapolis had seen a general strike. Kaiser Permanente workers were on the picket lines in California and Hawai'i. Across the country, health care workers, educators, and service workers have been reaching the same conclusion at roughly the same time: Appeals to politicians, labor boards, and mediated negotiations have reached their limit when employers are determined to hold the line. When employers refuse to move, workers have to escalate – and that means being willing to take risks that go beyond the familiar rhythms of contract negotiation.

What happened on the steps of 555 West 57th Street was not a symbolic gesture. It was a message delivered in the clearest possible terms. The nurses identified the command structure behind their employers' united front, went to its front door, and put their bodies in the way. They drew on a tradition of direct action rooted in decades of labor and civil rights struggle in New York City, and linked their fight to a rising wave of worker militancy from coast to coast.

Jarrett Murphy described it as seeing something wrong and refusing to look away. For 15,000 nurses – and the patients who depend on them – the fight continues. #



Cassandra Curiel, president of United Educators of San Francisco, speaks during a press conference at Buena Vista Horace Mann K-8 Community School in San Francisco's Mission District.

has offered a 6% raise spread over three years. The union is demanding a 15% increase over the same period, noting that anything less would amount to a wage cut after inflation and living costs are accounted for.

Health care costs have become a central point of contention. As of early 2026, many educators pay approximately \$1,500 per month for family coverage, with another increase projected later this year. A state-appointed fact-finding panel recommended a 6% raise over two years, a proposal union members rejected as incompatible with existing medical costs.

District officials claim a budget deficit prevents them from meeting the union's demands. The union disputes that claim, pointing to reserve funds it says the district has refused to use. Educators argue that years of cost containment have already produced staffing shortages, larger class sizes and high turnover, as teachers are increasingly unable to live in the communities where they work.

The San Francisco walkout is part of a broader pattern unfolding across California's public sector. Teachers, nurses and university workers are confronting the same conditions: rising costs, stagnant pay and administrations insisting there is no alternative to restraint. In each case, workers report that standard bargaining has failed to produce material relief, leaving strike action as the remaining lever.

Beyond wages and benefits, educators are also demanding that sanctuary protections shielding students and families from ICE terror be written into the contract, along with an emergency housing program. District officials have argued these provisions would create "significant liability." Educators counter that schools are already dealing with the consequences of housing instability and ICE terror,

and that the district has avoided addressing those realities.

San Francisco's strike is unfolding alongside escalating labor action across California, particularly in sectors funded or regulated by the state. Educators across multiple districts are coordinating through the "We Can't Wait" campaign, which seeks to align bargaining timelines and strike actions. In late January, roughly 35,000 Los Angeles teachers voted by a 94% margin to authorize a strike.

Health care workers are already on the picket lines. More than 31,000 Kaiser Permanente nurses and health care workers have been on an open-ended strike since Jan. 26, and more than 4,000 pharmacy and laboratory workers are expected to join them Monday. In New York City, approximately 15,000 nurses remain on strike, while tens of thousands of University of California graduate students are voting on strike authorization.

Taken together, these actions point to a widening conflict between public-sector workers and Democratic-led administrations overseeing education and health care systems. In California, where state and local governments control both funding and labor frameworks, workers are increasingly confronting the limits of electoral alignment without material gains.

Principals and administrators are reportedly holding an emergency vote this weekend on whether to take sympathy action.

After nearly five decades without a district-wide walkout, San Francisco educators are testing whether a public school system can continue operating on wages and benefits that no longer cover basic living costs. Similar contract disputes and strike votes are now underway across California's public education and health care systems. #

# The Department of War shut down El Paso's sky – and threatened deadly force

By Gary Wilson

Feb. 11 – On Tuesday night, the Federal Aviation Administration shut down the sky over El Paso, Texas. The FAA issued a 10-day flight restriction, grounding all commercial, cargo, and general aviation at El Paso International Airport. The agency classified the airspace as “national defense airspace.” It warned that the government “may use deadly force” against any aircraft in violation. No one told the city, the airport, local lawmakers, or even the chair of the Senate Homeland Security Committee.

Not even medevac flights were exempt. “It’s a complete ground stop. ... not even medevac are allowed to fly,” an air-traffic controller was heard telling flight crews as the blackout went into effect. Medical evacuation helicopters – the aircraft that carry gunshot victims and heart attack patients to trauma centers – were grounded over a city of nearly 700,000 people.

The restriction was lifted six hours later, early Wednesday morning. But the damage was already visible – and so was the real story behind it.

## Two stories, one operation

The White House offered one explanation: Mexican cartel drones had “breached U.S. airspace,” and the newly christened Department of War had “acted swiftly to address the cartel drone incursion.” Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy declared the “threat has been normalized.”

Sources briefed by the FAA told a different story. According to CBS News and CNN, the flight ban was driven by military operations from Biggs Army Airfield, located on Fort Bliss, right next to the El Paso airport. Military drones and aircraft had been operating outside their normal flight paths. The FAA acted after the Department of War could not assure the safety of civilian aircraft in the area.

Rep. Veronica Escobar, who represents El Paso, said Wednesday morning that it was her understanding the closure was not due to Mexican drones, which she noted are “not unusual” for the El Paso area. She said the chair of the House Armed Services Committee had not flagged any drone incursions either.

“This was an FAA decision and was done without any local consultation and without any local communication,” Escobar said. “That is not the way the federal government should operate.”

El Paso City Representative Chris Canales was more blunt: “Nobody local got advance no-



**Commercial flights were halted at El Paso International Airport after the FAA classified the airspace as ‘national defense airspace,’ grounding even medical evacuation aircraft.**

tice – neither civilian nor military leadership.”

Even Sen. Rand Paul, the Republican chair of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, said he was not notified. “We’re very curious,” Paul told CBS. “In a major airport in a big city, we’d like to know what they’re doing and why.”

## The Department of War gets its name right

The contradiction between the two accounts – cartel drones versus domestic military operations that couldn’t guarantee civilian safety – tells us everything about what is actually happening on the U.S.-Mexico border.

In September 2025, Trump signed an executive order rebranding the Pentagon as the “Department of War.” Pete Hegseth, the defense secretary who now styles himself “Secretary of War,” said the change would signal “maximum lethality, not tepid legality; violent effect, not politically correct.” The department’s website moved from defense.gov to war.gov. Bronze plaques were bolted to the Pentagon entrances.

The name change was supposed to be symbolic. El Paso just proved it is operational.

The military is testing high-energy laser weapon platforms and drone systems at Fort Bliss – weapons designed for “hard kills” against crewless aircraft – in airspace immediately adjacent to civilian flight paths.

When the Department of War could not assure the FAA that these operations would not endanger commercial flights, the FAA’s response was not to reroute the military. It was to reroute civilian life: a 10-day restriction, a deadly force warning for any aircraft in violation, and a blackout imposed without notice to the city, the airport, or even key members of Congress.

The “threat” neutralized was the threat created by the operation itself.

El Paso was not the first disruption. On Jan. 16, the FAA issued a 60-day advisory warning pilots across Mexico and the eastern Pacific to “exercise caution” due to GPS interference and electronic warfare operations targeting cartel communications. The military has been degrading civilian aviation infrastructure across the region for weeks. Tuesday night, that degradation reached a U.S. airport.

## From Caracas to El Paso

This is the domestic face of the same military campaign that began in the Caribbean last summer and reached Caracas on Jan. 3.

Operation Southern Spear – the Pentagon’s sprawling military campaign across Latin America and the Caribbean – was formally unveiled by Hegseth in November 2025. By that point, the U.S. had already amassed the largest military presence in the Caribbean since the Cuban Missile Crisis, with an aircraft carrier strike group, an amphibious assault fleet, and more than 12,000 troops deployed to the region. Since September, U.S. forces have conducted lethal strikes on more than 36 vessels, killing at least 117 people the administration calls “narco-terrorists.” The Department of War has acknowledged that it does not require “positive identification” of individuals before carrying out these strikes.

On Jan. 3, U.S. forces invaded Venezuela, bombed air defenses in Caracas, and kidnapped President Nicolás Maduro and Cilia Flores – a political leader in Venezuela. Prisoners of war, they were illegally taken to New York, where the administration has filed charges against them. More than 80 people were killed in the attacks, including 32 Cuban personnel stationed in Venezuela at the government’s request.

Trump called this the first application of what he named the “Don-roe Doctrine” – his personalized Monroe Doctrine. Its purpose, he said plainly, was to reassert U.S. dominance in the Western Hemisphere. He boasted that “American dominance in the western hemisphere will never be questioned again” and said the United States would “run the country” until a transition could be arranged. He spoke enthusiastically about reopening oil fields and securing access to Venezuela’s vast reserves – the largest proven oil reserves on Earth.

On Jan. 9, Trump announced the next phase. Claiming the maritime campaign had succeeded, he declared the military would “start now

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# Dow 50,000 – and workers selling blood

By Gary Wilson

In February 2026, the Dow Jones Industrial Average crossed 50,000. Television anchors called it strength.

At the same time, an estimated 200,000 people a day are selling their blood plasma to pay rent, buy groceries or cover medical bills.

That is the U.S. economy.

## A million jobs vanish

The Bureau of Labor Statistics recently revised down nonfarm payroll growth for 2024–2025 by 1.03 million jobs. For months, officials celebrated a “strong labor market.” Now we learn that more than a million of those jobs never showed up in the payroll tax records.

January job growth was concentrated in health care and social assistance – including child care and family services. Much of the rest of the economy was flat or losing ground.

Inflation tells a similar story. Core services – health care, insurance, basic necessities – continue rising. Yet housing components in the Consumer Price Index understate rent pressures, holding down official inflation figures. Because Social Security cost-of-living adjustments are tied to those numbers, retirees receive increases that lag behind real expenses.

Workers are told conditions are solid. Their bills say otherwise.

## Wages down, profits up

In 1980, labor’s share of gross domestic income stood at 58%. By 2025, it had fallen to 51.4%.

That shift represents roughly \$2 trillion a year that no longer goes to wages. It flows upward as profits, interest and dividends. The average worker loses about \$12,000 a year compared to the 1980 distribution.

Over the same period, the top 1% doubled its share of national income.

This is why people making \$75,000 or even \$120,000 a year report selling plasma to stay afloat. Most of the people called “middle class” are workers with higher salaries, not owners. When even they are selling plasma, it shows how far conditions have fallen.

Grocery prices have risen more than 25% in the past five years. Child care costs in most states are rising faster than overall inflation. More than 70% of people in the United States say raising children is unaffordable.

Around six in 10 people in the United States report living paycheck to paycheck – including many households earning over \$100,000 a year. That is what a \$2 trillion transfer from wages to profits produces. One missed paycheck becomes a crisis.



The blood plasma industry is booming. Around 200,000 people a day sell plasma to cover rent, food and medical bills.

## Overproduction and postponed crisis

Capitalist crises are crises of overproduction – too many goods are produced to be sold at a profit. Companies can fill warehouses, but they cannot sell enough at a price that sustains profit. Profits fall. Weaker firms go bankrupt. Factories close. Workers are laid off.

For working people, it is devastation. For the system, it has a function. Bankruptcies wipe out smaller competitors. Assets are sold cheap. Wages are pushed down. After enough damage, profits recover for big capital and the largest corporations.

The state manages crisis in the interests of the largest corporations. Markets are propped up. Speculation is rescued. Asset prices are inflated. Losses are shifted onto the public. That deepens instability – and makes the next downturn more severe.

That fragility surfaced in January when political pressure intensified against the Federal Reserve. As doubts grew that monetary policy would be bent to short-term political demands, gold surged to nearly \$5,500 an ounce before settling near \$5,000. Gold spikes when confidence in the dollar and the institutions behind it weakens.

## Automation under strain

Artificial intelligence is accelerating layoffs across the workforce. Office staff are being cut first. Warehouses and factories are next.

This is not neutral progress. In an economy strained by overproduction, automation becomes a tool to defend profit margins. Workers lose jobs not because their work is unnecessary, but because it is not profitable enough.

The capacity exists to shorten the workweek and raise living standards. Instead, productivity gains are used to cut payrolls and intensify insecurity.

## Minneapolis breaks the narrative

On Jan. 23, 2026, Minneapolis saw its first general strike since 1934. Up to 100,000 people mobilized after federal police killings and an ICE surge turned working-class neighborhoods into occupied zones.

The strike was political. It targeted federal authority, not a single employer or contract.

The same regime that overstated job growth and understated inflation deployed paramilitary forces in a major U.S. city. The people who lost jobs and the people who faced ICE raids live in the same neighborhoods.

## Crisis abroad

The blockade of Cuba, threats against Iran, tariff wars, military deployments and talk of seizing territory are presented as strength. They defend U.S. financial power and force other countries to absorb the shock of a weakening dollar and a fragile domestic economy.

In January 2026, Washington went further – invading Venezuela, kidnapping President Nicolás Maduro and Cilia Flores and transporting them to the United States.

At the same time, U.S. naval and air operations in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific have killed more than a hundred people in actions that constitute extrajudicial assassinations under international law.

These measures reflect a state under strain – using blockades, financial pressure and military force to maintain global dominance as conditions at home deteriorate.

That is what a declining empire does – it bombs, blockades and kidnaps to hold power its economy can no longer secure.

## One system, two headlines

Dow 50,000 and workers selling blood describe the same system.

The stock market measures the wealth of those who own stocks. It does not measure whether working people can live without selling part of their bodies.

In Minneapolis, workers answered federal violence with a general strike. That showed where real power lies – not in the Dow, not in the Federal Reserve, not in the balance sheets of the largest corporations, but in the ability of working people to shut things down.

The state manages crisis for big capital. Workers can manage their own future only by organizing to confront it. #

# Munich War Council and the escalation

By Gary Wilson

The 62nd Munich Security Conference was not a diplomatic gathering.

It was a war council – a gathering of the general staff of world imperialism, assembled not to resolve conflicts but to coordinate the next phase of aggression on a global scale.

The conference's own annual report provides the clearest self-indictment. Its theme, "Under Destruction," describes an era of what it terms "wrecking-ball politics" – the deliberate demolition of the post-1945 international framework. What the authors of this report do not say is that this destruction is not an aberration. It flows from the deepening crisis of capitalism, which can no longer sustain even the fiction of a peaceful order.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz declared that the world has crossed a "threshold" back into great power competition. But rivalry among the imperialist powers never ended. After the fall of the Soviet Union, it was channeled through U.S. dominance – sanctions, financial coercion and proxy wars – rather than direct confrontation among major states. What has collapsed is not competition itself, but the illusion that it had been resolved.

What is emerging now is not a new system, but a more open and dangerous phase of that rivalry. As competition over markets, resources and strategic positions intensifies, the arrangements that once managed those rivalries are breaking down. When rival capitalist states can no longer secure their interests through economic pressure alone, they turn to military force.

## Fusion of the military and the monopolies

The scale of military spending shows what is being prioritized. Congress has approved an \$839 billion Pentagon budget – \$8 billion more than the Pentagon requested. When supplemental and reconciliation funds are included, total spending approaches \$1 trillion.

The question is not "defense" but who controls the single largest share of the money Congress spends each year.

Deputy Secretary of War Stephen Feinberg is not a career military officer. He is a billionaire financier and co-founder of Cerberus Capital Management, a private equity firm built on acquiring and restructuring companies for profit. He now oversees the Pentagon's day-to-day operations.

In other words, a Wall Street financier is helping decide how nearly a trillion dollars is allocated. That money comes from wealth workers produce and the state collects. It is being directed toward the arms monopolies.

This is what Lenin described in the age of

imperialism: the merger of banking and industrial capital into finance capital, and the growing subordination of the state to its interests. The financial interests that profit from war now help administer the state apparatus that wages it.

Under the banner of "strengthening the industrial base," the administration has proposed cuts to education and social programs while steering contracts to high-tech weapons systems – artificial intelligence, autonomous systems and drone warfare. Companies such as Palantir and Anduril, backed by private equity and venture capital, stand to benefit directly.

Feinberg's appointment is not about one individual. It reflects the consolidated power of the arms trusts – Lockheed Martin, Raytheon (now RTX), Boeing and Rheinmetall – along with the financial conglomerates that hold major stakes in them.

The same process is visible in Germany, where Berlin has approved a record €108 billion (\$128 billion) defense budget for 2026. Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who served as chairman of the supervisory board of BlackRock's German subsidiary from 2016 to 2020, now presides over a rearmament drive whose primary beneficiaries are the same financial and industrial interests he represented in the private sector.

There is no money for social needs. The rearmament drive is being financed through debt and austerity – and the beneficiaries are the arms monopolies and the financial institutions tied to them.

## The ideological preparation for war

Large-scale rearmament does not advance on budgets alone. It requires a political narrative that neutralizes resistance before it can organize – one that declares civilization under threat and brands opposition to war as betrayal.

At Munich, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio supplied that narrative.

Unlike Vice President JD Vance, who the previous year had bluntly demanded greater European militarization, Rubio delivered the same demands in smoother language. He called for higher European military spending, tighter borders and reduced reliance on multilateral institutions. The substance did not change. Only the tone did.

The crucial point was how Rubio justified the alliance. He did not frame it primarily in terms of trade, security agreements or strategic interests. Instead, he described the United States and Europe as bound together by "Christian faith, culture, heritage, language, ancestry." He grounded the alliance in a shared civilizational identity.

He told the assembled leaders that "armies do not fight for abstractions. Armies fight for a

people; armies fight for a nation."

He went further, celebrating five centuries in which "the West had been expanding" to "settle new continents, build vast empires extending out across the globe" – a romanticized history that erases the dispossession and slaughter of Indigenous peoples entirely. He lamented that after 1945 these "great Western empires" had entered terminal decline, accelerated by communist revolutions and anti-colonial uprisings. In this telling, the dismantling of colonial rule was not a victory for self-determination but a civilizational loss.

And Rubio made clear this was not merely nostalgia. "We in America have no interest in being polite and orderly caretakers of the West's managed decline," he declared. This is a statement of intent: The independence won by colonized nations in the 20th century is something this administration intends to roll back.

This is the ideological shift now under way. The language of "human rights" and "democracy promotion" that accompanied earlier wars is giving way to something more direct: the defense of "Western civilization" against perceived external and internal enemies.

This rhetoric carries familiar hierarchies – racial, religious and cultural – and elevates a vision of strength and authority tied to patriarchal power. Rubio's language at Munich was the language of restoration and dominance: strong armies, sovereign nations, a civilization that refuses decline. The defense of "civilization" has always meant the defense of patriarchal power.

When a leading diplomat grounds military alliance in "Christian faith" and "ancestry," the appeal is not merely cultural. It mirrors themes long associated with white supremacist ideology: the defense of a supposedly unified Western civilization against internal and external "others." In this way, racist mythology becomes part of the ideological preparation for war.

The European bourgeoisie, desperate for reassurance after months of Trump's tariff threats and open contempt, received Rubio's ultimatum – fall in line or be abandoned – with a standing ovation. European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen said it was "reassuring." A speech that openly mourned the end of colonial empires and promised to reverse their decline was met not with protest but applause. This is the posture of a vassal class, grateful for the master's softer tone even as the demands grow more extreme.

## The fronts of imperialist aggression

The concrete lines of military confrontation mapped out at Munich confirm the global character of the crisis.

On Iran, the conference dispensed entire-

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# of imperialist rivalry

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ly with the pretense of diplomacy. Organizers withdrew invitations to Iranian government officials and instead elevated exiled former crown prince Reza Pahlavi, who used the platform to call for U.S. military intervention to overthrow the Islamic Republic. U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham openly called for regime change.

The conference unfolded while approximately 50,000 U.S. troops are deployed in West Asia – the largest such concentration since the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Iranian officials, their invitations revoked, described the conference as the “Munich Circus.”

On Ukraine, a sharp tactical division was exposed within the imperialist camp. European leaders – Merz, French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer – demanded the intensification of the war against Russia, fearing that any negotiated settlement would be reached by Washington over their heads and at their expense. The Trump administration, conversely, views the Ukraine front as a drain on resources better deployed elsewhere and is pressing Europeans to assume the full financial burden of continued weapons shipments.

Washington has also made clear what it expects in return for aid already given. In February 2025, the administration demanded major ownership stakes – reportedly up to 100% – along with revenues from Ukrainian ports and infrastructure. The deal, signed in April, grants Washington preferential rights to mineral extraction.

This is not a disagreement about peace. It is a disagreement between imperialist powers about the allocation of costs and the distribution of spoils – and Ukraine’s resources are the spoils. No faction of the ruling class, on either side of the Atlantic, represents a force for peace. They differ only on the question of which front of imperialist aggression should receive priority and who gets to loot the country they claim to be defending.

## **The domestic front: rearmament and the class struggle**

Every war abroad is simultaneously a war at home. The social consequences of the rearmament now underway make this truth unmistakable.

In the United States, the \$839 billion Pentagon appropriation exists alongside the decimation of the federal workforce, the crumbling of public housing, and a health care system that remains inaccessible to millions. The same Congress that could not find funds for housing or health care approved \$8 billion more than the Pentagon requested.

**German Chancellor Friedrich Merz confers with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl at the 62nd Munich Security Conference on Feb. 13, 2026. The gathering served as a coordination meeting for the leading imperialist powers amid escalating military spending and global rivalry.**



The same class war is playing out across the Atlantic. In Germany, the constitutional “debt brake” – treated as unassailable when it came to funding education or public transit – has been suspended to permit unlimited military borrowing, driving total federal debt to over €174 billion (\$206.2 billion) in 2026 alone – more than triple the level two years prior.

The bourgeoisie claims there is no money for social safety nets, yet has found unlimited credit for tanks and missiles. Chancellor Merz tells German workers they must “work more and longer” to stabilize the economy while funneling their future labor into the coffers of the arms monopolies.

This is not a mistake or a policy error. It is how capitalism functions in its imperialist stage.

The largest arms corporations and the financial firms behind them sit at the center of the system. Their profits depend on military expansion.

And that expansion is paid for by squeezing workers harder – through layoffs, longer hours and cuts to social spending.

Every billion funneled into tanks and missiles is extracted from the wealth created by labor – the same wealth nurses, teachers and public workers are fighting to defend. The battle over war spending is not abstract. It is already being fought in contract negotiations, on picket lines and in the streets.

## **What Munich reveals**

The 62nd Munich Security Conference must be understood in the context of what has already occurred. This is a ruling class that, in January of this year, bombed a sovereign nation and kidnapped its sitting head of state – President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela – along with First Revolutionary Combatant Cilia Flores, transporting both in shackles to a federal prison in New York.

Not a single Latin American government was represented at Munich – at a conference that bills itself as the world’s leading forum for international security. This absence is not incidental. It is a statement of whose security is under discussion and on whose terms. The

hemisphere where Washington just carried out a military kidnapping was simply excluded from the conversation.

In its first year back in power, the Trump administration has used military force against Iraq, Iran, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen – and has threatened force against Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, and Panama. This is not a single act of aggression. It is a global pattern, spanning four continents.

The Christmas Day bombing of Nigeria – justified by Trump as a defense of Christians, timed as what he called a “Christmas present” – shows the civilizational rhetoric at work as military doctrine. What Rubio articulated at Munich as shared “Christian faith” and “ancestry” had already been operationalized as Tomahawk missiles.

It seizes foreign assets at will. It imposes unilateral sanctions that amount to economic warfare against entire populations. It has withdrawn from dozens of international organizations since January 2026 alone. And it does all of this while lecturing the world about civilization and values.

The “rules-based order” was never a universal system. It was the legal and diplomatic framework of U.S. supremacy. It disciplined other states. It did not discipline Washington.

Now that supremacy is contested, Washington is dismantling the very framework it once demanded others obey.

What emerges is not disorder but a more naked form of imperialist rule – domination enforced by military power. Rubio’s speech reflected that shift.

Rubio dispensed with the liberal vocabulary of human rights and international law. He spoke openly of “civilizational” survival and armies defending a Western way of life – language that mirrors white supremacist mythology.

The working class must draw its own conclusions from this clarity. The opposition to war, to rearmament, to the cannibalization of social spending for the benefit of the arms monopolies – this opposition will not come from any faction of the bourgeoisie. It will not come

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# The permanent war economy never

By Gary Wilson

On Jan. 30, the U.S. Senate voted 71-29 to pass an \$839 billion fiscal 2026 defense appropriations bill. The measure sailed through with bipartisan backing, including 23 Democrats. Among those voting yes were Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, Minority Whip Dick Durbin and Vice Chair of the Democratic Conference Mark Warner.

The bill funds \$27.2 billion for 17 warships, including a Columbia-class nuclear ballistic missile submarine and two Virginia-class fast attack submarines; \$7.6 billion for 47 F-35 stealth fighters; \$3 billion for a sixth-generation F-47 fighter; \$1.9 billion for the B-21 Raider stealth bomber; and \$4.5 billion for hypersonic weapons systems. It appropriates \$839 billion in discretionary defense funding – \$8.4 billion above the Pentagon’s own request.

Combined with the \$156 billion in additional military funding contained in Trump’s so-called “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” total Pentagon spending for 2026 approaches \$1 trillion – the largest military budget in U.S. history.

The business model runs on schedule. Military production underwrites shipyards, aerospace giants, weapons labs and whole regional labor markets. War appropriations lock in contracts and protect profits. When Congress funds the Pentagon, it is sustaining one of the core pillars of the U.S. economy.

The vote came within weeks after federal agents killed two U.S. citizens in Minneapolis: Renée Good on Jan. 7 and Alex Pretti on Jan. 24. Their deaths ignited protests, fueled the Jan. 23 general strike, and forced Senate Democrats to temporarily strip DHS funding from the package.

In other words, Congress voted to fully fund the war machine at the very moment the domestic consequences of militarized policy were unfolding in real time.

As the USS Abraham Lincoln heads toward the Persian Gulf and threats against Iran intensify, Congress is fully funding ICE, Customs and Border Protection and the Department of War – the same federal forces that recently killed Renée Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis.

The message from Congress was unmistakable: Whatever domestic turbulence erupts, the military apparatus will be fully funded.

## Managed dissent inside Congress

The tussle over Department of Homeland Security funding in January was widely framed as a response to the federal killings of Renée Good and Alex Pretti. Senate Democrats released a set of reform demands – body cameras, judicial warrants for home entries, limits on masked agents and roving patrols – and refused to support a full-year DHS appropriations bill without them.

In practice, however, the fight was procedural and largely symbolic. ICE and Customs and Border Protection continue to operate through multiyear appropriations and reconciliation funding, making them effectively shutdown-proof in the short term. Agencies such as the Transportation Security Administration, the Coast Guard, FEMA and the Secret Service were more directly affected by funding lapses than the enforcement arms responsible for the killings.

Put plainly: The appropriations maneuver absorbed political pressure without materially restraining ICE operations. Meanwhile, the \$839 billion Pentagon budget moved forward with bipartisan support and no open resistance.

That hierarchy is the point.

The population does not want this war.

Across national surveys this winter, large majorities of people in the United States oppose military action against Iran. A January 2026 Quinnipiac poll found that 70% oppose any military action against Iran.

Yet the machinery moves anyway.

Aircraft carriers deploy. Appropriations pass. Threats escalate.

The gap between public sentiment and institutional action is not subtle. It is structural.

## War powers theater

Another contradiction is playing out around the new war powers resolution introduced by Tim Kaine and Rand Paul to block unauthorized military action against Iran.

A similar resolution failed last June, 47-53, after the administration’s nuclear site strikes. Paul was the lone Republican to vote with most Democrats; John Fetterman, a Democrat, broke the other way.

But look at the sequence.

Kaine voted for the \$839 billion appropriations bill that funds the Department of War – now deploying carriers, bombers and new weapons systems toward confrontation – and then introduced a measure to limit how that force can be used.

First Congress finances the war machine.

Then it debates whether the president should be allowed to turn the key.

They approve the money. Then they argue about permission.

## Labor steps into the breach

While congressional Democrats maneuver between funding votes and war powers resolution

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## Department of War shut down El Paso’s sky

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hitting land.” Fort Bliss and Biggs Army Airfield – where the weapons testing that shut down El Paso’s airport is taking place – sit directly on the Mexican border.

The people of El Paso woke up on Wednesday to canceled flights, stranded travelers, and an airport that the federal government had sealed off without a word. The city that Trump’s border war is supposedly protecting was the city that lost its sky.

CBS News reported that similar communication failures between the FAA and the Department of War have already led to “close calls between military aircraft and commercial flights in the Caribbean.” The same lack

of coordination that nearly caused midair collisions over the Caribbean just shut down a major U.S. airport.

El Paso is the 23rd-largest city in the United States. Nearly 3.5 million passengers passed through its airport in the first 11 months of 2025. It is a hub of cross-border commerce with Ciudad Juárez. It is a working-class city, a majority-Latine city, a city whose residents cross the border daily for work and family.

What the Trump administration did to El Paso on Tuesday night is what it has already done across Latin America – treated a civilian population as an obstacle to military operations. The Don-roe Doctrine does not distinguish between the people of Caracas and the people of El Paso. The military acts, the popu-

lation absorbs the consequences, and the “war on drugs” provides the cover.

The Caribbean campaign killed more than 117 people at sea. The invasion of Venezuela killed more than 80 in Caracas. El Paso lost its sky for hours – but the precedent will last much longer. The Department of War can close the sky over a major U.S. city, threaten deadly force, and override every civilian authority – the mayor, the city council, the congressional delegation, the chair of the Senate Homeland Security Committee – without explanation or advance notice.

Hegseth said the Department of War would bring “maximum lethality, not tepid legality.” He was not exaggerating. The Don-roe Doctrine has come home. #

# misses a vote

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tions, a different form of opposition is emerging.

In San Francisco, educators won contract language barring ICE from schools. In New York City, nurses have demanded ICE exclusion from hospitals during their strike. In Minneapolis, a general strike erupted after federal agents gunned down a resident and militarily occupied Somali, Hmong and Latine neighborhoods.

These struggles are not simply “domestic” disputes. They represent the labor movement claiming terrain that links war spending, immigrant repression and austerity.

The same Congress that can find nearly \$1 trillion for war cannot guarantee safe staffing ratios, fully funded schools or secure housing. Workers are drawing the connection.

Both parties speak for the Pentagon. The emerging labor opposition speaks for the majority – and is beginning to challenge the economic model that puts endless war at the center of the economy. #



A nuclear submarine under construction at General Dynamics Electric Boat in Groton, Conn. War appropriations guarantee contracts for shipyards like this one – a central pillar of the permanent war economy.

## Munich war council

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from the Democratic Party, whose leading figures attended Munich to argue for a more effectively managed imperialism. It will not come from the European establishments that are racing to build the most powerful armies on the continent.

This process does not unfold without resistance. Across the United States, workers have begun to link bread-and-butter demands to

opposition to repression and militarization – insisting that hospitals, schools and workplaces serve human need, not the war drive. These struggles remain uneven and incomplete, but they point in the only direction capable of halting the slide toward catastrophe.

It will come from the independent mobilization of the working class against the capitalist system that produces war – and will continue to produce it – until it is overthrown. #

## Nurses, teachers, strikers: Labor takes on ICE

*Continued from page 5*

districts shut down.

The organizational depth behind that day grew from the ground up. Workers organized on their blocks and through Signal networks. The momentum pulled union leadership along – the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, endorsed the action, as did the Minnesota AFL-CIO Executive Board, representing over 300,000 workers. SEIU Local 26, UNITE HERE Local 17, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005 and CWA Local 7250 all mobilized their members.

SEIU Local 26 President Greg Nammacher told the Dig podcast: “There are so many players in motion right now – organized on their blocks, organized through Signal groups and structures that didn’t exist, or didn’t exist at an organizational level, just weeks ago, are now playing key roles.”

CWA Local 7250 President Kieran Knutson placed the moment in Minneapolis labor history – the 1934 Teamsters strike, the P-9 Hormel strike of the 1980s, the 2020 George Floyd uprising when ATU bus drivers refused to transport arrested protesters and 600 strikes erupted in the following month. “The Twin Cities has an experience with struggle and an experience with relating to social movements that emerge from the community,” he told Payday Report. “As they emerge from the community, they infect the workplaces. And if the unions are listening, the unions can become a part of it.”

### Profiteering hospitals and the class line

The hospital systems fighting NYSNA in New York illustrate why labor action – rather than legislative appeals – is the sharper tool.

Between 2020 and 2023, CEOs at Montefiore, Mount Sinai and NewYork-Presbyterian increased their total compensation by over 54%. Mount Sinai’s Upper East Side hospital alone generated \$1.2 billion in revenue in the first three months of 2025, a 20% jump over the same period the year before.

These same hospitals claim they cannot afford the nurses’ demands. They spent over \$100 million on temporary replacement nurses before the strike even began, with scabs earning up to \$10,000 per week. They hired Risa Heller Communications – a PR firm whose previous clients include Harvey Weinstein, Jared Kushner and the Sackler family – to manage their public image.

Mount Sinai fired three labor and delivery nurses by voicemail the night before the strike. Fourteen nurse leaders had already been disciplined – some for speaking to the press after an active shooter incident, others simply for discussing the union with colleagues. Governor Kathy Hochul declared a disaster emergency to allow out-of-state nurses to work in New York, actively undermining the strike.

The class line runs through every aspect of this fight. Billion-dollar hospital systems that cannot find money for safe staffing ratios have unlimited budgets for strikebreakers and crisis PR. The same institutions that dismiss ICE ex-

clusion as a “distraction” are spending fortunes to avoid negotiating on it. Austerity for patients and nurses; blank checks for union-busting.

From Kaiser emergency rooms in California to the picket lines outside Mount Sinai to the frozen streets of Minneapolis, workers at the center of these fights are drawing the same conclusion: The enforcement regime and the austerity regime are two faces of the same assault on working-class communities.

Teachers cannot do their jobs when their students live in terror. Nurses cannot do their jobs when their patients are afraid to seek care. Health care workers and educators are recognizing that defending immigrants is defending the conditions that make their own work possible. And they are reaching for the most powerful tool available to them – the collective power of organized labor.

Nammacher described the bigger picture on the Dig: “This is an incredibly hopeful story about combining systematic, intentional, self-conscious organizing with understanding that in a movement moment when the entire community is provoked, things will move far beyond your organizational control.”

The infrastructure is real. The coordination is deliberate. National Nurses United is linking Kaiser strikers in California, NYSNA nurses in New York and health care workers in Minneapolis through shared actions, shared demands and a shared conviction: ICE is a threat to patient care, and organized labor has the power to stop it. #

# Big Oil's 'biggest opportunity': WAR ON IRAN

By Gary Wilson

Two aircraft carrier strike groups are converging on the Persian Gulf: the USS Abraham Lincoln, already on station with three Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, and the USS Gerald R. Ford – the largest warship ever built – now ordered forward from the Caribbean.

Pentagon planners are drawing up “sustained, weeks-long operations.”

The richest country on earth is marshaling its war machine against a nation of 90 million people whose primary “offense,” in Washington’s eyes, is refusing to surrender its sovereignty. Seventy percent of the U.S. public opposes military action against Iran. The war preparations continue regardless, because the decisions are not made by the people who will pay the price.

## Demands designed to be rejected

Washington has laid out demands that go beyond disarmament to the dismantling of Iran’s economic sovereignty. Iran must permanently terminate its nuclear program – a civilian energy and research infrastructure essential to the country’s development – destroy its entire ballistic missile arsenal, and cut all ties with Palestinian, Lebanese, and allied resistance forces. Iran must surrender both its path to economic independence and every means of defending itself, leaving it at the mercy of the same power that destroyed Iraq, Libya, and Syria.

Iran has offered to negotiate on uranium enrichment and international inspections – the stated reason for the entire confrontation. It has not mattered. The enrichment question was never the point.

The point is that Iran maintains an independent foreign policy, supports Palestinian resistance, and refuses to submit to U.S. regional domination. The missile program is “non-negotiable” because it is the reason Iran has not already been bombed into the same rubble as Baghdad and Tripoli.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu continues to demand “forceful intervention.” This is the role Israel plays. As former Secretary of State Alexander Haig put it, Israel is “the largest American aircraft carrier in the world that cannot be sunk” – a U.S.-funded, U.S.-armed settler-colonial state that functions as Washington’s forward military base. The pressure to attack Iran originates in Washington. Israel is the instrument.

## A war machine with serious problems

The Pentagon’s carrier groups in the Persian Gulf look formidable, but they function

**Ships from the USS Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group sail in formation as Washington deploys a second carrier group toward the Persian Gulf, escalating pressure on Iran.**



as “glass cannons” – immense striking power paired with finite defenses. The USS Abraham Lincoln and the USS Gerald R. Ford can launch punishing air operations, yet their escorts reveal a structural weakness. An Arleigh Burke-class destroyer carries roughly 36 to 46 air defense interceptors. Against Iran’s saturation drone and missile tactics, that defensive “magazine depth” can be exhausted quickly. The imbalance is mathematical.

Range compounds the risk. The F-35C Lightning II has a combat radius of about 600 nautical miles, meaning carriers must move closer to launch sustained strikes – and into range of systems like the Khalij Fars. If Saudi Arabia and Iraq restrict overflight, flight paths narrow and become predictable.

There is also fleet fatigue. The Ford has already deployed for eight months; extending that mission strains maintenance cycles and crew endurance.

Washington speaks of a “weeks-long” campaign. But against a digitized, asymmetrical defense, this is less a short, decisive operation than a potential war of attrition – one where inventory limits, geography and time set the terms.

## Iran rebuilds, adapts, and arms

The June 2025 conflict – the “12-Day War” – was supposed to cripple Iran’s defenses for years. It failed.

China supplied HQ-9B long-range surface-to-air missiles and YLC-8B anti-stealth radar designed to detect the B-2 bombers and F-35s at the center of U.S. strike planning. Beijing also helped Iran transition from the U.S.-controlled GPS to China’s BeiDou, reducing the effectiveness of U.S. signal jamming against Iranian precision-guided weapons.

Russia delivered Mi-28NE attack helicopters and reportedly MiG-29 SMT fighters and Iskander ballistic missiles. The air-defense and strike architecture Washington would confront today is significantly more capable than it was last summer.

Satellite imagery shows reinforced tunnels at Natanz and Isfahan, along with a new hardened facility at Mount Kulang Gazla. Critical nuclear infrastructure has been buried deep and shielded more thoroughly. The country

Washington would be attacking today is not the one it struck in June.

On Jan. 29, Iran, Russia, and China signed a Trilateral Strategic Pact – a concrete step toward breaking Washington’s ability to dictate terms to the rest of the world. The agreement creates trade mechanisms in yuan and rubles that bypass the dollar, provides for intelligence sharing and military cooperation, and advances the North-South Transport Corridor linking Russia to India through Iran. For decades, any country that defied Washington could be sanctioned and starved into submission because there was no alternative. That era is ending.

## The covert war

Military buildup is one front. Covert destabilization is another. After protests in January 2026, the State Department diverted funds from other programs to purchase nearly 7,000 Starlink satellite terminals. About 6,000 were smuggled into Iran to give anti-government groups internet access during state-imposed blackouts – regime-change infrastructure dressed up as “internet freedom.” The same playbook used from Cuba to Venezuela to Hong Kong.

Iran countered many of the terminals by spoofing GPS signals, feeding fake location data that prevented the hardware from connecting to satellites. Inside the U.S. government, officials argue over whether the expensive Starlink operation has actually undermined cheaper VPN tools that had been keeping dissidents connected for years. The sabotage campaign is tripping over its own feet.

Then there is financial warfare. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent took credit for engineering the crash of Iran’s currency in December 2025. During a Congressional hearing in early February 2026, Bessent explicitly stated: “What we have accomplished at Treasury is the creation of a dollar shortage in [Iran].” The dollar shortage forced Iran’s central bank to print money to rescue a failing commercial bank, accelerating inflation and destroying the purchasing power of ordinary Iranians.

This is collective punishment of an entire population – economic warfare aimed at making life unbearable for tens of millions of people. When the U.S. Treasury Secretary boasts

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# Why Washington wants war on Iran

By Gary Wilson

The largest U.S. military buildup in West Asia since the 2003 Iraq invasion is not about Iran's nuclear program. It is about who controls oil, who profits from permanent war, and who is challenging the economic order that keeps U.S. imperialism on top.

Marx observed in "The Eighteenth Brumaire" that when history's dramas unfold, we should look past the actors on the stage and ask: Which class interests do they serve? Wars and stealth fighters are not the story. They are instruments. The story is the class forces that set them in motion.

## Who benefits

On Jan. 16, at the American Petroleum Institute's "State of American Energy" summit, oil industry consultant Bob McNally of Rapidan Energy Group – a former energy adviser to George W. Bush – told executives that Iran is "the biggest opportunity" for the industry. A war to topple the Iranian government, he said, would be a "wonderful day." That is not an offhand remark. It is a class program stated plainly.

Iran holds the world's second-largest natural gas reserves and among its largest proved oil reserves – and those resources remain largely outside Western corporate control. Since the 1979 revolution, Western capital has been locked out. U.S. sanctions, diplomacy and military buildup converge on one objective: prying open Iran's economy to U.S. and allied corporations.

The arms monopolies have their own ledger. Lockheed Martin, RTX (formerly Raytheon) and Northrop Grumman carry a combined backlog exceeding \$540 billion. When Israel struck Iranian sites last June, defense contractors' shares on Wall Street spiked instantly. War is not a risk for these corporations. It is the business model.

When U.S. forces moved toward a strike posture on Feb. 18, oil futures jumped more than 4%. This "war premium" – roughly \$10 a barrel – acts as a direct wealth transfer from working-class energy consumers to the shareholders of ExxonMobil and Chevron.

## Washington as instrument

Marx wrote that the executive of the modern state is a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie. The bipartisan consensus on Iran proves the point.

On Jan. 30, the Senate passed an \$839 billion defense appropriation – \$8.4 billion more than the Pentagon itself requested – by a vote of 71 to 29. With other streams added in, total military spending for fiscal year 2026 ap-

proaches \$1 trillion. Democrats provided the votes needed for passage.

The Secretary of War overseeing this buildup, Pete Hegseth, invited pastor Doug Wilson – a self-described "paleo-Confederate" who has defended Christian enslavers and argued women should be denied the vote – to lead worship in a Pentagon auditorium. The ideological content of the war party is not hidden: racist Christian nationalism fused with military power, preached from the building where strike plans are drawn up.

While the Democratic leadership often markets itself as a bulwark against the current administration's domestic agenda, the bipartisan consensus on foreign policy remains largely intact. This creates a difficult contradiction for even the most progressive voices in Washington, who find themselves operating within a framework that validates the premises of empire.

When Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez spoke at the Munich Security Conference on Feb. 13, she navigated this tension by focusing on a "working-class" foreign policy and the "scourge of authoritarianism." Yet, her presence at a conference dedicated to imperialist security highlights the difficulty of challenging the broader strategic shift. Her remarks did not address the historic military buildup currently funneled toward Iran, nor did they mention the escalating oil blockade that is strangling Cuba.

The same institutional gravity was visible in her Munich comments regarding the Jan. 3 U.S. capture of Nicolás Maduro. While she correctly criticized the operation as an "act of war" and a "terrifying precedent," she adopted the State Department's framing by characterizing Maduro as an "anti-democratic leader." By challenging the style of U.S. intervention while accepting the justification for it, the debate remains confined to how imperialism should be managed, rather than whether it should be dismantled.

This is not a matter of individual failure, but of class alignment. On the fundamental questions of military supremacy, the blockade of socialist states, and the defense of dollar power, the two parties function as a single board of directors. Washington pulls even its most progressive voices into a unified front.

## Iran's real 'crime'

Washington demands that Iran scrap its civilian nuclear energy and research capacity, destroy its missile defense system, and sever ties with Palestinian, Lebanese and allied resistance forces. The word for that is capitulation.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi offered to negotiate on enrichment and inspec-

tions – the stated reason for the confrontation. A senior U.S. official dismissed the Geneva talks as a "nothing burger." Vice President JD Vance warned that "the president reserves the ability to say when he thinks that diplomacy has reached its natural end."

Iran's "crime," in the eyes of U.S. capital, is threefold: It maintains an independent national economy closed to imperialist oil monopolies; it supports Palestinian resistance and refuses the role of compliant petro-state; and – what drives the urgency now – it is building economic structures that bypass the dollar.

## An alternative to dollar rule

On Jan. 29, Iran, Russia, and China signed a trilateral strategic pact. On the surface, it is a technical agreement involving trade mechanisms in yuan and rubles, intelligence sharing, and the North-South Transport Corridor. In substance, it is an exit ramp from the U.S. financial system.

For decades, Washington's influence in West Asia has rested on more than just aircraft carriers. It has rested on the dollar's role as the dominant currency and clearing channel for energy trade. By ensuring that oil is priced, insured, and banked in U.S. currency, the Treasury maintains a "silent veto" over the economic life of any nation. This is not merely a convenience; it is the mechanism that allows the U.S. to run a \$1 trillion military budget while shifting costs outward to the rest of the world.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent was remarkably candid in a recent Congressional hearing when he described the "success" of U.S. policy: "What we can do at Treasury, and what we have done, is created a dollar shortage in the country [Iran]."

A "managed" currency crash is a form of warfare that leaves the buildings standing but hollows out the lives of the people inside. When the rial is devalued by decree from Washington, the purchasing power of an Iranian worker's paycheck vanishes. This is the "peaceful" alternative to bombing – a systemic strangulation designed to force a sovereign economy back into the imperialist orbit.

The trilateral pact is a proof of concept for an alternative. By routing more trade through the North-South Corridor and settling more transactions outside the dollar, these countries are building a circuit Washington cannot switch off.

This is the true "threat" that the current military buildup is positioned to address. If the dollar is decoupled from the world's energy flows, the U.S. loses its primary tool of global

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# Gaza under ‘ceasefire’: bombs, blockade

By Gary Wilson

Since the “ceasefire” took effect on Oct. 10, 2025, Israeli forces have attacked Gaza on 101 out of 116 days, killing more than 556 Palestinians and wounding 1,500. The Israeli military has violated the agreement at least 1,450 times through airstrikes, artillery and direct shootings.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos in late January, none of that came up. The language there was “reconstitution,” “economic acceleration,” “post-conflict transformation.” The gap between that vocabulary and the reality – a 10-day-old infant killed by tank fire in Gaza City on Feb. 4, a paramedic shot dead while on duty in Khan Younis the same day – has been engineered into the deal from the start.

The ceasefire promised 600 truckloads of aid per day. The actual average has been 260 – 43% of the agreement – and Israeli authorities have blocked meat, dairy and vegetables while allowing chips, chocolate and soft drinks. Israel banned more than three dozen aid organizations, including Doctors Without Borders, Oxfam and the International Rescue Committee. Dr. Mohamed Abu Selmiya, director of al-Shifa Hospital, asked the question no one at Davos wanted to hear: “Where is the ceasefire? Where are the mediators?” The Israeli military answered through an anonymous official: It would continue striking the strip.

## What the death toll hides

The confirmed death toll – over 71,800 – counts only recovered bodies recorded by hospitals. Stuart Casey-Maslen of the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law says demographic modeling shows Gaza’s pop-

ulation has dropped by more than 10% since October 2023, pointing to roughly 200,000 dead. Lancet analyses put the figure between 300,000 and 377,000 when indirect deaths are included – people who died of starvation, hypothermia, untreated infection and diseases that surged as much as 384-fold in overcrowded camps with no clean water.

The Israeli military bombed hospitals, killed at least 1,700 medical workers and blockaded medicine. Of 36 hospitals, only 22 were functioning by mid-2025, at limited capacity. A Lancet study calculated over 3 million life-years lost – more than 1 million of them belonging to children under 15.

## The real estate plan

On Jan. 22, Donald Trump signed the Board of Peace charter at the World Economic Forum in Davos. The 11-page document does not mention Gaza, Palestine or Palestinians. It establishes Trump as permanent chairman with veto power over all decisions. Permanent seats cost \$1 billion. France, Britain and Germany refused to sign. Israel, Hungary, Argentina, Bahrain and Morocco did.

Minutes later, Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner unveiled AI-generated slides of a fantasy metropolis: 170 waterfront towers, coastal tourism zones, data centers, an airport. The \$25 billion “master plan” was developed with Yakir Gabay, an Israeli real estate and infrastructure speculator whose portfolio centers on large-scale redevelopment projects and post-crisis property acquisition. No Palestinians were consulted. Architecture professor Ali A. Alraouf called it “the Vegas-ification of Gaza” – gated communities for a specific economic class, built on the rubble of an existing society.

An analysis by NPR found the plan would erase entire neighborhoods and push the population south, away from their homes and toward the Egyptian border. It makes no reference to land deeds, housing allocation or where hundreds of thousands of displaced people would live during construction.

Trump made it plain: “I’m a real estate person at heart. Look at this location on the sea. Look at this beautiful piece of property.”

Shortly afterward, Elon Musk appeared on-stage alongside Larry Fink. Musk offered one of the summit’s most revealing lines. “I heard about the formation of the Peace Summit,” he said, “and I was like, is that P-I-E-C-E? A little piece of Greenland, a little piece of Venezuela.”

Their pairing captured the logic of Davos: tech capital and asset management converging around militarized reconstruction – where war zones become investment opportunities and displacement is reframed as development.

## The five-year waitlist

More than 18,500 Palestinians need urgent medical treatment abroad, including 4,000 children. The Rafah crossing – Gaza’s only exit that does not pass through Israel – reopened on Feb. 3 after nearly two years of closure. On day one, five patients were allowed to leave. On day two, 16. On day three, the Israeli military canceled the evacuation entirely.

Palestinians who make it through have described being blindfolded, bound, strip-searched and interrogated. On the Egyptian side, 150 hospitals stand ready. Inside Gaza, Rajaa Abu Mustafa waited outside a hospital for her 17-year-old son Mohamed, blinded by an Israeli bullet through the eye a year earlier as he

*Continued on page 19*

# Big Oil’s ‘biggest opportunity’: WAR ON IRAN

*Continued from page 14*

about crashing another country’s currency, it confirms exactly what Tehran has always told its people: Their economic pain comes from Washington, not from their own government. The empire handed Iran a propaganda victory along with the economic damage.

## A war the empire cannot afford

Iran could close the Strait of Hormuz, through which one-fifth of the world’s oil passes daily, triggering a global energy shock. Swarms of low-cost armed drones could target U.S. bases in Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and the UAE – facilities full of service members, overwhelmingly from working-class communities, who signed up because the military was the only path to a paycheck or a college degree.

The war would not stay contained to Iran.

U.S. bases across the region would become targets, and the consequences would spread to countries whose populations have no interest in fighting on behalf of U.S. oil companies and Israeli settler expansion.

Seventy-nine percent of the country does not support this war. A prolonged conflict producing even modest U.S. casualties would become a political catastrophe for an administration with no public mandate. A war on Iran would make Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and Northrop Grumman richer. It would tighten Washington’s grip on the world’s oil supply and enrich the energy giants that are already lining up for the spoils.

At the American Petroleum Institute’s “State of American Energy” summit in Washington on Jan. 16, veteran industry consultant

Bob McNally of the Rapidan Energy Group told the crowd that Iran holds “the biggest opportunity” for the oil industry. McNally, a former energy adviser to George W. Bush, urged the audience to imagine U.S. companies going back into Iran after regime change: “We would get a lot more oil, a lot sooner than we will out of Venezuela.”

A regime change war, he said, would be a “wonderful day” for the oil industry. It would advance Washington’s project of unchallenged military dominance in West Asia, enforced through its settler-colonial outpost in occupied Palestine. It would not build a single school, fund a single hospital, fix a single bridge, or create a single job in the communities across this country being asked to supply the soldiers. #

# and real-estate plans

Continued from page 18

tried to reach food from aid trucks. “We have been waiting for the crossing to open,” she said.

## Occupation by committee

The National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG) – a 15-member body of Palestinian technocrats appointed under the ceasefire’s second phase – was announced on Jan. 14. Most members are affiliated with the Palestinian Authority. The committee is led by civil engineer Ali Shaatt, who said it would play “no political role” in governing Gaza.

That limitation is structural. The NCAG does not control borders, territory, security or diplomacy. Its mandate is confined to waste management, telecommunications and basic infrastructure – administering civilian life under conditions it cannot challenge.

The Board also commands a military force: U.S. Army Major General Jasper Jeffers leads the International Stabilization Force, placing the U.S. Army at the head of Gaza’s occupation.

In practice, this creates a technocratic layer managing the aftereffects of bombardment while armed control remains with a U.S.-led military force – an occupation administered by committee.

The framework also provides political cover from criminal accountability. The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants in November 2024 for Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, citing war crimes including the use of starvation as a weapon. Under international law, all 124 Rome Statute member states are obligated to arrest Netanyahu if he enters their territory.

Instead, Viktor Orbán – a Board signatory – invited him to visit. France claimed he enjoys immunity. Netanyahu’s flight paths have reportedly been altered to avoid ICC member airspace.

By drawing governments into a shared governance structure where Netanyahu sits as a partner rather than a fugitive, the Board of Peace converts legal obligations into diplomatic liabilities – making enforcement of the warrants politically costly and practically unworkable.

## The answer from the sea

On Feb. 5, organizers of the Global Sumud Flotilla announced from the Nelson Mande-



Residents walk through destroyed neighborhoods in Gaza City in February, weeks after a ‘ceasefire’ took effect. Israeli forces have continued airstrikes and ground attacks while aid remains restricted.

la Foundation in Johannesburg that they will launch the largest civilian maritime mission in history on March 29. More than 100 boats carrying 3,000 participants from over 100 countries will depart Barcelona, carrying 1,000 medical workers, engineers and war crimes investigators to break the sea blockade.

In October 2025, Israel intercepted the previous flotilla of 40 boats and detained more than 450 participants, including Mandla Mandela – Nelson Mandela’s grandson – and Greta Thunberg. Detainees reported beatings, strip searches and verbal abuse. The organizers are going back with more boats and more people. “As a collective across the globe, we can isolate apartheid Israel, collapse it and bring it to its knees, just as we did to apartheid South Africa,” Mandela said. #

## Why Washington wants war on Iran

Continued from page 17

discipline. To the financial interests that guide Washington, a shift in the global trade architecture is more dangerous than any missile. The warships in the Gulf are there to ensure that the world continues to trade on terms set by Wall Street, or not at all.

### Israel: the instrument, not the driver

Israel plays the role it has played since its founding – what former Secretary of State Alexander Haig called “the largest American aircraft carrier in the world that cannot be sunk.” It is a U.S.-funded, U.S.-armed settler-colonial state functioning as Washington’s permanent forward base. Israel can draft target lists and supply justification, but the decisive question is what U.S. capital decides to do. Israel supplies the pretext and the operational partner

– not the strategic motor.

The Gulf rulers are pushing the other way. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian that Riyadh will not allow its airspace or territory to be used for strikes on Iran. The UAE issued a similar declaration. They would rather manage a sanctioned Iran than gamble on collapse, chaos and blowback.

### A trillion-dollar machine

The USS Gerald R. Ford has been redirected to join the USS Abraham Lincoln in the region, carrying more than 150 warplanes between them. An estimated 50,000 U.S. troops are deployed across the region. The Pentagon is preparing not a one-off strike but “sustained, weeks-long operations.” Last June’s strikes were followed by a reported toll of 1,190 killed,

based on figures from Human Rights Activists and its network of medical and local volunteers.

According to Axios, a former senior U.S. intelligence official advising the Trump administration assessed an 80% to 90% likelihood of strikes within weeks. CNN reported Feb. 18 that the White House has been briefed the military could be ready to attack by the weekend. Trump has not given the order – but the machinery is in position, and the clock is running.

Every F-35 deployed is a revenue stream for Lockheed Martin. Every Patriot battery is money in the accounts of RTX. Every Tomahawk loaded onto a destroyer was manufactured for profit. The buildup is both war preparation and stimulus program for the arms industry, funded by the trillion-dollar budget that both parties approved. #

### ‘WAR AND LENIN in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ Includes U.S. complicity in the Gaza genocide and military profiteering

Vladimir Lenin, The revolutionary leader of the Soviet Union and key contributor to Marxist theory, wrote ‘Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism’ in 1916.

At [tinyurl.com/LeninAndWar](https://tinyurl.com/LeninAndWar)



**CHINA: Building Socialism in an Imperialist World** is a report on how over a billion people are building a socialist society inside a world dominated by imperialism. The report shows how socialist construction created the foundations of modern China: state ownership of key sectors of industry, technology and banking, planning, broad participation, universal education and healthcare, and an industrial base able to withstand pressure from the capitalist powers.

China: Building Socialism in an Imperialist World offers an account of how socialism is built in real conditions – and why that process continues to shake the world system shaped by imperialism.



# JESSE JACKSON

## Champion of the oppressed

Rev. Jesse Louis Jackson Sr., the civil rights leader who carried the unfinished struggle for Black liberation from the streets of the segregated South to the floor of the Democratic National Convention, died Feb. 17 in Chicago. He was 84.

Jackson came of age in the blood and fury of the 1960s freedom movement. A key aide to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., he marched at Selma in 1965 and stood with King and Stokely Carmichael during the 1966 March Against Fear in Mississippi, where the call for Black Power first electrified the nation.

He brought that fire north. Through Operation Breadbasket and later Operation PUSH — People United to Save Humanity, founded on Chicago's South Side in 1971.

Jackson's 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns were qualitatively different from those of Black politicians who ran as members of the establishment. Jackson ran as a movement candidate — the authentic representative of an oppressed people demanding full democratic rights. Jackson was the first to explicitly mention gay and lesbian rights in a major national convention speech, stating, "The Rainbow includes lesbians and gays." His Rainbow Coalition married the struggles of Black, Latine, and white working-class communities with labor unionists, women,



Photo: David Bacon

**Another warrior and leader on the battlefield for justice has died'** — ILWU retiree Clarence Thomas and Delores Lemon-Thomas

In his struggle for the rights of workers to organize Jesse Jackson endorsed the Million Worker March and supported the **International Longshore & Warehouse Union**

anti-war activists, and LGBTQ+ people.

Jackson's vision was global. He was the leading U.S. voice demanding divestment from apartheid South Africa. He courageously

championed Palestinian statehood on the national stage. He met with Fidel Castro in Havana and opposed U.S. wars from Nicaragua to the Persian Gulf. #

# How Michael Parenti helped clarify the class war

By Lev Koufax

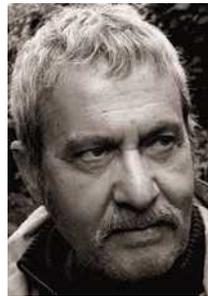
With the death of Marxist thinker and anti-imperialist advocate Michael Parenti, many on the left have been reflecting on his life. For anyone committed to the working class struggle, Michael Parenti represented a strong voice against fascism and U.S. imperialism in an academic landscape dominated by State Department mouthpieces.

I read Parenti for the first time in the autumn of 2016 at the ripe age of 23. Trump had just been elected for the first time, and it shook the world of this particular second-year law student. That fall began a journey from liberalism and soft zionism to revolutionary working-class thought and action.

Parenti was a crucial part of that journey. Where before I had seen possibilities for re-

form within capitalism and compromise, Parenti's writings helped show me the complete class antagonism of the ruling class. "Blackshirts and Reds," Parenti's historical analysis of fascism not as a movement outside of capitalism, but as a tool of the broader capitalist class, opened all sorts of thought windows for the once moderate young law student.

As the Trump crisis deepened, Parenti's telling of Hitler and Mussolini's respective rises to power rang more and more in my mind. Beginning in 2016 and continuing to this day, one can see Parenti's analysis play out in real time. Parenti analyzes in great detail how the first move of fascism is always to crush the institutions of the working class: labor unions, social



Michael Parenti

movements, and any regulatory system given as a concession to an oppressed group. And to enforce this attack on the working class, capitalism uses "black shirts" or "brown shirts." Then, it was the Squadristi and Sturmabteilung. Today, it is ICE and the militarized police system.

Watching Parenti's historic analysis shape how I viewed the world was part of the readings and experiences that led me to the conclusion that the only solution is socialist revolution.

Parenti spent his life fighting against imperialism and fascism. Whether it was the zionist genocide on Palestine, the U.S. bombing of Yugoslavia, or the brutal imperialist blockade on Cuba, Parenti stood on the side of the working class and the oppressed people of the world.

For that, he will be remembered by many, including me. Michael Parenti presenté! #

# International activists announce flotilla mission for Cuba solidarity

By Laura V. Mor

An international coalition of social movements, trade unions, and humanitarian organizations on February 12, announced a maritime mission set to deliver essential food, medicine, and supplies to Cuban communities facing severe shortages exacerbated by intensified U.S. blockade and recent sanctions.

The “Our America Flotilla” (“Nuestra América Flotilla”, in Spanish), named after Cuban National Hero Jose Marti’s 1891 essay, will set sail next month with a group of volunteers in a direct response to the U.S. blockade, which has disrupted fuel imports, grounded flights, and forced emergency conservation measures across Cuba.

The initiative aims to alleviate the impact of a rapidly deteriorating situation on the Caribbean island, which is directly related with the humanitarian consequences of the aggressive U.S. foreign policy.

“When governments impose collective punishment, ordinary people have a responsibility to act,” declared David Adler, a member of the Progressive International collective and one of the Flotilla organizers.

“We prepare to sail to Cuba for the same reason we traveled in the Global Sumud Flotilla to Gaza: to break the siege, bring food and medicine, and demonstrate that solidarity can cross any border or sea,” he strongly affirmed.

Thiago Avila, a driving force behind the Global Sumud Flotilla to Gaza, emphasized that the mission to Cuba extends beyond delivering material assistance. It also seeks to “transmit the message that the Cuban people are not alone,” highlighting the power of solidarity between the people.

The coalition has launched a website to gather support and will hold its first assembly this Sunday to advance logistical planning, coordinate volunteers, and manage the acquisition of humanitarian supplies.

Organizers warn that tighter U.S. sanctions have led to widespread power outages and limited access to gasoline, impacting homes, medical centers, and essential infrastructure.

Source: teleSUR



The organizers point out that the Trump administration has intensified the siege on Cuba with punitive policies and defend ‘the right of every nation to live, develop and decide its own future free from intimidation.’

Photo: EFE.

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 #BetterWithoutBlockade

# Cuba's Mariela Castro Espín: 'Principles are not negotiable'



*This interview has been edited and condensed for print. Mariela Castro Espín spoke with Carlos Aznárez of Resumen Latinoamericano; translated by Walter Lippmann with the assistance of Melinda Butterfield. Read the full interview at [struggle-la-lucha.org](http://struggle-la-lucha.org).*

Mariela Castro Espín directs CENESEX, Cuba's National Center for Sex Education, and is an active militant in internationalist solidarity – from the defense of Palestine to the defense of Bolivarian Venezuela. In early 2026, U.S. forces bombed five Venezuelan cities and abducted President Nicolás Maduro and Congresswoman Cilia Flores. Thirty-two Cuban internationalist combatants were killed defending them. Castro spoke about what Cuba faces in this new and dangerous phase of imperialist aggression.

**After U.S. forces bombed Caracas and kidnapped President Maduro, many people described Trump as “crazy.” Do you accept that characterization?**

No, he's not crazy. He's a psychopath who also grew up without limits. Anything goes, and “I get what I want,” by any means necessary.

And that's what they did with this military aggression against Venezuela, where they bombed five Venezuelan cities – mainly the capital – to create a distraction while they went in to kidnap the legitimate constitutional president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro Moros, and his wife.

Let's remember that Cilia Flores is a congresswoman with a long career, the First Lady, and also the First Combatant. Her kidnapping is also illegal; it has consequences and is a violation of internationally established norms. They are brazenly unpunished.

Notice that the Mossad's modus operandi doesn't differ from the methods of U.S. imperialist power, because they are one and the same; they were born almost simultaneously and have developed and strengthened each other. And they do the same thing everywhere they need to seize wealth, territory, eliminate entire populations, and assassinate popular



Mariela Castro Espín.

leaders who bother them.

**What was the impact on Cuban society when the news came about the 32 Cuban combatants killed in the attack?**

The biggest shock was the first news that came that morning. First, a journalist friend called me: “They're bombing Venezuela.” I told her, “That can't be.” And she replied, “Go to Telesur so you can stay informed.” And I started watching the events, the kidnapping of the president and his wife.

Then I thought to myself, “No, this has gone too far.” So the pain was immense, even physical, very painful. And I said to myself, our comrades were fulfilling an internationalist mission protecting President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, because there were already threats, and it was known that they were studying the president's movements for some kind of attack.

That was known. And the threat was a kidnapping, openly declared, since the threats were blatant. But it sounded more like boasting. The thing is, in Cuba we take boasting seriously, because we've already had painful experiences, including the loss of valuable lives.

Of the 32 Cubans killed, some were sleeping during the changing of the guard, or they were drivers. But 21 fought directly. Just 21 soldiers faced 200 robots. Because you know how the U.S. army operates, heavily protected. But they are incapable of hand-to-hand combat. They lack that skill because it requires conviction. They're defending the richest people in the world, not even their own people.

We know what our fighters are like; we know how Fidel, how the leadership of our country, has trained our fighters in the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the armed forces of the Ministry of the Interior. They fought to the death, but they inflicted casualties on the enemy. And the U.S. doesn't want to talk about that, because that would be a disgrace.

It wasn't a successful surgical operation; it was a disaster.

**Cuba has called for the defense of the country. How is Cuba preparing?**

Since the triumph of the revolution, Cuba has suffered attacks and aggressions of various kinds from successive U.S. administrations. Therefore, Cuba has had to develop a defense strategy that integrates its own experiences and those of other countries, such as Vietnam, as exemplified by the doctrine of people's war.

This is a permanent strategy that is constantly being strengthened, and at this time, certain tasks are being reactivated with the entire population so that everyone knows how to respond to different types of aggression, and above all, so that we are kept up-to-date on the latest military tactics used by the U.S. military, particularly the use of new technologies, as we have seen in Gaza, or as we see now in the aggression against Venezuela.

Our people are preparing for different scenarios in order to defend themselves. Cuba is not an aggressor nation; Cuba will defend itself, and in turn, support other nations in their defense.

What Cuba has strongly developed is the principle not only of sovereignty and independence but also of solidarity among nations. Fidel always taught us that these are non-negotiable principles. Principles are not negotiable. There is no possibility of negotiation with imperialism and all its facets.

As Jean-Paul Sartre said: one does not negotiate with fascism, one fights fascism.

*Read the complete interview at [struggle-la-lucha.org/2026/02/11/mariela-castro-principles-are-not-negotiable](http://struggle-la-lucha.org/2026/02/11/mariela-castro-principles-are-not-negotiable)*

**LOVE IS THE LAW**

**Cuba's  
Queer Rights  
Revolution**

Gregory E. Williams

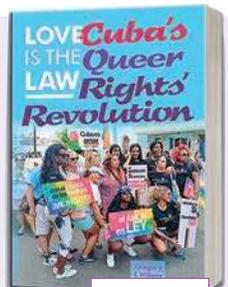
**What you'll find in this book**

- A chronicle of Trump's return. This is the government that cruelly keeps Cuba on the terrorist list and under economic blockade.
- Together with its Zionist appendage, it is committing genocide against the Palestinian people. Cuba doesn't bomb anybody. Cuba sends doctors.
- The process of winning approval of the Families Code referendum. Cuban writers are included and a webinar discussion on: 'What We Can Learn from Cuba's 'Code of Freedom' for Families;
- Reports from the U.S. Friends Against Homophobia and Transphobia delegation to Cuba;
- Reports from Cenesex – the National Center for Sex

Education / Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual director Mariela Castro Espín

- Cenesex has been at the center of gender and sexual liberation in the country, an international hub, facilitating exchanges between activists, academics, researchers and progressive religious groups.
- The full text of Leslie Feinberg's 'Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba'

[tinyurl.com/Cuba-LoveisLaw](http://tinyurl.com/Cuba-LoveisLaw) [tinyurl.com/Read-LOVEistheLAW](http://tinyurl.com/Read-LOVEistheLAW)



# Bad Bunny's halftime show went against climate of hate

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

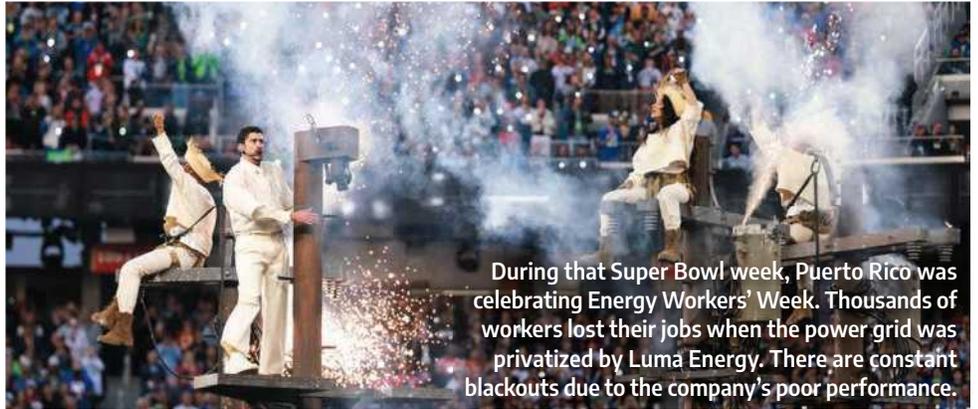
Last Sunday, millions of viewers around the world were able to witness a unique event on their television screens: Bad Bunny's participation in the halftime show of the Super Bowl, the biggest event of U.S. American football.

Why is this significant?

The United States is experiencing an extremely dangerous climate of hatred against immigrants from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia. These are people who speak their native languages and don't have blond hair, but who – despite working and contributing to the U.S. economy – are under constant attack by ICE agents who are essentially criminal and paramilitary gangs, supported by the government.

Amid these attacks emanating from the White House itself, a young Puerto Rican dared to defy that status quo. Not only did he come from a colony abused by Yankee imperialism, but he also spat in the face of the notion of "English Only," making his entire program – with the exception of one Lady Gaga song in English – entirely in Spanish.

But Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, Bad Bunny, took a much deeper approach. When, in this climate of hatred, attempts were made to criminalize the LGBTQ community, Benito invited Ricky Martin, a famous openly gay Puerto Rican singer, to sing "Lo que le pasó a Hawaii" (What Happened to Hawaii), one of the most politically charged songs on his album "Debí Tirar más Fotos" (I Should Have



During that Super Bowl week, Puerto Rico was celebrating Energy Workers' Week. Thousands of workers lost their jobs when the power grid was privatized by Luma Energy. There are constant blackouts due to the company's poor performance.

Taken More Photos). The song details the impositions of foreign interests, primarily U.S., on Puerto Rico, which have even led to laws favoring wealthy foreigners who buy up our best land, depriving us of access to our beaches, leaving us like Hawaii, with nothing but the clothes on our backs, forcing us out of our homeland.

The entire spectacle was full of symbolism. But without going into every detail, there is one that, due to its relevance these days, must be mentioned: electricity. During that Super Bowl week, Puerto Rico was also celebrating Energy Workers' Week. Thousands of energy workers were removed from their posts when the government decided to privatize the power grid and contract the corrupt company Luma Energy, with Canadian and U.S. capital. Since then, our people have been suffering from constant blackouts due to this company's poor performance.

So when Benito sang "El Apagón" (The Blackout) and climbed one of the light poles, he wasn't just remembering the blackout that lasted for months after Hurricane Maria, but also the grave crime that is the privatization of this essential service.

That 13-minute show, which was like a condensation of Puerto Rican reality, concluded with a parade of flags from all of our America, putting an end to the use of America as the name of the United States, emphasizing that America is all our countries that constitute the American Continent.

The spectacle wasn't just about Puerto Rico; it was about Latin America, with values of humanity, solidarity, and immense love amidst the existing atmosphere of supremacist hatred and fascism. Hope and the power of struggle prevailed.

*From Puerto Rico in struggle, with Radio Clarín of Colombia, Berta Joubert-Ceci*

## Resonancia del Show de Medio tiempo de Benito

*Continúa de página 24*

abusada por el imperialismo yanqui, sino que escupió en su misma cara la noción del English Only, haciendo que todo su programa menos una canción en inglés de Lady Gaga, fuera completamente en español.

Pero el desafío de Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, Bad Bunny, fue mucho más allá. Cuando en ese clima de odio se intenta criminalizar a la comunidad LGBTQ, Benito invita al Ricky Martin, un famoso cantante boricua abiertamente homosexual, para que cante "Lo que le pasó a Hawaii," una de las canciones más políticas de su álbum "Debí Tirar más Fotos." Una canción que detalla las imposiciones de los intereses extranjeros, principalmente gringos, en Puerto Rico que han logrado hasta leyes para favorecer extranjeros millonarios que compran nuestras mejores tierras, nos

quitan el acceso a nuestras playas, dejándonos como Hawaii, sin nada más de lo que llevamos encima, echándonos de nuestra patria.

Todo el espectáculo estuvo lleno de simbolismo. Pero sin tocar todos los detalles, sí hay uno que por la relevancia estos días, hay que mencionar. Y es el de la energía eléctrica. En esa semana del Súper Bowl, también se celebraba en Puerto Rico la Semana de los Celadores de la Energía. Miles de celadores fueron removidos de sus puestos cuando el gobierno decidió privatizar la energía y contratar a la mafiosa compañía Luma Energy de capital canadiense y estadounidense. Desde entonces, nuestro pueblo está sufriendo de apagones constantes por el deficiente desempeño de esta compañía. Así que cuando Benito cantó "El Apagón" y se subió a uno de los postes de luz, no sólo recordaba el apagón que duró meses luego del Hura-

cán María, sino el gran crimen que constituye la privatización de este servicio básico.

Al final de esos 13 minutos del espectáculo que fue como una condensación de la realidad puertorriqueña, se despidió con un desfile de banderas de toda nuestra América, dando al traste el uso de América como nombre de Estados Unidos, recalando que América son todos nuestros países que constituyen el Continente Americano.

El espectáculo no fue solo Puerto Rico, fue latinoamericano, con valores de humanidad, solidaridad y mucho amor en medio del existente ambiente de odio supremacista y de fascismo. Prevalció la esperanza y el poder de la lucha.

**Desde Puerto Rico, para Radio Clarín de Colombia, les habló, Berta Joubert-Ceci**



# Partido de la Lucha por el Socialismo está con Cuba: ¡fin al bloqueo de EUA!

Al Presidente Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez,  
Primer Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista  
de Cuba, al gobierno y al pueblo de Cuba:

Las membresías tanto del Partido Struggle for Socialism-Lucha por el Socialismo y de la organización Women in Struggle-Mujeres en Lucha (miembro de la Federación Democrática Internacional de Mujeres), basadas ambas en los Estados Unidos, conjuntamente les enviamos nuestra inquebrantable solidaridad.

Condenamos además, la última orden ejecutiva de Donald Trump, una escalada ilegal del bloqueo, diseñada para estrangular a su nación mediante el castigo colectivo. Es inadmisibles que Washington se atreva a declarar una “emergencia nacional” sobre Cuba mientras nuestro propio pueblo carece de vivienda, atención médica y alimentos; mientras el Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas (ICE) secuestra a niños migrantes; y mientras la violencia gubernamental cobra vidas en nuestras propias calles. Pero no es sorprendente. El imperio siempre inventa emergencias en el extranjero para distraer la atención de las crisis que fabrica en casa.

Diez millones de personas. Una isla pequeña. Sin ejército de ocupación. Sin bases extranjeras. Sin antecedentes de ataques a Estados Unidos. ¿Y aun así, Cuba es considerada una “amenaza inusual y extraordinaria”? Califiquemos esta mentira por lo que es: una proyección. Cada acusación que Estados Unidos lanza contra Cuba es una admisión de sus propios crímenes contra su soberanía.

Estados Unidos ocupa 80 países, mantiene 700 bases militares y cuenta con un presupuesto de guerra de 1,5 mil millones de dólares, más que las nueve naciones siguientes juntas. Washington ha derrocado gobiernos en Nicaragua, Guatemala, Granada y otros lugares. Este gobierno – que dice representarnos, pero en realidad solo representa a

los multimillonarios – ha financiado escuadrones de la muerte, librado una guerra psicológica y ahora tiene como rehén al presidente de Venezuela para robarle su petróleo. Y aun así, Washington se atreve a sermonear a Cuba sobre la “inestabilidad regional.”

Esta última orden no es nueva. Es la misma política de castigo que ha definido las relaciones de Estados Unidos con Cuba durante 64 años. No es un embargo comercial, sino un bloqueo global. Una campaña sistemática para intimidar a cualquier nación que se atreva a aliarse con Cuba. Un crimen contra el derecho internacional y la decencia humana.

¿Y qué ha hecho Cuba para merecer esto?

Cuba envía médicos. Cuando el ébola asoló África Occidental, las y los médicos cubanos estaban en primera línea. Cuando el COVID-19 azotó Italia, las brigadas cubanas respondieron al llamado. Cuando el huracán Katrina inundó New Orleans, Cuba ofreció ayuda, pero Estados Unidos la rechazó. Esta es la “amenaza” que Washington no puede tolerar: una pequeña nación socialista que sana al mundo mientras el imperio lo bombardea.

No permitiremos que calumnien a Cuba, la maten de hambre o la intimiden para que se someta.

Exigimos: Fin inmediato al bloqueo de 64 años.

- El regreso de la bahía de Guantánamo a la soberanía cubana.
  - Eliminación de la fraudulenta lista de estados patrocinadores del terrorismo.
  - Fin de las amenazas de Estados Unidos contra las naciones que comercian o ayudan a Cuba.
  - Fin a la violencia que Estados Unidos exporta al exterior e inflige en su país.
- ¡Viva la Revolución Cubana! Desde las entrañas del monstruo, nuestro corazón está con ustedes. Nuestra lucha está con ustedes. Hasta que caiga el bloqueo, hasta que se devuelva la tierra, hasta que Cuba esté libre de agresión estadounidense.

¡Hasta la victoria siempre!



## Resonancia del Show de Medio tiempo de Benito

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

El domingo pasado millones de espectadores alrededor del mundo pudieron presenciar en las pantallas de sus televisores un hecho único: la participación del Conejo Malo, Bad Bunny en el espectáculo del medio tiempo del Súper Tazón del fútbol estadounidense.

¿Por qué es significativo esto?

En Estados Unidos se está viviendo un clima extremadamente peligroso de odio en contra de las y los inmigrantes que proceden de Latinoamérica, del Caribe, de África y de Asia. Personas que hablan sus idiomas maternos y

no tienen el pelo rubio pero que aunque trabajen y colaboren en la economía gringa, están bajo ataque constante por agentes del Departamento de Inmigración que más bien constituyen pandillas criminales y paramilitares, avaladas por el gobierno.

En medio de estas agresiones que surgen desde la misma Casa Blanca, un joven puertorriqueño se atrevió a desafiar ese estado. No sólo procedía de una colonia

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El fenómeno boricua, Conejo Malo o Bad Bunny, hizo historia con el primer espectáculo de medio tiempo del Super Bowl casi completamente en español.

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