

## Trump launches multiple attacks on immigrants

Mary Althaffer / AP



By LISA LUINENBURG

As the 2020 presidential election draws ever closer, the Trump administration has continued to ramp up its attacks on undocumented immigrants and on refugees seeking asylum in the United States. The president has launched attacks on immigrants across multiple fronts, and when he is blocked by Congress or the courts, he issues executive orders to accomplish his own agenda.

And what is that agenda? It is simply the aim of the ruling class. The U.S. economy continues to depend heavily on the labor of undocumented immigrants, a super-exploited class of workers who work the toughest jobs for the smallest amount of pay. It benefits those in power to keep immigrants afraid, too afraid to fight back, to demand better wages or working conditions.

In a 2018 speech, Trump said, "Illegal immigration hurts American workers, burdens American taxpayers, and undermines public safety, and places enormous strains on local schools, hospitals, and com-

munities in general, taking precious resources away from the poorest Americans who need them most."

But the actual numbers paint a much different picture. According to the "PBS News Hour," undocumented immigrants contribute about \$11.6 billion dollars in taxes a year, putting more into the government than they receive back in public benefits. Immigrants often take the most difficult jobs, working as field hands, home-care aides, child-care providers, and cleaning staff.

But Trump continues to spout off vile racist rhetoric attacking immigrants, often tweeting his views. At the same time, his policies targeting immigrants and refugees have gotten worse as his presidency has continued. In June, thousands of people across the country protested when the deplorable conditions that migrant children are being held in along the U.S.-Mexico border were exposed.

In a June 22 article in the *New Yorker*, journalists interviewed a team of lawyers who toured border patrol facilities in Texas where migrant children who had been separated from their families were

being held.

According to the *New Yorker*, "The conditions the lawyers found were shocking: flu and lice outbreaks were going untreated, and children were filthy, sleeping on cold floors, and taking care of one another because of the lack of attention from guards. Some of them had been in the facility for weeks."

Children were denied food, water, health care, and sanitation. These are children who are already vulnerable and traumatized, after passing through countless ordeals on their journey to the United States with their families, seeking a better life.

When the story broke, the public was shocked, prompting a series of protests around the country. A recent protest organized by grassroots immigrant rights organizations in Minneapolis was attended by perhaps 5000 people. Around the country, Lights for Liberty held vigils in hundreds of cities. Many of the vigils, such as the one held in Chicago, were well attended.

However, many of these events were organized by

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# Amazon workers walk out in Minnesota

By KAREN SCHRAUFNAGEL

It was over 90 degrees and very humid outside the Amazon Fulfillment Center in Shakopee, Minn., on Monday afternoon, July 15, when workers walked off their jobs for a six-hour strike action on one of Amazon's busiest days of the year. Blue t-shirts carried their message: "We Are Humans, Not Robots."

A striking worker explained to *Socialist Action*: "The pace is set by the robots. To keep up with robots you must suppress everything that makes you human—you cannot stop for a drink, or to go to the bathroom, you cannot even stretch."

More than 500 supporters showed up at the facility to picket and rally, despite the oppressive heat. Pickets stopped trucks that were entering and leaving the facility to give them flyers with information about the action and the workers' demands. There seemed to be substantial support for the strikers among the truck drivers.

On the same day, solidarity actions took place at Amazon facilities in New York, San Francisco, and other U.S. cities, as well as in Britain, Germany, Spain, Poland, and elsewhere.

Meg Brady didn't support the last worker action at the Shakopee facility in December 2018, but that was before she got injured at work. Her job involves pulling items off a line and dropping them down the appropriate



David Gilbert-Pederson

chute, moving constantly, as fast as she can, on concrete floors, 10 hours per shift, four days each week. There is one paid 30-minute lunch break per shift (and another 30-minutes unpaid break time).

She found herself with tendonitis. She filed a workers' comp claim, but it was denied: "All treatment stops when that happens, and all the time off that you are allowed, that stops ... So I just keep working, right? And then the tendonitis turned into a stress fracture in my foot, my doctor put me in a boot and I was no longer able to work. Now I'm living one of my worst fears—being injured and unable to work, with bills piling up."

The strikers demand:

- Humane workloads
- Job security, NOT "temp" jobs and high turnover
- Stop unfair write-ups
- Invest in our communities
- End retaliation

Most strikers I spoke with mentioned human dignity, the desire to have their humanity recognized by their employer. They acknowledge that jobs at Amazon pay relatively well (Amazon raised their minimum wage to \$15/hour in October), but complain about the dehumanizing efficiency targets and the continuous flashing updates. Lights flash green, yellow or red to let you know how you are doing versus "the rate" that has been set for you by the company. "The

(Photo) Community activist Filsan Ibrahim speaks at Shakopee rally.

rate" varies by employee and task but every rate is brutal.

One worker in "stow" told me her "rate" when she began working at Amazon was 120 items per hour (two per minute), but now (3 years later) her rate is 280 items per hour (almost five per minute).

Warnings are automatically sent when you fall below rate. Workers told me that as few as three warnings can lead to firing. Workers also mention that over the past three years, the "allowed" rate of error has been lowered from one in 1000 items to one in 2200—a rate it is hard to believe even robots can match.

And speaking of robots, the company does seem to want it both ways. Meg Brady mentioned: "The only part that's air conditioned are the offices for the staff and, get this, the robots work in climate-controlled areas because if it gets too hot, they won't work. We have to, but the robots won't."

Socialist Action supports the strikers in all their demands. Corporations like Amazon are on the cutting edge of technology-driven super-exploitation of workers. Continuously increasing "the rate" at which workers are expected to complete repetitive tasks, while simultaneously decreasing the allowed rate of "human error" to essentially zero, means Amazon strips its workers of their humanity in the name of ever-increasing profits. #HumanBeingsNotRobots. #HearOurVoice. ■

## JOIN SOCIALIST ACTION!

Socialist Action is a national organization of activists committed to the emancipation of workers and the oppressed. We strive to revitalize the antiwar, environmental, labor, anti-racist, feminist, student, and other social movements with a mass-action perspective. Recognizing the divisions that exist on the left and within the workers' movement, we seek to form united front type organizations around specific issues where various groups have agreement. In this way we seek to maximize our impact and demonstrate the power and effectiveness of mass action.

In the process we hope to bring activists together from different backgrounds into a revolutionary workers' party that can successfully challenge the wealthy elite—whose profit-driven system is driving down living standards and threatens all life on this planet.

We are active partisans of the working class and believe in the need for independent working-class politics—not alliances with the bosses' parties. That is why we call for workers in the U.S. to break from the Democratic and Republican parties to build a Labor Party based on the trade unions.

We support the struggles of those who are specially oppressed under capitalism—women, LGBT people, national minorities, etc. We support the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities, including Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans. We are internationalists, and hold that workers of one country have more in common with workers of another than with their own nation's capitalist class. We seek to link struggles across national boundaries, and to build an international revolutionary movement that will facilitate the sharing of experiences and political lessons. We maintain fraternal relations with the Fourth International.

Socialist Action believes that the capitalist state and its institutions are instruments of the ruling class, and that therefore they cannot be used as tools of the working class but have to be smashed. That is why we fight for revolution. When we fight for specific reforms, we do so with the understanding that in the final analysis real social change can only come about with the overthrow of capitalism, the establishment of a workers' government, and the fight for socialism. Our ultimate goal is a truly democratic, environmentally sustainable, and egalitarian society organized to satisfy human needs rather than corporate greed. We invite you to join us in the struggle to make the world a better place!

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# S. Africa: The ANC monopoly is over

By MARTY GOODMAN

*"We are the only ones fighting for the total destruction of capitalism." — South Africa's Socialist Revolutionary Worker's Party spokesperson, Phakamile Hlubi-Majola*

The May 8 National and Provincial elections in South Africa revealed deepening—potentially explosive—fault lines of class and race. The once overwhelming choice of South Africa's working class, the African National Congress (ANC), the Party of Nelson Mandela, is ebbing. Disgust with ANC corruption and neoliberal policies reduced voter turnout to 66% of eligible voters, compared with 73% in 2014.

Even so, the national returns show the ANC garnered 57% of the vote, earning it 230 seats in the National Assembly, down from 249 in 2014.

Following the May 8 results, the National Assembly elected ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa as South Africa's new president. Shocking to many outside of South Africa, Ramaphosa's personal wealth was estimated at \$550 million in 2017, a reality that highlights the extreme contradictions of this supposedly working-class party. Ramaphosa is an ex-union militant who led the National Union of Mineworkers.

The second-place Democratic Alliance (DA) slipped from 22% in 2014 to 20% this year. It will have 84 seats in the National Assembly, down from 89. Long regarded as the party of white conservatives, the DA has tried to appeal to middle-class Blacks. As a result, the DA's white right-wing base switched to the Freedom Front Plus (FF+), of separatist Afrikaner racists. FF+ will now have 10 seats in the National Assembly, up from four.

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), founded by Julius Malema, former president of the ANC's Youth League, won 10.79% of the vote and 44 seats, up from 6% in 2014, 19 more than it won five years ago. The EFF successfully taps into much of the anger of impoverished Blacks. "Our land and jobs now!" was the EFF slogan. EFF members dress in red, including in parliament, and use leftist rhetoric, but lack a clear perspective. The EFF has called for the "expropriation" of large, mostly white-owned, land but modified their radical demand in a deal with ANC parliamentarians. Malema was expelled from the ANC in 2011 by Ramaphosa.

The ANC assumed power in 1994 with the official fall of apartheid, and despite its "progressive" posturing pretensions, has always been a capitalist party. A centerpiece of its program is the "Freedom Charter," a populist program that does not challenge the roots of exploitation, i.e., capitalism. The ANC is part of a tripartite coalition that includes the large COSATU union federation and the South African Communist Party (SACP).

The ANC presides over a country of 55 million, 80% non-white, in which 37% of all workers are unemployed and more than half live in poverty. One in four goes hungry every day. Merely 1% of the population owns 70% of the wealth. Spending on basic education has declined 8% since the economic crisis in 2008, which led to a nationwide student revolt. Indeed, South Africa has been called the "protest capital of the world."

A turning point in post-apartheid South Africa was the August 2012 massacre of 34 unarmed strikers at the Lonmin platinum mine in Marikana. As a non-executive director of the mining company, Lonmin, ANC top bureaucrat Cyril Ramaphosa described the strikers to ANC cops in an e-mail as "plainly dastardly criminal and must be characterized as such ... There needs to be concomitant action to address this situation" (see the award-winning documentary, "Miners Shot Down").

That same year, the ANC's Ramaphosa bid R20 million (US\$1.5 million) for a prize buffalo.

In 2018, Ramaphosa decreed a R20 minimum wage per hour (about 13.3 U.S. cents per hour) for workers. In April 2018, NUMSA (the National United Metalworkers of South Africa) led a nationwide strike against Ramaphosa's slave labor proposal (see *Socialist Action*, May 2018). More recently, there have been escalating blackouts as the Eskom power authority cuts electricity, enraging working-class customers. As a "solution," the ANC is preparing privatization



schemes for education, water, communications, and health care.

## The SRWP: An historic development?

An exciting new force in the electoral arena is the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP), which has been stridently revolutionary in its pronouncements. The nation's largest union, NUMSA (National United Metalworkers of South Africa), resolved in 2013 to form a new party after its expulsion from the COSATU trade-union federation for not supporting the ANC presidential candidate over the party's role in Marikana. For some reason it did not declare its intention to actually run until only a month before election day.

Unfortunately, the SRWP received only 24,439 votes, not nearly enough for a single seat in parliament, which means that even the NUMSA membership did not vote for the party in any great numbers. It is too early to judge whether the party's overall strategies were to blame.

The SRWP is based on the militant NUMSA, with a total membership of over 370,000. NUMSA played the leading role in founding the SAFTU union federation in 2017, which now has 800,000 members. It is the next largest trade-union coalition next to ANC partner COSATU.

Clearly, the SRWP, at least in its declarations, has rejected the endless latch-ups of middle-class "socialist" formations in recent years such as Greece's SYRIZA party, PODEMOS of Spain, the Green parties, the Sandinistas, and Venezuela's United Socialist Party (PSUV), etc., parties that oriented toward elections and accommodation to capitalism. Also, since the SRWP is based on South Africa's largest trade-union, NUMSA, the party's emergence is of world significance for the working class, in a country that is second economically on the African continent.

SRWP National Chairperson and NUMSA secretary-general Irvin Jim, puts it bluntly, "As communists we have an old view that elections are not necessarily a solution; however, they are a tactic that can be explored to test if we have the support of the working class."

In addition, the SRWP pledges that if any SRWP candidates win legislative seats in the upcoming election they will be subject to instant recall by the party and will not be paid more than the wage of an "average skilled worker," principles advanced by the Bolshevik party of Lenin.

The SRWP has protested the vote totals and is not accepting the May 8 election results at face value. It gives examples of "evidence of faults and fraud" at the hands of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and concludes that it would be "impossible" for the party "to scientifically accept the accuracy of the results of these elections." The SRWP, however, has not faulted its own approach to the masses. Where the truth lies remains to be seen.

Thus far, the SRWP has also refrained from criticizing the EFF, possibly so as to not rule out a future political block or fusion. If so, the lack of political clarity may prove costly in the end. Another possible reason for the omission is that the EFF obviously received many votes from NUMSA members but also, it has

(Above) Striking NUMSA members in 2014. NUMSA is the key force in the new SRWP.

been reported, a third of the votes in the platinum mining area of Marikana.

## Stalinism and the ANC

A key component of the leadership of the ANC has always been the South African Communist Party. The SACP was founded in 1921 and within a few years became politically aligned with the perspectives of the Stalinized Communist International. The Comintern was led by the USSR's Premier Joseph Stalin, (1878-1953) and solidified after the death of Vladimir Lenin in 1924 and the expulsion and later murder of revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky in 1940 on Stalin's orders.

Stalin reigned over a conservatized Soviet bureaucracy that enjoyed material privileges. Aided by repression, the once revolutionary Bolshevik party moved to the right. After around 1935, revolution was seen by Stalinist parties as a two-part process in which support for a "democratic" capitalist government was to be a stage on the road to socialist transformation, i.e., workers power—which never arrives when led by Stalinists. But, as the Lenin-Trotsky leadership had insisted, "democratic" capitalism is not a progressive force under modern imperialism but counter-revolutionary through and through. Reliance on "democratic" capitalists, and not the revolutionary power of workers, led to bloody defeats again and again (Chile, Spain, etc.).

The Stalinist "two-stage" strategy was accepted by the SACP beginning in the 1930s and subsequently, despite the fact that party leaders took their distance from some of Stalin's "excesses" after his death. In the 1950s, the party adopted the tactic of working within the ANC; its strategy was fully consistent with the famous "Freedom Charter." In 1987, a SACP message to the second COSATU trade-union congress warned, "Socialism is not on the agenda."

When Nelson Mandela, who appears to have been a Communist Party member in the 1960s, took over in 1994, large loans from Western banks were already in the pipeline conditioned on neoliberal measures, i.e., belt-tightening for workers. In 1992, Joe Slovo, an SACP leader, offered the key compromise of a "sunset clause," to be included into the new South African constitution, which dropped all references to nationalizations. In 1996, when launching the ANC's neoliberal "GEAR" program, the ANC's Thabo Mbeki, later South Africa's president, said, "Just call me a Thatcherite."

SRWP may carry considerable political baggage of reformism, Stalinism, etc., but the revolutionary statements from its leadership should make us hopeful and ready to mobilize our solidarity in future struggles.

South Africa may have officially thrown off the chains of racist apartheid but it is now in a state of "economic apartheid," crushing the lives of the Black majority and all other workers. As the SRWP correctly states, elections are merely a barometer of class consciousness. Only revolution can obliterate the nightmare of capitalism in South Africa. ■



(Left) Students protest in Khartoum, July 31, a day after youths were shot in the town of al-Obeid during a rally against bread and fuel shortages.

## Sudan's revolution in danger

By STEVE XAVIER

Beginning in December, demonstrations and strikes paralyzed Sudan for months, leading to the removal of the dictator, Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir on April 11. The coup was an attempt by the military to preserve the regime by putting on a new face. Al-Bashir's military-installed replacement lasted less than 48 hours as the masses continued to mobilize and insisted on a transition to a civilian government.

A general strike, on May 28-29, shut down industry, ports, transport, and government ministries with high levels of participation by workers. The general strike was followed by violent repression on June 3 as demonstrators took to the streets. Government-aligned militias slaughtered more than 120 people, raped protesters and medical personnel, and wounded more than 700.

On July 5, the military and civilian opposition forces reached an accord to end the months of unrest. U.S. imperialism and their regional allies, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, exerted enormous pressure on both the movement and the TMC to reach a deal. Similar pressure to resolve the situation came from both Russia and China, which have economic interests in the country.

Under the agreement, an 11-member Sovereign Council (SC) will be formed, consisting of five civilians and five representatives of the military. The 11th member will be a civilian mutually agreed upon by the two sides.

Under the agreement, a military representative will head the SC for the first 21 months. The plan proposes

a 39-month transition leading to a civilian government. The SC will set up a legislative body.

### Breakdown

Since the agreement, the military has been trying to change the terms of the pact in their favor. On July 15, the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) announced its withdrawal from the negotiating process, stating that it would not participate in the transitional government. The SCP also called for continued mass mobilizations against the regime.

At the meeting with the Declaration of Freedom and Change Forces (DFCF), the Transitional Military Council (TMC) refused to allow the immediate formation of the legislative council promised in the accord. The TMC also refused to approve the formation of a DFCF-led committee to investigate the Rapid Support Force militia's violent slaughter of protesters.

During the meeting of the TMC, the military proposed to preserve the foreign-policy commitments made by the deposed al-Bashir government. This means Sudanese troops would be kept in Yemen. Withdrawal from Yemen has been one of the main demands of the popular movement. Proposals of the TMC were condemned by forces of the DFCF, which includes opposition parties and unions, and the Sudanese Call, an alliance that includes armed rebel groups.

On July 17, a section of the DFCF broke ranks and signed a deal with the military that postpones discussion and resolution of contentious issues until a constitutional agreement is in place. The National Umma Party, one of the main opposition parties, signed the

July 17 agreement. The party is headed by Sadiq al-Mahdi, who was overthrown in the 1989 coup that brought al-Bashir to power.

This action was rejected by elements of the DFCF, the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), the SCP, and armed rebel groups. The Sudanese Journalists Network condemned the agreement stating that it "strengthens the power of the junta, that is made up of members of the security committee of the Al Bashir regime and that tries to usurp power by stealing the efforts, sweat and blood of the revolution."

The pact allowed the TMC to appoint the Interior and Defense Ministers, leaving the repressive apparatus of the state in the hands of the regime. This was a violation of previous agreements between the opposition and the TMC. In another violation of the agreement, the TMC is now demanding that parties allied with the old regime be included in the new legislative council

### Economic woes and repression persist

Inflation, unemployment, and water shortages continue to plague Sudanese workers. Port Sudan-Sinkat bus line drivers have struck to demand higher fares, pointing to increased cost of living, fuel prices, and insurance rate hikes.

RSF goons attacked curfew breakers in Port Sudan, beating people and shaving the hair off of a young woman who wasn't wearing a head cover. Militia have also targeted members of the press. On July 19 and July 26, tens of thousands marched in Khartoum and other cities in defiance of the junta and demanding justice for the victims of the RSF militia. On July 19, security forces tried to disperse the demonstrators with tear gas. Demonstrators carried posters with pictures of those killed by the RSF and banners demanding justice for the victims.

### Take forward the fight!

There is a real danger that the old regime will reassert its power through repression and the exploitation of divisions in the opposition movement. As we wrote in earlier articles, bourgeois parties are not reliable allies in the struggle against the dictatorship. The working class and its allies need their own independent fighting instrument, fighting unions and a revolutionary workers party, to take forward the struggle.

One urgent task is to dismantle the power of the repressive apparatus. The RSF and the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) must be disbanded and the criminals in their ranks held to account for the atrocities they have committed. Sudanese troops must be withdrawn from Yemen and the military budget slashed to meet the needs of the Sudanese people.

Efforts to split the military and win rank-and-file soldiers to the revolution should be redoubled, and mass-based self-defense committees should be built to counter reactionary militias. Democratically run popular committees that answer to the people of Sudan are necessary. Ultimately, the success of the Sudanese revolution requires a fight for workers' power and the overthrow of capitalism. ■

## Free Julian Assange! Defend freedom of the press!

By BRUCE LESNICK

On April 11, the Ecuadorian government revoked asylum protection for Wikileaks founder Julian Assange. Within minutes, British gendarmes entered the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, arrested Assange, and seized his computers, documents, and other materials.

He is now being held in London's Belmarsh prison for bail violation. That spurious charge stems from a withdrawn Swedish extradition request that arose from a now defunct investigation into sexual misconduct. No charges were ever filed against the Wikileaks founder in the Swedish case.

Assange sought asylum in 2012 due to a well-founded fear of rendition to the U.S. for activities related to Wikileaks' publishing. At the time, rumors were circulating of a sealed indictment against him. On April 13, 2017, then CIA Director Mike Pompeo raised the stakes by describing Wikileaks as a "non-state hostile intelligence service."

Then, on Nov. 16, 2018, the mask was torn off as *The New York Times* reported, "The Justice Department has

secretly filed criminal charges against the Wikileaks founder, Julian Assange, a person familiar with the case said, a drastic escalation of the government's years-long battle with him and his anti-secrecy group.

"Top Justice Department officials told prosecutors over the summer that they could start drafting a complaint against Mr. Assange, current and former law enforcement officials said. The charges came to light late Thursday through an unrelated court filing in which prosecutors inadvertently mentioned them."

On April 11, 2019, the first actual U.S. indictment against Assange was unsealed, charging him with "working with Chelsea Manning, then a US army intelligence analyst, to break into the defense department network in March 2010 to obtain classified documents."

A month later, a superseding indictment was issued accusing Assange of 18 counts of violating the 1917 Espionage Act for publishing the Iraq and Afghan War Logs and related information leaked by Manning documenting U.S. war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In other words, Assange, an Australian

citizen, is currently being held in a British prison, facing extradition to the U.S. and a possible lengthy prison sentence for the "crime" of journalism.

Espionage is a capital crime. Thus, the Trump administration, which has recently reinstated federal capital punishment, could, in principle, seek the death penalty in Assange's case. However, the UK Human Rights Act of 1998 protects anyone within UK jurisdiction from:

- Torture (mental or physical)
- Inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- Deportation or extradition (being sent to another country to face criminal charges) if there is a real risk you will face torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in the country concerned.

In 2012, the U.N Special Rapporteur on torture accused the U.S. of cruel and inhuman treatment in its imprisonment and solitary confinement of Chelsea Manning. So, Assange has a well-founded fear of ill treatment at the hands of U.S. authorities. On this basis, extradition from the UK should not be possible. That's where Sweden comes in.

Sweden is not bound by the UK Human Rights Act. If Assange had been extradited to Sweden to face sexual assault charges, there would have been nothing to stop Swedish officials from turning around and handing him over to U.S. authorities. Indeed, before the Swedish investigation was dropped, Assange offered on multiple occasions to cooperate with the Swedish investigators and even to return to Sweden for that purpose if Swedish officials would guarantee he would not be turned over to U.S. authorities. Though such a guarantee was within the power of Swedish authorities to grant, they flatly refused.

Of course, if Assange or anyone else were to be found guilty of rape, they should face the legal consequences. But aside from the fact that everyone is assumed to be innocent until proven guilty, the evidence in the Swedish case is chock full of holes. As columnist Caitlin Johnstone put it, "[Y]ou'd have to be out of your mind to believe a completely unproven allegation about a known target of US intelligence agencies. It's just as stupid as believing unproven claims

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# Shifting the balance of power in hotels

By ERNIE GOTTA and ERWIN FREED

Hopitality Workers Local 217

STAMFORD, Conn.—Like any capitalist enterprise, hotel companies hate losing profit margins to benefit the workers who make them rich. Industry professionals debate about the type of model they need to make the most profit. Currently, hotels in the Stamford area are running on very lean models.

Sebastian Georgiana, a front desk agent at the newly unionized Sheraton Stamford, said, “For the most part our hotel is run with less and less staff. Supervisors and managers often do our work to save the hotel money. It’s one of the reasons we voted to join the hospitality workers union Local 217. In the non-union hotels the situation is much worse.”

Hotel owners know that in the end there is a zero-sum trade-off between their receiving the biggest pay-offs for their investments and workers’ taking home enough money to live. Even though the managers at every opportunity promote the idea that the hotel is a “family,” they really only care about their profits and do not blush about slashing hours to the bare minimum.

## Company strategies

Obscuring the definitions of job classifications is one way that employers squeeze profits out of hotel workers. Lupita Agrado, a 20-year banquet server and union steward at the Hilton Hotel in Stamford, said, “Before we formed the union the kitchen managers pushed cook’s work onto banquet servers, giving fewer hours to cooks and more work for servers. Cooks are paid more hourly than servers, so it benefits the company to schedule fewer cooks and pass that work on to me and my coworkers. Now, as shop stewards, we are working hard to enforce our first contract, but it’s not easy.”

At the Sheraton, workers are now fighting for their first contract, but before voting to join Local 217 workers were often made to staff positions other than their own, regularly taking on two or more different jobs in the same shift. This allowed the bosses to hire fewer people and cut hours for positions like the café. By keeping a skeleton staff that is worked to the bone, they save a lot of money on labor costs, but at the same time the hotel cannot maintain a high level of customer service. Management proves again and again that they prioritize profits over guest satisfaction.

Another strategy to save costs is “flexible scheduling.” At non-union hotels this can take on many different forms including cancelling shifts with little to no notice, cutting the length of shifts, and giving inconsistent and/or irregular hours. All of these methods are helped along by having salaried managers do work that would be in the bargaining unit if the hotel were union.

## Speed-ups, “smart staffing,” and Marxism

Capitalists, both individually and as a class, make their profits from the amount of revenue they take in that is greater than what they pay to workers’ wages



(Above) Hotel workers picket in Stamford, Conn.

and benefits. These profits are used to pay debts and interests to stockholders, rents, and, crucially, expand production. The fact that profits are generated by unpaid labor of workers is at the core of Marx’s theory of capitalist exploitation, also known as the labor theory of value.

There is a common confusion about the Marxist theory of capitalist production, which is that surplus value is only generated by creating material items as commodities. Under this view, service work is not “productive” in the Marxist sense because it does not necessarily create a single item, like a coat or a shoe.

However, Karl Marx was very clear that this is not the case, stating in the first volume of “Capital,” “An actor, for example, or even a clown, according to this definition, is a productive laborer if he works in the service of a capitalist (an entrepreneur) to whom he returns more labor than he receives from him in the form of wages ...” In hotels, the commodity provided is a room cleaned and functioning to certain industry standards, sometimes with amenities like room service, which can be accessed via exchange of money for a room key.

In general, the capitalists’ revenue is realized with a definite pace, given a particular number of check-ins with more or less the same check-out time. The rate of turnover is relatively constant. The price of individual hotel rooms is decided by competition around a common market-level over the medium term.

Hence there is a more-or-less understood amount of money that falls into the hands of the hotel’s owners

over a period of time. This money needs to be divided into various categories, the most important for us being that of the wage rate. While capitalists may choose to neglect maintenance of their means of production, for example, going past the normal amount of time to renovate a property, the main avenue towards “cost savings” available to the bosses is squeezing every bit of labor out of their existing workforce.

Marx pointed to two main ways that capitalists get more work from the same amount of people. These are “absolute” and “relative” surplus value extraction. Increasing *absolute surplus value* is accomplished by extending the working day. This method will fall into play more often when the hotel or department is understaffed. It is cheaper to pay time-and-a-half for overtime than to pay two workers making the same wage. Increasing *relative surplus value* is accomplished by giving a worker more work within the same amount of time in a working day. Tactics in this department include the aforementioned cross-training, workplace discipline like banning cell phones on the job, and busy work.

Without its own organizations, labor is totally at the mercy of capital in regards to how the working day is set-up. Due to competition between capitalists and the relative similarity between fixed capital costs in a given industry, the main mechanism that the individ-

(continued on page 9)

## ... Assange

(continued from page 4)

about governments targeted for US regime change, like believing Saddam had WMD.”

### WikiLeaks’ outstanding record

All of the documents provided by Manning and published by WikiLeaks—the documents that form the basis for the indictment against Assange—have been confirmed as genuine. In fact, not a single thing published by Wikileaks since its inception in 2006 has been shown to be false or fraudulent. The same cannot be said for *The New York Times*, CNN or the *Washington Post*. In its 13-year life, WikiLeaks has published multiple blockbuster revelations, including:

- The Iraq and Afghan war logs (2010). A collection of Army field reports that exposed true civilian casualty rates. One of the key items in this release was the “Collateral Murder” video which showed a U.S. helicopter gunship targeting civilians and journalists, actions that many have said amount to war crimes.

- U.S. diplomatic cables (2010). These reveal candid comments and attempts

at manipulation carried out by imperial diplomats.

- Guantanamo prison files (2011). Assessments, interviews and internal memos about various prisoners. As reported by Democracy Now! and others and summarized by Wikipedia, “[M]ore than 150 innocent Afghans and Pakistanis, including farmers, chefs, and drivers, were held for years without charges.”

- The Stratfor files (2012). An intelligence company with ties to the Pentagon, this cache of emails exposed U.S. and other government machinations around the world.

- Assistance provided to Edward Snowden (2013). WikiLeaks assisted Snowden in traveling from Hong Kong to Russia to escape capture.

- The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Intellectual Property Rights chapter (2015). This showed one way the TPP was designed to prioritize profits over people.

- The John Podesta and Democratic National Committee (DNC) emails (2016). Showed cheating and subterfuge carried out by the Hillary Clinton Campaign and the Democratic Party behind the scenes.

- Vault 7: The CIA’s secret hacking tools (2017). Exposed an arsenal of tools used by the CIA to spy on individuals, organi-

zations, and governments the world over.

Each of these disclosures chipped away at the lies promoted by the U.S. empire and its allies.

### Mainstream media fails miserably

As Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist Glenn Greenwald has emphasized, the materials released by WikiLeaks were distributed “in partnership with some of the largest media outlets in the world, including *The New York Times*, *the Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Le Monde*, and *El Pais*, outlets that published many of the same secret documents that form the basis of the criminal case against Assange.”

If WikiLeaks or Assange are guilty of any crime, so too must be numerous mainstream outlets and journalists. Yet remarkably, a wide-range of mainstream media personalities have bought into the imperialist smear that Assange is not a journalist and that WikiLeaks is not a media organization.

(See, for example, *AP News*, the *Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Bloomberg News*, and David Corn of *Mother Jones*.)

But as Greenwald explains, “Press freedoms belong to everyone, not to a select, privileged group of citizens called ‘journalists.’ Empowering prosecutors to de-

cide who does or doesn’t deserve press protections would restrict ‘freedom of the press’ to a small, cloistered priesthood of privileged citizens designated by the government as ‘journalists.’ The First Amendment was written to avoid precisely that danger.”

In the spirit of generations of labor and anti-imperialist struggles, we would add, “An injury to one is an injury to all!” Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are essential conquests of working-class and popular struggles against corporate oppression. Any attack on these rights hurts workers and the oppressed most of all.

The current dictatorship of capital relies heavily on messaging and propaganda to maintain the inequality of wealth and power on which it is balanced.

The minority at the top would like nothing more than to chip away at our ability to organize, speak, write, and expose the injustices of the current system that worships profits at the expense of human needs.

In response, we must steadfastly fight to defend and extend the rights of the majority. To that end we must demand: Free Julian Assange! Drop all the Charges against Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning! Defend Freedom of the press! ■

# An interview with Heather Bradford

## Socialist Action's candidate for U.S. vice president

Bob King / Duluth News Tribune



(Photo) Heather Bradford (2nd from left) joins rally for equal pay for women outside Duluth city hall in April 2017.

Following are major excerpts from an interview with Socialist Action's vice presidential candidate Heather Bradford that appeared on the Third Party Second Bananas website. See: <https://thirdpartysecondbananas.blogspot.com/2019/06/heatherbradford-2020-vp-social-action.html>

Heather Bradford is the running mate with presidential candidate Jeff Mackler on the Socialist Action ticket for 2020. She is the organizer of the Socialist Action branch in Duluth, Minn., and works as a women's advocate at a domestic violence shelter, at an abortion clinic, and as a public school teacher. Bradford has been a longtime activist in the LGBT, environmental, feminist, and antiwar movements.

**Q:** How did you arrive at becoming a member of Socialist Action?

**Heather Bradford:** When I was in my early 20s and attending college, my major was International Studies. Through my coursework, I quickly learned that much of the world was impoverished and lacked access to such basic things as food, medicine, and clean water.

I also learned that global suffering was connected to the policies of organizations such as the IMF, World Trade Organization, and World Bank, which played a role in perpetuating colonial relationships based upon economic exploitation. I also recognized that the United States has played a sinister role in destabilizing countries through war, support of dictatorships, economic coercion, and overthrowing democratically elected governments that leaned toward socialism.

The more I learned about the state of the world, the more I saw patterns that indicated a systemic problem and the more I began to identify with socialism.

At the same time, I believed that socialism had gone extinct as a movement. I believed it was something that must have died off decades ago. But to my surprise, I found that Duluth had its own socialist group! I sought out the only socialist group in my city, which was Socialist Action, and I have been a member ever since.

**Q:** Socialist Action has been described as Trotskyist. Could you explain to us how that makes SA different from other political parties on the left?

**H.B.:** That's a great question with a lengthy answer! One difference between Socialist Action and some other socialist parties is that we do not provide any support to candidates of the Democratic Party. We call on workers to break with the Democratic Party, as we believe it is fundamentally and inevitably a party of the ruling class. As such, it will always promote U.S. imperialism and the immiseration of workers around the world.

Our staunch refusal to support the Democratic Party (or any capitalist party, such as the Green Party) differentiates us from some other socialist groups.

**'The Democratic Party harms workers here and abroad by supporting militarism and corporate interests.'**

— Heather Bradford

Though, it is important to note that from time to time, we support the candidates of like-minded socialist parties and would support the formation of a Labor Party within the U.S.

At the same time, we believe in the right of oppressed groups such as women, LGBT, oppressed racial minorities and nationalities to form autonomous movements to fight for their interests. We believe that the liberation of these oppressed groups is an essential component of working towards socialist revolution, which is itself an important component of our core ideology.

We are revolutionary socialists whose aim is the overthrow of capitalism. While working toward the goal of revolution, we support reforms that challenge the structures of oppression inherent to capitalism.

Revolution must be international, worker led, and socialist in nature (rather than in stages or [limited to] one country). Some socialists agree on some of these principles and not on others, or interpret them differently. This is a short answer to what is otherwise a long and complex question.

**Q:** Throughout American history, I observe progressive groups are presented with an infinity of directions since they are pioneers (abolitionists, suffragists, socialists, etc.), and as such they have intense disagreements over which direction to go and method to use. I mention this because, as I was looking at the background of Socialist Action, it seems your party is not immune from this historical pattern, receiving more criticism from the left than from the right. What do you think it would take to unite the leftist political parties?

**H.B.:** Left political parties can and often do work together in mass movements. Socialist Action believes in forming united fronts, which allow us to converge with other leftists on issues we can agree upon.

Because the two-party capitalist electoral system is rigged against us, we don't think that elections are really where socialists are going to be the most effective. We can make the most impact by building independent movements that put pressure on the political system or economy. Movements for immigrant rights, antiwar, women's rights, LGBT rights, better wages and working conditions, housing, prison reform or abolition, and so on are arenas where leftists

can work together.

Of course, leftists come together with their unique histories, rivalries, and perspectives, which can hinder cooperation and movement building. Sometimes, fighting also stems from the fatigue and demoralization of the long-haul fight against capitalism. But movement work can bring us together.

The formation of a Labor Party would also be a vehicle for smaller socialist parties to collaborate. The militant labor struggle required for the creation of such a party would hopefully draw socialists together.

**Q:** What do you make of a segment of the working class being dazzled by Trump with what some would call an almost cult-like fervor?

**H.B.:** Around 43% of Americans did not vote in 2016, so there is a large swath of the U.S. population that was not enamored enough by Trump or Clinton to bother voting. According to Gallup, Trump's approval rating is 40%, which is lower than the average approval rating of 53% for presidents since 1935. Trump certainly appeals to a segment of the population, which represents

the failure of the left to effectively organize workers and offer them a meaningful alternative to voting for racism, sexism, and xenophobia.

Trump seemed like an outsider and anti-establishment to some voters. I think it is also important to note that racial minorities overwhelmingly did not vote for Trump. The American working class is often imagined as white and male, but racial minorities, women (when including racial minority women), and people with incomes under \$50,000 a year did not vote for Trump.

The task of socialists is to continue to support the interests and liberation of the most oppressed segments of the working class (women, racial minorities, sexual/gender minorities, etc.), offer real solutions to workers who have been duped by Trump, and fight real and terrifying elements of racism and reaction that have been emboldened by Trump.

**Q:** The Republican playbook for 2020 appears to be painting the Democrats as "socialist." I gather from the SA website that even Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez are considered as servants of the ruling class rather than the working class?

**H.B.:** I think we are entering an age wherein socialism has lost its teeth as an insult. Republicans may have to change the language of their putdowns as socialism becomes increasingly popular. Unfortunately, the Democratic Party has done nothing to earn the honor of being called socialist. Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez muddy the water a bit by invoking the language of socialism, without really clarifying what precisely this means.

As you recall, I became a socialist through internationalism. Socialism means standing against imperialism, which is characterized by the international dominance of monopoly and financial capitalism of a few powerful countries. It is the duty of socialists to stand against U.S. power as an expression of imperialism.

At the same time, socialism should be international. How could any socialist, which is a movement based upon the power and liberation of workers, tolerate wars or foreign policies that harm other workers? Yet, Bernie Sanders has supported U.S. foreign policy, stated that he wants a strong military, has approved U.S. military spending, and supports U.S. wars such as in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. Both Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez sent mixed messages about U.S. intervention in Venezuela.

Even if they clarified what they meant by socialism into a cohesive ideology that seeks to end capitalism, the Democratic Party is not the vehicle to accomplish socialism. It is a party that supports U.S. power around the world and ultimately harms workers here and abroad by supporting militarism, financial institutions, corporate interests, and the maintenance of private capital. These things should be anathema to socialists. ■

# Socialist runs for city council in Ohio

By JOHN LESLIE

As the socialist movement grows, independent socialist candidates for local office will be faced with challenges. How to advocate for the oppressed and exploited effectively without adapting to bourgeois politics? Once elected to local office, a socialist candidate can use the megaphone offered by their office to be what Lenin referred to as “a tribune of the people.” As an advocate for oppressed peoples and the working class, a socialist on city council can draw a clear line of demarcation between the interests of working people and those of landlords, developers, and big business.

While bourgeois politics rest on a passive relationship between voter and candidate, socialist politics require the continued mass mobilization of the working class and its allies.

The working class lacks its own political instrument—an independent party representing workers and oppressed peoples. Such a party would fight every day through elections and through the day-to-day struggles of working people for justice. As socialists, we recognize that “lesser-evil” compromises and work inside the Democratic Party can only reinforce our subordination to the “other” party of big business. In this sense, local independent socialist campaigns can be seen as the beginning of a process that leads us to the formation of a Labor Party based on fighting unions and communities of the oppressed.

Ellie Hamrick is the candidate of the Athens Revolutionary Socialists (ARS), a local collective that used to be a branch of the former International Socialist Organization (ISO). Hamrick will be on the ballot in November.

The campaign is focused on issues that are crucial for working people, such as offering solutions to the opioid crisis that go beyond criminalization, gentrification, and high rents; living wages for workers; environment and climate; and standing up for the oppressed. Hamrick and the ARS have been clear that they do not support the Democratic primary bid of Bernie Sanders, a stance we agree with. That said, their support for independent mayoral candidate Damon Krane, a DSAer in Athens who has expressed his support for Sanders, contradicts this important stance and blurs the class lines in politics.

Socialist Action is publishing this interview for the information of our viewers. We have not endorsed Hamrick, but applaud the positive aspects of the campaign. We hope that this interview will help to illuminate some of the issues faced by socialists running for local office.

## Socialist Action: What brought you to socialist politics?

**Ellie Hamrick:** I first started calling myself socialist after reading *The Jungle* and *Les Miserables* in the sixth grade. I didn't really know what it meant, but I knew it meant being on the side of oppressed and exploited people rather than those doing the oppressing and exploiting. In college, I was an activist with the Conflict Free Campus Initiative; I built a campaign pressuring my university to adopt procurement and investment policies that would favor those electronics companies not funding war in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We had very moderate demands, and we did everything “right.” We met with administrators, got unanimous support from all the university senates, got a positive recommendation from various university committees, etc. Yet we were met with complete intransigence from the university administration. They laughed at us, slammed doors in our faces, and said we were “like children asking for cookies.” It was the best education I possibly could have gotten about power.

I had a socialist friend helping me with the campaign, and he helped me learn all the right lessons the hard way. Through that experience, I learned a lot about what kinds of tactics are (in)effective, and I learned about the folly of single-issue struggles. I soon became involved in a student coalition that was fighting for environmental, feminist, and class issues. Next thing you know, I was reading “Capital” and signing a membership card for the ISO!

**SA:** How do you see the role of elections for socialists?

**E.H.:** We cannot achieve socialism simply by electing socialists; we have to completely do away



with the current system, and change has to come from the bottom up for that to happen. But whether we like it or not, elections are an important part of the political landscape, and people's ideas can find expression or change through elections. We need an independent workers' party sooner rather than later, and I think socialists running (and hopefully winning) as independents can help pave the way for that. I hope to use this election to spread revolutionary socialist ideas, amplify the message of struggles, and advance the

qualitative and quantitative organization of the left in my community.

**SA:** What are the central issues you want to raise?

**E.H.:** My platform has four central points:

**1) Fighting for the working class.** This includes support for the Athens Fight for \$15 Coalition and challenging the immense local power of slumlords, two of whom I'm running against for at-large seats.

(continued on page 9)



**Heather Bradford**  
Socialist Action VP  
candidate via SKYPE



**Nora Barrows Friedman**  
Associate Editor,  
Electronic Intifada  
(via message)



**Cindy Sheehan**  
Organizer/Coordinator,  
Women's March on the Pentagon



**Glenn Ford\*\***  
Senior Editor,  
Black Agenda Report



**Robbie Meeropol\*\***  
son of Julius and  
Ethel Rosenberg



**Jeff Mackler**



**Pam Africa**  
Chair, International  
Concerned Family &  
Friends of Mumia  
Abu-Jamal



**Alice Walker**  
Pulitzer Prize Novelist,  
author *The Color Purple*



**Joe Lombardo**  
Co-National Coordinator,  
United National Antiwar  
Coalition\*  
(via Skype message)



**Barbara Becnel**  
author, filmmaker, co-producer,  
Golden Globe-nominated film  
*Redemption: The Stan  
Tookie Williams Story*



**Sabrina Jacobs**  
Producer/host, KPFA Pacifica  
Radio's *Rude Awakening*



**Mumia Abu-Jamal**  
The nation's  
foremost innocent  
political prisoner  
(via phone connection)

## A public rally to launch Socialist Action's 2020 election campaign Jeff Mackler for President

With the following speakers...

**A Life in the Struggle for Socialism**

Jeff Mackler's political life spans six decades as an activist-participant and leader in the early civil rights, Black Liberation, antiwar and free speech movements, in the fight against the McCarthy-era witchhunters, the mass mobilizations against the U.S. imperialist Vietnam War to the present. For the past 36 years Mackler has been the National Secretary of Socialist Action, the U.S. revolutionary party that aims to organize the working class and its allies to abolish capitalism and build a socialist society where the vast majority – the 99 percent – democratically rule to advance the interests of all humanity as opposed to the private profits of the corporate elite. Mackler serves on the Administrative Committee of the United National Antiwar Coalition. He is the Director of the Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and the past West Coast Coordinator of the Lynne Stewart Defense Committee. He was a founder and leader of the Northern California Climate Mobilization. He is among the 21 founders of the recently-formed Defense Committee for the Venezuela Embassy Protectors. As organizer and Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers in Hayward, CA and President of the Alameda County Council of the AFT, Mackler spent two decades as a pioneer fighter for militant teacher unionism. Mackler's 25 pamphlets, books and countless articles cover a broad range of subjects including national liberation struggles in Latin America and the Middle East, revolutionary Cuba, Marxist economic theory, the fight for working class independence via the construction of a trade union-based Labor Party, the current world economic crisis, impending climate catastrophe, anti-racist, women's and LGBTQI liberation struggles, socialized health care, free quality education and the struggle for Palestinian freedom.

**Sunday, August 18 2019**

**12 Noon Reception/Lunch**

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\* organization listed for identification purposes only  
\*\* Via Skype

# Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

## CSIS spy agency violates democratic rights — BCCLA

By GARY PORTER

The Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) is a heavily funded spy agency. With a \$500 million (CDN) annual budget, it operates gunslinger-style, spying on Canadians and others it considers a security risk, gathering information from the dozens of innocent people their suspects contact, such as friends, relatives, neighbours, and co-workers. This information is fed into a data analysis program where CSIS purports to develop an understanding of the lifestyles and personality profiles of “targets.”

CSIS collects intelligence information and conducts open and covert investigations and operations within Canada and abroad. As a measure of their objectivity, in 2017, several CSIS members accused the organization of having a racist and homophobic workplace culture.

CSIS collects information illegally, stores it illegally, and shares it in very questionable ways. CSIS is expressly forbidden by law from collecting information on peaceful activists involved in legal advocacy, speech or protest. But CSIS has always done exactly that.

On July 8, CBC reported that the B.C. Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) released thousands of heavily redacted documents by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) concerning allegations the agency had spied on peaceful protesters of the now-defunct Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline project. The BCCLA has uploaded all the documents to a searchable website.

The CSIS-disclosed documents had been held under a confidentiality order (recently expired) by the Security Intelligence Review Committee [SIRC], Canada’s spy agency watchdog. SIRC is a committee of five federal government appointees who are legally independent of CSIS, but chosen from people with security experience and a strong predisposition towards the CSIS argument that security should trump privacy and democratic rights.

“What we’ve now received is a huge volume of secret evidence that we didn’t get to see at all before,” said Paul Champ, a lawyer with Champ and Associates representing the BCCLA. Champ told CBC’s Early Edition host Stephen Quinn that the documents show over 500 CSIS reports about individuals or groups who had been protesting the pipeline proposal.

“[It] raises concerns that this isn’t about national security, but it’s about protecting the economic interests of Canada’s energy sector and, in our view, that’s completely beyond CSIS’ mandate,” he said. The association further claimed the information was being shared with the National Energy Board



Darryl Dyck / The Canadian Press

Documents show that CSIS spied on pipeline protesters.

and the petroleum industry.

CSIS also routinely shares information about Canadians with the so called Five Eyes group—Canada, the United States, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, a body known in some circles as the

Anglo-Saxon mafia.

The civil liberties association first challenged CSIS’ actions in 2014 with a complaint to SIRC alleging the agency was spying on pipeline opponents. During private hearings with SIRC, CSIS disclosed the now-available documents. The complaint was dismissed, however, when the review committee concluded that information had been gathered on peaceful protesters only as a by-product of investigations into legitimate threats, not as the goal. The BCCLA has been working to overturn the watchdog’s dismissal decision in federal court.

The newly disclosed documents reveal Canada’s spy service routinely welcomed reports from the energy industry about perceived threats and kept such information in its files for future reference. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service is supposed to retain only information that is “strictly necessary” to do its job. The spy agency is now facing questions about whether it collected and retained material about groups or people who posed no real threat.

“This is something we don’t expect to experience here in Canada,” says Alexandra Woodsworth with Dogwood BC. Especially concerning, she says, is how the documents suggest CSIS shared their information with fossil fuel companies.

“Our tax dollars are being used to spy on Canadians to benefit the fossil fuel industry,” said Woodsworth. “A government that appears to be working more to safeguard the interests of big oil than to safeguard the interests of its citizens.”

“Spying on people who are participating in public processes—and then giving that information to the oil industry—is an illegal attack on democracy.”

The question is: Do workers and oppressed peoples in Canada need an agency, whose daily work is to spy on opponents of corporate greed, corruption, pollution, exploitation and oppression? As long as CSIS exists it will violate our democratic and constitutional rights in support of capitalism. ■

## Latest deals in the building trades deepen wage slavery

*Below is the text of a leaflet produced by members of Socialist Action who are plumbers, steamfitters, sheet metal workers, carpenters and general labourers in the building trades.*

Many Ontario construction workers, including those belonging to unions, are being dehumanized in the workplace through an array of repressive techniques.

- Surveillance via on-site cameras.
- Pressure to do precarious work, alone.
- Pressure to complete tasks in unrealistic time frames.
- Being shifted or laid off with little or no notice.
- The hiring of foremen who are under-skilled and scared of management.
- An increase in questionable hiring and firing practices by the bosses.
- Coercion and intimidation are used to get employees to forego their rights to proper pay and safety practices.

The most recent round of bargaining, and the resulting collective agreements, failed to address

any of these issues in a meaningful way. In fact, the contractors have multiplied their efforts to take away the hard fought-for rights won by workers over the years.

The bosses want to impose a longer workweek with less overtime pay, and to limit the wage increase to a level far below the rising cost of living. They provide a bigger wage increase for foremen—to drive a wedge between them and the rest of the workforce. Many employers treat their workers like pawns, with no thought for our personal wellbeing and happiness.

It’s time to speak out against these injustices and show the bosses that we will not tolerate being treated like company property. Just because they pay us does not mean they own us.

There is power in numbers, power in unity, power in our common interest. When all the trades act as one, the profit generated by hard work will be reclaimed by workers. To advance a Workers’ Agenda, we need greater union democracy, and a break from the parties of big business, the Liberals and Tories. Join us! ■

## TTC electrical workers: Free public transit for Toronto!

By CUPE LOCAL 2 WORKERS

We of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2 are committed to free public transit in the city of Toronto and beyond. No one should have to pay for transit.

The fact is that right now Doug Ford and his Tories are sabotaging our city and our province. They’re no government of the people. They are a bosses’ government, and they’re attacking workers and poor people in every way—on the job, in education, in health care—the list goes on.

Ford also has an axe out for public transit. His “upload” of the TTC is a step toward privatization, undermining the public for the profits of a few.

We know that transit fares gouge op-

pressed people the hardest. They’re a tax on the working class and the poor. None of us should have to sacrifice hard-earned money for food, rent or whatever else just to get to and from where we work and shop. No unemployed person should have to choose between saving cash or going to a job interview. Free public transit would mean a boost to the economy and to society as a whole.

Public transit is currently free in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. The project there has been a success. Now it’s spreading throughout the country. Their tax revenues are up because people are spending more money. “Free buses are better buses,” says the business journal *The Economist*. “Expensive but worth it.”

What we really cannot afford is the current transportation crisis. “Gridlock

costs the Toronto region \$6 billion annually in lost productivity and is projected to grow to \$15 billion by 2031,” complains the Toronto Region Board of Trade. Traffic in Toronto is nothing short of a disaster. The average commuting time is 96 minutes both ways—the worst in North America and second worst of any major city worldwide. Goods are more expensive because they take longer and cost more to transport. Hundreds of thousands of us sit in cars frustrated, burning time, money, and gasoline. It takes a toll on all the things we value most.

Free public transit will ease the gridlock, and CUPE Local 2 will do its part to make that a reality. As a union, we are about something bigger than just our own members. We are part of the labour

movement. We stand for good jobs for all. Together we have the power to defeat the employers’ agenda of cuts to vital services. The current batch of parties and politicians will not do it for us. The Conservatives, Liberals, Greens and even the NDP are too tied up with the short-term interests of big business and the banks. We don’t trust them to tackle the problems confronting the rest of us.

As working-class and oppressed people, we can rely only on our own strength and initiative. After all, we’re the ones that do the work. We don’t need the rich. They need us. Let’s remember that together, and make it the starting point for our politics. With Ford’s approval ratings in the dumps, the writing is on the wall.

The time has come to bring his rule to an end. Mass strikes and protests across Ontario are what it will take to bring down Doug Ford. ■



# IJVC condemns NDP removal of candidate for tweets criticizing Israel

By INDEPENDENT JEWISH VOICES CANADA

The federal New Democratic Party (NDP) has removed noted Halifax activist Rana Zaman from the party's candidacy in the Dartmouth-Cole Harbour riding, which she won on May 1 by a vote of party members. The ostensible reason for her removal is several tweets that Zaman made in August 2018 when Israeli forces were shooting thousands of unarmed Gazans during the "Great March of Return."

Although Ms. Zaman's tweets did contain comparisons to the Holocaust that Independent Jewish Voices Canada does not condone, her statement of apology sent within less than 24 hours, acknowledged the inappropriateness of those comparisons and showed her commitment to learning from her Jewish allies.

Jewish theology and religious jurisprudence distinguish between "Yetzer HaTov" (the inclination to do good) and "Yetzer HaRa" (the inclination to evil-doing, something like the western legal notion of "mens rea" or "malice aforethought"). An act motivated by Yetzer HaRa should be treated much more severely. But an act motivated by Yetzer HaTov should be treated with mercy, understanding and education. The concept of restorative justice is appropriate.

Ultimately, the controversy around these tweets dis-

tracts from the murderous and illegal Israeli activities in Gaza. Those atrocities speak for themselves and require no embellishment by crude analogies.

According to Amnesty International, by August 2018 Israeli forces had killed almost 150 Palestinians. At least 10,000 others had been injured, including 1800 children, 400 women, 100 paramedics, 100 journalist, and Canadian emergency room physician Tarek Loubani.

Knowing Ms. Zaman as a social activist who cares deeply about and works against injustice, we are confident that neither her intentions nor her actions were anti-Semitic. And we will work with her, not against her.

But that is not the way the Israel lobby views these matters. They are embracing the International Holocaust Remembrance Association-Working Definition of Antisemitism (IHRA-WDA). Independent Jewish Voices Canada has a rigorous critique of that weak, vague, and dangerous document. It has also been condemned by the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association and the Ontario Civil Liberties Association.

Seven of the 11 "examples" in the IHRA-WDA involve not hatred of Jews but criticism of Israel. Its author, American legal scholar Kenneth Stern, has disavowed the document. It is clearly meant as a cudgel to beat

critics of Israeli policy over the head. The IHRA document says that "drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis" is nothing less than full-blown anti-Semitism. Full stop.

The IHRA-WDA, to which representatives of the mainstream Jewish community directed Ms. Zaman in response to her tweets, becomes judge, jury, and executioner. The Israel lobby is demanding that the highly flawed IHRA definition be adopted by all Canadian governments, universities, and other such institutions.

As for the NDP, now that Ms. Zaman has posted her statement, why is that apology not good enough for the party to re-instate her to the candidacy? In the 2015 federal election campaign, NDP leader Thomas Mulcair blocked four candidates found to be critics of Israeli policy.

We had thought that under Jagmeet Singh the party would be more even-handed on the question of Israel/Palestine. But at its convention in March 2018, its apparatchiks conspired to keep a very mild resolution on the issue from even reaching the floor.

Shame on the NDP for betraying its progressive roots by allowing itself to be manipulated by the Israel lobby and throwing a progressive woman of colour under the bus. ■

## ... Ohio socialist

(continued from page 7)

Damon Krane, a local DSA member, is running for mayor as an independent, and he's put forward an exciting plan he calls "Operation Slumlord Smackdown." It includes rent control as well as measures to actually enforce our city housing code.

**2) Care, not criminalization.** Athens and the surrounding areas have been hit hard by the opioid crisis, and the response has been policing and incarceration. More on this below, but I'm arguing that we should direct resources away from policing and toward ending poverty, which is at the root of the opioid crisis.

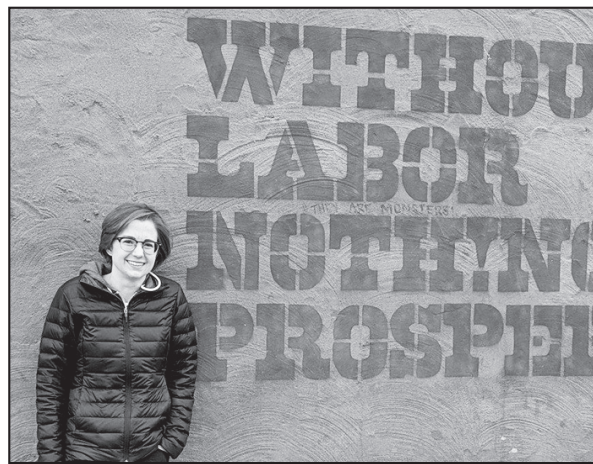
Drug use or possession should be decriminalized. People who use drugs are human beings, deserving of rights. They should have access to health care, clean needles, safe injection facilities, and a voice in drug policy. People who use drugs are so often treated as a problem, when in fact they have so much to contribute and can be a central part of the solution when it comes to reducing the harm caused by addiction.

**3) Standing against oppression.** I want to make it clear that being a socialist means being feminist, anti-racist, anti-border, and standing against all forms of oppression. We want to advance abortion access and reproductive health care. We want to make our community more accessible for people with disabilities. One platform point that I'm particularly proud of is demanding local voting rights for non-citizens, and demanding an end to cooperation with ICE and DHS. In addition to advancing gender-inclusive bathroom policies, we're investigating other steps we could take to promote LGBT liberation. I believe I'd be the only openly queer member of council if elected.

**4) Planet over profit.** Coal and now fracking companies have exploited Athens and all of Appalachia for far too long. They have taken and taken from our region, giving only poison in return. Though the coal companies have left for China, the acid runoff they've dumped into our local rivers and streams remains.

Thankfully, fracking already has been banned in city limits, but it's happening all around us in our county and region, further destroying our water quality. It causes cancer and God only knows what else. A water quality report for the neighboring town of Buchtel was released a couple of weeks ago, and it turns out there are chemicals in the water called trihalomethanes that cause cancer as well as liver, kidney, and central nervous system damage over time.

I want to expand our local wellhead protection areas and restore full funding to stream restoration projects. I also support the Athens County Charter, an activist initiative that aims to expand county powers so that fracking can be banned countywide.



(Left) Ellie Hamrick at mural in Athens, Ohio.

In addition to the platform points, I also want to highlight how undemocratic our local government has been. The Democratic Party has run Athens uncontested for decades. In over 90% of cases, people elected to local office face no challengers in either the primary or the general elections.

Essentially, then, the Democratic Party just appoints people to office. Despite facing exactly zero opposition from Republicans or anyone else and maintaining total power for decades upon decades, the Dems have done nothing to change the fact that Athens is the poorest and the most unequal county in Ohio.

**SA: How will you deal with questions like police militarization? Police funding?**

**E.H.:** Policing and prisons do not keep us safer. Instead, they make life more dangerous for Black and indigenous people in particular, but also for all people of color, LGBTQ people, and poor and working class

people. I want to decrease police funding by as much as possible at every opportunity. I want to ban the local police from accepting any donations from the 1033 program, and to take away as many weapons as possible up to the point of entirely disarming them.

**SA: How do you envision the future of the socialist movement in five to 10 years?**

**E.H.:** We literally have a decade to make a revolution before total and complete ecological collapse. I'm 27, and already in my lifetime 90% of amphibian species and 70% of mammal species have gone extinct. Millions of people have been killed or displaced as a result of climate change and broader ecological catastrophe, and we ain't seen nothing yet. Far, far worse is coming in the near future.

Ecological disaster is going to get much, much worse much, much more quickly than the nightmare we are already living, starting in 2030. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that billions of lives are at stake. Socialist revolution is our only hope of survival. So, while I can't predict what *will* happen, I know what needs to happen starting yesterday. Our movements need to grow in size and militancy, and our socialist organizations need to grow quickly as well.

At the same time, it's tricky because if we jump the gun before masses of people are ready for revolution, we will fail miserably and put ourselves in an even worse position. We basically have one more chance to get it right. It's really scary and stressful and depressing, but once you know what's at stake I don't think you have a choice but to fight as hard as you can for a radically different world. ■

## ... Hotels

(continued from page 4)

ual capitalist has to gain an advantage against its competitors is by increasing the rate of exploitation through either absolute or relative surplus value extraction.

**A constant fight**

There are many more specific tactics the bosses use to extract from their workers as much labor for as little cost as possible, but just from the few outlined above we can already see why employers are terrified of union victories. The whole logic of the profit-system demands they always find new ways to increase their own profits at the expense of working people. Simple and rational practices like enforcing job designations, eliminating management from bargaining unit work, and keeping to regular schedules all put dampers on the dream of being industry leaders in profitability.

Companies still hold onto this dream even after union recognition, and even when a collective bargaining agreement, is won. For this reason, they try to hold off on implementing whatever gains they think they can get away with. If left with only the contract, grievance procedures, and their own ideas about how a hotel should be run, management, taking orders from investors and corporate boards, tries to revert back to non-union conditions. When they think they can get away with it, management will try to use scheduling, seniority, and other means to turn union members against each other.

While the grievance procedure is an important tactic, grieving takes time, effort, and resources, all of which big companies have in greater quantity than worker-funded organizations like trade unions. A worker's strength also does not exist in the formal relationship between the union and the boss. Filing a grievance also put the ball in management's court because however strong a case the workers

might have—short of arbitration, another long and costly procedure—the decision is ultimately made by the company.

Strength comes from shop floor militancy. What workers have on their side is the ability to apply pressure on management through delegations, workplace actions, shop-floor campaigns like button ups, or a strike.

The legal protections gained by simply winning union recognition are, of course, incredibly important on their own, but legal protections do not bring a good contracts, livable wages, and job security on their own. They simply put the workers and the bosses on a more even level with regards to their "right" to decide how business is conducted.

For workers to shift the balance of power on the shop floor, they have to make the boss realize that it will be more costly if they don't give in to workers' demands. Trade-union militants should keep in mind Marx's famous motto: "Between equal rights, force decides." ■



(Photo) Prime Minister Nahendra Modi.

sands of millionaires, yet there are more poor people in India than in all of sub-Saharan Africa. The richest nine Indians own more wealth than the bottom 50% of the population. Many Indians survive in some of the worst living conditions. The social environment is unique in the world due to the presence and permeation of caste into ways of life for Indians.

India's federal politics have historically been dominated by the Indian National Congress, which has been centered on the Gandhi family (no relation to Mahatma). This party has gradually ushered in neoliberalism over the past decades and has overseen the withering away of "socialist" and secularist ideas and Mahatma Gandhi-inspired principles.

(The Congress Party has made major mistakes in recent years. It remains centered around the Gandhi family despite a new climate in which dynasty is called into question. In fact, after the elections, Rahul Gandhi wished to resign as head of the INC but the rest of the leadership wished otherwise and he capitulated. The INC's main proposal to the masses of India if elected was an economic welfare program known as Nyay, in which poor families would receive cash from the government. However, polls revealed that the majority of the poor were not aware of the program.)

The political left in India is at a low point. The Communist parties (Maoist and Stalinist) have lost most of their seats in government. The heavily Maoist left has taken a disparaging attitude towards unionization. Only about 5-7% of the working class is unionized.

There is a serious threat that assaults on the working class will not only continue but will expand—especially now that the reelection of Modi and his party can be used as a mandate. What defense does the Indian working class have at its disposal? The main tools at the present time have been mass mobilizations.

During the Modi years there have been countless social mobilizations of oppressed groups of India. From farmers marching in the capital from across the country to protest high debt and low returns, to environmental protests, to mobilizations of women, the oppressed are fighting back. In the short-term, these grassroots movements are the main weapons against the anti-working-class policies of Modi. The long-term problems are, of course, more daunting.

#### Problems across the region

South Asia is an incredibly diverse region—many ethnicities, many languages, many cultures. Countries in the region have varying types of governments, from a "failed state" to a "democratic-socialist republic." Nevertheless, working people in all South Asian countries largely share similar perils and obstacles—principally, the lack of organization of women workers, the decline of a principled left wing, and tribalism.

Female labor accounts for most of the value of exports of South Asia (as well as Southeast Asia). Women face many forms of oppression, such as gender-based violence at work, sexual discrimination in society at large, and the burdens of household work. The only appropriate way forward is building an anti-capitalist "feminism for the 99%" that takes root in the labor movement.

Across the region, minorities are suffering. The days and weeks following the Easter bombing attacks in Sri Lanka saw a security state clampdown that unnecessarily targeted Muslims. The attacks led to mob violence by Buddhist extremists. The situation on the island is one of heightened ethnic tensions in an already fragile setting recovering from the Civil War (which saw conflict between the majority Buddhist/Sinhalese state versus Tamil separatists). (Modi has referenced Sri Lanka in regards to anti-terrorism measures; he mentions the terror attacks whilst simultaneously making rhetorical questions about what other leader could "stand up" to Pakistan.)

In Pakistan, people standing up for the rights of minority Pashtuns are persecuted. In late May, comrade Ali Wazir (a Trotskyist and Pashtun activist) was abducted by security forces and was jailed following an incident in which security forces fired into a sit-down protest in Waziristan. In Bangladesh, the ruling government consistently refuses to grant amnesty to Rohingya migrants who are persecuted in Myanmar. As the South Asian masses are pitted against each other, the ruling class gets away with endless oppression.

In the wake of a declining left, South Asians are being wooed by the only ideological alternatives that the national bourgeoisie of these semi-colonial countries can produce—populism and nationalism, often with an appeal to ethno-religious mythology. Such a populist government has already taken power in India, and it is not unlikely that Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, or Pakistan could see similar developments.

However, nationalist ideologies and actions—much like the nationalism of many years ago leading up to independence—are not nearly enough to overthrow the system that oppresses working people and the rural poor in those countries. It is precisely these conditions that make the role of principled revolutionary socialists all the more important. ■

## Modi's reelection in India: More attacks on workers and national minorities

By RUWAN MUNASINGHE

On May 25, the day of the swearing-in of incumbent Prime Minister of India Nahendra Modi, a 30-year-old man from Bihar, Mohammad Qasim, was bedridden in a hospital in Begusari. A bullet had to be removed from his back. Qasim was one of many victims of a wave of violence against minorities and lower-castes in India following the reelection of the Prime Minister.

According to Qasim, his assailant stopped him and upon learning his name shot him and told him to go back to Pakistan. "Apart from the bullet, what hurt me is that I had no connection with Rajiv, yet he shot me just because I'm a Muslim," he told the London *Telegraph* from his hospital bed. He lamented that many like him are living in a state of fear.

Millions in India have little or nothing to gain from another term of Modi. The struggles of workers on strike, farmers, tribal people evicted from their lands, the people of Kashmir, and many others have demonstrated this to be true.

In what is often described as "the world's largest exercise of democracy," the Indian general election was held from early April to late May. It saw Modi's party (the Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP) spending more money on the campaign than any other party in the history of India. His supporters, formally or otherwise, launched a truly massive effort. Efforts included such things as a flood of clandestine campaigning on the App WhatsApp. The whole affair has been described as a "campaign run on slogans," centering on a larger than life figure who is, perhaps, more popular than his own party.

His election and the gains of the BJP were a dramatic loss not just to the Indian National Congress (INC, the ruling party for most of India's post-independence history) but also independent political parties in parliament. Communist parties and parties representing minorities are at a low in parliament. This is the country's first consecutive single-party parliamentary majority since 1984.

#### Modi emboldens attacks on ethnic minorities

Nahendra Modi is a far-right Hindu nationalist. He previously served as chief minister of Gujarat; during his tenure he oversaw the mass slaughter of Muslims in the 2002 riots. Modi is a lifelong member of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayasevak Sangh)—the parent organization of the BJP, largely seen as a semi-fascist organization. The RSS operates in an interesting legal manner: it is not a political party but rather a "cultural organization" with camps across the country that arm and train people (especially young people) in ideas of Hindu Supremacy and Hindu nationalism (Hindutva).

Modi is seen as being a part of the global rise of right-wing nationalism, including the rise of certain figures such as Bolsonaro, Marine Le Pen, Viktor Orban, Donald Trump, and so on. Much like the spike in right-wing violence in the U.S. following the election of Trump, Modi's rule in India appears to have emboldened attacks on ethnic minorities (like the attack on Mohammad Qasim). Within the duration of the first term there seems to have been an endless stream of senseless attacks—towards people suspected of dealing in or eating cattle, Dalits, and so on. The Modi administration has turned a blind eye to these attacks.

Islamophobia on a macro scale is reflected by Modi's policies towards Kashmir and the immigration status of people in the Assam region in the East near Bangladesh. In Assam, the Modi government oversaw the construction of detention facilities; nearly 50,000 (mostly Muslim) Indians were made eligible for deportation in 2018. This stance is reflective of the ruling party's right-wing anti-Muslim and inherently nativist ideologies.

In Kashmir, Modi's first term has seen an escalation of tensions to heights not seen in decades. Kashmir is a Muslim-majority area widely celebrated for its beauty. It is disputed between Pakistan and India. A large section is administered by India. A slightly smaller and less significant section is administered by Pakistan. Kashmiris have never been able to voice their opinion on how their land ought to be governed.

Kashmir has been systematically denied self-determination. During flares of violence in Kashmir—which saw the Indian government brutalize protesters, the Obama and Trump administrations increased arms sales to India in tandem with suppression of Kashmiris.

Earlier, the killings of Indian security forces in Pulwama on the Jammu Srinagar National Highway led to a conflict between India and Pakistan. Part of India's response was an airstrike in Pakistani territory (at Balakot). Many commentators spoke openly about the threat of nuclear war.

Similar cases of injustices have been seen throughout India under Modi. The BJP has banned women from entering the Sabarimala temple in Kerala. Millions of Adivasi indigenous people face eviction from forests. Striking workers face repression.

#### Unemployment and grinding poverty

Economically, Modi has been disastrous. Unemployment is at a 45 year high despite promises of tens of millions of new jobs. Modi led a rushed "demonetization" scheme in which many cash banknotes were no longer valid for exchange. This basically happened overnight and burdened the poor who were not able to navigate the sudden change as well as the rich.

Modi has embraced large corporations and privatization. The BJP is largely supported amongst the business classes and mass media (especially television). The party is seen by capital as a stabilizing force. Modi has done nothing to challenge outside economic influence on the country. His leadership in India has not raised any hostilities from China, Russia, or the global economic institutions. India under Modi has seen Chinese firms make partnerships with Indian ones. Of course, Modi is close to the U.S. administration.

Lal Kahn, editor of the *Asian Marxist Review*, described Modi and the BJP in the following terms: "This election result has transformed one aspect of Indian politics: that the BJP appears to have become the traditional party of the Indian bourgeoisie, just as Congress was in the first few decades after the partition-induced independence. Tycoons and stock exchange manipulators were jubilant as results poured in, with the share index rocketing. The BJP's manifesto pledged abolishing labour protection laws and ordaining extravagant incentives for the capitalists to boost their profits and guaranteed protection to the elite's plunder."

It is important to put all of this into context. India is an immensely unequal country. There are *hundreds of thou-*

# ... Immigration

(continued from page 1)

Democratic Party leaders. Because the immigrant rights movement lacks national leadership, local organizing efforts often get sidelined when more moderate forces step in. This tendency will only increase as the 2020 presidential elections approach.

As a result of the public outcry, and under immense pressure, the Senate passed a bipartisan \$4.6 billion emergency funding bill to provide humanitarian aid to migrants seeking asylum on the U.S.-Mexico border. The money would be allocated to the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Homeland Security, as these federal agencies run out of funding to address the growing crisis.

But this is just a drop in the bucket in terms of what is actually needed to address the growing humanitarian crisis at the border. While much of the public spotlight has drifted away from the caravans of refugees that continue to arrive at the border, thousands of migrants are still waiting in terrible conditions in camps along the Mexican side of the border, as they wait for their turn to plead their case for asylum in front of an immigration judge.

The current situation is largely a result of Remain in Mexico, a new program that Trump negotiated with the supposedly progressive Mexican president, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (known as AMLO to Mexicans). Under the new agreement (signed by the Mexican president on June 7), Mexico has agreed to house migrants in their country while they await their asylum cases, while at the same time deploying their National Guard across the country (with particular emphasis along the southern Mexican border with Guatemala) in an attempt to halt the flow of migrants coming into their country from Central America.

Before the Remain in Mexico policy was officially signed into law, migrants were supposed to be able to stay in the United States while waiting for their asylum cases to be heard. But now they must languish in what amounts to concentration camps on the Mexican side of the border, without access to proper food, sanitation, or medical care, while they wait for weeks or even months for their cases to be heard.

The backlog of immigration cases has now reached a crisis point in the U.S. court system. According to a National Public Radio report on June 4, the American Bar Association is saying that the immigration courts are now on the "brink of collapse."

The current backlog has now grown to almost 900,000 cases. With less than 450 immigration judges across the U.S., some have as many as 9000 cases on their dockets and are scheduling hearings years in advance. Judges are now required to reach quotas of cases in order to get good job reviews, pushing many towards the brink of burnout. The process is grueling for immigrants too, many of whom don't even have access to lawyers to help them through the legal process.

## "Safe third countries"

At the same time, Trump is now attempting to deny Central American migrants even the basic right to seek asylum at all. The *Globe Post* reported on July 15 on Trump's latest executive order, which would bar migrants from applying for asylum in the U.S. if they have passed through other countries first on their way there. Instead, they would now be required to apply for asylum in the first country they enter. This contradicts current U.S. law, which says that migrants have the right to apply for asylum in the U.S. no matter how they arrived, unless they traveled through a "safe third country" on the way.

While Canada is currently the only country designated as a "safe third country," Trump just strong-armed the Guatemalan government into signing a deal that would give it this designation, although not explicitly. The deal came after Trump threatened the country with tariffs and with blocking remittances sent to Guatemala by immigrant family members living in the U.S.

The ACLU has already sued to block the new rule from going into effect, and it is unclear if the Guatemalan government will actually implement the new agreement with the U.S., or even what that agreement entails. But the entire debate around migrants denies the fact that people are fleeing poverty, political unrest, and violence in their home countries—conditions that more often than not are a direct result of U.S. economic and military interventions in Latin America, which have continued for decades.

While Trump is attempting to restrict the flow of migrants and refugees into the U.S., he is also in-



(Above) Children from the 2018 Refugee Caravan waiting to cross the border near Tijuana.

creasing attacks on the population of undocumented immigrants already living in the U.S. and contributing to the U.S. economy.

Over several months, the Trump administration has been battling through the court system in an attempt to get a citizenship question added to the U.S. census, which is set to take place in 2020. After an outcry that the question would cause many immigrants and their families to avoid completing the census, the Supreme Court ruled in June to block the question. After census forms had begun to be printed without the citizenship question, Trump dropped his threats to continue the struggle through legal channels.

According to CNN, instead, "Trump issued an executive order directing the Commerce Department to obtain citizenship data through means other than the census. That includes documents from the Department of Homeland Security, which houses citizenship and asylum services, and the Social Security Administration."

## Nationwide ICE raids announced

Real fear has continued to spread throughout the immigrant community after the Trump administration announced a series of large-scale raids that were to take place across 10 major U.S. cities in early July. As reported in *The New York Times*, the raids were supposed to target undocumented immigrants who had received final deportation orders. However, ICE agents also anticipated sweeping up what they called "collateral" deportations, meaning family members of the person being targeted who also happened to be on site during the raid.

After protests broke out across the country, ICE officials expressed discomfort with the operation, and many cities and police departments announced that they wouldn't participate in the raids. Trump then called off the raids at the last minute.

Meanwhile, Trump threatened to resume the raids in several weeks unless Congress had agreed to "work out a solution to the Asylum and Loophold problems at the Southern Border." Although the second round of threatened raids also failed to materialize, the announcements had the intended effect of spreading panic and fear throughout the immigrant community.

At the same time, the fact that Trump had announced the raids beforehand (which never happened under Presidents Bush or Obama) gave local organizers time to prepare the community. Around the country, grassroots immigrant rights groups organized Know Your Rights trainings and Rapid Response Networks.

In the Twin Cities, hundreds of Somali workers at a local Amazon distribution center also recently walked out to protest working conditions.

## Democrats will dampen the movement

While the grassroots organizing around the country continues on a local level, the lack of a national leadership organization in the immigrant rights community means that the Democratic Party will continue to exert increasing influence over the movement as the 2020 presidential election approaches. Immigration will no doubt continue to be a hot-button issue in the upcoming elections, but the influence of the Democratic Party in the movement will inevitably have a moderating and dampening effect, as they suck the vital energy of grassroots organizers into the game of electoral politics.

How can we combat this? First, we must continue to organize on a grassroots level in our local communities, where we can meet the best fighters involved in the movement in our area. Second, we can support an independent socialist candidate who isn't beholden to the Democratic Party and its lackeys, who can expose the lies of the ruling class and explain the system along class lines.

Consider supporting Jeff Mackler and Heather Bradford, Socialist Action's candidates for president and vice president of the United States in 2020. They support an end to raids and deportations, unconditional legalization for all immigrants, open borders, the closure of all detention camps, and an end to U.S. military intervention in Latin America and around the world.

No Human Being is Illegal! ¡Ningun Ser Humano es Illegal!

# ... Puerto Rico

(continued from page 12)

obtaining large loans in the form of bonds to keep the economy afloat. Imposed debt to the U.S. government has only mounted since then and has become a primary source for the economic death spiral. Widespread unemployment and lowering wages have and continue to be the rule of the day.

The modern neoliberal era has been particularly devastating. Austerity policies aimed at paying the debt have seen the gutting of social services and education, and ever shrinking revenues for the island's government. Unpaid debt has become a market for capitalist investment, with further at-

tempts to squeeze Puerto Rico. Debt has become the main leash of U.S. imperialism around the island, ever used as justification to cut back on any democratic control or aid.

The calls and dreams of a free Puerto Rico cannot be fulfilled without a full break with the humiliating and lethal relation of the island to its imperial ruler. The illegitimate debt must be abolished as a crucial step on the path to true self-determination in Puerto Rico.

Though the demand to abolish the debt has not yet been widely articulated by the massive but unorganized movement, we must raise the call clearly while standing in solidarity with the developing struggles in Puerto Rico. Self-determination for Puerto Rico! Abolish the debt!

## Puerto Rico defiant!



By WYATT MUND

The island of Puerto Rico has been the site of massive unrest and protest for over the past two weeks. Hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets in the largest demonstrations in the island's history.

After a fierce struggle, the initial call from the streets for the resignation of Ricardo Rossello as governor of Puerto Rico has been won. Despite much push-back, by July 24, Rossello announced his resignation, finally conceding to the overwhelming force of the movement.

However, the protest movement has not ended; nor has it faltered in momentum. It is clear that the roots and tensions at work in these protests have not yet come to the surface, and indeed the deep crises facing Puerto Rico go far beyond one scheming politician.

The protests began on July 14 in outraged response to leaked documentation of private messages between Rossello and nine other members of his administration. The messages, filling almost 900 pages, were riddled with crass misogyny and homophobia, targeting many politicians and celebrities, and ridiculing the devastation of Hurricane Maria. Thousands died in the hurricane, and the effects are still acutely felt on the island. The messages not only ignored the depths of the tragedy, but they cruelly mocked the dead.

Some jokes mentioned attacking oppositional politicians with violence—including “shooting” San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz, who had denounced President Trump for the meager aid that his administration sent to the island after the hurricane.

Trump was quick to throw his support to the governor, tweeting on July 18: “A lot of bad things are happening in Puerto Rico. The Governor is under siege, the Mayor of San Juan is a despicable and incompetent person who I wouldn't trust under any circumstance, and the United States Congress foolishly gave

92 Billion Dollars for hurricane relief ...”

In many ways, the publication of the vulgar conversations by Rossello and his close associates was the straw that broke the camel's back. Rossello's administration was already embroiled in a corruption scandal, with two former officials arrested on July 10 for funneling some \$15.5 million in contracts to businesses with which they had personal ties. Protests grew rapidly, with ferocity, demanding the resignation of the governor. The movement became known as #RickyRenuncia, echoing the #MeToo movement's self-designation. This could be said to reflect the queer and feminist character of a layer of the protests, with many protesters working to have a visible queer presence.

Quickly, the force of the continuing protests became overwhelming. By July 21, Rosello announced he would not seek re-election, hoping to deescalate the situation that had already developed out of his control. But the pressure and mass protests did not let up, and though initially the Rossello proclaimed he would not give in, the governor soon officially resigned. He is scheduled to leave office on Aug. 2.

The protests have been on an enormous scale in the capital of San Juan. Nearly a third of the island, over half a million Puerto Ricans, joined the demonstration on July 22. Many people walked off their jobs to participate, and much of the city was paralyzed.

The Puerto Rican diaspora has responded with strong enthusiasm and support, organizing solidarity protests around the mainland United States, and with many people going directly to the island to participate in the streets.

The anger and resentment that have boiled over into these mass protests, however, are a response to more than just Rossello's and his cronies' actions. As the protests have continued past Rossello's defeat, the focus has begun to shift. Calls for radical change and opposition to the entire line-up of succession for the governorship have become loud and vocal. Puer-

Rican protesters have had enough with the entire government of the island.

Puerto Rico's colonial status and subjugation to U.S. imperialism is the fundamental root of the tensions plaguing the island. The aims of the protest movement can only be effectively resolved if they deal firmly with this fundamental injustice.

For over a century Puerto Rico has been an open colonial holding of the United States, subject to all the crushing stages of changing capitalist exploitation from the days of early monopoly capital rule through the rise and decline of neoliberal projects. The colony has always been denied any semblance of democratic representation in the U.S. federal government. And in 2016, the PROMESA authority board (the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act), a completely unelected and undemocratic apparatus, managed in Washington, was foisted on the island—with the power to revoke any acts of the Puerto Rican government.

Political control has been entirely removed from the colonized peoples of Puerto Rico in the interests of ensuring that the big banks and capitalist speculators can efficiently recover payments on the island's \$74 billion bond debt.

The management of Puerto Rico under American capital has provided decades of ruin and a stranglehold for the working people of the island. Until the 1950s, the island was kept underdeveloped as a vast sugar plantation. During the postwar boom, special tax breaks and the prospect of ultra-cheap labor caused U.S. businesses to swoop in and set up light manufacturing and textile shops—devastating Puerto Rico's agricultural base in the process. Beginning in the 1990s, however, most of the capitalist enterprises fled the island for even cheaper labor in Asia, and Puerto Rico was plunged into a lasting depression with high unemployment.

The island's pro-capitalist politicians resorted to  
*(continued on page 11)*

