

A Call to Action: Towards a General Strike to End the COVID-19 Crisis and Create a New World

by Cooperation Jackson

The COVID-19 pandemic is changing the world before our very eyes. In less than 3 months, it has exposed the grotesque nature of the capitalist system to millions, ground the world economy to a halt, and revealed how truly interconnected our little planet really is.

As bad as this crisis is on its own terms, it is made considerably worse by the misleadership from the White House, Congress and many state and local governments. President Trump not only failed to heed the advice of the state's intelligence services regarding the potential threat of the coronavirus, he downplayed its severity for months, and has refused to mobilize the vast resources at the disposal of the US government to address the crisis. He continues to deny the science and proven medical advice and is now threatening to retract social distancing orders and call for everyone to return to work by the end of April.

A bipartisan Congress just passed the largest corporate bailout in history, that provided paltry relief to most working people in the form of a one time payoff that won't cover most people's rent and utilities for a month. The Governors of Mississippi, Florida, and Georgia have refused to shut their states down and give clear stay at home orders to halt the spread of the virus. And the Federal Reserve is doing everything it can to protect Wall Street, in total disregard of the real time needs of millions of people. If Trump and his political allies in government, Wall Street, and the corporations are successful in forcing a considerable number of workers to go back to work before the pandemic has been brought under control, it will turn into an outright calamity in the US. We cannot afford to let this happen.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Disaster capitalism and white supremacy are running amok. The Trump alliance of the neo-fascist right, combined with sectors of finance capital, the fossil fuel industry and the religious right are exploiting this crisis to accelerate climate change, reshape society and redefine the geopolitical order. In the midst of this pandemic they have eliminated critical environmental protection standards (reducing already poor air quality giving new horrible life to the Black Lives Matter slogan borne of Eric Garner's murder, "I can't breathe" as millions struggle for air). Trump has eliminated various health and safety standards to protect workers and consumers, undermining unions and other working class organizations. He has allowed genetically modified plants to be unleashed in protected lands, expanded roundup and deportation operations, and refused to provide adequate medical treatment of federal prisoners.

Brutal bipartisan sanctions on Iran and Venezuela prevent millions of poor and working class from accessing critical life saving resources, and US intervention has blocked Venezuela from receiving an IMF loan to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Right now the federal response is being driven by finance ministers and corporations, rather than the medical experts and front line workers directly addressing the response to the pandemic, abandoning the potential power of a coordinated federal response. All this is just a sample of the crimes against humanity unfolding daily at the hands of the White House.

Despite the asymmetry of power between ourselves in the left and the organized working class and the forces of right, we have to do everything we can to intervene. We must stop the worst most deadly version of this pandemic from becoming a reality, and we have to ensure that we never return to the society that enabled this pandemic to emerge and have the impact it is having in the first place. We must do everything that we can to create a new, just, equitable and ecologically regenerative economy.

The question is how?

To fight back we have to use the greatest power we have at our disposal - our collective labor.

We can shut the system down to break the power of the state and capitalist class.

We must send a clear message that things cannot and will not go back to normal. In order to do this, we need to call for collective work and shopping stoppages, leading to a general strike that is centered around clear, comprehensive demands. We must make demands that will transform our broken and inequitable society, and build a new society run by and for us - the working class, poor, oppressed majority.

A general strike cannot be organized through online campaigns alone, or as the result of the mere expression of a desire or even great need for a general strike. A general strike is not organized through a list of demands, though demands are necessary



In order for a general strike to not only take place right now, but also be effective, we need to develop a broad united front organized around short-term and long-term aims. We need to assess connections between unions of all sorts and organized labor, and begin reaching out to other poor and working-class people from within our places of work, our places of living, our places of worship, and our places of leisure.

A general strike will also take resources to sustain. We cannot count on capital to support this effort; they will attack and undermine us at every turn. So, we are going to have to call for and rely upon our collective resources. This includes our own individual purchasing power, but also the mobilization of the collective resources at the disposal of our unions, civic organizations, mutual aid, and spiritual institutions. We need to make sure that we can provide aid to workers on the frontlines of the health struggle and the frontlines of the supply chain struggles. This means providing mutual aid where warranted, as well as strike funds to support workers from losing their homes, cars, medical care, and other essential expenses.

Those with the most experience in organizing strikes of all sorts - both young and old - must step up in this moment and provide general insights and strategies that can be utilized by the united front in tandem with organized labor groups that are on the same page, and these insights in addition to strategy must inform an open information campaign that not only brings attention to strike efforts, but brings in supporters from outside of our organized formations who can then employ a wide range of strategies to begin initiating mass actions without feeling isolated.

The capitalists and landlords win when we are divided, fearful, and/or fighting our own battles in isolation. All it takes is enough of us breaking for them to have their way. We stand a much better chance coordinating nationally and internationally, and with organizing networks and infrastructure that are fortified with centuries' worth of cumulative experience between the organizers who comprise them. We also stand a better chance with global attention.

Those who control the land, the property, and the businesses want you to believe that this COVID-19 crisis is going to blow over soon, and that everyone will simply go back to work. They want you to believe that things will return to "normal" within a matter of months, and even weeks. Right now, poor and working-class people have an opportunity to make it clear to the ruling classes that not only was "normal" abnormal to begin with, but that we are not going to settle for a return to the social and economic conditions that created this pandemic to begin with.

We should take inspiration in that we are not alone in calling for and acting upon a call for a general strike. Workers throughout the country and the world are spontaneously taking matters into their own hands. Auto workers, chicken factory workers, nurses, drivers, grocery store workers, and more are all taking independent action. Calls for a rent strike are going viral, as working poor and homeless workers are starting to occupy hundreds of vacant homes to meet their needs and practice the necessary social distancing to ensure their survival. Things are in motion and we need to build upon this momentum, quickly.

This crisis changes everything.

We have an opportunity to take control now, and we are ready to fight for a society in which all people can live with full autonomy without having to worry about survival.

Below is the basic framing and list of preliminary demands that we think are essential to call for and act upon at this time.

*General Strike! No Work, No Shopping Friday, May 1st
People over Profit: Tell the Government and Wall Street that their priority must be to Save Lives, Not Profits.

Returning to Work under this Pandemic is a threat to our Collective Health and Safety

We Need Systems Change, Not Just Relief and Reform. The Capitalist System Can't Resolve this Crisis.

Our Demands:

Protect All Frontline Workers in the Hospitals, the Supply Chains, and the Farms and Fields to ensure that they have all of the equipment and disinfectant materials that they need to keep themselves and the general public healthy
Protect Asians and other vulnerable communities, including the homeless, migrants, and refugees from discrimination and attack in this time of crisis
Democratize the Means of Production, Convert the Corporations and Workplaces into Cooperatives to produce what we need and distribute equitably according to need
Institute Universal Health Care Now
Institute Universal Basic Services Now (Education, Childcare, Elderly Care, Water, Electricity, Internet, etc.) based on Economic, Social and Cultural rights guidelines
Institute Universal Basic Income Now
Democratize the Finance, Credit and Insurance Industries - Bail-out the People, Not the Corporations and Wall Street
Decarbonize the Economy, Institute a Green New Deal based on a Just Transition, End the Fossil Fuel and Extractive Industries Now
Housing is a Human Right, Decommodify Housing Now, Open all available housing stock to those who need it now
Ensure there is clean drinking water for all communities, decommodify water now
Cancel Our Debts, Institute a Debt Jubilee Now
Close the Jails, Close the Prisons, Release the Prisoners
Close the Detention Centers, Reunite the Families, Stop the Raids and Deportations
Close all of the Overseas Military Bases, Cut the Military (Defense) and Spy (Surveillance) Budgets and Redirect these funds to Health Care, Social Services, Universal Basic Income and Greening Public Infrastructure and the Economy*

We are calling upon all who agree with this call to join us in calling for militant action to shut the system down.

****This is what we are asking you to do immediately: ****

Let us know if you agree with this call and this list of demands, or how you would add upon or strengthen them.

Let us know if you would be willing to participate in a coordinating body to help organize and advance this call. This coordinating body would take on the task of building out the base of the united front, help facilitate community between its constituent parts, and facilitate the calls to action.

Join us for our first zoom call on Monday, April 13th at 12 noon edt/11 am cdt/10 am mdt/9 am pdt to start building this front and advancing this call to action. To participate in the call and communicate your alignment and willingness help coordinate a broad, united front initiative email us at GenStrike2020@protonmail.com.

Finally, this initiative is not intended to negate any of the calls already issued for a rent strike, a people's bailout, etc. We hope to unite all who can be united, while respecting the independence of initiative of the various forces that would comprise the front. We have to apply ceaseless, unyielding pressure on the system and the forces that enable it. Let's do so with any eye towards employing maximum unity to end this crisis and create a new world in its aftermath.

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Now is the Time to Empty the Prisons

by EVE OTTENBERG

Now is the time to empty the prisons. With over two million people incarcerated, the vast majority for nonviolent crimes, prisoners are packed like sardines, their overcrowding perfect for mass infection and spread of the Covid-19 pestilence. Nonviolent drug offenders, people who couldn't make bail, people within six months of release, the elderly and infirm – all should be freed before they catch the disease, spread it and die.

For years the U.S. gulag has been an international scandal. We incarcerate proportionally far more of our people than any other country on earth, at a staggering rate of 698 per 100,000. This prison population explosion dates back to Bill Clinton's attempt to attract centrist and Republican votes by getting tough on crime. Originally written by Senator Joe Biden, the 1994 federal crime bill signed by Clinton was the biggest thing of its sort in U.S. history. It ravaged minority communities. An entire generation of young Latino and African American men came of age in prison thanks to Clinton's crime initiative. It resulted, as of today according to the non-profit Prison Policy Initiative, in 1,291,000 people in state prisons, 631,000 in local jails and 226,000 federally incarcerated. 578,000 people rot in state prisons for nonviolent offenses like DUI and

public order. They could be released. In local jails, 470,000 people have not been convicted. They could be released pending trial. Federal prisons contain 213,000 nonviolent offenders. Under the current extraordinary pandemic circumstance, they too should be freed. As the head of the Cook County Board of Commissioners in Chicago recently said: "Our jails are Petri dishes."

Right now this need for emptying jails is most acute at the pandemic's center – New York City. That means Rikers Island, where Covid-19 is spreading like wildfire. The chief doctor there says it is "a public health disaster unfolding before our eyes." As of Monday, Rikers had 167 confirmed cases among its thousands of inmates. The mayor has announced freeing 650 people from Rikers, with hundreds under review for release. But the daytime population at Rikers – including staff and visitors – can reach 20,000. It is horribly overcrowded and unsanitary. The prisoners have little access to soap and running water – a perfect environment for this plague. Meanwhile Rikers prisoners have been asked to dig mass

graves for those dead of Covid-19. The prisoners will be given protective gear and paid \$6 per hour. Whether they can wash up after this toil was not announced.

What's true in prisons also holds true in migrant detention centers. In March, the detention center population surged to 13,400. Recently a federal judge in Los Angeles ordered the release of migrant children. Plaintiffs had reported children testing positive for Covid-19 at a shelter in New York. The judge said she would order the release of roughly 3400 children April 10, barring an explanation of why they should remain in custody during a pandemic. Meanwhile a federal judge in New York ordered ICE detainees immediately freed from county jails with Covid-19 present. Migrant detainees in Pennsylvania are on a hunger strike, demanding release during the plague.

By freeing the 1,261,000 nonviolent prisoners and all migrants in detention, the U.S. government would eliminate much Covid-19 infection. Prisons would be less densely crammed for those remaining, routine sanitation

would be easier and spread of the disease among prisoners and guards would decrease. Who knows – release that many prisoners and in some institutions there might actually be one person per cell, thus drastically curtailing contagion. Since most migrants are not held for violent crimes, practically the entire migrant detention population could be safely freed, thus arresting the spread of Covid-19 in swarming, filthy detention centers.

These releases are the just, moral and correct thing to do; they will save lives – of prisoners, migrants, guards, ICE officers and their families. While some states, localities and the federal government have started this process, it moves far too slowly. This pestilence is a highly contagious killer. Let it not be said in a couple of years that our government was as lethally irresponsible as the cruise industry, which keeps packing victims into its boats and sailing, as they die, for profit.

Eve Ottenberg is a novelist and journalist. Her latest book is Further Adventures of Feckless Frank. She can be reached at her website: <http://www.eveottenberg.com/>

AUGUST 21 - SEPTEMBER 9th NATIONAL SOLIDARITY EVENTS TO AMPLIFY PRISONERS HUMAN RIGHTS

IWOC (Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee) Media Committee <media@incarceratedworkers.org>



To all in solidarity with the Prisoners Human Rights Movement:

We are reaching out to those that have been amplifying our voices in these state, federal, or immigration jails and prisons, and to allies that uplifted the national prison demands in 2018. We call on you again to organize the communities from August 21st - September 9th, 2020, by hosting actions, events, and demonstrations that call for prisoner human rights and the end to prison slavery.

We must remind the people and legal powers in this nation that prisoners' human rights are a priority. If we aren't moving forward, we're moving backward. For those of us in chains, backward is not an option. We have nothing to lose but our chains.

Some people claim that prisoners' human rights have advanced since the last national prison strike in 2018. We strongly disagree. But due to prisoners organizing inside and allies organizing beyond the walls, solidarity with our movement has increased. The only reason we hear conversations referencing prison reforms in every political campaign today is because of the work of prison organizers and our allies! But as organizers in prisons, we understand this is not enough. Just as quickly as we've gained ground, others are already funding projects and talking points to set back those advances. Our only way to hold our ground while moving forward is to remind people where we are and where we are headed.

On August 21 - September 9, we call on everyone in solidarity with us to organize an action, a panel discussion, a rally, an art event, a film screening, or another kind of demonstration to promote prisoners' human rights. Whatever is within your ability, we ask that you shake the nation out of any fog they may be in about prisoners' human rights and the criminal legal system (legalized enslavement).

During these solidarity events, we request that organizers amplify immediate issues prisoners in your state face, the National Prison demands of 2018, and uplift Jailhouse Lawyers Speak new International Law Project.

We've started the International Law Project to engage the international community with a formal complaint about human rights abuses in U.S. prisons. This project will seek prisoners' testimonials from across the country to establish a case against the United States Prison Industrial Slave Complex on international human rights grounds.

Presently working on this legally is the National Lawyers Guild's Prisoners Rights Committee, and another attorney, Anne Labarbera. Members of the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC), Fight Toxic Prisons (FTP), and I am We Prisoners Advocacy Network/Millions For Prisoners are also working to support these efforts. The National Lawyers Guild Prisoners' Rights Committee (Jenipher R. Jones,

Esq. and Audrey Bomse) will be taking the lead on this project.

The National Prison Demands of 2018 have not changed. As reflected publicly by the recent deaths of Mississippi prisoners, the crisis in this nation's prisons persist. Mississippi prisons are on national display at the moment of this writing, and we know shortly afterward there will be another Parchman in another state with the same issues. The U.S. has demonstrated a reckless disregard for human lives in cages.

The prison demands were drafted as a path to alleviate the dehumanizing process and conditions people are subjected to while going through this nation's judicial system. Following up on these demands communicates to the world that prisoners are heard and that prisoners' human rights are a priority.

In the spirit of Attica, will you be in the fight to dismantle the prison industrial slave complex by pushing agendas that will shut down jails and prisons like Rikers Island or Attica? Read the Attica Rebellion demands and read the 2018 National Prison demands. Ask yourself what can you do to see the 2018 National Prison demands through.

SHARE THIS RELEASE FAR AND WIDE
WITH ALL YOUR CONTACTS!

We rage with George Jackson's "Blood in my eyes" and move in the spirit of Attica!
August 21st - September 9th, 2020

AGITATE, EDUCATE, ORGANIZE

Dare to struggle, Dare to win!

We are--

"Jailhouse Lawyers Speak"

More information: <https://incarceratedworkers.org/news/national-solidarity-events-amplify-prisoners-human-rights>

NLG EMAIL CONTACT FOR LAWYERS AND
LAW STUDENTS INTERESTED IN JOINING THE
INTERNATIONAL LAW PROJECT:
micjlsnlg@gmail.com

DEMANDS:
<https://jailhouselawyerspeak.wordpress.com/2020/02/11/prisoners-national-demands-for-human-rights/>

The Roots of Anti-Racist, Anti-Fascist Resistance in the US

by Robin D.G. Kelley

“No Trump, No KKK, No Fascist USA!” has been a popular protest chant since the New York real-estate mogul and former reality TV star became the 45th president of the United States. This was no mere rhetorical flourish. We saw a surge in the ranks of white nationalists and the “alt-right,” an escalation of domestic terrorist attacks on Black and Brown people, immigrants, Muslims, Jews, and the LGBTQ community. The road to a “Fascist USA” took a deadly turn after Trump indirectly condoned the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in which an assembly of Klansmen, “alt Knights,” neo-Nazis, and white nationalist militias inspired one of their number to mow down anti-racist protesters with his car.

A consensus took hold that Trump’s election, along with the campaign to remove Confederate monuments following the 2015 massacre of nine Black worshippers in a Charleston, South Carolina, church, had emboldened militant white supremacists. Books, articles, and blog posts linked Trump’s ascendance directly to white nationalism, even reminding readers of his daddy’s ties to the Klan.

A fair share of liberal intellectuals and pundits set about explaining the roots of contemporary white supremacy by tracing the events in Charlottesville to the history of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. This is understandable. The “second Klan” enjoyed a high degree of legitimacy, and its xenophobic slogans—“America First” and “100% Americanism”—were echoed by the Trump administration. Besides, most of the recent scholarship on the Klan focuses on the 1920s, precisely because, in spite of its virulence, its values and ideology were not far from the American mainstream.

But why go back to the 1920s when the militant white supremacists of current generation are either products of, or influenced by, the “third Klan” of the 1970s and 1980s? Between 1974 and 1981, Klan membership grew from about 1,500 to more than 10,000. In the course of a decade, a resurgent Klan formed paramilitary units, burned crosses, organized rallies in cities such as Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Meriden, Connecticut, and prepared to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border as an auxiliary to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Their leaders also attained enough legitimacy to enter mainstream politics and run for public office. In 1980, Tom Metzger, the “Grand Dragon” of the Ku Klux Klan, garnered enough votes to win the Democratic primary in Southern California’s 43rd Congressional district. Similarly, in 1989 David Duke, former Klansman and founder of the National Association for the Advancement of White People, was elected to the Louisiana House of Representatives.

The spectacular rise of the Klan, the American Nazi Party, skinheads, and various white Christian nationalist militias opened the floodgates for a reign of terror by adherents and lone wolves targeting African Americans, Jews, and Mexican and Vietnamese immigrants. Homes, churches, synagogues, and schools across the country were firebombed. Between 1979 and 1980, two dozen Black people and two white women in interracial relationships were murdered in seven different cities. In Buffalo, New York, two Black taxi drivers were found dead with their hearts cut out, and two weeks later in that same city a white sniper took the lives of four African Americans. Meanwhile, between 1979 and 1981, twenty-eight children, adolescents, and adults were mysteriously murdered in Atlanta. Other murders were not so mysterious. In Mobile, Alabama, in 1981, members of the United Klans of America kidnapped, tortured, and hanged a Black teenager named Michael Donald.

Why, in an effort to understand the Trump era, have the pundits, the press, even some of our finest historians ignored this crucial period of white racist violence? Why do most Americans believe that such virulent expressions of white supremacy died with Jim Crow, leaving in its wake more indirect or benign forms of racism—employment and housing discrimination, a biased criminal justice system, the dismantling of affirmative action, and the like?

One recent exception that has garnered significant attention is Spike Lee’s Oscar-nominated *BlacKkKlansman*, based on the true story of how a Black undercover cop, Ron Stallworth, infiltrated the Klan in Colorado Springs in 1978. But Lee’s film elides the fact that Stallworth also infiltrated the Klan’s chief opposition, the International Committee Against Racism, a mass organization formed by the Progressive Labor Party. By transforming an undercover cop into a Black freedom fighter and presenting the police as the first line of defense against white nationalists, *BlacKkKlansman* fundamentally distorts the history of the Klan, the police, and the period.

Neither the soft power of historical revision and erasure nor the hard power of lynch law could keep Black people down.

Fortunately for us, Hilary Moore and James Tracy have written a magnificent book that not only corrects the record but helps explain the mercurial rise of white supremacist organizations in the 1970s, how the Klan was (temporarily) defeated, and why this period has been largely ignored. *No Fascist USA!* is not a history of the Klan, per se, but rather a history of anti-racist, anti-fascist resistance in the United States, from the post-1968 insurgencies through the Reagan-era counterrevolution. We learn that opposition to the Klan was militant, uncompromising, and effective, mobilizing more white people to confront violent white supremacist organizations than at any other time in history. And, contrary to popular stereotypes, the Klan was no joke. Its members were not poor, frustrated, ignorant outcasts out of step with modernity but often men and women of standing who held positions of power and authority in state institutions—police forces, prisons, jails, and local government.

No Fascist USA! radically shifts our perspective, challenging the prevailing wisdom that racist terrorism rises in response to economic downturns, because of white downward mobility, or in a vacuum created by a lack of progressive alternatives. On the contrary, the Klan’s resurrection was a reaction to the radical insurgencies of the era: Black and Brown rebellions, struggles for gender equality and sexual freedom, the defeat of

U.S. imperialism from Vietnam to Tehran—real movements for democracy and social transformation. The same can be said for the original Klan, formed in 1866 as a reaction to Emancipation and the struggle of formerly enslaved people to establish a real democracy in the South.

With the military defeat of the first Klan in 1871, the Southern Bourbon Democrats reverted to the reign of terror, though it took them another three decades to crush abolition democracy and install the Jim Crow regime. And even then, Black resistance to white supremacy persisted. Indeed, the resurrection of the Klan in 1915 and its growth in the 1920s ought to be seen as a reaction to a new wave of democratic insurgencies—notably Black, immigrant, pro-labor, and feminist.

Its initial inspiration derived from a national campaign to erase the history of Reconstruction. “Colonel” William Joseph Simmons revived the Ku Klux Klan after seeing D.W. Griffith’s 1915 masterwork of racist propaganda, *The Birth of a Nation*. The film was historical alchemy, turning terrorists into saviors, rapists into chivalrous protectors of white female virtue and racial purity, and courageous and visionary Black men and women into idle, irresponsible ignoramuses, rapists, jezebels, and sexually depraved mulattoes. By circulating old racial fabrications and new fictions in the service of New South capitalism and modern white supremacy, *The Birth of a Nation* attempted to obliterate all vestiges of the Black struggle for social democracy during Reconstruction. Respectable white supremacist groups such as the Ladies’ Memorial Associations and the United Daughters of the Confederacy waged their own soft power campaign of building Confederate monuments throughout the region and around the nation’s capital. One of the most elaborate statues, erected at Arlington cemetery in 1914, depicted an enslaved Black man marching into battle alongside his master, and a faithful “mammy” caring for her charge as the child’s uniformed father heads off to fight the dreaded Yankees.

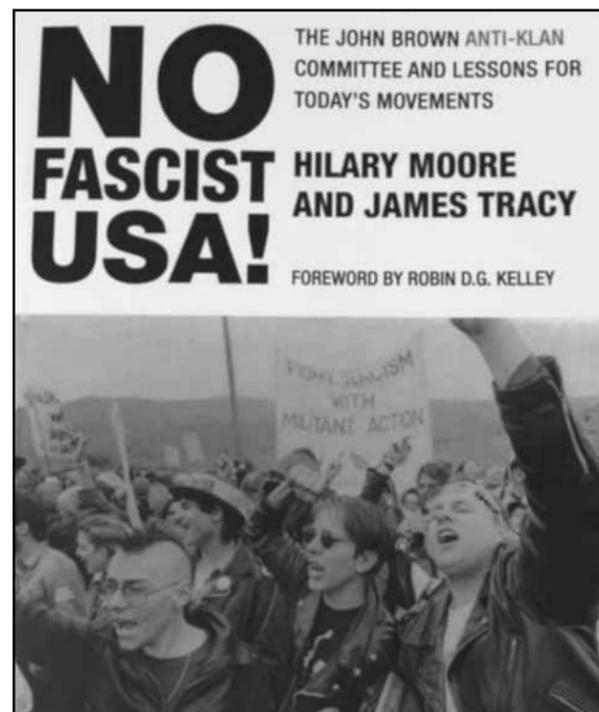
In a particularly ironic twist, the myth of “mammy” was weaponized by the federal government to buttress the hard power of Jim Crow. In 1922, the U.S. Senate approved a monument dedicated to “Mammy” in Washington, D.C., just weeks before allowing a Southern filibuster to defeat an anti-lynching bill. Not surprisingly, Black leaders not only excoriated the Senate’s failure to pass the bill but thoroughly rejected commemorating a stereotype. The *Chicago Defender*, a Black newspaper, proposed an alternative monument to the “White Daddy” showing an adult Black woman (“mammy”) looking on helplessly as the white master assaults a small child—presumably his child with “mammy,” born of rape.

The truth is, neither the soft power of historical revision and erasure nor the hard power of lynch law could keep Black people down. Despite the Klan’s best efforts, Black people fled the old plantations for the industrial plantations of the urban North. They founded new organizations, exercised the franchise, continued the fight for democracy, and called themselves “New Negroes.” These New Negroes refused Griffith’s racial and national fabrications; fought back with pickets and boycotts, speeches and editorials, scholarship and art, and outright rebellion; called on their country to get out of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, and Mexico; and exposed the United States for what it was—the tyranny of white supremacy masquerading as enlightened democracy.

The new Klan hoped to make America great again by purging it of un-American (read: radical) influences—Negroes, immigrants (except for those of Anglo and Scandinavian stock), Catholics, and Jews. The Klan’s pursuit of severe immigration restriction was driven not only by xenophobia but by anti-communism. Immigrant workers from Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Asia populated the burgeoning socialist, anarchist, and communist organizations and were often outspoken opponents of the First World War. The Second Klan emerged against a backdrop of state and federal anti-secession laws, the Mexican Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution, and a wave of deportations of immigrants accused of subversive activities. In January 1920 alone, some four thousand people were rounded up all over the country, held in seclusion for long periods of time, tried in secret hearings, and deported.

So we should not be surprised that the Third Klan arose at the height of insurgent movements in the US, when the FBI’s Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) and local police red squads surveilled and jailed key leaders just as prison organizing reached its apex. According to Moore and Tracy, the catalyst for the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee (JBAKC) came from Black activists within the prisons, who warned that the Klan was not only growing but occupied important positions within prison administration. The call to resist the Klan galvanized white radicals on the outside who engaged in prison solidarity work. In other words, the Committee was formed not by naïve do-good liberals but by folks associated with the organized Left. Many of their principal leaders came out of cadre organizations committed to the larger project of socialist revolution and self-determination for oppressed nationalities. They saw themselves as comrades, not allies, in a life-and-death struggle to stop fascism in its tracks.

The perils of fighting the Klan were made abundantly clear on November 3, 1979, when the members of the Communist Workers Party (CWP) held an anti-Klan march at a predominantly African American housing project in Greensboro, North Carolina. As the demonstration was about to begin, a nine-car caravan pulled up carrying thirty-five armed members of the United Racist Front, an umbrella organization consisting of Klansmen and Nazis. In the space of eighty-eight seconds, they emptied more than twenty rounds of ammunition into the multiracial crowd, wounding a dozen people and killing five of the march leaders: Dr. James Waller, William Sampson, Sandra Smith, Cesar Cauce, and Dr. Michael Nathan. Three of the victims were white men, Cauce was originally a Cuban immigrant, Sandi Smith was an African American woman. All were veterans of the student anti-war and Black liberation movements, and all but Nathan were members of the Communist Workers Party. Despite the fact that a local news station captured the entire ambush on camera, two all-white juries acquitted the Klan-Nazi defendants of criminal charges in the Greensboro murders. In a civil trial in 1985, a third jury held two Greensboro police officers, the Klan-police informant, and four Klan-Nazi gunmen liable



for wrongful death. The trials exposed not only the complicity of the local police but the fact that a federal agent of the Bureau Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Bernard Butkovich, who was working undercover in the American Nazi Party, encouraged members to come to the demonstration armed and never informed the police or FBI of their plans. As a consequence of the civil suit, the city of Greensboro paid a paltry \$351,000 to Dr. Martha Nathan, widow of Dr. Michael Nathan.

The John Brown Anti-Klan Committee showed unfathomable courage.

How could this be? Why, as we prepare to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Greensboro massacre, is this incident not part of our collective memory, our national trauma? For the same reasons that so little is known about the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee. In the political culture of the Cold War, Communists spouting “Death to the Klan” were the principal threat, not armed white supremacists. Indeed, Klan-Nazi defense in the second trial rested on the argument that they were fighting communists, and therefore their actions had no racist intent! Members of the Communist Workers Party, like their counterparts in the John Brown organization, would not play the victim or turn the other cheek. They believed in armed self-defense and famously refused to testify in the first trial out of principled opposition to a criminal justice system that targeted them.

The John Brown Anti-Klan Committee showed unfathomable courage.

Their numbers were always small; unlike Antifa and other anti-fascist protesters today, they rarely outnumbered the racists. The Klan and local police could identify them by name, knew where they lived, knew what kind of cars they drove. Committee members endured potentially deadly attacks—cut brake lines, slashed tires, burglaries, rocks thrown, and even gunfire were not uncommon. Moreover, in exposing the depths of the Klan’s paramilitary operations and the level of violence that members of the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee were up against, *No Fascist USA!* overturns one of the most common narratives of the era: that the Black freedom movement’s presumed shift from nonviolence to violence led to its downfall. Instead, the 1970s and early 1980s were marked by the unabated escalation of violence perpetrated by white supremacists, often with tacit support or indifference from federal, state, and local law enforcement authorities. As *No Fascist USA!* demonstrates, the police and feds appeared to devote more energy and resources to surveilling and prosecuting anti-Klan activists than to corralling the Klan itself.

Members of the John Brown organization understood this all too well and, like their namesake, recognized that the resurgence of white terrorism was not a regional problem but a national one. Lest we forget, John Brown originally planned to initiate a war against slavery by dispatching guerrilla armies to raid plantations in Virginia and retreat to the hills, freeing slaves and causing havoc until the system was no longer profitable. He assumed that once an armed attack began, enslaved people would join the revolt. But by 1857–58, the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling on *Dred Scott* convinced Brown to strike the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry instead. Why? Because the *Dred Scott* decision proved to Brown that while slaveholders were morally accountable for holding human beings in bondage, it was the federal government that sanctioned and sustained the institution of slavery. Slavery was a national crime, and the federal government was slavery’s prime source of authority and protection. We tend to remember one line from Chief Justice Roger Taney’s majority opinion: that Black people “had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.”

But John Brown and his crew understood that what was at stake extended beyond Black citizenship. The ruling effectively rendered the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional, opening the door to make slavery legal everywhere in the United States. The majority ruled that Congress could not prohibit slavery in the territories because it never had the power to govern territories, and that denying the right to own slaves violated the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which declared that no person can be deprived of “life, liberty, or property without due process of law.” John Brown now understood the task ahead as a struggle to remake the country. So in 1858, in preparation for the raid on Harpers Ferry, he drafted “A Declaration of Liberty by the Representatives of the Slave Population of the United States of America” and what he called a “Provisional Constitution and Ordinance for the People of the United States.” Its preamble called slavery “a most barbarous, unprovoked, and unjustifiable war of one portion of its citizens upon another portion, the only conditions of which are perpetual imprisonment and hopeless servitude or absolute extermination,” and it declared the newly created body a provisional government committed to the destruction of slavery.

While the prevailing consensus has deemed John Brown’s raid a failure, the attempt, more than any other event, provoked Southern secession and launched the Civil War, which ultimately ended chattel slavery.

Robin D. G. Kelley, who teaches at UCLA, is the author of the remarkable biography Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original (2009) and most recently Africa Speaks, America Answers: Modern Jazz in Revolutionary Times (2012). He is a contributor to Killing Trayvons: an Anthology of American Violence.

THOUGHTS ON COVID-19 FROM MONTREAL ANTI-FASCISTS

<https://montreal-antifasciste.info/en/2020/03/30/covid-19-preliminary-thoughts-on-the-current-situation/>

What follows are preliminary thoughts; things are changing quickly and in unpredictable ways, and we feel it's important to communicate some thoughts and connect some dots from an anti-racist, anti-fascist perspective, as the exercise might be useful, and to start thinking now about how we will move forward from this.

The COVID-19 pandemic has set off waves of repressive and authoritarian reaction, often along nationalist lines. While the virus will claim a heavy toll in lives lost, the social ramifications are likely to be at least as significant.

Extraparliamentary far-right forces haven't attempted to mount a coherent response to the crisis and have no agreed-upon position. Some engage in denial, claiming that the virus is a hoax, others promote conspiracy theories and insist it's a bioweapon developed by China or by leftists, but most are simply overtaken by the speed of events. Specific groups may be gearing up to overcome these limitations. What we've seen has been discussions on social media. An exception is Atalante, neofascists based in Quebec City, who put up several of their signature poster-banners in Montreal and Quebec City March 21, with slogans like "Le Mondialisme Tue" ("Globalism Kills") and "Le Vaccin Sera Nationaliste" ("The Vaccine Will Be Nationalist"). Antifascists were quick to paint these over.

The initial non-State response to COVID-19 has been almost entirely led by far left forces, which have established mutual aid networks in communities across North America, while putting forth economic demands around rent and working conditions for those deemed to be "essential employees." At the same time, people have organized themselves, often against daunting odds – note for instance the hunger strike being engaged in as we write by people held at the migrant prison in Laval and various other initiatives by prisoners across North America resisting conditions in which they have clearly been deemed expendable.

Despite their fantasies of "serving the nation," far right forces of the national-populist variety have been incapable of doing anything useful, and have been content to vent on social media about how much they hate Trudeau and love Legault. Accolades directed at Legault and the CAQ – not only by the right – are as pathetic as they are revealing. The political establishment the CAQ represents (along with the Liberal Party of Quebec and the Parti Québécois) is directly responsible for the fact that, through decades of cuts, the health system isn't as robust as it should be: hospitals are understaffed and under-equipped, stocks of personal protective equipment, as well as ventilators, are likely grossly insufficient, there are fewer ICU beds per capita in 2020 than in 1992, and so on. (So far) the premier appears to many as a reassuring father figure, in contrast to the wimpy drama teacher equivocating on the federal level; a reminder that image is paramount in the bourgeois electoral spectacle.

What we've seen around the world is that the decisive responses to the pandemic are on the level of State structures – closed borders, emergency legislation, mobilization of military assets, new police powers, etc. Over the past two weeks, more than a dozen European countries, together with the EU as a whole, have imposed new travel restrictions and border checks. This builds on years of growing populist xenophobia and "euroskepticism," and has been applauded by far-right politicians. In Italy, Matteo Salvini of the far-right Northern League declared, "Allowing migrants to land from Africa, where the presence of the virus was confirmed, is irresponsible." "The need for borders is being vindicated by the pandemic," crowed Laura Huhtasaari, a member of the European Parliament with the Finns Party of Finland – "Globalism is collapsing." Meanwhile, Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán has blamed foreigners and migrants for the spread of the virus in Hungary: "We are fighting a two-front war, one front is called migration and the other one belongs to the coronavirus. There is a logical connection between the two as both spread with movement."

Here in Canada, the Trudeau government closed its borders to travelers who are not Canadian or US citizens on March 18, a few days later to all non-essential travel, and then in a symbolic move, announced that refugees from the US would be turned away at irregular border crossings. This is a concession to xenophobic, racist sentiments in Canada, a clampdown on irregular border crossings having been a key demand of right and far-right forces and the site of numerous anti-immigrant mobilizations.

Various repressive measures are not simply being passed but applauded. Here in Quebec, following a government declaration that gatherings of two people or more (from different households) were forbidden, police appealed to the public to denounce their neighbors breaking this new measure. Within a few days, police intervened to break up dozens of such "gatherings." While people socializing represents a health risk, we aren't oblivious that the State is claiming powers that were unimaginable just weeks ago, to popular acclaim. This bodes ill for the future, with or without this disease.

The organized Quebec far right (such as it is) has been outflanked by elements of the "mainstream." Comparing the writings of Atalante with those of Quebecor columnist Denise Bombardier (see her odious "Tout va basculer") – who is to say which is further to the right?

Nothing can be excluded from the realm of possibility, and comrades had best keep that in mind. Repression could ramp up very rapidly, to an extent that most of us have never experienced before; nothing is certain, but nothing is impossible right now.

The past three months have seen a steady stream of escalating racism and attacks against those perceived to be Asian. "People have reported being coughed at or spit on and being told to leave stores, Uber and Lyft drivers refusing to pick them up, verbal and online harassment and physical assault," according to the Stop AAPI Hate website. Over 1000 such incidents were documented in the U.S. between Jan 28 and Feb 24, and over 650 in the week since the website was launched on March 18.

As news and misinformation about the coronavirus began to spread following the New Year, Chinese and Asian Canadians began speaking out about dealing with an increase in racism and

xenophobia. As the Pan-Asian Collective has documented, "In Montreal, two Korean men were stabbed this week, and the South Korean consulate has issued a warning to Koreans to be careful. GaNaDaRa, a Korean restaurant in Montreal, has been robbed twice. It's unclear if these robberies were racially motivated, but East Asians in the city can feel tensions rising. There are reports KimGalbi, another Korean restaurant, was vandalized this week. Hate crimes have occurred in Montreal's Chinatown where a number of statues and symbols have been vandalized in the last few weeks, and there've been attacks on three Buddhist temples.

Opposing anti-Asian racism needs to be a priority in a context where the U.S. president makes a point of referring to this disease as "the Chinese flu" – one constitutive element of the far right is the impulse to scapegoat, to blame and attack a stigmatized group when times get hard. As Trump's circus plays itself out, times will get very hard indeed.

A number of other oppressive arguments are circulating that we should be alert to. Ableist and ageist reassurances that COVID-19 "only kills old people and those with pre-existing conditions" build on popular attitudes that the human bodies that are not young and healthy are disgusting, defective, and less worthy of care. They also build on a producerist ethic, whereby certain people are deemed "parasitic" and, thereby, not worthy of equal rights, in some cases not even worthy of life. Historically this has found expression in the eugenics movement (which was widely supported by both the left and right), and we see it today in claims by mainstream media and political figures arguing that the economic harm of social distancing is worse than the possibility of the old and infirm dying. (It's worth noting here that such ableist and eugenic criteria are embedded in the Canadian State itself, which, for instance, has long held that various medical conditions are sufficient to disqualify immigrants from receiving Canadian citizenship.)

Another trope circulating widely, including in progressive circles, is the idea that the virus is some kind of punishment or lesson being dished out by a conscious or meta-conscious "nature" to teach humans to not damage the environment. It is true that the response to COVID-19 proves that it would be possible to enact drastic societal changes for other purposes (for instance to reduce carbon emissions and slow climate change) and also that by various measures pollution and other harmful impacts have decreased as a result of the lockdowns (as they did after 9/11). Such rhetoric, however, lays the blame on "human beings" (magically undivided by class, gender, or nation) for what is in fact a global economic system maintained for the benefit of a minority at great and murderous expense to the majority. This kind of mystical talk of "nature" has historically laid the basis for violence against those deemed "unnatural" or "offensive to nature" and points away from societal solutions to societal problems. At its most extreme – which we have not seen much of yet, but which we are aware of as a potential – this can find expression in misanthropic eco-fascist movements. (In October of last year, in a joint text with the IWW and CLAC, Montréal Antifasciste laid out a brief series of points regarding climate change and the environmental crisis; these seem all the more relevant today in light of the current pandemic.)

At this moment the State remains the preeminent terrain for repressive and nationalistic action (though this is not static). Tendencies in the far right – those referred to in the media as "accelerationist", i.e., neo-nazis with dreams of mass carnage and chaos – have been caught chatting about the possibility of intentionally spreading COVID-19; there has been a lot of talk about responding to (or precipitating) mass upheaval through acts of violence meant to instill terror. In an apparent example of trying to implement these ideas in the real world, on March 25, neo-Nazi Timothy Wilson was killed in an encounter with the FBI while trying to bomb a hospital treating coronavirus patients in Missouri. Hopefully this will be an isolated case, but we need to remain aware of the potential for violence.

On the level of the State, a series of repressive demands have been granted; it remains to be seen if they stay in place. Left-wing demands may also be fulfilled, and there's the possibility of a renewed authoritarian welfare state, as a consensus seems to have emerged that neoliberalism has failed. The welfare state and social democracy have always had an exclusionary and nationalist aspect, representing a series of privileges historically reserved for citizens of the nation in return for their loyalty. This is important to remember as certain right-wing forces propose measures that might superficially resemble those of the left.

At the same time, under cover of a global health emergency, long-standing programs are being pursued. In the US, some state governments have excluded abortion providers from the list of essential medical services allowed to stay open. In various jurisdictions, cell phone data is used both to trace those who have tested positive for COVID-19 and to ascertain where people might be gathering in numbers that violate social distancing rules. Such techno-repressive fixes have been discussed by officials in Canada and Quebec. At the same time, under the guise of stimulus measures to maintain the economy, billions of dollars will be funneled to oil and gas corporations as part of Canada's strategy of opening up Indigenous lands for exploitation by global capitalism.

We are just in the earliest days of this pandemic, and it remains completely unclear what kind of future will emerge. One thing is clear: while we must stay safe to the best of our ability, we must also prepare to fight.

Zapatistas Act: EZLN Closes Caracoles Due to Coronavirus

<https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2020/03/17/ezln-closes-caracoles-due-to-coronavirus-and-calls-on-people-not-to-abandon-current-struggles/>
To the people of Mexico: To the peoples of the world: To the National Indigenous Congress—Indigenous Governing Council: To the Networks of Resistance and Rebellion: Sisters, brothers, hermanos: Compañeros, compañeras, compañeras:

Given the serious and scientifically proven risk to human life presented by COVID-19 or "Coronavirus"; Given the frivolous irresponsibility and lack of seriousness shown by the bad governments and the political class in its entirety who are using this serious humanitarian problem to attack each other instead of taking the necessary measures to confront a life-threatening virus which endangers all regardless of nationality, gender, race, language, religion, political affiliation, social class, or history; Given the lack of accurate and timely information about the spread and severity of the virus and the lack of a coherent plan to confront it, and; Given that our commitment as Zapatistas is to struggle for life; We have decided the following:

First: We declare a red alert in all of our communities, towns, barrios, and Zapatista organizational bodies.

Second: To the Juntas de Buen Gobierno [Good Government Councils] and the Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities in Rebellion, we recommend the full and immediate closure of the Caracoles and Centers of Resistance and Rebellion.

Third: To the bases of support and the entire Zapatista organizational structure, we recommend adherence to the series of recommendations and special hygiene measures which will be distributed in all Zapatista communities, towns, and barrios.

Fourth: Given the total absence of the bad governments, we strongly urge everyone [todos, todas, todoas] in Mexico and around the world to follow the necessary scientifically-based sanitary measures that will allow us to survive this pandemic.

Fifth: We call on you to sustain the struggle against femicides and violence against women, to continue the struggle in defense of territory and Mother Earth, to maintain the struggle for the disappeared, murdered, and imprisoned, and to hold high the flag of the struggle for humanity.

Sixth: We call on all not to lose human contact, but rather to temporarily change our forms of relating as compañeras, compañeros, compañeras, sisters, brothers, and hermanos.

The word, the listening ear, and the heart have many ways—paths, calendars, and geographies—in and on which to meet. This struggle for life can be one of them.

That's all.

From the mountains of Southeastern Mexico,

For the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee—General Command of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation, Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés. Mexico, March of 2020.

Covid-19 Update: Free Our Elders Now!

by Keith 'Malik' Washington

Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee

Revolutionary Greetings Comrades! Today is Tuesday, April 7, 2020. This morning the entire prison population here at USP Pollock was screened for Covid-19 and issued protective Masks! The Registered Nurse who was part of the screening team was named Pennison. I asked Mr. Pennison two important questions: #1.) Are there any Confirmed Cases of Covid-19 on the entire Federal Correctional Complex here at Pollock?

He answered: "No"

#2.) Have there been any Suspected Cases of Covid-19 on the Complex??

His answer was: "Yes, but they have been ruled out."

Be advised that this morning a prisoner on my Housing Unit claimed to have Covid-19 symptoms! He has been placed in quarantine. Please Pray for the Best!

The Fed-corr-complex at Pollock includes a Satellite Camp, a Medium Facility and a U.S. Penitentiary where I am currently housed.

Thus far I attribute USP Pollock's Coronavirus-free status to the thorough screening and aggressive protective measures implemented by the Complex Warden here at Pollock, Chris McConnell.

I spoke with Warden McConnell on April 2, and was able to conduct an informal interview here on my housing unit B-2 here at USP Pollock. The informal interview was directly related to the Bureau of Prisons response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. I will share the questions and Warden McConnell's responses to my questions.

Question: I asked Warden McConnell would he have his Medical Staff conduct screening of prisoners at USP Pollock Again for Covid-19??

Answer: Warden McConnell said that screening was being planned for all prisoners at USP Pollock.

Note: All B.O.P. employees are screened for Covid-19 symptoms everyday before entering the FCC-Complex at Pollock. These measures along with increased cleaning and sanitizing by the prison population have proven to be effective—thus far. I suggest the Protocols initiated by \McConnell be followed throughout the BOP.

Question: I asked Warden McConnell would he consider having B.O.P. Correctional Officers stay on Prison Complex Property rather than leaving daily to return to their homes during Louisiana's Statewide Lockdown??

Answer: Warden McConnell said that the B.O.P. has made provisions for this very real possibility—should the conditions deteriorate and those actions be necessary for the safety and health of all B.O.P. employees and prisoners.

Question: Lastly, I asked Warden McConnell that since I am an older prisoner who is nearing release, would the B.O.P. consider me for early release to Home Confinement in San Francisco.

Answer: Warden McConnell stated that the B.O.P. is not looking to release any High Security prisoners in the United States. He further explained that the B.O.P. is only considering prisoners who are Low Security and Low risk.

I found McConnell to be straight forward and candid during this informal interview. He said he was familiar with the Journalism and Activism of the infamous "Comrade Malik".

Sisters and brothers, in light of the information provided to us by complex warden Chris McConnell I must take this opportunity to issue a National Call for Action! Now!

I want all of you to consider the lives of our long suffering elderly and infirm Freedom Fighters and Servants of the People who've languished in these prisons for decades!

Many of our respected elders are still housed at High Security Facilities despite excellent behavior and clear disciplinary records. They are extremely vulnerable to contracting the Coronar virus!

WE MUST DEMAND ---that Congress as well as Attorney General Barr create some flexibility and include language in the Law (The CARES ACT) that will allow the immediate release of our elder and infirm comrades!!!

These elderly and vulnerable prisoners don't have to die from Covid -19 while in Federal or State custody!

THEY MUST BE FREED NOW! Help Me do this!

by Michael Novick, *Anti-Racist Action-Los Angeles/ People Against Racist Terror (ARA-LA/PART)*

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the US, where as we were (belatedly) going to press, the number of cases are the highest in the world, and the mortality rate was climbing and spiking, has been an object lesson to poor and working people, oppressed and colonized people, and the general population, of exactly what it means to live in the world bastion of reaction. Capitalism kills, and the USA, because of its roots in and continuing practice of settler colonialism, land theft, genocide, enslavement and racial capitalism, is, in the words of Mumia Abu-Jamal, Murder Incorporated.

In October 2019, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation/ Bloomberg School of Public Health conducted a "table-top" exercise planning for a novel corona-virus global pandemic (a Center for Health Security planning exercise), urging governments and private businesses to work together to allocate and distribute medical supplies and treatments and deal with other aspects of such a pandemic. Videos can still be seen on-line here: <http://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/event201/videos.html>

Real Planning is Impossible Under Capitalism

These videos illustrate the impossibility of real planning under capitalism. They talked endlessly about how only private global supply chain corporations could deal with providing necessary medical supplies and treatments, how to deal with impacts on global transportation, how to handle the impacts on the financial system, and the possibilities of controlling the Internet to prevent panic.

They called for cooperation between WHO and private global supply chain providers. They concluded that 65 million deaths would result as the disease spread through impoverished mega-cities, and that the impact of the economic contraction would last for years. Their exercise assumed a much slower pace of the spread of the pandemic than what has actually occurred, and a less precipitous drop in economic output and in stock values (always a big concern for the big bourgeoisie) than now seems to be the case IRL. How accurate their prediction of deaths proves to be remains to be seen.

The coincidence of their game-playing with the actual outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic within a couple of months has of course provoked an array of mostly right-wing claims that the whole thing is either a "false flag" bio-weapon attack, or a New World Order-Bilderberg plot for population reduction. Since the event was not closed door but covered by the media and remains posted on the Internet, it's safe to conclude that such conspiracist thinking is opportunistic fear-mongering, which only obscures the more fundamental truth of class contradiction, capitalist impotence to overcome the inherent contradictions of their system, and the way in which capitalist agriculture and land use encourages the development of increasingly virulent pathogens.

The players came up with seven major recommendation from their sobering "game", excerpted here:

“1. Governments, international organizations, and businesses should plan now for how essential corporate capabilities will be utilized during a large-scale pandemic. Public sector efforts are likely to become overwhelmed. But industry assets, if swiftly deployed, could save lives and reduce economic losses.

2. Industry, national governments, and international organizations should work together to enhance stockpiles of medical countermeasures (MCMs) to enable rapid and equitable distribution.

3. Countries, international organizations, and transportation companies should work together to maintain travel and trade. Travel and trade are essential to the global, national and even local economies, and should be maintained even in the face of a pandemic. Improved coordination, and communications between the public and private sectors, relating to risk, travel advisories, import/export restrictions, and border measures will be needed.

4. Governments should provide more resources for development and surge manufacturing of vaccines and diagnostics needed during a severe pandemic. Countries may need population-level supplies of safe and effective medical countermeasures.

5. Global business should recognize the economic burden of pandemics and fight for stronger preparedness. In addition to investing more in preparing their own companies and industries, business leaders and their shareholders should advocate for increased govt. resources for preparedness. Globally, there has been a lack of attention and investment in preparing for high-impact pandemics.

6. International organizations should prioritize



reducing economic impacts of epidemics and pandemics. Much of the economic harm resulting from a pandemic is likely to be due to counterproductive behavior of individuals, companies, and countries.

7. Governments and the private sector should develop methods to combat misinformation prior to the next pandemic. Governments will need to partner with traditional and social media companies to develop nimble approaches.

“Accomplishing the above goals will require collaboration among governments, international organizations and global business.”

Capitalism Kills

Reality has demonstrated capitalism's complete incapacity to accomplish any of those goals. Goal #5 is especially interesting, because no corporation has ever "invested" in anything absent the expectation of a financial return on investment, an increase in profits. That's the nature of the beast. As a participant admitted in one of the videos, "nobody" manufactures goods for which there is not an immediate market (or at least not under the iron laws of capitalist competition).

Goal #6 is also telling and unusually frank. It would be naive to imagine that a panel convened by Gates and Bloomberg would prioritize anything other than "reducing the economic impacts of .. pandemics." The idea that international organizations might instead want to prioritize public health and human survival would of course never cross their minds.

It would be an interesting investigative journalism project to see if any of the "players" in this table-top planning exercise has contracted COVID-19. One is from the CDC. Stephen C. Redd is the Deputy Director for Public Health Service and Implementation Science at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Dr. Redd currently oversees the Center for Preparedness and Response; the Center for Global Health; the Center for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support; and the Office of Minority Health and Health Equity. <http://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/event201/players/index.html>

Coronacapitalism Targets Black, Indigenous People

Unfortunately, Trump gutted funding for the CDC before this "game" took place, and eliminated the Pandemic preparedness section of the National Security Council. Charged with coming up for a test for infection by the virus, instead of using the one from WHO, the CDC and the Food & Drug Administration failed massively. Native tribal peoples and the African descent Black population in major cities are the two hardest hit groups: **Black people are 40% of COVID deaths** nationally, AP reports, 70% in Mississippi, Louisiana & Milwaukee, WI, because of the underlying racist economic and health inequities that the SARS-CoV2 is now exploiting just as the capitalists do.

The antidote to the ravages of COVID-19, and the required physical distancing, on the population and the economy is social solidarity, and socialism; true mutual aid as the organizing principle of society. The reason there aren't enough masks for medical personnel, let alone all the workers who need them -- the grocery clerks, postal carriers, field hands, fast food workers, machinists, janitors, teachers, check-out cashiers or nannies -- is not merely because Trump fucked up, but because as a commodity under capitalism, such products have been outsourced, so that the maximum value can be extracted from super-exploited labor. They're produced within a global supply chain in quantities established by the market for maximum profitability and efficiency on the distribution end as well, according to the principles of just-

in-time inventory control -- the same reason stores ran out of toilet paper when everyone tried to buy some extra at the same time. The cornucopia does not fill itself endlessly and automatically; provisions are provided by collective and coordinated human labor.

Solidarity is the Antidote

Solidarity is an antidote -- not to COVID, but to the far more destructive viral memes that govern our consciousness and behavior under capitalism and colonialism: look out for number one, money talks, America first, nice guys finish last; you're fired; if you're white, you're all right, if you're Black, get back; you're beautiful when you're angry; don't worry your pretty little head about it-- all the sickness of the spirit and the lack of moral guidance that brought us Trump. Our latest wartime president is learning willy-nilly that bullets and bombs are useless against a virus -- and in fact, in the long run, are useless against the desire for freedom of a united people. We need to drive that lesson home by demanding an end to sanctions and war-mongering against Iran, Cuba, Venezuela and other countries the US targets.

Sheltering-in-place has demonstrated in a few days' time that this society runs on the work-a-day people who



make and move everything. Their lockout, their enforced absence, has taken big business and Wall Street to their knees in a matter of days. Let this be a lesson to us all about the power of the general strike, the capacity to topple the high and mighty by withholding our labor, refusing to consent, ending our identification with our oppressors and exploiters.

Power to the People

All the power the rulers possess is taken from the people they oppress; all their wealth is stolen from the people and the land, the bountiful products and ecosystems of nature that capitalism is ruining. The modern alchemists who spin gold out of the blood, sweat, toil and tears, the likes, tweets and data of billions, understand very clearly that unless they keep extracting it daily, hourly, their wealth and power can vanish in an instant, like the housing bubble and stock market bubble that inevitably popped; like the banks that could never provide even pennies on the dollar if everyone came for their cash like they do for toilet paper. We need to seize this crisis as a teachable moment, a learning moment when that truth becomes clear, like an epiphany, to the people being exploited and oppressed.

We need to use that understanding and that popular, creative power to shape a new, better and different world "out of the ashes of the old," as Solidarity Forever has it. We need to transform agriculture so it no longer drives the evolution of virulent pathogens through gigantic hog and poultry operations that 'perfect' and transmit micro-organisms from wildlife into humans. We must end the carceral state now and forever. We must say that we will not allow the respite that this breakdown of global capitalism has given to the environment, the reduction in toxic air pollution and greenhouse gases, to be reversed back to "business as usual." We must take this moment of crisis not just to demand debt or rent relief, but to expropriate the expropriators, to end usury and private ownership of land once and for all. We must organize not just for hazard pay or workplace safety, but to end the wages system and take over the means of production, in order to meet human needs, environmental restoration and social good.

We cannot afford to miss this critical opportunity to fight for the future, or we may not have a future!

Mass Incarceration and Revolution

By Chairman Shaka Zulu

In this paper I propose a radical idea that prisons constitute the cutting edge of modern day slavery, repression and rebirth. The principal focus of mass incarceration is currently on the harsh sentencing laws, rightly characterized as “Jim Crow” laws by Michelle Alexander in her famed book “The New Jim Crow.” However, it’s necessary to show that prisoners living in this massive slave plantation do not accept this dehumanization passively. They are resisting and rediscovering their humanity in a place of total repression. Prisoners are not stopping there, satisfied with a new identity. They are being released from these huge monstrosities called prisons with a new direction and purpose.

The current numbers show that 9 million people are under or on some form of criminal supervision; 800,000 prisoners are housed in Security Housing Units (SHU) or Management Control Units (MCU); 500,000 people sit in county and military prisons. Just a few decades ago the number of people was around 300,000, but the numbers now show that Amerika imprisons more people than the rest of the whole world together. The 2.5 million prisoners constitute a modern day slave force, as elaborated by the U.S. Constitution.

It was in 1619 that 20 enslaved Afrikans arrived in Jamestown, Virginia. It is here in Virginia that we can find huge oppressive laws being laid that currently define Black peoples relationship to the dominant slave system as “forever slaves” in this land where “all people are created equal.”

Here is a few laws from Virginia’s racial laws:

1661. An Act is passed punishing any servant who runs away with a person held as slave. The punishment increases time to be served.

1662. A law declares that a child follows the conditions of the mother, so that a child born of a woman held as a slave and a free father is deemed a slave.

1667. Conversion to Christianity will not end slave status.

1669. A so-called “master” who is “correcting” an obstinate person held as a slave may kill that person, during the process, and there is no crime.

1680. Persons “engaged by lawful authority” to track down persons held as slaves who escaped and are “laying out” may kill them, If they resist being returned to slavery, without penalty for murder.

These laws were meant to keep Black people permanently enslaved and inferior. It was a crime to teach other Blacks how to read and write. Slavemasters and the whole slave state thrived on the ignorance of the people. To read is to know, and to know is to act!

We can clearly see one long chain of oppressive laws designed to curtail and derail Black people’s freedom struggle. And these oppressive laws have given rise to the mass incarceration system of today. Prisons are where society puts people who are cut off from the productive system, where they refuse or can’t provide housing, education, food, clothing and decent medical care, and because of the nature of the capitalist economic system, where a small extraneous minority hoards all of the resources for its ruling class, one notices that a majority of these prisons are populated with poor people.

Change and Transformation

Recently, a comrade asked me “how did I become a revolutionary?” I answered that my encounters with the enemy criminal justice system and its police forces kind of “kicked” me into the revolutionary movement. When I initially went into the enemy prison, I was a common criminal that preyed on the people. I stole and robbed my way through my early teens. I did all of the things that people do to survive. But when I went into the enemy prison I ran into some ideas that changed my life forever.

It was in prison that I and my comrades found redemption in revolutionary politics; it was there that we encountered a revolutionary idea that with time, patience and study we can change our behavior from that existing on the exploitation of the people to one having an undying love for the people. My morals and values changed as well. I JOINED WITH THE REST of the working-class poor people trying to make a difference for everybody.

So, I began to read books. I began to talk to political prisoners. I began to do a lot of writing. And in that process, I discovered my humanity in the enemy prison. Right there in that prison cell is where I and thousands of other prisoners started dropping their criminal mentality and picked up the banner of International Proletarian consciousness.

The first books I remember reading that still impact me today are:

“Soledad Brother” by Comrade George Jackson; “To Die for the People” by Huey P. Newton; “Revolutionary Suicide” by Huey P. Newton; “Assata” by Assata Shakur

As is evident, here I read a lot of books and reading

exposed me to a whole different perspective and consciousness about myself. These books dealt with the Black experience here in this country. It was only when I became familiar with Mao Tse-tung, Marx, Ché and Kwame Nkrumah that my transformation became complete. So I became a revolutionary because it scares the Hell out of our oppressors plus it’s the only way to get free. Revolutionary Marxism has been the only philosophical instrument wielded by the oppressed that freed them from capitalist misery and exploitation.

To simply answer a larger question bound up in my change that constantly rears its head is how did I decide to become a Black Panther? I think the average Black person, whether they are a part of the Black lumpen class, Black working class or petty bourgeois class know of the history of the Black Panther Party in a superficial way. Our Brothers, our Sisters, our mothers, grandmothers, grandfathers and friends have had some kind of encounter with the Black Panther Party either growing up or they experienced it by participating in the many programs that the Black Panther Party had. So, I always knew that the Black Panther Party existed. I didn’t know its ideology. I didn’t know its membership. I didn’t know its International reach. And I certainly didn’t know its theoretical approaches to solving the oppression of our people.

But I knew of the Black Panther Party’s name. It’s similar to old folk’s tales that we have within the Black community, especially during slavery where enslaved



Afrikans would get together and would talk about “Old Jack” or “Old Charles.” These are Black slaves that rose up in rebellion. They rose against the plantation economy; they raided the slavemaster’s house for corn and chickens. They were never caught. And so 10 years, 20 years, 250 years later, these stories of resistance are still being told. “Old Jack” was able to out maneuver the slave state. And in some instances it’s really a fairy tale. Afrikan culture is about inspiring and motivating people. You want to put oppressed people in a position where they can win the freedom struggle against an established enemy.

So the Black Panther Party has a sort of mystique within the Black community that takes on a life on its own. Some of us don’t understand its ideology. Folks are brainwashed by our capitalist enemies to see the Panthers as an anti-white party; others still think it was about killing pigs or guns only. They miss the most important aspect to the Party, which is to empower the people by bringing them into political life as agents of change. The Black Panther Party also had over 60 “Serve the People” survival programs that gave hope to the hopeless; to people who had no sense of how to fight back against the enemy state. The Black Panther Party’s ideology empowers the community, empowers the nation, and empowers the world through a revolutionary thrust for freedom. Hence, social programs for the party is not a source of cheap charity or pacification. It’s a prerequisite to liberation for all oppressed people.

Prisons and Mass Incarceration are acts of counter-insurgency, an unfinished war with our oppressors for basic freedoms that guarantee our dignity and humanity in this racist, avaricious society. Prisons should be seen as a tool of warfare by our enemies to break up our resistant communities and to inflict genocide. Prisons play such a huge role in our lives that any revolutionary movement that advocates for socialism would do themselves and our



people a disservice if they do not include prisoners in the decision-making bodies of the liberation struggle to get free.

Prisoners have over 150 years of solid socialist practice to examine to determine how socialism works. We don’t need to guess. Nor do we need Bernie Sanders to tell us what socialism is. The first socialist society of 1917 did not get the chance to fully develop as a socialist society, because it was constantly under capitalist attack. It was surrounded by imperialist enemies. Nevertheless, we can see an image of the kind of society we want. We see women liberated from housework that really enslaved them to a tradition of patriarchal rule.

Peasants were liberated from feudal life that tied them to a life of misery, hopelessness and poverty. We saw housing and medical care become a human right. We saw the means of production confiscated from the oppressive exploitative ruling strata and placed the resources at the disposal of the people.

While in prison reading about political and economic systems I developed a bird’s-eye view into the very function of capitalism. Chew on this: Let’s try to compare capitalism with the kind of world we want today. Most people would agree that the kind of world envisioned where all of the resources underneath and on top of the earth belongs to all of the people. That these resources belong to everyone, that having these resources in the hands of the socialist State will give us a world free of militarism, racism and plunder.

If we examine resources, we can see that it’s resources in the hands of the oppressors that is primarily responsible for our class and racial oppression. A lack of resources or access to these resources as a matter of human rights constitutes the uneven economic development we see across the underdeveloped regions that are being deliberately kept poor and repressed. So if the resources were in the hands of the people, we wouldn’t have a Congo that has been involved in a low-intensity war since the assassination of Luarent Kibila in 1996. According to the United Nations nearly 6 million people have died since then in the Congo. The reactionary fight by the mining corporations and imperialist governments have been over gold, diamonds, and coltan, which goes into making cell phones, airports, jets, etc.

So if we can grab hold of the resources that are in the hands of the 2,000 billionaires, we can change the world for the better. We can give everyone the opportunity to have education as a human right; housing as a human right; we can abolish prisons; we can abolish warfare as a means of resolving contradictions between nation states and individuals.

Socialism is the only viable option. Nothing else will save the people from our capitalist enemies. There is no third way. We know that socialism gives us the ability to put humanity on the right course. Capitalism from the start put us on the wrong course, because this whole parasitical system was founded on the backs of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade and the mass genocide of indigenous people.

Capitalism and prisons have not been around that long. These kind of societies where people exist on top of one another is a recent invention of the capitalist bourgeoisie. And these kind of particular societies developed out of the modern construction of the international monetary system set up by our oppressors.

Prior to this, people lived for thousands of years in relative peace and harmony, especially during the early stages of formative society or what sociology has termed the communal stage, where a spirit of unity and cooperation pervaded the whole land. So, prison has taught me to see myself as a human being, to see myself, though living at the bottom of society, as a meaningful actor in its transformation.

Chairman Shaka Zulu, Panther Love! NABPP

A Tale of Two ‘Reservations’: Palestine, Indian Country, and the Coronavirus

By Benay Blend

<https://www.palestinechronicle.com/a-tale-of-two-reservations-palestine-indian-country-and-the-coronavirus/>

In an article titled “The Struggle of Native Americans is the Struggle of Palestinians,” Rebecca Miles, Executive Director of the Nez Perce tribe, relates how the struggle for resources on the part of these two groups bear similarities. Palestinians, she explains, are yet another indigenous group of people severed from their land, waterways, and ways of life.

Because both groups face the same “institutional colonialism and racism,” Miles wants to “communicate the similarities we share as people” along with a “sense of camaraderie” in order to facilitate that “help[ing] each other and stick[ing] together” because the issues are the same. Written two years ago, her words are no less pertinent today as both groups of people, already under siege, now are faced with the specter of the Coronavirus.

At the beginning of March, before the nightmare became a reality, Ramzy Baroud posed the following question: “What if the Coronavirus reaches the besieged Gaza Strip?” Already placed under political quarantine by Israel, Palestinian communities would presumably have a difficult time because of a lack of healthcare as well as medical facilities equipped to handle a pandemic.

For Gaza, already faced with “chronic power outages, gaps in critical services, including mental health and psychosocial support, and shortages of essential medicines and supplies,” and hospitals full of injuries from the Great Return March, the prospect of managing the crisis appeared bleak.

As Baroud explains, 97% of Gaza’s water supply is not drinkable, so now, during the crisis, there is insufficient water to sterilize instruments as well as hands. Moreover, Oxfam’s Laila Barhoum adds that there are 70 intensive care beds and 62 ventilators available for 2 million Palestinians in Gaza. “No amount of ‘preparedness’ in Gaza,” Baroud concludes would have compensated for Israel’s “politically-imposed ‘quarantines’—also known as apartheid.”

On the Navajo Nation, the situation is similar. As of March 31, 2020, the Navajo Department of Health and Navajo Area Indian Health Service, in coordination with the Navajo Epidemiology Center, announced that the number of positive tests for COVID-19 had reached 214, along with seven confirmed deaths.

In a dispatch from The Red Nation, an indigenous activist group based in New Mexico but with branches now in other states, there are listed two aspects of the current crisis: the danger of illness and death from the disease, and the larger context of “capitalism [that] has proven biologically unsuitable for life.” Typical of health care in a capitalist system, it is the poor, those in ICE detention camps and on isolated Indian reservations, and incarcerated people who will pay the highest price.

In Palestine, there was very little that could be done to prepare for the pandemic due to life under the Occupation. In America, The Red Nation continues, there was the possibility of being on top of the situation, but “preparedness and human solidarity are not profitable in a global economic system.” This is exactly what Naomi Klein calls the Shock Doctrine, an opportunity that arises

during a disaster for the ruling class to garner even more than its fair share of wealth.

Another piece of the problem is that the US does not collaborate with others who have more advanced tests and treatments, partly because that would hinder corporate profits of companies who are perhaps far behind in research. For example, advances on the part of Chinese and Cuban doctors are not being used even though these physicians are helping other affected countries.

On the Navajo Nation, as in Palestine, there are extenuating circumstances due to long-held settler-colonialism. For example, according to Melissa Tso (Navajo), community activist and organizer for The Red Nation, some families are in need of paper plates, plastic utensils and water because Chapter Houses, where they have gone to receive water, are now closed. These homes have no running water and in some cases no electricity or indoor plumbing.

Moreover, the lack of internet and technology means that public schools are handing out paper packets to their students. This procedure in itself could spread the virus. Teachers have had to go into work to put these packets together, and families then come into school to retrieve them, all of which increase risks of spread.

What Indigenous people do have, that capitalist systems do not, is an abundance of resilience and collective strength that will arm them through the struggle. Writes The Red Nation: “The crisis has exposed the capitalist system for what it is,” in short, “anti-life.” In Palestine, the poet Rafeef Ziadah’s verse “We Teach Life, Sir” is alive and well. As exemplified by shoemaker Amjad Zaghir who very quickly converted his Hebron factory in order

to produce “thousands of masks a day,” Palestinians are rising to the occasion.

“If you’re not fighting for life in such a system,” claims Justine Teyba (Pueblo) of The Red Nation, “what else is there to do [with] your life?” Moreover, if “you’re not putting [your prayers] into praxis,” what good are they? Prayer and praxis, both practices that led Teyba to be a seed keeper in these hard times, and steered her towards a “path to farm and feed [her] people.” Her journey leads away from practices that devalue basic needs, and towards a tradition that relies on human values.

“COVID-19 isn’t an individual problem,” explains The Red Nation. “How we respond must be collective, with human dignity and love.” Not to diminish and/or romanticize the seriousness of the struggle, but it seems that Indigenous nations are doing what they have always done, i.e. building the collective ability to fight back.

At a recent Town Hall, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez explained that “once again,” the United States government has overlooked its first people, not just on Navajo land but in “all of Indian Country.” As “strong people,” Nez continued, “we have overcome tough times and we’re utilizing our resources to help our people out there.” Despite the lack of U.S. government aid, Nez is “hearing about people hauling water for their grandparents, people helping get water and hay for their elders out there. That’s Navajo right there — helping each other out to overcome this.”

The time is ripe to create a new paradigm based on sharing resources, creating mutual aid networks, and lifting sanctions that cause so much suffering for people already in dire straits. As China sends Coronavirus kits and ventilators to Palestine, and perhaps also a team of medical experts; as Palestinian farmers leave produce for those who cannot afford to pay; and as we spent the day arranging with a friend of a friend to distribute much-needed water and other supplies to people on the Navajo Nation, perhaps we won’t go back to “normal.”

As Peter Baker suggests, conceivably the crisis that is “destabilizing” the world will have a “liberating” outcome, one far removed from capitalism and settler-colonialism of the past.



New Mexico mural by Native artist Remy depicting Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation.

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— Benay Blend earned her doctorate in American Studies from the University of New Mexico. Her scholarly works include Douglas Vakoch and Sam Mickey, Eds. (2017), “Neither Homeland Nor Exile are Words’: ‘Situated Knowledge’ in the Works of Palestinian and Native American Writers”. She contributed this article to *The Palestine Chronicle*. Pictured above at a JVP meeting.

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- ★ April 22 - Earth Day - Economic impact of COVID-19 has reduced pollution
- ★ May 1 - General Strike: No Shopping - No Rent - No Debt - No Work!
- ★ May 5 - Cinco de Mayo - Mexican (Chican@) anti-imperialist holiday
- ★ Jun 2 - Harriet Tubman Combahee River raid 1863; Jun 11 - SoWeTo rebellion
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INSIDE

- ★ Towards a General Strike: May 1, 2020
- ★ Release our Elders from Prisons & Jails!
- ★ Mass Incarceration and Revolution
- ★ A Tale of 2 "Reservations": Palestine, Native Country & COVID-19
- ★ Solidarity with Prisoners' Human Rights
- ★ The Roots of Anti-Fascist Resistance
- ★ Fight for the Future
- ★ and Much More!

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