

# 10 Lessons for US Anti-war & Anti-fascist Activists from the War in Ukraine

By Michael Novick, Anti-Racist Action-Los Angeles/People Against Racist Terror (ARA-LAs/PART)

**Number 1: White supremacy is at the root of the saturation media coverage of the war in Ukraine and the international sanctions against Russia.** Equally brutal wars in Palestine, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, or various African countries have elicited no comparable coverage or outrage. The bombardment of people in the US and Europe with news, opinion and policies that humanize and uplift the Ukrainians as victims and heroes and demonize Russia, the instantaneous and united response by the so-called “international community” – essentially the EU and the NATO allies of the US – make it clear that in the eyes of imperialism, white lives matter most (as Matt Meyer had it in his book by the same name). Early commentary was quite explicit that this was an “earth-shattering event” *because* it was taking place in Europe and among Europeans.

If the same unanimity and propaganda barrage, humanizing the Palestinians and demonizing the Israelis



Truman signs NATO treaty, 1949, launching Cold War & national security state.

Clinton and the late Madeleine Albright led a campaign to turn NATO into an aggressive, eastward facing and expanding military force with scarcely a peep from most of the US population. There was no massive outcry then or since about the wasting of the “peace dividend” from the end of the Cold War. Many on the left and in the peace movement actually supported Clinton and NATO’s so-called humanitarian war in the former Yugoslavia. There was a massive outpouring in the streets globally in advance of Dubya Bush’s planned invasion of Iraq, but once “shock and awe” was launched, it dissipated. No other governments threatened or imposed sanctions on the US for its war of choice.

There has been no substantial resistance to the US Congress, controlled by the Democrats, allocating over a trillion dollars to the US military this year alone (counting not just the Pentagon but the “intelligence community”, NASA, the VA, and the Energy Dept. which handles nuclear armaments), while refusing to budget an equivalent amount over 10 years for social safety net programs.

We need to focus self-critically on the identification with empire, white supremacy and class collaborationism that have hamstrung opponents of US militarism and imperialism. This allowed matters to reach their current state of hostilities and the risk of a wider and deadlier conflict. We must determine how to overcome those weaknesses, and turn horror at the costs of war into effective opposition to all the war-mongers.

This is the most effective means that we have, to bring about peace – struggle to expose the aggressive US war machine and the deadly consequences of US efforts to dominate the world. The failures of the Democratic Party oriented left in this regard are evident in a recent Pew Research poll, which shows larger numbers of people in the US see Russia as an enemy. Early in the year, half of those polled thought of Russia as a “competitor” rather than an enemy; now 70% go for “enemy.” The poll also shows increased support for NATO. Liberal Democrats are especially strongly supportive of NATO; skepticism of the value of NATO is concentrated among conservative Republicans, 47% of whom question its “value” to the US: [https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/PG\\_2022.04.06\\_Russia-NATO\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/PG_2022.04.06_Russia-NATO_FINAL.pdf)

## Number 3: War and ethnic hatred are the inevitable consequence of capitalism and colonialism.

People in the US, and to an extent Europe, have been blinded to this reality by the capacity of imperialism to project its violence, its military forces, and its war-making into the countries it colonizes and exploits. Beneath the surface of a so-called Pax Americana, or a “new cold war”, hot wars have been raging on the planet for decades. The destruction of state socialist systems in the USSR, Yugoslavia and elsewhere has led



to intensified reactionary ethno-nationalism and war, of which this current war by Russia on Ukraine is the latest and most massive. Capitalism and colonialism foment ethnic, racial, and national divisions and animosities as a means to divide and conquer.

The US-instigated break-up of Yugoslavia resulted in wars among Serbs, Croats, Kosovars, and attendant war crimes and atrocities. We are seeing the same thing play out now in Ukraine, except that unlike in Kosovo, NATO is constrained from direct military engagement because of the size, strength, and lethality of Russia’s military capacity. But short of a no-fly zone, NATO is arming Ukraine and punishing Russia, including its civil society, with sanctions. US sanctions against Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Iran and a host of other countries are criminal, but (as with NATO aggression), left opposition to them has been limited and ineffective. US sanctions against Iraq in the period between the first and second Bush wars in Iraq took thousands of lives, especially of children. State sanctions are a tactic of war.

**Number 4: It’s worth pointing out (again) that in the build-up to the war, Putin denounced Ukraine as a phony nation, and blamed the Soviet Union and Lenin for inventing it.** He has clearly predicated his goals and policies not on socialism or the USSR, but on the old Czarist empire. He is what Lenin denounced as a “Great Russian chauvinist.” He is an anti-communist, and reactionary religious nationalist. None of that excuses the



Lenin and Bolsheviks, revolutionary internationalists, signed off on independence for Ukraine, Belarus, Poland to sue for peace and get out of World War I.

plentiful crimes of the US empire and its NATO and other military “alliances” around the world.

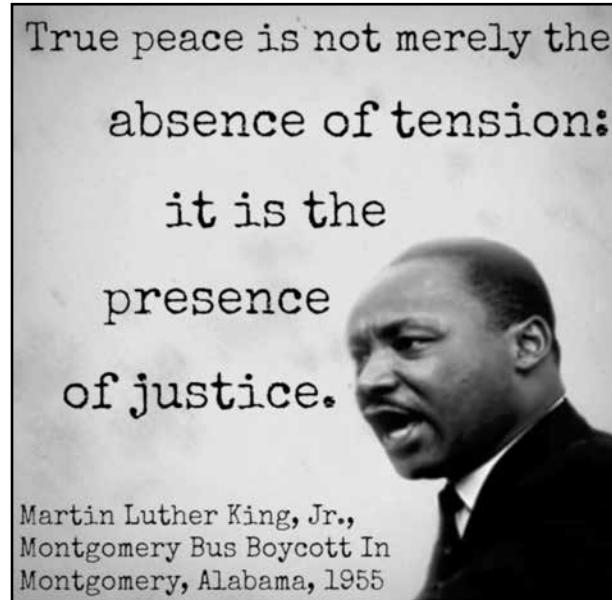
In the light of current developments, however, it is worthwhile to cast an eye back on history, and to conclude that there was a component of Anglo-US opposition to “Russia” disguised or perhaps amplified by the ideological struggle against state socialism and the USSR. Remember, the US invaded Cuba several generations before the Cuban revolution of Fidel Castro et al, and the Marines invaded and occupied Nicaragua long before the Nicaraguan revolution of Ortega et al, because of the expansionism and exploitative geopolitical interests and global ambitions of US settler-colonial capitalism. US intervention there dates back to efforts to incorporate Central American and Caribbean territories as slave states. Similarly, the US hostility towards the USSR can be seen to have been motivated not only by ideological hatred and fear of the threat of socialism, but also by geo-political interests and global ambitions.

How else to explain continued US hostility and “containment/rollback” strategies against Russia, more than a generation after the liquidation of the USSR and the triumph of fairly naked gangster capitalism in Russia? The left, or at least portions of it, discredited itself with its ideological flip-flops in support of the USSR and its state interests in the period leading up to World War II. We should not make the same mistake, without even the fig leaf of supporting “socialism”, in the current instance. We can and must oppose NATO and support the Russian and Ukrainian people, and the people of the world, without becoming apologists for Russia and its war-making.

**Number 5: There is an erroneous analysis put forward by some on the left that Russia is a state dominated by a so-called “national bourgeoisie” that has a material interest in opposing US and Western imperial domination of “Third World” countries and is therefore an objective ally of socialist or liberation forces. This is clearly wrong. There is no such “national bourgeoisie” opposed to imperialism in Russia, or perhaps anywhere. Russia needs security guarantees against further NATO expansion, and it is interested in contesting US hegemony, but as legitimate as those might be, they are not based on any progressive role of Russia’s ruling elites.**

In all the so-called BRICS nations, the response to the failures of neo-liberalism and to the crisis of capitalist globalization has been a rise in authoritarianism and reactionary nationalism, and for Russia, India and

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for example, had taken place in response to the call from Palestinian civil society for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel for its brutal and ongoing occupation of Palestine and war on Palestinian civilians, Israeli apartheid would have been ended long ago.

The *New York Times* for one has devoted more than half of every news section of their national print edition to Ukraine for weeks, along with additional stories in the business section and the Sunday magazine. No such saturation coverage has been offered to brutal US prosecuted and financed wars of aggression in Libya or Yemen, or to the French and US role in fighting in Africa.

The white supremacy involved in the coverage and the Western response is underscored by the disparate treatment of (white) Ukrainian refugees as compared to the simultaneous mistreatment and rejection of asylum seekers from Africa, Central or the Caribbean in the US, and from the so-called Middle East and Africa in Europe, as well as the mistreatment of African and other non-European refugees fleeing the fighting in Ukraine.

It should also be noted that even as it increases military and economic pressure on Russia, NATO is being pushed by the Biden administration to develop a new “Strategic Concept” that also targets China. Biden’s push builds on a Trump administration effort to get NATO to focus on China as a threat. The foreign ministers of Japan, South Korea and Australia came to the recent NATO foreign ministers’ gathering in Brussels for the first time, and the NATO Strategic Concept is also expected to address China for the first time, even though the Europeans have not previously shared the US view of China as a strategic threat.

**Number 2: The place to start an analysis of the causes of the war is with a self-criticism of the weakness and inefficacy of the peace movement in the U.S. and Europe.** There was an early and effective mass demand for demobilization after World War II which forced the US to withdraw many of its troops at least briefly. However, the impact of anti-communism and complicity with the bounty and booty of US domination and empire swiftly led to support for an ongoing massive global military presence by the US, and the establishment of NATO, as well as similar arrangements in Latin America (the Rio Pact), the so-called Middle East with CENTO (the Baghdad Pact), and in South-East Asia with SEATO. This has continued with a lack of resistance to the “Quad” anti-China alliance by the US, and the anti-China military compact and armament program by the US, UK and Australia.

There was a flurry of resistance in the late 80s, when the Nuclear Freeze movement, stronger in Europe but substantial in the US as well, opposed the US efforts to station intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe. But it petered out, and after the dissolution of the USSR, Bill

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China, if not Brazil and South Africa, an increase in militarization. The local rulers in all those countries continue to be quite well integrated into the global capitalist economy dominated by Western finance capital, as was much less the case from the 1950s-1980s. The Russian oligarchs in particular have helped prop up finance capital in London and New York, and promoted Zionism both within Israel and globally, as a prop of imperialism and settler colonialism. Of course there is inter-imperialist rivalry and there are contradictions among nation states and individual capitalists or sections of capital. But we should be under no illusion that some capitalists are “objectively progressive” or friends of the oppressed and exploited people of the world.

The deadly consequences of this illusion are also clear



Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil represents the integration of Brazil's bourgeoisie with global finance capital, and the Amazon rain forest, indigenous people pay the price.

in Brazil, where the Workers Party under Lula and Dilma tried to use state and organized labor resources to prop up an (imaginary) national bourgeoisie of Brazilian capital to compete regionally and globally. The consequence was a parliamentary coup, the deeper integration of Brazil with neo-liberalism as a “junior partner” to US imperialism in Latin America, and the coming to power of the neo-fascist Jair Bolsonaro, with his genocidal and ecocidal “development” of the Amazonian rain forest.

**Number 6: As we wrote at the launch of the invasion and war by Putin, although many of his charges about the actions and strategy of the US and NATO were accurate, they do not constitute a justification of the invasion.** (see <https://antiracist.org/blood-on-their-hands/> for that analysis.)

Quite simply, two wrongs do not make a right. Yes, NATO as a cat’s-paw for the US has been marching to the edges of Russia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union (effectively exposing the Cold War lie that it was needed defense to oppose “the Iron Curtain,” Soviet expansionism and subversion, and the ideological threat of supposed godless Communism). Yes, NATO refused to say that membership for Ukraine was off the table. Yes, the US and the West fomented, with participation by rightists and neo-



Polar view of NATO’s expansion to the borders of Russia nazis, the overthrow of a Ukraine government interested in economic but not military or political integration with western Europe while maintaining good relations and close ties with Russia. Yes, there has been a civil war within Ukraine in its eastern, predominantly Russian-speaking provinces.

Nevertheless, a Russian military invasion of Ukraine with inevitable civilian casualties was neither justified, wise or defensible. Whether particular individual atrocities were committed by the Russians or are false flags perpetrated by Ukrainian and Russian nazis in the Azov Battalion is almost irrelevant. War is not ennobling; it unleashes the worst in many.

The Russian invasion has objectively strengthened the hand of NATO and the militarists and warmongers in Europe. The Russian invasion appears to have backfired

in yet another aspect; instead of the “Finlandization” (neutrality) of Ukraine, there is a push for Finland and historically neutral Sweden as well, to enter NATO. See: <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-nato-jens-stoltenberg-finland-e80256ebe24bc5349724f4038784bd38> The Finnish and Swedish foreign ministers just participated in a gathering of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels.

We would do well to avoid becoming ensnared by the propaganda and self-justifications of any side in this war and to focus on opposition to war, war profiteering, and the root causes of conflict, and on support for the interests of the poor and working people of all nations. We have to figure out how to build an effective, impactful peace (and justice) movement in the US that can expose and oppose US imperialism and its crimes, without justifying militarism, repression and fascistization as a response to the ongoing global crisis of capitalism in other countries. Can we extend opposition to Russian war-making and oligarchs to resistance against the US war machine and “our” oligarchs, Bezos, Musk, Gates, Thiel, Zuckerberg, et al?

**Number 7: Neither should we accept the counter-narrative that this war is the successful culmination of a US-led strategy** to duplicate Zbigniew Brzezinski and Jimmy Carter’s successful entrapment of the USSR in “its Vietnam” in Afghanistan, by ensnaring Putin’s Russia into war in Ukraine. Despite the self-defeating nature of Putin’s war, there are critical differences. The USSR sent troops into its Afghan neighbor at the request of Afghanistan’s progressive, pro-socialist government to deal with a reactionary armed insurgency by Muslim fundamentalists provided with weapons by the Saudis and the US. There is no such invitation in this case.

Nor is Putin’s Russia remotely socialist. It is a system



Zbigniew Brzezinski & Jimmy Carter used Saudi-paid reactionary fundamentalists like Osama bin Laden to entrap & bleed the USSR in Afghanistan.

based on the looting of the social wealth created in the USSR through privatization into the hands of a few oligarchs, including Putin himself. It is an extractivist system and economy based on the sale of energy, mineral resources and grain to the West and other countries. Putin’s justifications for the war are not based on a reconstruction of the USSR, but on a Great Russian chauvinism and the history and model of the Czarist empire.

**Number 8: War is a breeding-ground and training-ground for fascism, domestically and internationally.** There is no question that there are fascist elements in Ukraine that have now been integrated into the state apparatus. Some of them came from Russia itself. Fascists from other countries have apparently joined in Ukrainian defense against the Russian invasion in order to get military experience and training. They are probably doing this in much larger numbers than US or other western anarchists and anti-imperialists joined in the military defense of Rojava and Kurdish autonomists in Syria. Fascists have been clearer about and more committed to independent armed action than most of the left, which puts the left at a disadvantage. An international left or libertarian socialist force prepared to fight fascism physically, as in Spain during the defense of the Republic against Franco and his nazi and fascist arms suppliers, Hitler and Mussolini, seems to be a shining artifact of the past, not a current day reality.

Fascism is also built from above as well as below, and is advanced not only by open and self-proclaimed fascists. The censoring of anti-war voices in Russia by Putin is paralleled by the censoring of skeptical and anti-war voices in the US, as for instance in the de-platforming by YouTube of Chris Hedges and the parroting of state department lines at Pacifica (not to mention NPR).

The national security state is intent on identifying any opposition to NATO or debunking of US or Ukrainian propaganda as coming from the right, and Trumpist supporters of Putin and Russia. This is similar to the treatment of any skepticism about the role of Big Pharma in the pandemic. Objectively, this strengthens the right

and the fascist attempts to portray themselves as the only effective anti-elitists. It drives people into their hands, and abets their strategy of mainstreaming fascist views and drawing support from people on the left.

This is fundamental to the fascist playbook. Mussolini came out of the Italian socialists to found his fascist movement. Hitler called his party the National Socialist German Workers Party. Putin cultivated ties with far-right forces as well as left elements and brought them into contact with each other at international conferences. There are fascists on both sides of the Russia-Ukraine war, and obviously within the US political spectrum inside and outside of government. An anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist anti-war movement must chart an independent path that contends effectively with all of them.

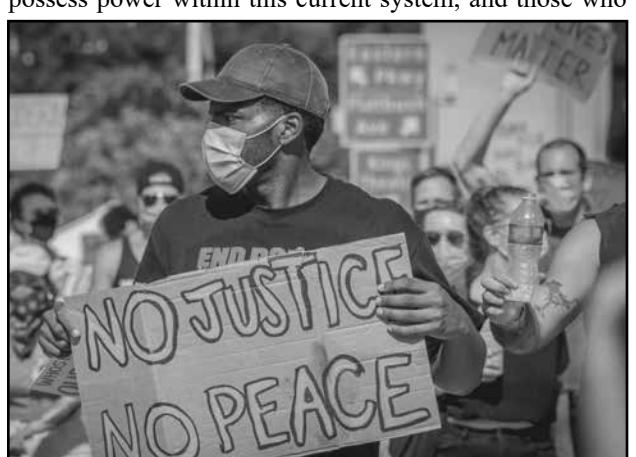
**Number 9: War or no war, business as usual goes on.** Despite the sanctions, western Europe continues to import Russian gas, oil and coal. In fact, Russian gas shipments to Europe *through Ukraine* have actually increased during the war, and Russia is continuing to pay royalties to Ukraine for the trans-shipments. This is one of the many insuperable contradictions of capitalism. Can we focus people’s attention on the hypocrisy of US and European



Russian gas and oil are still flowing to Europe through Ukraine

warmongers and war profiteers? What is the cost of this conflict not only in Ukrainian and Russian lives, or in rising gas prices, but in the vast sums going into weapons (and the bank accounts of the arms-makers and arms dealers)? The US has by far the largest arms industry in the world, not only in heavy weaponry but small arms, that fuel violence and deaths in the US itself as well as in dozens of countries around the world. We cannot allow the Russian invasion to become a justification for that. This is yet another reason why an anti-war movement must be a consciously anti-capitalist movement.

**Number 10: To build an effective anti-war movement in the US, we must link together peace and justice.** The US economy is bound up with the war machine, the so-called military-industrial complex, and with the carceral state, the internal war of racialized policing, surveillance, counter-insurgency, and mass incarceration. We must have a program for a just transition for all communities from reliance on weapons manufacture, imprisonment, and law enforcement (including border enforcement). Demands for eliminating nuclear weapons or ending reliance on fossil fuels must include plans for socially meaningful and valuable economic activity, production and employment. Leaving the uranium and the oil, coal and gas in the ground must recognize indigenous stewardship and protection of the water and land. But it also must project a way of life in which all people can have meaningful, gainful work engaged in production that is socially useful and necessary and manifests a reciprocal, restorative relationship with the rest of the natural world. We must offer a vision of the better world that is necessary and possible. We must provide people with a sense of their own power to create that world. We must also recognize that those who possess power within this current system, and those who



identify with them, will not relinquish that power without a struggle. They have been waging a class and colonial war for centuries in these lands, and by their nature, they will continue to do so until the oppressed, exploited and colonized unite to change the world.

# "We will prevail": A Conversation with Cuba's President Miguel Díaz-Canel

By Manolo De Los Santos on April 7, 2022

<https://www.resumen-english.org/2022/04/we-will-prevail-a-conversation-with-cubas-president-miguel-diaz-canel/>

In 1994, Miguel Díaz-Canel began a new position in Santa Clara, not far from his birthplace of Placentas, as the provincial secretary of the Cuban Communist Party. He set aside the air-conditioned car given to him and went to work each morning on his bicycle, his long hair and jeans defining him. Díaz-Canel organized rock concerts, spent time with his family at El Mejunje, the local LGBTQ cultural center, and roamed about talking to people on the streets. This closeness to the people defined his tenure at Santa Clara, which shaped the man who is now the president of Cuba.

In March, I spent a few hours talking to Díaz-Canel, who—born in 1960—has lived his entire life as Cuba struggled against the suffocating policies from Washington to shape its socialist path. Raised by a teacher and a factory worker, Díaz-Canel saw firsthand the Cuban Revolution's comprehensive program of social justice in which millions of members of the working class, peasants, Black people, and women began to access for the first time on equal terms the right to work, study and live with dignity. Diaz-Canel's generation grew up in a period under Fidel Castro's leadership in which, despite the existence of a US blockade, most Cubans saw their standards of living and quality of life rise significantly due to national development plans, favorable trade relations with the Soviet Union and a growing network of support in the nonaligned world.

Díaz-Canel studied electrical engineering at the Central University of Las Villas, but early on in his career teaching engineering there, he devoted much of his time to local activism with the Young Communist League. That led him to an internationalist mission in Nicaragua where, along with thousands of Cuban doctors and teachers, he served among the poorest, often in remote corners of this Central American country that was then trapped under a US-funded war of counterinsurgency.

Díaz-Canel returned from Nicaragua in 1989 as the USSR neared its final days and as the US government seized the opportunity to tighten restrictions on Cuba. In 1991, Cuba entered a Special Period as trade fell by 80 percent. Cubans were eating less (caloric intake decreased by 27 percent from 1990 to 1996), long queues for food became common, electricity became a rare occurrence, and millions took to riding bicycles as the island faced a severe oil shortage under an intensified blockade. Díaz-Canel was one of those on a bicycle. Cuba's resilience during the Special Period shaped his view of the world.

## Special Period II

In 2018, Díaz-Canel was elected to be the president of Cuba. US President Donald Trump had tightened the US blockade on Cuba, with 243 new sanctions measures, the prevention of remittances from overseas Cubans coming to the island, and Cuba being placed back on the US "State Sponsors of Terrorism" list. This campaign of maximum pressure has hurt the Cuban economy, which began to see fuel and food shortages that echoed the Special Period. The Biden administration has kept each and every one of these measures in place.

During the pandemic, the US did not allow Cuba any relief from its unilateral blockade. The Cuban government spent \$102 million on reagents, medical equipment, protective equipment, and other material; in the first half of 2021, the government spent \$82 million on these kinds of materials. This is money that Cuba did not anticipate spending—money that it does not have because of the collapsed tourism sector. Despite the severe challenges to the economy, the government continued to guarantee salaries, purchase medicines, and distribute food as well as electricity and piped water. Overall, the Cuban government added \$2.4 billion to its already considerable debt overhang to cover the basic needs of the population.

In this context, public discontent spilled onto the streets in 2021, notably on July 11. Díaz-Canel's first instinct was to go to the heart of the matter and speak with the people. He went to great lengths not to dismiss their concerns but rather to understand them within the broader context of what Cuba was facing. Díaz-Canel said of the people that most of them are "dissatisfied," but that their dissatisfaction was fueled by "confusion, misunderstandings, lack of information, and the desire to express a particular situation." "Imagine facing that situation in a country that is attacked, blocked, demonized on social networks, and then COVID-19 arrives," he told me. "Therefore, I am convinced that



Cuba has revolutionized its urban and rural eco-agricultural for self-sufficiency and sustainability.

they [the US] bet that Cuba had no way out: 'They cannot sustain the revolution; they cannot get out of this situation.'

Among the many creative responses to these many challenges was the decision by the Cuban government to develop its own vaccine. On May 17, 2020, Díaz-Canel called together Cuba's scientists. "I told them, 'Look, there is no alternative; we need a Cuban vaccine. Nobody is going to give us a vaccine. We need a Cuban vaccine that guarantees us sovereignty,'" he told me. Seven weeks later, in the second half of July, the first bottle of a Cuban vaccine candidate was ready.

Soon after, Cuba would have five vaccine candidates. Of these, three are already in use: Abdala, Soberana 02, and Soberana Plus. Two others are in the final stages of clinical trials and are quite promising, including one called Mambisa, which can be applied nasally. This is all short of a miracle considering that Cuba was only able to invest \$50 million to develop these vaccines.

With the many economic problems that Cuba faces, President Díaz-Canel, in line with his predecessors Fidel and Raúl Castro, has renewed the principle of self-reliance. "We have to face the economic battle ourselves with the concept of creative resistance," he said. With a growing number of workers in the non-state sector, the economy has encouraged small local businesses. A new energy has emerged between the state-led sectors of the economy and these growing new businesses.

In regular visits made by Díaz-Canel across the island, a great deal of emphasis is being placed on the local capacities of each municipality. He advocates a line of continuity with politics based on the ethics of José Martí and Fidel Castro, whose premise is to study the contradictions that exist in society, find the causes of

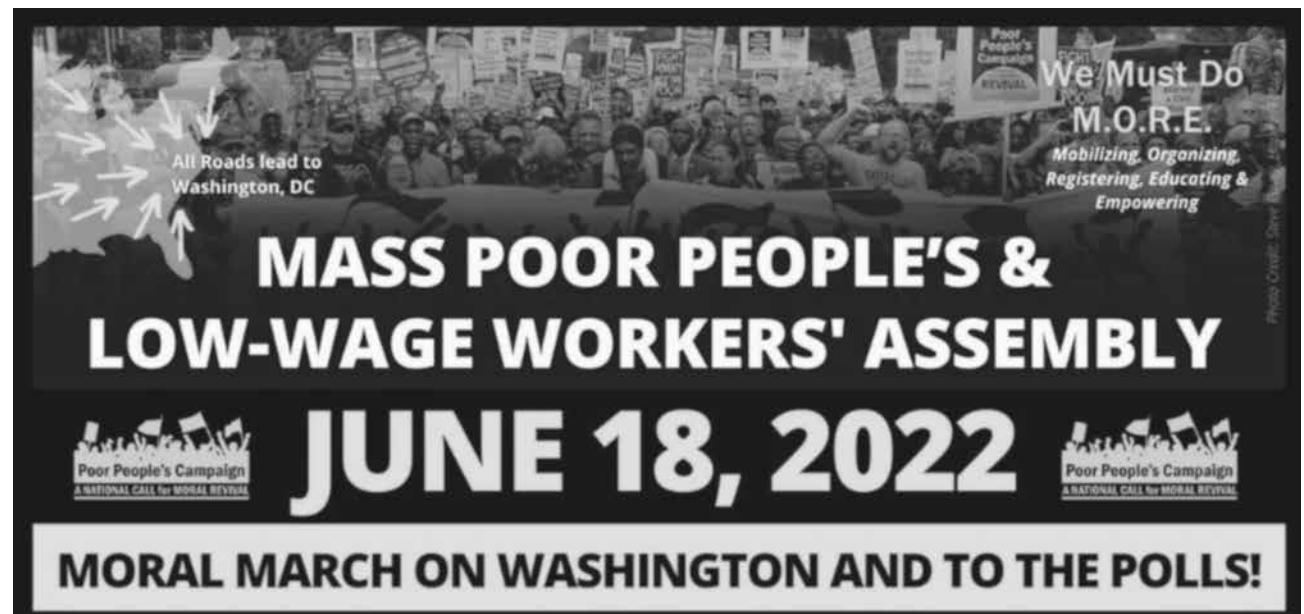
those contradictions, and propose solutions that eliminate the causes.

"We are defending the need to increasingly expand democracy on the basis of people's participation and control in our society," said Díaz-Canel. This approach has already opened the door to deep debates about how to eradicate the vestiges of racism that remain in society, the transformation of neighborhoods in disrepair, and a proposed legal code that would radically expand the rights of LGBTQ people, including marriage. In hundreds of meetings, many of which are recorded and televised, Díaz-Canel listens patiently to religious leaders, university students, artists, intellectuals, community organizers, social activists, and other sectors of Cuban society who have much to say.

These meetings can quite often be tense. Díaz-Canel smiles and says, "We have learned tremendously, proposals are made, we can share criteria, we can clarify doubts, and then we all go out together to work."

Cuba continues to face great challenges, and many problems remain to be solved. Yet it's clear that Díaz-Canel is leading a profound renewal of the Cuban Revolution in a process that seeks to face many complex challenges by empowering local leaders and citizens to become democratic problem-solvers within their communities. Those who continue to see the Cuban system as a repressive dictatorship refuse to come to terms with an evolving society that, despite the cruel violence from Washington, exists and is creating its own future.

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## On-Line Resources for Turning the Tide & ARA-LA/PART:

You can find archives of *Turning the Tide* at [www.antiracist.org](http://www.antiracist.org) that go back more than 30 years. In addition, there are several Facebook pages, such as [facebook.com/tideturning](https://facebook.com/tideturning), and [facebook.com/intercommunalsolidarity](https://facebook.com/intercommunalsolidarity). You can follow @ara\_losangeles on Twitter, @antiracistaaction\_la on Instagram and the De-Colonize LA! blog at [ara-la.tumblr.com](http://ara-la.tumblr.com).

# Amazon Labor Union Victory has lessons for Black movement & Labor movement

## Laboring Beyond Black Representation

By Too Black

<https://www.blackagendareport.com/laboring-beyond-black-representation>

The allure of Black representation in high places can be very dangerous. A Black man organizes an unprecedented union victory but gets less attention than one celebrity slapping another. Yet it is the union organizer who will have a real impact on the lives of Black people.

Because most of what passes as Black thought nowadays has been criminally captured by white capital (philanthropic foundations, corporate advertising, government funding, academia, business roundtables etc.) it was inevitable that the recent union victory against Amazon would fail to trend in the same spellbinding way as recent stories have in the Blacksphere. As a consequence, a feeble smack from one rich negro onto another and a token "First Black" woman justice appointed to a supreme court that regularly rules against (Black) labor, is naturally lifted above the story of the first union to form against the insidiously hostile employer, Amazon, that was led by a working class Black man, Chris Smalls. A well needed victory considering that as of 2020, Black people made up 31 percent of the lowest paid employees at Amazon.

But this is not about representation in the narrow sense of what group of Black people deserves visibility over the next as it so often goes. It's a question of what indeed serves the needs of the people.

Most Black people are workers (or flat out unemployed). We are not celebrities. We are not influencers. We are not business owners. We are regular people trying to make ends meet, usually working for stingy employers who barely pay us enough to make those ends meet. Yet, popular conversations in the Blacksphere are disproportionately consumed with talk of Black faces in elite spaces or "Buy Black" campaigns that rarely seem to take the worker at said Black business into consideration. Rather, these conversations tend to privilege a small minority of Black people who most of us will never become, and as a result, do not represent our needs. So why are they the center of conversation?

As stated at the opening, most of Black thought has been bought off by white capital. The Black artists, entrepreneurs, politicians, journalists, academics,



influencers, activists who have the most sway over our day-to-day discourse are employed by, funded by, and/or backed by white capitalists whose interests are antithetical to our own. Behind this group of neo-colonial ventriloquists is a whole other striver class of Black folks auditioning for the same Black elite roles. Their overall class function is to herd the rage of the Black sheep back into the stables of the State.

The more we strive to be like this class of Black herdsman, the more we work against our own interests. As emancipatory journalist Dr. Jared Ball regularly reminds us, most of Black media are too invested in obtaining white ad dollars to center the Black working and lumpen class. To do so would potentially threaten the market share of the corporate backers they so desperately covet. Their backers are not so partial to a Black worker-led labor movement. Instead, they foolishly want us to believe in celebrity deathmatches to "protect" Black women more than in collective bargaining. However, it's fair to say more Black people work at Amazon-like facilities than receive Oscars.

So what does serve the needs of the people? What does representation look like divorced from elite capture? If representation holds any value at all, it must be to represent the needs of the people: food, shelter, healthcare, education, safety, resources, dignity, power,

just to name a few. The newly formed Amazon labor union by no means fills all those voids nor is it the most revolutionary act to be done. What it does is give Black workers a power base to struggle with alongside other oppressed people. If the victory sparks unionization across other Amazon-like facilities, it will build a much larger power base than any "First Black" politicians, "Buy Black" campaigns or Black celebrity meltdowns combined.

This reality is not missed by white capital; hence, why cosmetic diversity and repressive action are used to counter such a possibility. I, like many Black folk in this settler colony, understand the need to escape the grips of our daunting reality from time to time. Entertainment and Black visibility can certainly aid in that endeavor but ultimately the goal has to be to transform our reality — not simply escape it. Celebrity centered analysis fails this goal. Shedding the Black peddlers of white capital is a start. Perhaps then the Black masses can serve our own needs.

*Too Black is a poet, member of Black Alliance For Peace, and host of The Black Myths Podcast on Black Power Media. He is based in Indianapolis, IN and can be reached at [tooblock8808@gmail.com](mailto:tooblock8808@gmail.com) or @too\_black\_ on Twitter.*

## ANTIFASCISTS PERSECUTED IN MOZYR, BELARUS; ANARCHISTS ON THE MARCH IN UKRAINE

On 22 March, a dozen local antifascists and DIY band members were arrested in Mozyr following searches in their homes. As a result, two women were detained under criminal charges – Kristina Cherenkova (inciting hatred to cops for a few Instagram posts and comments) and Anna Pyshnik (assistance in extremist activity for sending a video recording to the NEXTA Telegram channel that had been recognized as an extremist formation). They are kept in a pre-trial detention facility. SIZO-3, ul. Knizhnaya 1A, 246003 Gomel BELARUS

Other people got arrested for 10 to 15 days for disseminating extremist materials. They have allegedly shared some posts from 'extremist' media. Their phones and other devices were seized as a tool of committing the infraction.

Relatives are collecting donations to cover the legal costs and care packages  
paypal: [a.charankova@gmail.com](mailto:a.charankova@gmail.com)  
bank Santander IBAN  
PL 70 1090 1098 0000 0001 3288 5405 (euro)

PL64 1090 1098 0000 0001 3725  
7206 (usd)  
PL 04 1090 1098 0000 0001 4761  
8177 (pln)  
SWIFT WBKPPLPP  
ANASTASIYA CHARANKOVA  
card: 5575 1100 6802 8043 (only pln)  
Anastasiya Charankova

Support Ukrainian antifascists  
<https://www.bonfire.com/ukr161/>  
Learn more about fighting  
Ukrainian anarchists here:  
<https://revdia.org/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/theblackheadquarter/>  
United Anti-authoritarian forces of Ukraine  
[linktr.ee/Theblackheadquarter](http://linktr.ee/Theblackheadquarter)



You can read more about Ukrainian leftists and anarchists here:  
<https://truthout.org/articles/war-is-forcing-ukrainian-leftists-to-make-difficult-decisions-about-violence/>  
<https://crimethinc.com/2022/02/15/war-and-anarchists-anti-authoritarian-perspectives-in-ukraine>  
to learn why anarchists there have taken up arms against the Russian invasion.

## 100X100 Campaign to Increase Publication Frequency of Turning the Tide

Over its 30+ year publishing history, *TTT* has been published in magazine format, as a 24-page tabloid, and from time to time on a bi-monthly basis, six issues a year. For the last few years, economic necessity has dictated that we guarantee four 8-page issues a year. To restore bi-monthly publication, we launched a fund-raising campaign we've dubbed "**100X100**."

We are still looking for one hundred people who will donate \$100 a year, or \$10/mo, to make it possible for *TTT* to resume publishing six issues a year, and continue mailing about 1700 copies of each issue into the prisons. You can donate online at <http://gofundme.com/eugzgg>. Help it go viral!

*Turning the Tide* doesn't print itself, or mail itself. Some prisoners who get the paper contribute a few stamps.. Often, they pass the copy of *TTT* that they received from hand to hand, cell to cell, or they send in the names and addresses of half-a-dozen or more other prisoners. **Prisoners, if you can find donors or subscribers outside prison to subsidize your sub, that would help a lot!**

If you'd like to see *Turning the Tide* more frequently, if you want to contribute to breaking down the walls of isolation and separation imposed by the prison system, please contribute. If you can't manage \$100 all at once, you could donate \$10 a month. But any donation you make can help. Postage costs for a single issue of *TTT* are \$1000 and climbing. If you can't donate yourself, please help spread the campaign via your social media, to your Facebook friends, Twitter followers, and email contacts. Everything helps. Nobody makes a dime from working on *TTT*.

If the campaign is successful, we will resume publishing every other month in 2023. Postage is our biggest expense. Nobody gets paid at *TTT*. But the Postal Service is not so generous. We have a handful of people who are sustainers, making a monthly donation, a larger number of people who subscribe once a year or so. Right now, we are at about 10% of our goal. LA area supporters could set up house meetings, where the editor will pitch to your friends for support. The future of *Turning the Tide* is in your hands. Now, while you're thinking about it, go to:

<http://gofundme.com/eugzgg>  
and donate, or use paypal to [antiracistaaction\\_la@yahoo.com](mailto:antiracistaaction_la@yahoo.com) if you prefer. Then share it with your contacts. With your help, *Turning the Tide* can step up to the "urgency of now" -- the necessity for radical organizing, educating and analyzing to respond to the growing crisis of the Empire -- endless war, police terror with impunity, mass incarceration, colonialism, ecological devastation that will shortly become irreversible.

If you think *TTT* is a useful tool in the struggle for people's power and a new world, please donate today. If you wish, you can also just send cash, check or money order to

**Anti-Racist Action, PO Box 1055, Culver City CA 90232.**

# WHERE ARE THE VOICES OF INCARCERATED WOMEN?

By Uhuru Rowe

Though it is often not widely known, or perhaps ignored altogether, since the very first act of violence committed by European enslavers against Black people, Black women have played a major role in Black militant resistance against slavery, colonialism, racial violence, and patriarchal white supremacy. Consequently, they have suffered just as much state repression and abuse and torture in jails and prisons as their male counterparts. Assata's history is a testimony to this fact.

Assata was born on July 16, 1947 and spent the majority of her young life in Wilmington, North Carolina, where her grandmother — more than anybody else — taught her the importance of having a voice, speaking up against racial and gender oppression, and demanding respect, especially from racist white people in the segregated South. When she was in the third grade, Assata and her family moved to Queens, New York, where she eventually quit school, flirted with sex work, worked at odd jobs, but eventually went back to school, graduated, and then went to Manhattan Community College, where she became politically active.

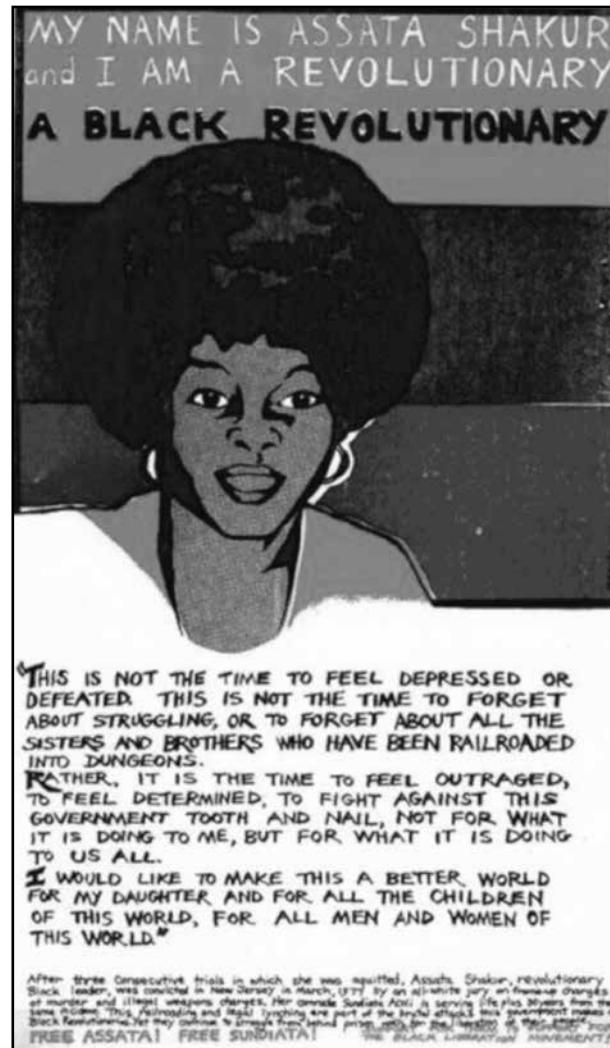
It was in college where she began checking out various political organizations like the Republic of New Afrika and the Black Panther Party. Assata said her first contact with the Panthers was through Zayd Shaqur, a Panther leader from the Bronx, and other Panthers who were invited to Manhattan Community College to give lectures. She would later join the prestigious Harlem chapter of BPP after visiting the Black Panther headquarters in Oakland, California.

It wasn't too long after that when Assata and the BPP in particular, and the Black Liberation Movement in general, became the number one target of J. Edgar Hoover's illegal and secretive counterintelligence program, also known as COINTELPRO. As a result, Dr. Huey P. Newton, the Party's Minister of Defense, was framed for the killing of an Oakland police officer and imprisoned on October 28, 1967. Lil Bobby Hutton, the party's first member and first treasurer, was murdered by Oakland police on April 6, 1968. Lil Bobby was the first, but not last, member to be assassinated by police. Bunchy Carter and John Huggins, two Panther leaders in Los Angeles, were murdered on January 17, 1969, during a COINTELPRO-instigated beef between the LA Panthers and Ron Karenga's United Slaves Organization. Twenty-one Black Panthers were arrested or indicted in New York on April 2, 1969. Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, two Panther leaders in Chicago, were assassinated by Chicago police on December 4, 1969. And then the infamous confrontation with police on the New Jersey Turnpike on November 2, 1973 that left Zayd Shaqur dead, and both Sundiata Acoli and a wounded Assata jailed and sentenced each to life plus thirty years in prison.

After her arrest, Assata learned firsthand about the horrors of prisons. Of course she was aware of the state-sanctioned racial violence against Black people in society, but she also came to see that what Black people in prison experience was an extension or continuation of that racial violence.

For instance, in the very first chapter of her autobiography, Assata talks about how she was constantly beaten, harassed, and tortured by the police and received little to no medical care for her gunshot wound. She detailed in other chapters how she was transferred from prison to prison, even to a federal prison in West Virginia. Those of us in prison call this repressive tactic Diesel therapy and it is still used today against politically active prisoners to keep them disoriented and far away from their base of outside support.

Assata detailed in her essay "Women in Prison," published in the Black Scholar in 1978, that the majority of women at Rikers Island Jail were Black and Puerto Rican, and that most of them were mothers and were mostly jailed for sex work and drug-related cases. She also mentioned that other women were there for stealing and hustling — crimes of survival committed, not only to ensure their survival, but the survival of their children because of the lack of employment and inadequate welfare assistance. <https://portside.org/2015-06-10/assata-shakur-women-prison-rikers-island-70s>



These conditions still exist. For instance, a pamphlet I received from the California Coalition for Women Prisoners states that the population of women in prison in the US has grown by 800% since 1980. Over 80% of people in women's prisons there are serving time for actions that are property and drug related. Approximately 70% of people in women's prisons are mothers, and the majority were the primary caretakers of their children before they were sent to prison. Approximately 80% of women in prison have experienced abuse even as children and adults.

These national statistics reflect what is happening here in Virginia. The Vera Justice Institute reports that the number of women in Virginia's prisons has increased more than tenfold, from 307 in 1978 to 3,154 in 2017, and the number of women in Virginia's jails increased more than nineteenfold, from 216 in 1970 to 4,150 in 2015.

These statistics reflect that women and girls are increasingly being targeted by the carceral state, and reports show that conditions have gotten worse for people in women's prisons since Assata wrote her essay. One of those reports is a 2022 Associated Press investigatory report detailing numerous rapes of incarcerated women at the Federal Correctional Institution in Dublin, California, which is nicknamed the "Rape Club" by both incarcerated women and prison employees. The perpetrators of these rapes range from a warden all the way down to a chaplain

and maintenance worker.

Another Associated Press report from 2021 detailed how 150 staffers at the Sununu Youth Services Center — formerly the Youth Services Center — in New Hampshire, beat, raped, and gang-raped more than 200 children, including girls, from 1963 to 2018.

With this knowledge, the question is, what can be done? Assata says in her essay "Women in Prison" that about 8% of the women engaged in some form of lesbian relationship, that there was no connection between lesbianism in prison and the larger Women's Movement, and that the Women's Liberation Movement and the Queer Liberation Movement were disconnected from the women at Rikers. I submit that this disconnect was not due to the women's lack of interest in the broader liberation movements. In fact, I submit that it was the other way around — that it was those movements that were uninterested in educating, politicizing, and organizing the women at Rikers. After all, Assata did say in her essay that there was no revolutionary literature laying around.

This is reflected in the current times by most prison justice and abolitionist organizations catering to and centering the voices and plights of incarcerated cis men while consciously and/or unconsciously overlooking or completely disregarding the voices and plights of incarcerated women, especially incarcerated trans women.

As an example, I receive a total of five radical and abolitionist newsletters and newspapers which frequently publish articles written by or about incarcerated people in regards to the conditions in prisons, and during the last year, none of them contained an article by or about an incarcerated queer or trans person, and only one of them — the San Francisco Bay View — contained an article written by an incarcerated woman. Is this due to a lack of incarcerated women and queer and trans people's unwillingness to write about conditions in prison? Is this due to sexism, queer- and transphobia, in many prison justice/abolitionist movements? Or is it because an incarcerated trans woman filing a lawsuit to force prison officials to give her a sex reassignment surgery or incarcerated women collectively refusing to lock down in their cells until their demands for more tampons are met is rendered invisible because these actions are feminized, queerized, and not considered real resistance behind these prison walls?

Women and LGBTQ+ people are not only the fastest-growing populations in prisons, they are the most oppressed group inside the sprawling prison-industrial complex. Their special oppression should give them a vanguard role in the anti-prison movement. In her essay, Assata said, "Black women can never be free while Black men are oppressed." In the same vein, the modern prison justice/abolition movement will never be successful until incarcerated women and LGBTQ+ people are sought out, accepted, embraced, and included as part of the vanguard movement to shut down and abolish these prisons, jails, and detention centers, and the carceral state as a whole. All power to ALL the people!

## URGENT APPEAL

We need your financial support to continue sending the paper free to about 1700 prisoners around CA and the US.

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Postage alone for this issue comes to \$1000. We would like to increase the size and frequency of Turning the Tide, but we can only do it with your support. If you're a prisoner and can send stamps or get someone outside the walls to subsidize your subscription, please do so. If you work with an info shop or other zine or record distro, please consider ordering a bundle of TTT to distribute; \$5 will get you 20 copies. And check out our 100X100 campaign elsewhere in this issue. If you live in L.A. or nearby, we can come to house meetings to speak and collect donations for the paper. Email [antiracistaaction\\_la@yahoo.com](mailto:antiracistaaction_la@yahoo.com)

# THE WAR IN UKRAINE: IT'S ONLY AN "ILLEGAL INVASION" WHEN IT'S DONE TO WHITE PEOPLE

By Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, Revolutionary Intercommunal Black Panther Party (2022)

As millions of Afghans sit starving under punitive US sanctions in the wake of a 20-year military invasion and occupation by Amerika that shattered their country, the US media and political mouthpieces are denouncing the Russian invasion of Ukraine as an "unjust war."

In the days leading up to the invasion of Ukraine, US president Joe Biden protested to the world that Putin was looking to create a pretext to invade Ukraine, even preparing a false flag event. Of course US officials know a lot about inventing pretexts for foreign military invasions; they did it to justify invading Afghanistan in 2001, and Iraq in 2003. Amerika's false flag event was none other than the events of 9/11; see my prior article, "Was 9/11 An Inside Job?"(1)

For 20 years, Amerika committed every conceivable war crime and atrocity against the civilian populations in Iraq and Afghanistan, all in the interests of accessing and controlling Middle East fossil fuel reserves. But not a word of protest or criticism was heard in the media about Amerika's aims or actions in these decades-long



invasions and occupations that propped up puppet US governments that collapsed only moments after the US invaders withdrew. This was imperialism of the most blatant sort. Just like the long-standing unconditional US military, political, and economic support for the fascist Zionist occupation, land theft, and depopulation of Palestine by Israel.

But now that such an invasion has been staged by Russia (a US rival) against Ukraine (a country of people with white complexions), the media and political podiums are alive with protestations that the deed is evil, and Russia is evil incarnate. Just as it was deemed a "Holocaust" when white skinned Jewish people were targeted by the German Nazis who have gone down in infamy, but when AmerIndians were subjected to the exact same policies of genocide (exterminating tens of millions), land theft and continental expansion by Amerika, it is hailed as a great achievement of Western civilization.

Of course the Russian invasion is an unjust incursion against the people of Ukraine, but it is also a struggle internal to US global imperial dominance, where Russia, who aspires to upstage US global hegemony, is angling to prevent Amerika's continued efforts to set up an outpost on Russia's borders through the US puppet Ukrainian government signing onto its NATO alliance.

This is just the sort of internal rivalry against US global dominance that we have analyzed for some time under our theory of Revolutionary Intercommunalism which forms the principal contradiction in the world today.(2)

Amerika is struggling to maintain its world dominance, creating chaos and anarchy and the danger of nuclear war in its effort to do so.

We stand with the people of Ukraine in their just struggle against Russia's invasion and also against US dominance whose imperialist agenda in Ukraine is even more sinister than Russia's.

Dare to Struggle - Dare to Win! All Power to the People!  
Endnotes:

1. Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "Was 9/11 An Inside Job? (A Reply to Mike Novick of TURNING THE TIDE newspaper)" (2020), <http://rashidmod.com/?p=2864>
2. Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "What is Revolutionary Intercommunalism and Why We Endorse it" (2021), <http://rashidmod.com/?p=2917>

## Global Warming and the End of Breakfast

[as recorded for the Final Straw radio show, 19Dec21]

We've recently seen the devastation that Al Gore predicted in his documentary, 'An Inconvenient Truth.' We have rising sea levels and melting polar ice that's even surprising the climate change experts. The change in water temperatures has shifted the weather patterns and we now have droughts and forest fires followed by flash floods and mud slides in some places, and devastating floods in other places when the droughts are occurring. This past week, we had forty tornadoes in just days touch down in the American Midwest, some of those in places that have never seen December tornadoes.

It would appear that all of these catastrophic weather consequences are related in some way to global warming. But while everyone is focused on the forty tornadoes, there's a consequence of global warming that has been incredibly under-reported, a consequence of global warming that could have lasting and monumental impact on the lives of us all. Because of global warming, a country called Ca-NAY-da, which is someplace north of the United States, experienced an unusually short and warm spring. One of the shortest in recorded Canadian history.

Couple this with a 21% global increase in demand for maple syrup during the pandemic-- you know, because everyone can slow down and actually eat breakfast rather than run out the door with a bagel --and maple syrup producers are struggling to meet demands. So, yeah, there were forty tornadoes and some people died, but look: This could impact our BREAKFAST. I don't want to sound tone-deaf here, as there were some real tragedies, and I get it-- we might all die from drought and floods and tornadoes, but in the meantime, I'd like to enjoy my Goddamn breakfast before we slowly sputter out... and global warming is gonna fuck THAT up? What has the world come to?

Quebec-- that's a place in CaNAYda --produces 73% of all maple syrup in the world. Its biggest consumer is the United States, of course. Luckily, the Quebec Maple Syrup Industry has created a stockpile to keep maple syrup in stock during bad harvest seasons. This maple syrup stockpile is called the Strategic Maple Syrup Reserve. Pay attention, folks. There's going to be a test at the end of this.

I did some research because I really care about breakfast. It's the most important meal of the day. The Strategic Maple Syrup Reserve holds 45 million kilograms of maple syrup. I did the math, and that comes out to just under 50,000 tons. This strategic reserve is regulated and controlled by the QMSP, which stands for the Quebec Maple Syrup Producers. The QMSP is a Canadian government-sanctioned private organization that determines the market volume of maple

syrup. They are to maple syrup what OPEC is to oil. So, if you were just out there in your care-free life slathering syrup all over your pancakes or waffles or french toast, and you thought this was just a matter of some Canadian with a bucket hammering a spigot into a tree, you were wrong. Very wrong. Syrup is a big deal. You should stop and think about that. You should be ashamed of how you took your syrup for granted.

In Canadian schools, children learn all about maple syrup. Text books even address the 2011-2012 Great Maple Syrup Heist, where thieves hatched an Ocean's 11-type plot and stole 3,000 tons of maple syrup, valued at \$20 million Canadian. Seventeen men were eventually arrested in New Brunswick-- not to be confused with Old Brunswick --when authorities discovered hundreds of barrels with maple syrup residue in them. Yes, a real caper. But don't be expecting the launch of CSI New Brunswick any time in the near future. Anyway, the Quebec Maple Syrup Producers have announced the release of 25,000 tons of maple syrup from the Strategic Maple Syrup Reserve-- more than half of its total reserves. This is the kind of radical, emergency measures that have to be taken in order to secure breakfast around the world during global warming.

To make a comparison, President Biden held a press conference to announce tapping into the U.S. oil reserves to lower gas prices and markets responded, people cheered. CaNAYda released 25,000 tons of maple syrup from its strategic reserve, and nobody blinked an eye. In this ongoing slow-cook we call global warming, we experience one low-intensity tragedy after another after another, and they all accumulate to form a kind of "new normal," the way the world will always be, from that moment forward. And we accept each of these low-intensity tragedies.

So, brace yourselves. In the next year, maybe sooner-- who knows? --it could be that the QMSP has to dump the last remaining drops of maple syrup from the Strategic Maple Syrup Reserves and then, shortly thereafter, breakfast as we know it will be forever diminished. There may be generations born who will never even remember pouring maple syrup on their pancakes.

We have to drastically lower our carbon emissions, not just to prevent the droughts and wildfires and tornadoes wiping out everything, but to preserve maple syrup and the dignity of breakfast. If we don't lower our carbon emissions radically and soon, then we will be willing accomplices to Big Oil's murder of Mrs. Butterworth. Can you live with that? --This is Anarchist Prisoner Sean Swain from the super-duper-uber-mega-ultra-hyper-turbo-maxi-multi-max in Youngstown, Ohio. If you're sobbing in your waffles, you ARE the resistance...

## OSO BLANCO, OTHER NATIVE PRISONERS, CAMPAIGNING FOR THEIR RIGHTS

A campaign was recently launched on behalf of indigenous political prisoners at the US Penitentiary Victorville in Adelanto CA, and their right to engage in their religious ceremonies and practices, especially the restoration of their sweat lodge, which had been destroyed and desecrated by prison authorities.

In response, there have been some developments regarding Oso Blanco (Byron Shane Chubbuck), a Native political prisoner recognized by the Jericho Movement, who is incarcerated there. His outside supporters have been instrumental in the campaign.

Here are some recent developments:

–Oso Blanco (OB) is currently in administrative segregation. In accordance with his personal beliefs, he does not use or distribute drugs. Prison staff and administration know this.

–OB was not directly informed why he was placed in segregation. But he was placed in administrative segregation following an exchange with Chaplain Doran Kelvington in which OB calmly advocated for peaceful resolution of the issues around rebuilding the sweat lodge.

–Assistant Warden Lepe came and told OB on March 29th that a couple of people including the pipe holder, Larry, will start cleaning up the sweat lodge area.

–Lepe stated that he will be sure to get the needed willows himself, he will not wait for the chaplain to do this.

–OB also told Lepe that grass is needed surrounding the area due to the intense heat. It is dangerous to step on the ground or dirt barefoot. Shade is also needed so that no one is at risk for heat stroke, which could be fatal.

You can write to Oso Blanco at  
Byron Shane Chubbuck #07909-051  
USP Victorville United States Penitentiary  
PO Box 3900, Adelanto CA 92301

You can read more about the campaign in the last issue of *Turning The Tide: Journal of Inter-communal Solidarity*, on-line here: <https://antiracist.org/ttt-vol-34-1-jan-march-2022/> on page 5 of the PDF.

**Correction and Retraction (June 28, 2022):** The original text of this article when it was initially published back on April 5 indicated that USP Victorville was on a facility-wide lockdown due to a series of drug overdoses. It was also reported that prison staff were bringing drugs into the facility. This information came from outside activists and has subsequently been proven partially false. There was an overdose-related facility-wide lockdown that did take place at USP Victorville, but the article also referenced a different incident at a different facility around approximately the same time that may or may not have involved prison staff. The exact location is still unknown. Oso Blanco was in no way connected to nor did he provide information on this incident. The editors also wish it known that Oso Blanco does not ever seek out, nor would he ever share, information pertaining to this type of activity, and had no involvement in or responsibility for the original error. OB also never said that it was staff who brought drugs into USP Victorville. Also, subsequent to publication, the sweat lodge has been rebuilt.

# CITY ON THE SECOND FLOOR

by Matt Sedillo

FlowerSong Press, McAllen TX, 2022, \$15

<https://www.flowersongpress.com/store/p/cityonthesecondfloor>

Reviewed by Michael Novick, *Anti-Racist Action-L.A.*

Like "Mowing Leaves of Grass," an earlier book of poems by Matt Sedillo, this volume of poems include history lessons, ethical and moral challenges to complacency and complicity, and unflinching examination of the horrors of late capitalism. He is also totally and unerringly in touch with the physical, social and political terrain of Los Angeles and its form of apartheid.

One example of his ability to teach contemporary and historical lessons is his throwaway reference to Lucky Baldwin. Sedillo lived in Baldwin Park. I live at the foot of the Baldwin Hills, where L.A. is still pumping oil out of the Inglewood Field, one of the richest sources of petroleum around – you can see the praying mantis oil wells dipping and pumping as you drive south on La Cienega Boulevard past Kenny Hahn Park. I never thought to wonder who the Baldwin was that they are named after. But Sedillo did, and found out about the biggest landowner (land thief and settler colonizer) in Anglo California, who owned the whole thing as one of his "ranchos" (a term stolen, like the land, from Mexico).

In "Precarious Rex", Sedillo writes:

For now  
Let us instead consider

The strange eventful  
History of one

Elias Lucky Baldwin

Born in the final year of

Jacksonian Democracy with all its promise of land theft  
And libertine debauchery

When asked for a defining legacy

Baldwin Pointed to the Santa Anita Race Tracks

And said

This was it

And that was Lucky

Early westward visionary and pioneer

Of land speculation

And underpaying Mexicans

A tradition to which my labor

Is accustomed

And a practice to which my employers

Both prior and current

Have proven themselves

Not only to be among the grandest of enthusiasts

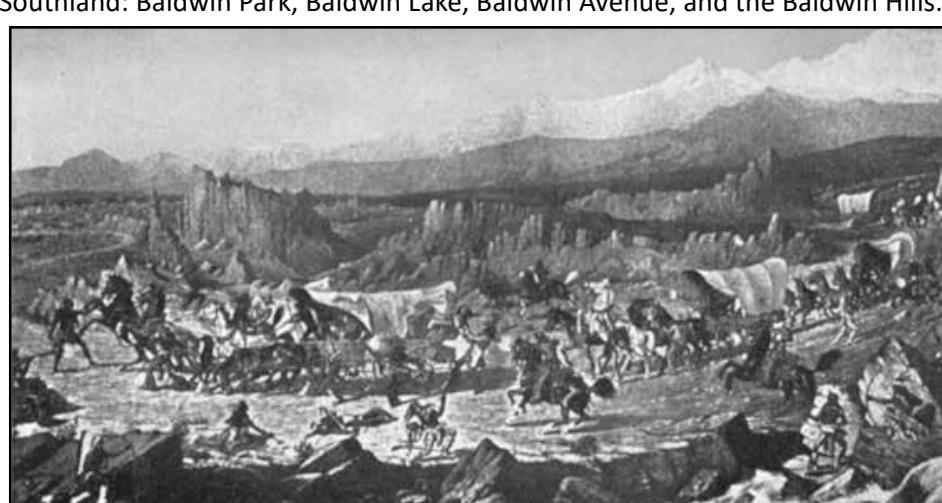
But also, the most ardent of practitioners

So, who exactly is Lucky Baldwin? Here's a description from a KCET episode:

In the year 1880, Elias Jackson "Lucky" Baldwin became the wealthiest land-owner in Southern California, laying claim to more than 40,000 acres of Los Angeles County.

Throughout the previous decade, he had cashed in on more than 5 million dollars worth of stock in silver and gold; he'd built the 3-million-dollar Baldwin Hotel in San Francisco; and turned Rancho Santa Anita into a tremendously productive operation, replete with thoroughbred race studs and miles of orchards and vineyards. Through it all, his penchant for business and love affairs kept his name in the papers for years to come, transfixing Americans with tales of immorality.

More than a century after his death, his name still echoes throughout the Southland: Baldwin Park, Baldwin Lake, Baldwin Avenue, and the Baldwin Hills.



Indian attack on the Baldwin Party near Salt Lake City in 1853, as pictured by the artist Cross. Image from C.B. Glasscock's 1933 biography 'Lucky Baldwin: The Story of an Unconventional Success'

"Laying claim to" is a euphemism for stealing. 40,000 acres is about 64 square miles; that is, a plot of land eight miles wide and eight miles long, about the distance from say, La Cienega Boulevard to the Santa Monica pier east to west, and from the Beverly Center to Manchester Boulevard, north to south.

Betcha didn't know that. I didn't until I learned about Lucky Baldwin from Matt Sedillo's poetry.

It's best in this review to give a little more of the actual flavor. Here's an excerpt from *Party Hymn*:

And I have seen  
Academic's metaphysics  
Swallow reality  
Then spit back a peer reviewed  
tenure track salary  
And I have seen  
The organizers of labor  
Embrace parties of capital  
And I have seen age old cowardice

Dishonesty, careerism  
Parade as groundbreaking new  
And I have seen courage  
Burst into spontaneous flame  
And I have seen fear in the pig's eye  
And I have seen rebellions  
Light the night sky  
Then fade to smoke

There is a great variety of material, agitational, personal, ideological, and fantastical. Some of the poems and a long teleplay script are forms of speculative fiction about possible futures and about how political contradictions might play out between tendencies in an on-going revolutionary process.

Sedillo evokes or invokes Shakespeare, T.S. Elliot, William E. Henley's *Invictus*, Langston Hughes, Allen Ginsburg, and he speaks through various characters he creates, rich and poor, with humility or hubris as befits the character. But his own voice is unique, Chicano Mexicano proletarian and prophetic, and you can almost hear it ripping through your ears as you read. His words burn vivid images in your mind as they slash, flash and splash across the page. They compel you to think, to feel, to care, and above all, to act, to fight for a better world.

In an era when "fake news" is virtually a trademark of Trumpians and neo-liberal globalists alike, when journalism and social media are corrupt and controlled by the CIA, the FSB and other organs of state and private corporatized surveillance and propaganda, it is poetry and poets like Sedillo who have taken on the task of "afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted." But Sedillo doesn't stop there; he seeks to open the eyes, pierce the heart, and goad the soul of the afflicted into a recognition of their own power to create and recreate the world.



Sedillo is unembarrassed in acknowledging his efforts to become a successful and self-sustaining public intellectual through his poetry, as an educator without portfolio, hosted on campuses, broadcasts and podcasts, building a following on Facebook for his social and cultural criticism and interviews. But all this is in service of laying the ground for an uncompromising, revolutionary movement for workers' power and a struggle for socialism and self-determination. Sedillo understands that knowledge is power, that words have power, and that IRL, the bosses and colonizers, white nationalists and imperialists need and depend on the confined and constrained creative powers of the oppressed and exploited as the true source of their own oppressive and exploitative power and wealth.

Sedillo's latest work, as published in *City on the Second Floor*, demonstrates that his rhetorical, lyrical and creative powers are growing. Buy it, read it, and let it arm your spirit, armor your resistance, and fortify your capacity to struggle with him, against blood-suckers and brain-eaters, for a better world.

Sedillo basically summed up the impact and purpose of his latest book in the poem *Camelot*:

"This is a Molotov

Tossed towards Camelot"

## DHORUBA BIN WAHAD, REVOLUTIONARY PAN-AFRICANIST

Dhoruba Bin Wahad was a leading member of the New York Black Panther Party, a Field Secretary of the BPP responsible for organizing chapters throughout the East Coast, and a member of the Panther 21. Arrested in June 1971, he was framed as part of the illegal FBI Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) and subjected to unfair treatment and torture during his nineteen years in prison. During Dhoruba's incarceration, litigation on his behalf produced over 300,000 pages of COINTELPRO documentation, and upon release in 1990 he was able to bring a successful lawsuit against the New York Department of Corrections for their criminal activities. Living in both Ghana and the U.S., Dhoruba continues to write and work promoting Pan Africanism, an uncompromising critique of imperialism and capitalism, and freedom for all political prisoners.

Dhoruba has been diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. If you are able, please donate to this GoFundMe to help with his medical care. <https://www.gofundme.com/f/qd8dz-dhoruba-bin-wahad-medical-fund/donate>

Dhoruba's website is here: <https://www.dhorubabinwahad.com/>

## In Memoriam: Paul Frederick Kaskiewicz

Paul Frederick Kaskiewicz was born in Yorkshire, England on July 7, 1950. He passed away on Jan. 19 in Pasadena at the age of 71. He is survived by his loving wife, Lili Etezady Kaskiewicz.

After receiving his graduate degree in classical physics, Paul's profession began with a stint at Princeton University, followed later by his career at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, California. This ran the gamut from inventor of spacecraft shading device, Windsat free flyer using Advanced Tiros-N satellite and as a major member of the team implementing and deploying the Spitzer Infrared telescope, which was instrumental in revealing facts about the sun. This telescope paved the way for the recently launched James Webb Telescope.

After retiring, Paul continued an active and meaningful life. He enjoyed badminton, hiking, classical music, computer graphics and reveling in nature. He won the friends in many communities, including health-conscious Altadena. He was one of the founders of Culture Clash 101, an organic restaurant in Pasadena, where he volunteered, solving computer and technical issues. He befriended John Hopkins, owner of O Happy Days, a nexus vegan grocery store in Altadena and volunteered there for years.

Paul's social circle was diverse, touching many lives. His friend, Irena Varjadabian, illustrates this:

"I had the great fortune to have known Paul for the past 15 plus years. Throughout that time, his compassion, wisdom, and love was expressed in his commitment, and caring for the community and the environment. Paul was a selfless man who often dedicated his time to helping others through direct actions and inspiration. His practicality and wisdom ensured that he always shared insightful solutions to many issues. I personally will always be grateful for his sweet nature and the times he spent taking my mother to the park towards the end of her life. Also, he helped me numerous times with different tasks and problems. Paul had a very calm and thoughtful way of explaining and sharing. It's not a very common trait to have. It's a blessing."

Paul's family and friends praised him for his intellect, kindness, generosity, brilliance, his tireless research and labor and for being an authentic and true progressive as well as a skillful speaker, and last, but not least, his cooking skills.

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# TURNING THE TIDE

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- ★ Apr 19-May 1 Pan African Film Festival, L.A. <https://www.paff.org>
- ★ April 22 - Earth Day for Peace - End the US military-industrial complex
- ★ May 1- May Day, Municipalism webinar w/ Kali Akuno <https://zoom.us/j/99920101611>
- ★ Jun 8-10 Peoples' Summit vs. OAS <https://www.codepink.org/peoplessummit2022>
- ★ Jun 9-11 Afro-indigenous feminist Venezuelan women's delegation in L.A. <https://international.dsusa.org/venezuela-solidarity>
- ★ Jun 18 Poor Peoples & Low Wage Workers March on Washington

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- MUMIA ABU JAMAL

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& all struggling people of the world!**

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- ★ Amazon workers' union victory
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- ★ Voices of Incarcerated Women
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