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VOICE OF REVOLUTION

Publication of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

November 15, 2019

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IMPEACHMENT EFFORTS CONTINUE

Organize Together for Politics of Empowerment

Public hearings on the Trump impeachment, broadcast live, have begun, with various officials testifying. The monopoly media is filled with reports of every detail involving hours of testimony and hundreds of pages of depositions. There

is speculation as to whether the various statements provided help or harm Trump, along with Trump's numerous tweets. Everyone is to be embroiled in every detail of who said what, what role the

Politics of Empowerment • 3



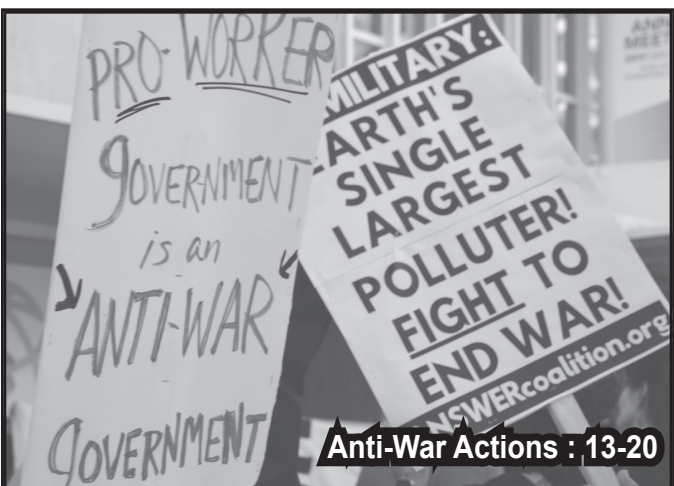
DENOUNCE U.S. ORCHESTRATED COUP

Stand with Bolivian People Resisting U.S. Dictate

On November 10, after a series of brutal attacks orchestrated by the U.S. and its opposition forces inside Bolivia, Bolivian President Evo Morales and his vice-president announced their resignation. This handed over the reins of

government to the National Assembly. The Assembly has so far been unable to meet as its many members supporting Morales are boycotting and the other representatives who are successors according to

Stand with Bolivian People • 8



OUTREACH TO THE PUBLIC DONE

March on the War Machine Opposes U.S. Wars and Atrocities

The Rage Against the War Machine march brought together various individuals and groups to stand against all U.S. wars, atrocities and interference against the peoples worldwide. It demanded

an end to war funding and targeted the war monopolies, war economy and war government. Taking place during the 2020 election campaigns, it stood against both Democrats

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president did or did not play, whether individuals were acting on his orders or not, etc. Trump has also proclaimed he will not work with Congress as long as the impeachment process is taking place. This is yet further evidence of the intensifying conflicts among the rulers as to how to restore confidence in a dysfunctional system and how to maintain the unity of the country when the ruling factions are at war with one another.

The issue facing the people however is not the power struggles and conflicts among the rulers but rather their own struggle for political empowerment. With or without impeachment, the existing system of representative democracy by and for the rich does not serve the interests of the people. This is evident in their broad rejection of the current direction of the country, their discontent with the electoral process, including the many debates by Democrats that ignore the people's main concerns, like issues of war and peace, inequality, poverty and solutions for, not talk about, the environment and a bright future for the youth.

What is needed now is politics of empowerment, politics by and for the working class and people. The rulers, including with impeachment, are striving to disempower and depoliticize the people, so as to preserve their power. We are to line up pro and con about the individuals testifying, the various congresspeople involved, the process itself, the supposed apathy of the people about it, and so forth.

How to resolve the current crisis of the existing institutions,

their dysfunction, their lack of democracy, is not answered by becoming embroiled in the impeachment process and lining up for and against. While there is no doubt broad discontent with Trump, the bigger concern being widely expressed in actions and organizing of all kinds is with the existing democracy itself. It is a democracy which does not heed the will of the majority, which does not give voice to the people's concerns, which acts in their name while acting against their interests. The concerns of the people are silenced and government crimes at home and abroad that are far more serious than those being investigated with impeachment continue to occur with impunity. In the current set up there is no place for holding government accountable for genocide against African Americans and Native peoples, for colonization of Puerto Rico, for militarization of the border and police, for illegal aggressive wars, for collective punishment of whole countries and more. Why no public hearings on these matters of concern? No testimony by the people? No criminal charges for those responsible? To do so would call the existing undemocratic nature of the current system into question, something the rulers are striving desperately to avoid.

Through their many struggles, the people are giving voice to their concerns and coming forward to speak out, in their own name and for their own interests. Now is the time to step up the work for politics of empowerment, to put this issue front and center as the many battles for rights move forward.

DISCUSSION ON ELECTION RESULTS IN CANADA

A New Democratic Personality Emerges Despite Attempts to Preserve Old Arrangements

During the 2019 Federal Election Campaign a new democratic personality made itself felt in many ways as people came forward to speak in their own name about their concerns. Their concerns are also the concerns of society itself, which the parties that vie for election as part of the cartel party system do not address. One of the greatest concerns is how the electoral process itself blocks people from participating directly to set the agenda for the country and to elect governments that are known as fighters for that agenda. Instead, the electoral system is designed to bring parties to power to form party governments and the people are reduced to spectators. There were many instances where candidates of the cartel parties refused to participate in debates which people tried to organize so that they could hear what the candidates had to say about their concerns.

Debates are considered a central way for electors to become informed. However, election campaigns as promoted by the monopoly-controlled media and carried out by the cartel parties are focused on party leaders and they, as well as local candidates, are tightly controlled by campaign managers to keep on message and not interact with people in any other way except to

discredit their opponents or present themselves in a good light — the concerns of the people be damned. Not a few candidates worry about getting into trouble if their remarks conflict with the “branding message” of their party. Government incumbents, in particular, do not want to have to answer questions about what their government has done. In other cases, participation is simply a matter of whether their campaigns consider there are votes to be won or not.

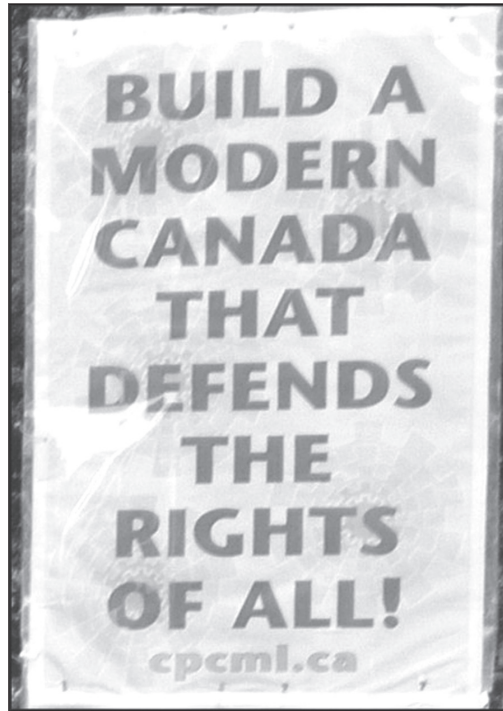
Across the country, debates organized by various bodies were canceled because of lack of response from one or more candidates or leaders of the cartel parties. For example, the City of Mississauga could not get sufficient participation for a debate entitled “Mississauga Matters” scheduled for September 23 and simply canceled it. The Munk Center at the University of Toronto canceled its October 1 Foreign Policy debate because Justin Trudeau declined to attend.

In many cases, however, organizers refused to cancel and used the occasion to discuss their concerns. This was the case when Studio.89, a non-profit fair-trade café and community hub in the riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville, invited candidates

to participate in a Youth Town Hall on October 19. While all candidates were invited, only three accepted: the Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada National Leader and Mississauga East — Cooksville candidate Anna Di Carlo, the Mississauga — Streetsville candidate for the Animal Protection Party Natalie Spizziri, and Mississauga Center Green Party candidate Hugo Reinoso.

Although the initial plan was to follow the traditional “candidates’ debate,” with prepared questions to be answered by the candidates, the youth chose to revamp their event. Candidates were given time for introductory remarks, but all the participants were encouraged to speak out about their experiences and present their views. The youth set out topics that they wanted to address, which included problems related to education and student debt, economic security, and the natural environment.

Each candidate made a contribution by elaborating how the problems present themselves. The discussion that ensued was characterized by everyone presenting their own thinking. For instance, on the subject of the environment and food sustainability, an informative exchange took place on theories which define the problem as one of population growth. Examples were



given of how problems related to food and water scarcity could be solved if the profit-motive is not put in command at the expense of people. The participants gave their own experiences from various countries as to how people are blamed for problems that are created by the destructive forces of multinational corporations.

The issue of student debt and the burden it imposes on students led to an exchange focusing on the terrible pressure young people face when problems are turned into matters of individual weaknesses, such as “money management” or “debt management.” It was evident that systemic structural problems and the failure to recognize and guarantee rights such as education and health care must be addressed along with the destructive consequences as a result of the privatization of education and anti-social “austerity” measures.

The lively and substantive discussion contributed to the participants’ determination to step up their own political activities beyond the election. In a thank-you note to the MLPC, Studio.89’s Events and Program Coordinator wrote: “You’ve inspired us, and further motivated us in our efforts to have our voices heard. As a way to keep this momentum alive, we do hope to have more events of this nature happening in our space.”

ELECTION RESULTS IN CANADA

What to Expect from the Trudeau Minority Government

Following the announcement that Canada would have a minority government led by the Liberal Party and its leader Justin Trudeau, it is abundantly clear that they will carry on governing in much the same way as during their first term. The Liberal government will continue to pay the rich and implement budgets designed by those in the highest echelons of the financial oligarchy. It will continue to rule with impunity and it will continue interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign nations to achieve regime change of those the U.S. seeks to take over.

To rule with impunity, the Trudeau minority government will continue to undermine the principles that inform Canada’s constitution, international treaties and what are called the democratic institutions. The use of Cabinet prerogatives in the SNC-Lavalin case and interference with the prosecutorial process were not the exception but the rule for this government. Remember how Trudeau ignored the all-party parliamentary committee which proposed to replace the first-past-the-post method of counting votes with a proportional system? This too was just one flagrant example of a common practice of Trudeau in ignoring conven-

tions and eliminating regulations designed to direct and tether ministerial powers.

Trampling on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

How the Trudeau government is proceeding with building the Trans Mountain pipeline is yet another good example of the use of ministerial prerogatives to rule with impunity. The pipeline runs through unceded territories where Indigenous peoples have been the decision-makers since time immemorial. It is designed to connect a terminal east of Edmonton to a marine terminal in Burnaby, BC. The expansion intends to see a second pipeline built roughly parallel to the first that can carry almost twice as much crude oil every day.

In September 2018, after the Federal Court of Appeal overturned federal approval for the construction of the pipeline, citing an insufficient environmental assessment and lack of Indigenous consultations, construction was stopped. The Trudeau government approved the expansion a second time in June 2019 claiming it had satisfied requirements on both counts. Construction on

the pipeline then resumed in August. A spokesperson for Trans Mountain Canada said on October 23 that work has started on the marine terminals in British Columbia and pumping stations in Alberta. The first 50 kilometers of actual pipeline will start being laid in the Edmonton area shortly, the spokesperson said.

There is however a new federal court challenge underway from Indigenous communities who argue the secondary consultation process undertaken by the government earlier this year was a sham. The Trudeau government got consenting elected band chiefs to sign on. They represent the Crown, not the peoples, on small allotments of Crown land called reserves.

The government is also conniving with private individuals to project the claim that the pipeline will benefit the Indigenous peoples by providing economic benefits. The Liberals also promised to create a \$300 million annual fund from pipeline revenues for natural climate solutions including tree planting, as well as conservation and restoration of forests, grasslands, agricultural lands and coastal areas, CBC reports.

The Conceit of Prerogative Power — the “Done Deal”

Finance Minister Bill Morneau told the *Canadian Press* that the pipeline is a “done deal.” To divert attention from the true nature of this pay-the-rich scheme which favors the U.S. war economy, the Trudeau government clothes it in high ideals. “We purchased it for a reason,” Morneau told the Canadian Press. “We now see how it can help us accelerate our clean energy transition by putting any revenues that we get from it into a transition to clean energy. We think that is the best way we can move forward in our current context.” Morneau said, “This project we’ve already moved forward on. It’s one that we’ve said that we’re moving forward on, we’ve actually already gone through that process.”

The new federal court challenge is underway because the consultations have been bogus. Even if, as expected, Trudeau’s persistence in using cabinet prerogatives to get what the elites he serves want, the credibility of the democratic institutions is suffering a great deal. All pretense that Canada is building nation-to-nation relations with the Indigenous peoples is also blown to bits. This will deepen the crisis Canada is in because it refuses to settle scores with its colonial past, which has become a new colonial present. It reveals that Canada’s claim to uphold UN treaties on relations with Indigenous peoples and on human rights is counterfeit. Canada’s aims in pushing self-serving definitions of what constitutes an international rules-based order is suspect indeed.

As for the mantra that the pipelines create jobs for Albertans, this too is merely repeated to undermine attempts of workers from across the country as well as in BC and Alberta to organize to change the direction of the economy and control their conditions of work. In fact, Canadians from across the country work in construction on the Alberta job sites, pushed to leave their homes due to economic need.

News reports say that, thus far, more than 2,200 workers have been hired to build the Trans Mountain pipeline, suggesting that the Alberta economy will benefit from pipeline construction.

In fact, the majority of jobs are either non-union or company union jobs where the workers exercise no control over working conditions, hours of work, pay or health and safety, which are all said to be deplorable. The monopoly-controlled media repeat the disinforming mantra of the narrow private interests the Trudeau government serves. It is the persistence of the Indigenous people in conjunction with Canadian working people to lay the claims which belong to them by right that exposes what is really going on with the Trudeau government’s energy program. It has nothing to do with humanizing the natural and social environment and everything to do with making the rich richer and promoting the U.S. imperialist war preparations.

Canada-U.S.-Mexico-Free Trade Agreement

Another success of the Trudeau government on the economy is said to be the negotiations with the Trump Administration over the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Free Trade Agreement (CUSMA). Turning the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) into CUSMA is part of the adjustments the financial oligarchy is making to retain its power and control in the face of growing inequality and resistance of the working people.

The aim is to serve the creation of North American trade, energy, communications, transportation and security corridors with regulations which smash all previous arrangements and jurisdictions and bring the productive powers, land and resources under the command of the office of the president of Fortress North America. The striving to create a unified Fortress North America is plagued by fighting among the factions which comprise the ruling class and the shenanigans of the cartels and coalitions of the oligopolies in every sector of the economy to take over the decision-making powers on a supranational basis. The situation is fraught with dangers, for not only the working class and people of Canada and Quebec, but also of the United States, who are already fighting against the imposition of unacceptable conditions on every front, and of Mexico where the people are striving to uphold Mexican sovereignty in the face of a brutal U.S. agenda.

In many ways the changes to NAFTA are similar to the efforts to save from collapse the dysfunctional and outmoded political system of representative democracy and the nation-state which has lost its *raison d’être*, its reason of state. Instead of democratic renewal to empower the people and a modern constitution which recognizes the rights of all, the financial oligarchy has politicized supranational narrow private interests and is forcing a continuation of the cartel party system, resulting in intensified control and rule of the minority over the majority. Instead of a new pro-social direction for the economy and modern nation-building project where trade with all humanity is for everyone’s mutual benefit and development, the financial oligarchy is forcing a continuation of the anti-social offensive on the people, endless wars and recurring economic crises.

Make Canada a Zone for Peace; Stop Interfering in Sovereign Nations

On matters related to war and peace, the Trudeau government

takes its marching orders from the Atlantic Council, the political arm of the U.S.-led NATO aggressive military alliance. Even though questions of war and peace are of the utmost importance to all Canadians, the Trudeau government makes decisions behind their backs. Such is the case with the U.S.-based International Security Forum of warmongers to be held in Halifax in mid-November. Haligonians organizing to make Canada a zone for peace have taken the initiative to hold a series of forums on war and peace during November and an anti-war rally on November 23, to denounce the 11th annual Halifax International Security Forum and the Trudeau government's participation and financing of these meetings, whose aim is to plot crimes against the peace and the peoples of the world.

The Trudeau government's continual interference in the sovereign affairs of nations such as Venezuela and acting as flunky for U.S. imperialism's regime change, anarchy and violence throughout the world, expose Canada's aim in pushing self-serving definitions of what constitutes a rules-based international order. During the election, Canada gave its support at a meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) to activation of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty) against Venezuela, adding fuel to the fire of those looking for a way to justify a foreign military intervention in that country,

based on the hoax that it represents a threat to peace and security in the region.

Following the election of Bolivian President Evo Morales to a fourth term in office this week, Canada along with the U.S. and the rogue representatives of a self-appointed president in Venezuela plus two other Lima Group members, forced the holding of a special meeting of the Permanent Council of the OAS for the purpose of raising the specter of "fraud" without a shred of evidence, and interfering in Bolivia's electoral process in what looks a lot like the failed attempt by the same forces to use the OAS to de-legitimize the election of Nicolás Maduro, promote instability and carry out a coup in Venezuela.

For working people, the battle to oppose the anti-social offensive and private control of decision-making is for their individual and collective well-being, to make Canada a zone for peace and to humanize the social and natural environment. It encompasses the fight of the actual producers to gain control over the direction of the economy and country so as to guarantee the survival and future of society and Mother Earth.

For working people, their independence of thinking, organization and action is fundamental in dealing with a financial oligarchy that is anti-social, self-serving, warlike and destructive in the extreme.

BRITAIN'S CALL FOR A GENERAL ELECTION

Working People Give Voice to Their Own Agenda

A general election is to be held throughout the state known as the United Kingdom on Thursday, December 12. The writ was dropped after the Early Parliamentary General Election Act 2019 was passed by the British House of Commons. The call to hold a general election comes after a long list of failed attempts to sort out the contradictions within the British ruling class over the direction of the economy in Britain so as to best benefit the demands of the financial oligarchy and the U.S. striving for world domination and war preparations. They have taken the form of whether to remain a member of the European Union or not. Neither the Brexit referendum, nor the subsequent general election called to get a solid majority behind the Brexit talks, nor a string of failed votes in the House of Commons to get approval for one deal after another, have sorted anything out. On the contrary, the divisions within the government between the factions called political parties, and within the political parties themselves, are sharper than ever.

Along with this, the crisis of credibility and legitimacy in which the so-called liberal democratic institutions are mired is deeper than ever. This includes the form of government and the form of decision-making. Confidence in the government, the parties which form a cartel party system and the House of Commons are at an all-time low and confidence that an election will sort the problems out is also lacking.

The Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) (RCPB(M-L)) explains the matter as follows: "It is certain that the election will sort out nothing for the ruling elites, embroiled in their own civil war. The old parliamentary

system and its electoral mechanisms have had their day. They no longer function in letting power flow from a party in office to the party in opposition which also represents the status quo. The powers-that-be can no longer look towards a champion who will provide a measure of stability."

The desire of Britain's working people is to have a labor party which is not part of the status quo. This requires blocking the factions within the Labor Party itself that support a neo-liberal agenda and status quo of power and privilege, which is what has caused havoc in the British economy in this period. By destroying the welfare state, the ruling class has privatized the systems of health care, education and civil services as well as transportation and turned other sectors of the economy over to war production and the oligopolies which are marauding all countries of the world.

RCPB(M-L) writes: "[T]he working class and people can make a difference by rejecting a vote for the establishment, at the very least preventing the Conservatives from forming a majority government, on their own or in alliance or coalition with any other party, and instead firmly voicing their own concerns and agenda, not relinquishing the struggle for their own rights and interests."

"The dysfunctionality of the old parliamentary system of 'representative democracy' has underlined that the people must use this election to speak in their own name, and in this sense empower themselves. That is, it is not only a people-powered campaign that is called for, but that the striving of the people themselves for their own empowerment is the call of

the times.”

RCPB(M-L) calls on the people to reject the pro or anti-Brexit agenda which the establishment wants to impose on the people. It calls on them to take up the agenda of the concerns of the people. “This election provides an opportunity for the working class and people to speak in their own name. It provides the opportunity to go all out for democratic renewal,” the Party says.

Using the Election for Discussing and Giving Voice to the Concerns of the People

“The calling of a general election is a vain attempt to end the impasse in Parliament and sort out the contradictions in the ruling elite over Brexit. The election has not been called by the establishment in order to empower the people to decide the future direction of society, but to impose an agenda and try and justify business as usual with claims that the electorate have given the status quo a mandate. The working class and people will not accept this cynical state of affairs and are determined to go all out to pursue their own agenda,” the Party writes.

“This election has been characterized by maneuvering and shenanigans from the outset. Going into the election, the speculation is over alliances and backroom deals. This is now the usual feature of the crisis-ridden cartel-party system and the chronic inability to predict outcomes.

“After the interregnum of the May Government, which had attempted to represent stability through government by police powers, and was defeated in its attempt to win a majority on that basis, the rise of Boris Johnson has represented the end of a stable and functional state of affairs in British politics.

“Furthermore, the presentation of the issues is to deprive people of an outlook that clearly views the civil war between the ruling factions for what it is and instead sets its own agenda. Rather, the disinformation poses the people as categorized into opposing camps. There is a burning need to defend the unity of the people



and reject this division.

“On the basis of this polarization of the polity, the narrative and presentation directs all attention to the leaders of the cartel parties and poses the issue as one of personalities.

“Maneuvering, division, categorization over ‘values,’ and so on, aim to block the people from thinking for themselves and speaking in their own name, as do the constant polls and punditry. Reducing the matter to numbers and tactics serves to obscure the actual human relations that exist, and the actual issues in society that arise out of those relations.

“In these conditions and where people do not decide the electoral process, the candidates and their platforms, nor determine what are presented as the election issues, in spite of all the blocks and attempts to preserve the old arrangements, people need to create conditions for a new democratic personality to emerge.

“In this election, the times are calling for discussion to be organized, discussions characterized by everyone presenting their own thinking. Rather than succumb to the pressure to follow the traditional ‘hustings,’ or ‘question time-style debate,’ the division into candidate and elector can be ended by finding new forms in which all participants, whether ‘panel’ or ‘floor,’ are encouraged to speak about their experiences and present their views.

“RCPB(M-L) and its activists pledge to go all out to do just that in the coming days and weeks.”

Vote No to War!

Stop the War Coalition Statement

Stop the War urges all voters to consider the significance of this election for our foreign policy and the increasingly dangerous international situation.

The wars that recent British governments have participated in in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and elsewhere have killed and displaced millions, destabilized whole regions of the globe and wasted an unimaginable amount of resources.

Britain has long been the U.S.’s main supporter in the West. Recently our government has broadly backed Trump’s confrontational stance over Iran. It has armed and given full political and military support to Saudi Arabia while it creates the world’s worst humanitarian catastrophe in its war on Yemen. It has co-operated in ongoing operations in Syria and Iraq.

Meanwhile Britain has backed the U.S.’s increasingly

aggressive stance towards Russia and China, raising the prospect of big power confrontation for the first time in generations.

The belligerent foreign policy that comes with the special relationship is making the world a more and more frightening and dangerous place. It has been one of the drivers of racism and Islamophobia and it has led to attacks on civil liberties at home.

Trump has already been welcomed twice to Britain by the Tories. Boris Johnson will be greeting him once again at the NATO summit in Britain on December 3. Stop the War will be protesting at the summit.

We urge people to use their vote to help break the cycle of violence and instability caused by the West’s wars of the last two decades. A fundamental change of course is needed.

I • Stand with Bolivians Resisting U.S. Dictate

the Constitution have also resigned in protest. The people are demonstrating and marching in huge numbers rejecting the coup and defending their right to decide their government free of U.S. interference. *Voice of Revolution* denounces this U.S. orchestrated coup and all the serious acts of wanton violence, arson, hijacking and other activities against ministers of the Evo Morales government, his family and the families of government ministers, as well as leaders of the workers' and peasants' mass organizations. The attack on Morales and his government is also racist to the core, as he is the first Indigenous person elected as president and proudly represented and served the large Indigenous population in Bolivia and the region.

U.S. actions and that of their opposition forces repeatedly attacked the democratic institutions and democratic elections that had just occurred in Bolivia, with Morales being re-elected. The U.S. and its opposition forces refused to accept the election and the stand of the Bolivian people to build their nation on a pro-people basis. It is this independence and strong stand in favor of people's rights by the Morales government that the U.S. seeks to eliminate with the coup.

The entire coup was instigated by the U.S., which embroiled Canada and other countries. It is part of U.S. efforts to block the peoples' movements in the Americas and their right to have their own independent nation-building projects and their own democracies in service to the people, not the rich and not the U.S. The U.S. is attempting to reassert control, as it maneuvers for regime change in Venezuela, Nicaragua and throughout the region. The racist U.S. state still considers all the Americas its "backyard" and aims for complete control of the region, its resources and peoples. As Trump said, "We are now one step closer to a completely democratic, prosperous and free Western Hemisphere," meaning one completely controlled by the U.S.

Trump emphasized that events in Bolivia "sent a strong signal" to Venezuela and Nicaragua that the U.S. and its U.S.-style democracy "will prevail." This is a threat to all those resisting that the U.S. will step up its aggression, collective punishment and interference. Whatever claims the U.S. makes about democracy and human rights, its actions make clear its agenda of domination and its willingness to unleash violence and chaos to achieve it.

Morales Called for New Presidential Elections

Earlier in the day, as part of efforts to peacefully resolve the



Bolivians support President Morales and oppose U.S.-backed coup

situation, President Evo Morales had announced that he would call a new presidential election. There had been a night of vandalism and violence in different parts of the country by right-wing opposition forces in what the Bolivian government called a coup attempt. The houses of two governors as well as of the minister of mining and President Morales' sister were burned down and people associated with the governing Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party were physically attacked. Violent opposition

protestors also took over two state media outlets and threatened their staff. The signal of Bolivia TV was taken off air for more than eight hours. Meanwhile, social movements and other supporters of President Morales, popularly known as Evo, took to the streets in different cities to defend the country's democratic processes and the constitution against the wrecking of the U.S.-backed coup forces.

Speaking at a press conference in La Paz, Evo said he would also replace the country's Supreme Electoral Tribunal with a new one made up of members elected by the legislature. He called for calm and respect for private property, for authorities and between families, saying, "We all have the obligation to make Bolivia peaceful." Standing beside Juan Carlos Guarachi, leader of the Bolivian Workers' Federation and Segundina Flores, executive secretary of the Bartolina Sisa National Federation of Campesino, Indigenous, and Native Women, Evo said his decision to resign came after consulting with different social movements in the country. As an indication that resigning was not enough for the U.S., Carlos Mesa, leader of the opposition Citizens' Community Party, who came second to Evo in the election and who declared even before the election that opposition forces would launch a coup if Evo won, said Evo and his running mate vice-president Alvaro García Linera, should not run in the new election. Evo has since been forced into exile in Mexico where he continues to denounce the coup and defend the interests of the Bolivian people.

Results of October 20 Election

Bolivia's electoral law requires that a candidate receive 50 per cent of the votes plus one, or 40 per cent and a 10-point advantage over their nearest rival, to be declared the winner on the first round. Otherwise a second round is required. When the Supreme Electoral Tribunal reported the final results of the election, Evo was declared the winner with 47.07 per cent of the vote to Mesa's 36.51 per cent. In third place was Chi Hyun Chung of the Christian Democratic

Party with 8.78 per cent.

Well before all the results had been received and tabulated however, the Organization of American States (OAS) election observer mission was questioning what it called “irregularities” in the vote count, without credible evidence to back up the allegation and ignoring known differences in voting trends and the speed with which results are typically transmitted from urban and more remote, rural parts of the country where support for Morales is traditionally strong. The OAS issued a report after the elections calling for new elections and a new electoral tribunal.

Referring to this, Morales said in an interview October 24 that historically, in colonial times, Indigenous movements were threatened with extermination, and “[n]ow when the elections come again, they do not recognize the Indigenous movements just like in the past, so we see history repeating itself.” He denounced that opposition leader Mesa and other extreme right-wing politicians were instigating hatred, contempt and discrimination by presuming to disregard the rural vote and calling on the population to rise up against the results that favored MAS. A native Aymara from Bolivia’s highlands, Evo became the country’s first Indigenous president in 2006 and handily won two more elections after that. His aim in running for a fourth term was to deepen the social and economic transformations achieved since he has been in office.

Before and after the results had been announced, opposition leader Carlos Mesa and other members of the Bolivian oligarchy and wealthy business people, most of them based in and around the Santa Cruz area, attempted to make good on their threatened coup. Following the model set by other foreign-backed coup forces in Venezuela and Nicaragua, they burned down seven regional elections offices, engaged in other acts of vandalism and violence around the country and called on the military and police forces to mutiny.

The U.S. and a handful of other governments and the European

Union refused to recognize the election results despite Bolivian electoral authorities declaring Evo elected in keeping with the country’s electoral law. The U.S. first called for a second round of voting. Instead of that, and given Evo’s readiness to have new elections where he very likely would win yet again, the U.S. orchestrated the coup.

The U.S. also attempted to use the OAS elections monitoring team to justify its actions. The OAS had declared that after 100 per cent of the votes were counted the margin of difference exceeded the 10-point threshold called for by the Bolivian constitution. Even so, it refused to accept these results and called for new elections. In this manner it can be seen that the U.S. is not interested in democracy or respecting the democratic institutions of the people of Bolivia, but rather in the results it seeks to control and dominate, using regime change, destabilization and collective punishment, like sanctions.

In contrast, at a meeting of the OAS Permanent Council called October 24 to consider the situation in Bolivia, Mexico’s representative Luz Elena Baños addressed the obvious lack of impartiality of the OAS electoral mission: “We demand respect for sovereign processes and condemn the fallacious claims of some member states of this organization that, despite [their countries] being under major social and political upheavals, want to be the judges and monitors of democracy in other countries of the region. We call for the sovereignty and institutionality of the Plurinational State [of Bolivia] to be respected and for the OAS not to insist on becoming an accrediting agency for political processes and governments.”

The situation continues to unfold as the people’s organized forces in Bolivia continue to fight for their right to govern and decide and reject U.S. dictate, and Morales continues to fight with them. *Voice of Revolution* urges all to denounce the U.S.-orchestrated coup and stand with the people of Bolivia in their just struggle to build their nation and their democracy as they see fit.

UNAC Statement on the Bolivian Coup

United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), November 11, 2019

The United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) condemns the U.S. sponsored military coup in Bolivia and urges protests throughout the country. The U.S. uses the corporate media, the bipartisan imperialist consensus, and pressures members of the Organization of American State (OAS) to support its regime change efforts against nations in this hemisphere who oppose Washington’s neo-liberal agenda.

President Evo Morales was the first indigenous president of Bolivia. When he was granted asylum by the Mexican government, he said these words upon his arrival. “If I have committed a crime; it’s being indigenous. If the Vice President has committed a crime; it’s implementing social programs for the humble and poorest sectors seeking social justice.”

The coup is not just an attack on President Morales and his party Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) but on all the Indigenous, working people, and the poor of Bolivia and all of Latin America. It makes clear that if any country believes it can oppose the dictates of Washington and Wall Street they will be hit with

economic sanctions, coups or regime change wars.

As we write this statement, we hear word of a resistance to the coup. In the largely indigenous city of El Alto, a city of 1 million people neighboring La Paz, meetings have been held throughout the city calling for “war on the coup.” They have called for defense committees to be established and for a new Trade Union and Civilian Police Force to be established to safeguard the people and their institutions.

UNAC supports the right of self-determination of the Bolivian people and demands an end to all U.S. intervention. UNAC member groups and others have been organizing solidarity demonstrations around the country. We urge all to support these actions or build one in your area.

U.S. Hands off Bolivia!
Down with the Coup!
#ElMundoConEvo
#NoAlGolpeEnBolivia

National Nurses United Statement on Bolivian Coup

National Nurses United, November 13, 2019

National Nurses United (NNU) today joined with the AFL-CIO, international labor leaders, and other activists in condemning the military coup in Bolivia and urging an end to political repression and violence.

NNU endorsed concerns by AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA), the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and the leader of Brazil's National Federation of Nurses (FNE) to protest the "military interference" in Bolivia.

Additionally, NNU also supports calls for restoration of democracy and a fair electoral process, including deposed former Bolivian President Evo Morales; and international solidarity for former ministers, their families, and supporters who have faced attacks or threats.

"We are alarmed by scenes of military intervention in the governance of Bolivia, arrests and acts of violence committed against supporters of the former Morales government, and racial attacks on indigenous peoples of Bolivia that have been seen across social media," said NNU President Deborah Burger, RN.

"As nurses we have concerns for the health and safety of all Bolivian people, and urge an immediate, peaceful resolution that protects the rights and security of all Bolivians," Burger said.

Burger said NNU endorses a statement yesterday by AFL-CIO President Trumka who said in a tweet: "The @AFLCIO joins the @ituc @CSA_TUCA in condemning military interference in Bolivia's election process. Morales reduced widespread poverty and fought for the inclusion of the indigenous majority. Bolivians must be able to vote peacefully and freely in new elections."

FNE President Shirley Diaz Morales, RN, said in a post that Evo Morales had accepted the call for new elections and peace

before being deposed. "We in Latin America cannot tolerate that every time any leader stands up against social injustice" they face a coup and cannot be silent "in the face of violence in Bolivia." FNE is a member, along with NNU, of Global Nurses United, an international federation of nurses unions in 28 countries.

Additionally, NNU cited an ITUC statement which stated that Morales "was forced to resign by high ranking military officials. The news comes after threats on his life and violence against ministers, parliamentarians and their families."

"No elected president should be forced out of office under military orders," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow. "That is not how democracy works. The electoral process is the solution, not intervention by military leaders. Military coups can never be the answer."

Morales, the ITUC observed, was first elected in 2006. In his three terms as president, he oversaw a major reduction in poverty, with overall poverty going from 59.9 percent to 34.6 percent in 2017 and extreme poverty cut by more than half in the same period. His inclusive policies saw huge budgets dedicated to health, education, and electrification, which notably resulted in illiteracy rates dropping from 13.28 percent in 2001 to 3.8 percent in 2014.

President Morales, the ITUC added, also called for a fresh vote to allow the Bolivian people to make their choice. Burger said NNU agrees with the ITUC call that "This should be respected and ... the international community (should) support it."

National Nurses United is the largest and fastest-growing union and professional association of registered nurses in the United States with more than 150,000 members nationwide.

Behind the Racist Coup in Bolivia

Danny Shaw, Council on Hemispheric Affairs

On Sunday November 10, at approximately 4pm (Eastern Standard Time) the democratically elected president and vice president of Bolivia, Evo Morales and Álvaro García respectively, were forced to resign from power. This was no voluntary resignation as CNN, the New York Times and the rest of the corporate media is reporting, nor has it been accepted by the Legislative Assembly as required by the Constitution of Bolivia. This was a coup that employed threats and brutality against Morales, García, members of the cabinet, congressional representatives, and their families. Both the commander in chief of the military and head of the Bolivian Police requested, in no uncertain terms, the resignation of Morales. The coup forces, led by Pro-Santa Cruz Committee president Luis Fernando Camacho, continues to target Movement for Socialism (MAS) activists, progressive social movements, and Indigenous peoples of Bolivia.

Behind the Misleading Headlines

The corporate press has predictably given one-sided coverage of the unfolding situation in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, a resource-rich Andean nation of 11.5 million, of which approximately 50% are Indigenous. While the mainstream media act as cheerleaders for the unrest in Hong Kong and magnify any sign of discontent in Venezuela or any other country perceived by the US government as "enemy," it has largely ignored the popular uprisings in Haiti, Chile, Ecuador and beyond. Now, in the case of Bolivia, conservative circles in the Americas are celebrating an opportunity to take power back from a president, administration and people who have been a regional driving force for the advancement of Indigenous, environmental, women's and workers' rights. Bolivia has enjoyed one of the most stable economic growth rates in the Americas, between 4% and 5% in the last years, and decreased poverty among millions

STAND WITH BOLIVIAN PEOPLE AGAINST U.S. DICTATE

of Bolivians, from 59% to 39%, according to official data from the World Bank.

A Call for Solidarity

On Thursday, October 24th, Bolivia's election panel declared Morales the winner with 47.07% of the votes and Carlos Mesa the runner up with 36.5% of the votes. According to a Center for Economic and Policy Research, Morales had a sufficient margin of victory to be declared the victor in the elections. The Organization of American States presented findings that the election had irregularities and that the "auditing team could not validate the electoral results and were thus, recommending another election." The opposition contested the election, led by extreme right wing leader of the Santa Cruz Committee, Luis Fernando Camacho. Camacho is involved in the continental corruption case known as "The Panama Papers." He also has links with terrorist and separatist Branko Marinkovic, who enjoys safe harbor in Brazil, which is governed by the right-wing presidency of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil.

In response to charges that the election was not valid, Morales invited the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) to conduct an audit. The opposition rejected these calls, reiterating their demands for Morales to step down. Morales responded to the OAS audit, which claimed there were irregularities, by calling for new elections and a reconstitution of the electoral commission but the coup leaders rejected all of these concessions.

Since the anarchy began, all of president Morales' public statements have pleaded for peace and dialogue. However, the opposition has no interest in the social peace the MAS built. Quite the opposite, they want to reverse all of these gains.

In the town of Vinto, protestors brutally attacked, cut off the hair and marched MAS mayor Patricia Arce through the streets to humiliate her. Anti-government forces have picked up arms and burned down the homes of MAS activists and family members. In response, Morales said: "Burn my house. Not those of my family. Seek vengeance with me and Alvaro. Not with our families."

The U.S. headlines do little to explain the racial and class divide that defines Bolivia historically and at the current moment. Pro-democracy forces should seek to understand the inner-dynamics at work in Bolivian society and support the restoration of democratically-elected government and peace. Veterans of centuries of resistance, the Bolivian people are poised to keep resisting the coup and preserve the historic gains of the "process of change."

Behind the Propaganda

Morales and the Movement for Socialism's (MAS) true crime



Indigenous peoples and organizations oppose U.S.-backed coup

— in the eyes of the salivating gas multinationals and their local lackeys — was the severing of Bolivia's historically exploitative relationship with the U.S.

In 2005, Evo Morales became the 80th president of Bolivia and its first Indigenous. In 2006, the MAS re-nationalized Bolivia's vast gas reserves. Morales expelled the DEA, USAID, the Peace Corps and the U.S. ambassador because of their agendas of political intervention in domestic affairs, which is illegal in any country, as it is surely in the U.S. Aware of the 200 plus U.S. military invasions in the continent in the 20th century, the MAS established an anti-imperialist military school to train their own officers and rank and file soldiers.

Cholitas, as Aymara women are known, have made important gains since 2005. Traditionally alienated from the formal economy and exploited as servants in the homes of the wealthy, Bolivia's women have carved out new economic and cultural terrain to exercise more self-determination over their lives.

Despite all of the social and economic gains, the process of change was unable to completely transform the old state apparatus over the past thirteen years. In the decisive moment, when the rule of law came under attack, important sectors of the military high command and the police supported the coup.

In Evo's own words upon resigning, in order to prevent more attacks against innocent Bolivians, "my sin is I'm indigenous and I'm a leftist."

Contextualizing the Coup

Contrary to what the second-place candidate Carlos Mesa, Luis Fernando Camacho and other pro-coup forces would have us believe, the violence and chaos is not just about Morales' fourth presidential term; it is about what class forces control the future of Bolivia.

The overthrow of the MAS government and the victory of pro-U.S. interventionist forces, for the present moment, represent

DENOUNCE U.S. ORCHESTRATED COUP AGAINST BOLIVIA

a monumental setback for the Bolivian people as well as for the cause of regional independence and democracy, akin to the rise of Pinochet in Chile in 1973.

While 66.2% of Bolivians are of Indigenous or mestizo (mixed Native and European with the indigenous component higher than the European) ancestry, the violence is concentrated in Santa Cruz and other areas where the largely lighter-skinned, Spanish-descendent, wealthier sectors have no interest in Bolivian unity and democracy. The concentration of wealth in these sectors is the result of unequal development, a direct product of centuries of colonialism.

Santa Cruz tried to secede from Bolivia in 2008. The secessionist forces trampled on the red, yellow and green flag of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Wiphala, electing instead to fly the green and white regional flag. The call for “autonomy” and the latest burning of homes and violent attacks seek to steal back the direction of the Bolivian state. Driven by racism and a thirst for the unconstrained power they have been accustomed to since the inception of Bolivia’s history, these class forces believe they have won this round, forcing Morales and García from power.

An Insurrectionary Continent

It is important to place the temporary setback in Bolivia in the wider context of what is unfolding across Latin America.

Bolivia’s neighbor to the south, Argentina, just rejected the right-wing agenda of Macrismo at the polls. To the west, Chile is in revolt against a billionaire agenda and president, Sebastián Piñera. Further north, Colombia rejected Uribeismo in local elections. Lula — the most popular politician in Brazil — is free after 19 months as a political prisoner. Millions of Haitians are in the streets demanding an end to U.S.-led exploitation and occupation. In Ecuador, there is a popular movement against Lenín Moreno’s hard turn towards the neoliberal economic model. And in Mexico, President



Demonstration in D.C. opposes U.S.-backed coup and supports President Morales

Andrés Manuel López Obrador leads a new party which aims at building a post-neoliberal order for the country. Venezuela and Cuba continue to fight back against an all-out U.S. diplomatic, military, media and economic offensive.

The Coup Cannot Bury the Process of Change

As this article goes to press, there are numerous official denunciations of the coup from governments which defend the constitutional order in Bolivia as well as expressions of solidarity from progressive forces around the world. This is indeed a great blow to democracy and social justice in the Americas.

The OAS, after having failed to denounce the violence and racist attacks perpetrated by coup forces, has belatedly voiced support for the preservation of the constitutional order, for a new electoral authority, and for new elections, all of which were sought by President Morales himself. [...]

Now that President Morales and Vice President Álvaro García have resigned and the coup has polarized Bolivian society, it will be difficult to re-establish the “institutional functioning” undermined by the coup. Morales has been granted asylum by Mexican authorities. Celebrants of the anti-Indigenous victory are burning the Whiphala (flag of the Indigenous peoples) in public squares. Popular mobilizations against the coup and in support of Morales which are now on the rise, are being met in some areas with brutal repression by the police. There are reliable video and testimonial reports that mutinous police, who had stayed in their barracks during the violence and destruction wrought by the anti-government forces, are now using live ammunition on people in El Alto. Meanwhile the MAS and other organizations that have been major protagonists of the process of change are seeking to protect their ranks from persecution and regroup in order to defend the progress of the past decade, gains which have lifted millions of Bolivians out of poverty, revalorized Indigenous culture, and contributed to continent wide aspiration of realizing the Patria Grande. As Evo Morales has promised, “the struggle continues.”



I • March on the War Machine

and Republicans as war parties that refuse to implement the broad anti-war stand of the country's majority calling for an end to U.S. wars. In salute to the actions defending the environment and affirming the right of the youth to a bright future, it was brought out that the Pentagon is the world's single largest polluter and that U.S. wars and military worldwide poison the water, soil and human beings, often making land uninhabitable. Stopping war is key to stopping climate change.

Starting at the White House, marching on a Friday during the day to do outreach to the public, the demonstration proceeded to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), responsible for massive attacks on social programs and sovereignty of countries worldwide, while profiting from wars and the huge debts imposed on the peoples. It also went to the office of the Atlantic Council, which is in an unmarked building, consistent with its role to hide its influence while acting to advance U.S. domination and use of force, using the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). As the leaflets distributed brought out, the Atlantic Council specifically targets the antiwar movement, using disinformation while acting, for example, to have 800 Facebook pages removed, many of them opposing U.S. wars and crimes. No explanation was given for the removal. Some of the pages had millions of "likes," including Police the Police, Cop Block and Free Thought Project.

The action then proceeded to the *Washington Post*, where it denounced current *Post* owner and Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos as a CIA contractor and responsible for the widespread misinformation and disinformation of the *Post*. This included its consistent failure to even report on antiwar demonstrations and many other efforts of the peoples in D.C. defending rights.

At each stop leaflets with information about the role of the various pro-war forces were distributed to the many passersby and workers along the way. This outreach to the public was

an important part of the action and reflective of the need for demonstrations today to be directed to and engage the public in discussing and standing against the U.S. war machine and war government. Importance was given to putting the issue of war and peace on the agenda during elections and of demanding that candidates support the call to *Bring All U.S. Troops Home Now!* This is a solution the peoples at home and abroad are demanding.

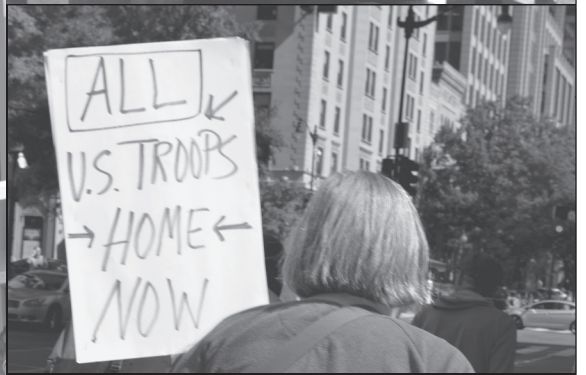
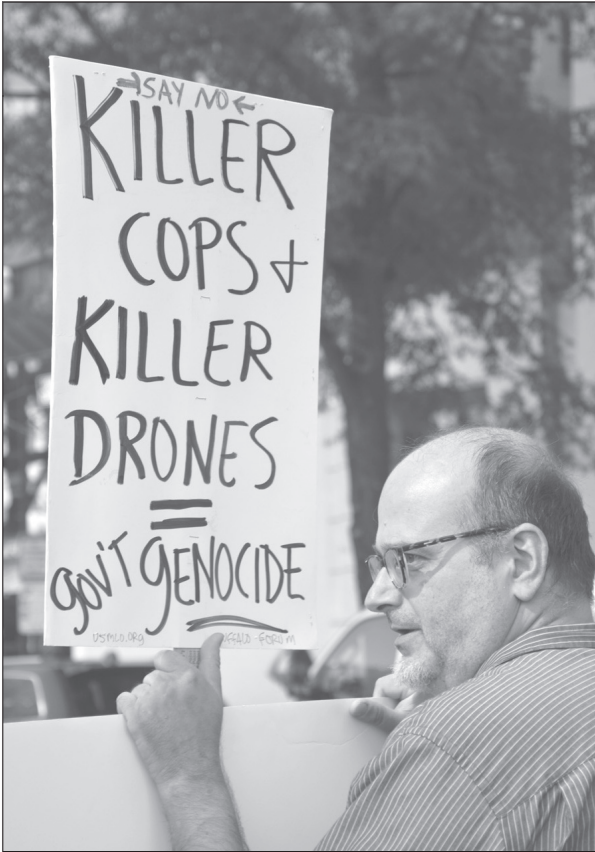
The march was followed by a Summit the next day where all involved were able to share organizing experience and provide information about on-going struggles. These included that of the Syrian people to get the U.S. out, Venezuelans defending their right to decide their government against U.S. efforts at regime change, and opposing the crime of collective punishment, including sanctions, against the peoples.

The importance of relying on the people themselves, not the government, including organizing work to repeatedly engage and politically mobilize the public was brought out. So too was the need to be pro-active, to advance a pro-people, antiwar program and not be limited to reacting to the agenda set by the rulers and their pro-war parties.

Voice of Revolution (VOR) was widely distributed among participants and the public during the march and at the Summit. Its call to *Unite and Fight for an Anti-War Government* was raised for discussion. As the VOR statement brought out: "Let us use the Summit and similar events in the coming year to collectively discuss the aim of an anti-war government. Let us not be limited to describing and denouncing the crimes of the U.S. whether it be sanctions, aggressive war or the imperialist system. Let us be pro-active in debating and working together to further build our own independent collectives and institutions of people's empowerment as steps on the path to achieving our unifying aim of an anti-war government."



STOP FUNDING WAR AND FUND OUR RIGHTS



DEDICATED TO THE CAUSE OF PEACE

Help Us Celebrate Armistice Day 2019!

Veterans for Peace

Veterans For Peace has been celebrating Armistice Day almost since the organization's inception, with a few chapters doing yearly events. However, in 2008 the effort became a national effort with the passage of an official Veterans For Peace resolution. Since then, chapters across the country have been "Reclaiming Armistice Day" pushing the celebration of peace into the national conversation on Veterans Day.

Over one hundred years ago the world celebrated peace as a universal principle. The first World War had just ended and nations mourning their dead collectively called for an end to all wars. Armistice Day was born and was designated as "a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated."

After World War II, the U.S. Congress decided to rebrand November 11 as Veterans Day. Honoring the warrior quickly morphed into honoring the military and glorifying war. Armistice Day was flipped from a day for peace into a day for displays of militarism.

Veterans For Peace has taken the lead in lifting up the original

intention of November 11th – as a day for peace. As veterans we know that a day that celebrates peace, not war, is the best way to honor the sacrifices of veterans. We want generations after us to never know the destruction war has wrought on people and the earth.

Veterans For Peace is calling on everyone to stand up for peace this Armistice Day. More than ever, the world faces a critical moment. Tensions are heightened around the world and the U.S. is engaged militarily in multiple countries, without an end in sight. Here at home we have seen the increasing militarization of our police forces and brutal crackdowns on dissent and people's uprisings against state power. We must press our government to end reckless military interventions that endanger the entire world. We must build a culture of peace.

This Armistice Day, Veterans For Peace calls on the U.S. public to say no to more war and to demand justice and peace, at home and abroad. We know Peace is Possible and call for an end to all oppressive and violent policies, and for equality for all people.

CONVICTED ANTI-NUCLEAR WEAPONS ACTIVISTS SPEAK OUT:

The Crime Are These Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction, Not Opposing Them

Marjorie Cohn, October 28, 2019

The seven Catholic peace activists who were convicted on October 24 for their symbolic protest against nuclear weapons at the Kings Bay Naval Base in Georgia are now facing a two-to-three-month wait to hear their prison sentences. They could face more than 20 years in prison.

"Our own lives are uncertain regarding the possible length of prison sentences," defendant Martha Hennessy said. "But we rejoice in the fact that more scrutiny is being directed at the purpose of the Kings Bay Naval Base in southern Georgia."

The Kings Bay Naval Base is home to nuclear armed submarines with two dozen ballistic Trident D5 missiles, each of which is 30 times more powerful than the atomic bomb the United States dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. The seven peace activists — Martha Hennessy, Mark Colville, Clare Grady, Jesuit Fr. Stephen Kelly, Patrick O'Neill, Carmen Trotta and Elizabeth McAlister, who are collectively known as the Kings Bay Plowshares 7 — were convicted by a Georgia federal jury of conspiracy, destruction of property on a naval station, deprivation of government property, and trespass after entering the base on April 4, 2018.

They came onto the base bearing hammers, baby bottles

containing their own blood, crime scene tape, a copy of Daniel Ellsberg's book, *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*, and an indictment that charged the U.S. government with crimes against peace. They cut a fence and entered the base without being detected. They used the hammers to deface a monument to the Trident, poured their blood and left a sign that read, "The Ultimate Logic of Trident is Omnicide," (extinction of the human species). They went to three different sites on the base, including a storage bunker for nuclear weapons where they damaged statues and poured their blood on various structures. [...]

Facing a Jury Without Opinions on Nuclear Risks

The jury that convicted the Kings Bay Plowshares 7 activists was self-avowedly apathetic about the risks posed to humanity by nuclear weapons, and the judge and prosecution worked together to prevent the defendants from sharing information or arguments to raise jurors' consciousness on the issue.

Sam Hussein, communications director at the Institute for Public Accuracy, a nonprofit organization, attended the three-day trial. "It was a subtly but insidiously controlled courtroom with

the judge and prosecution working hand in glove,” Hussein reported. “The defendants were allowed to speak about their religious beliefs and to some degree how they relate to nuclear weapons. But it was all presented as subjective, and expert testimony on international law, and justification and necessity of urgent action were excluded.”

The defendants, who said they were following the command of the biblical prophet Isaiah to “beat swords into plowshares,” were denied the right to present the defense of necessity, which allows one to commit a crime in order to avoid a greater harm. They were also denied the right to discuss the *Religious Freedom Restoration Act*, which “ensures that interests in religious freedom are protected.” Thus, they were limited to their own testimony about their subjective motivations for their acts.

“Defendants were allowed to briefly discuss their moral objections to nuclear weapons but were cut off quickly. No outside evidence or testimony was allowed,” said defense attorney Bill Quigley.

Husseini added: “The manner that the judge allowed the case to be made did not make it clear that the house was indeed on fire — or even that there was a house. The reality of the nuclear weapons, the threat they pose, and certainly their illegality, were not objectively communicated” to the jury.

Defendant Patrick O’Neill said, “When Judge Lisa Wood asked the entire jury pool: ‘Do any of you have a strong opinion about nuclear weapons — pro or con, would you raise your hand?’ Of 73 people, not one raised a hand.” [...]

O’Neill added, “The Pentagon has brainwashed people to just trust a government that is imperiling the earth and risking the end of life as we know it. That’s why we went to Kings Bay — to hopefully wake people up.”

Refusal to Allow the Necessity Defense

If the judge had allowed the peace activists to raise a “necessity defense” — in other words, arguing that their actions were necessary to avoid the use of nuclear weapons — the jury could have come to a very different decision. There was abundant evidence to support a necessity defense.

In order to sustain the necessity defense, Quigley explained in his brief, the defendant must show four elements:

(1) that she believed that she needed to choose between two evils and she chose the lesser evil. “Any use of nuclear weapons by definition cannot discriminate between civilian and military targets. Each of the many Trident nuclear missiles kept at Kings Bay contain many multiples of the destructive power used by the United States in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.”

(2) that she sincerely believed and reasonably acted to prevent

imminent harm. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists says the world is closer to nuclear devastation than ever before. President Trump repeatedly declared that “all options are on the table” and threatened North Korea with “fire and fury like the world has never seen.”

(3) that she reasonably believed her action could help to avoid that harm. “Only by symbolically disarming these nuclear weapons is there any hope for real disarmament.”

(4) that she reasonably believed there were no legal alternatives to breaking the law. “Defendants have each spoken, written, prayed, petitioned, and lobbied for nuclear disarmament and peace for decades. These actions are the only ones left which might make a difference.”

Quigley’s brief cited the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, which would allow the United States to use nuclear weapons in response to a non-nuclear attack. The Doomsday Clock, maintained by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, continues to stand at 2 minutes to midnight. The U.S. refuses to join the majority of the nations of the world in ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Iran nuclear deal, and he may well pull out of the New START Treaty as well, “which would leave nuclear weapons free from all controls” Quigley wrote.

Ellsberg believes the defendants were “definitely entitled” to present the necessity defense. As he said in a statement to the Institute for Public Accuracy, “an action which would under other circumstances be illegal can be justified as legal by a reasonable belief that it is necessary to avert a much greater evil: in this case omnicide, the collateral murder of nearly every human on earth in a war in which the nuclear missiles aboard Trident submarines were launched.”

The judge found that the defendants could have protested nuclear weapons without illegally entering Kings Bay and could have used the political process to change nuclear policy. But, Quigley wrote in his motion to reconsider, “there are no facts at all in the record” to support the judge’s conclusions. In fact, the defense tried unsuccessfully to introduce evidence that defendants had tried to effect change through the political process “for decades without success.”

In a declaration filed with the court, Ellsberg wrote about the significance of civil disobedience:

“[I]t was not until widespread campaigns of civil disobedience, affecting public awareness and conscience . . . relating to women’s right to vote, civil rights, and the right to unionize that the electoral and legislative and legal processes began to function to extend and protect these rights in a way we now take for granted as fundamental to democracy.”

Visit our website: usmlo.org

Refusal to Allow Expert Testimony on Illegality of Nuclear Weapons

The judge denied the defense motion to present the expert testimony of Professor Francis Boyle about the illegality of nuclear weapons under both international and U.S. law. “[T]hese defendants acted lawfully and reasonably to prevent egregious and fundamentally prohibited of all crimes, war crimes,” Boyle wrote in a declaration. He concluded that the defendants did not have the criminal intent required to convict them of the charged crimes.

But while the “Defendants’ subjective beliefs about the illegality of nuclear weapons may be relevant background information, whether nuclear weapons are actually illegal under international or domestic law (a doubtful proposition) is not relevant or an appropriate issue to litigate in this case,” Judge Lisa Godbey Wood wrote.



or asset, or damage any military asset, including submarines or weapons systems, at the base.

Refusal to Allow Religious Freedom Restoration Act Defense

The judge also denied the defense motion to argue that the prosecution violated their rights to religious exercise protected by the *Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA)*. Although the judge concluded that the defendants had established the prima facie elements of a RFRA defense, the government demonstrated a compelling interest in prosecuting the defendants for their actions at Kings Bay, citing the safety of individuals on the base, the security of the assets there, and the smooth operation of the base.

If the jury would have heard the facts about the nuclear bombs headquartered at Kings Bay ... they would probably have come to a different decision.

The defense, however, elicited an admission from Scott Bassett, communications officer for Kings Bay base, that he had told the *Washington Post* that the protesters did not threaten any personnel

Reactions to the Verdict

The Kings Bay Plowshares 7 are asking people to sign a world-wide petition urgently requesting that the charges against them be dropped. [...]

“I don’t see [what I did] that’s the crime,” defendant Liz McAlister said on Democracy Now! “I think the crime is the weapons. The crime is the money spent on the weapons. The crime is the money taken from the real needs in our country and in our world to spend it on these weapons of mass destruction. And we need to stop that. And that’s the message that I want to continue to stand behind.”

Meanwhile, defense attorney Quigley said he thinks the verdict will “make convictions easier and defenses harder” in the future. “If the jury would have heard the facts about the nuclear bombs headquartered at Kings Bay — with 3,800 times the destructive power of Hiroshima and the real possibility of ending all life on the planet — they would probably have come to a different decision about the legality of what these courageous people did,” he said.

CALL TO ACTION IN NOVEMBER

Free Khalida Jarrar, Heba al-Labadi, Samer Arbeed and all Palestinian prisoners!

Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network

Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network urges all supporters of justice in Palestine to hold events, actions, info tables, demonstrations, poster campaigns and mobilizations in November to demand freedom for Palestinian political prisoners struggling for freedom — and their very lives — in Israeli occupation prisons.

Khalida Jarrar, leading Palestinian feminist, leftist and parliamentarian, was seized in the pre-dawn hours of 31 October 2019 by Israeli occupation forces. The heavily armed force invaded her home with over a dozen military vehicles and 80 soldiers only eight months after she was last released from Israeli prison. She had been jailed there for 20 months with no charge and no

STOP FUNDING WAR AND FUND OUR RIGHTS

trial under administrative detention. During Khalida's imprisonment, over 275 organizations around the world joined the call for her freedom, and protests and mobilizations around the world highlighted her case. It is time to act again and demand Khalida's immediate release!



Heba al-Labadi is a 24-year-old Palestinian with Jordanian citizenship. She has been on hunger strike since 24 September 2019 against her administrative detention — imprisonment without charge or trial. She is one of 425 Palestinians detained without charge or trial, many of whom spend years at a time jailed under indefinitely renewed administrative detention orders. There are over 5,500 Palestinians imprisoned in total by the Israeli occupation. Heba al-Labadi launched her hunger strike after five weeks of harsh interrogation involving techniques amounting to torture, including sleep deprivation, and threats against her family and verbal abuse. Heba has been jailed by the Israeli occupation since 20 August, when she entered Palestine with her mother to attend a wedding in Nablus.

Samer Arbeed is being held in Hadassah hospital after severe Israeli torture under interrogation and brutal beatings that caused him to lose consciousness for weeks. He has been shackled to his bed and even tear-gassed in his hospital room by Israeli forces despite the fact that he has 11 broken ribs and pneumonia as well as kidney dysfunction so severe he now requires dialysis. He suffered from none of these medical conditions prior to being seized by Israeli occupation forces on 25 September, although his wife witnessed occupation soldiers begin to beat him immediately upon arresting him. He has been banned from lawyers' visits and his lawyers were not informed that he was tear-gassed; in a medical report delivered by the intensive care unit at the hospital, it was noted that Samer's lung health has further deteriorated due to contamination in his ventilation apparatus. He is being subjected to continuous interrogation even as he remains in his hospital room due to Israeli torture.

Khalida, Heba and Sameer have all, independently of one another, organized and spoken out for Palestinian prisoners. Khalida is one of the most prominent international advocates for Palestinian prisoners and their rights and the former vice-chair of the board of directors of Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association. Heba has written and campaigned about Palestinian political prisoners and urged their freedom, including that of Georges Abdallah, jailed in France for 35 years. Samer Arbeed volunteered and worked for organizations demanding

freedom for prisoners — and has been previously targeted for his work.

On Friday, 8 November through Monday, 11 November and beyond, speak out for Khalida, Heba, Samer and all of the thousands of Palestinians held behind bars. Torture, arbitrary detention

and abuse are taking place in full view of the world and we must speak out to stand with these Palestinians demanding their most fundamental rights. Free all Palestinian prisoners! Freedom for Palestine!

1) Organize or join an event or protest for the Palestinian prisoners. You can organize an info table, rally, solidarity hunger strike, protest or action to support the prisoners. If you are already holding an event about Palestine or social justice, include solidarity with the prisoners as part of your action. Send your events and reports to samidoun@samidoun.net.

2) Write letters and make phone calls to protest the violation of Palestinian prisoners' rights. Demand your government take action to stop supporting Israeli occupation or to pressure the Israeli state to end the policies of repression of Palestinian political prisoners. In particular, demand that your political officials put pressure on Israel to end the policy of administrative detention, the imprisonment of Palestinians without charge or trial.

Call during your country's regular office hours:

- Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs Marise Payne: + 61 2 6277 7500
- Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland: +1-613-992-5234
- European Union Commissioner Federica Mogherini: +32 (0) 2 29 53516
- New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs Winston Peters: +64 4 439 8000
- United Kingdom Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt: +44 20 7008 1500
- United States President Donald Trump: 1-202-456-1111

3) Boycott, Divest and Sanction. Join the BDS campaign to highlight the complicity of corporations like Hewlett-Packard and the continuing involvement of G4S in Israeli policing and prisons. Build a campaign to boycott Israeli goods, impose a military embargo on Israel, or organize around the academic and cultural boycott of Israel. Learn more about the BDS campaign at bdsmovement.net.

Let us know about your events. Contact us at samidoun@samidoun.net or inform us on Facebook.

Democrats Back Down From Battle With Defense Department Over PFAS

Pat Elder, *Civilian Exposure*

Back in July, the House of Representatives included an amendment in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to force the Environmental Protection Agency to designate all per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs) “as hazardous substances” under the *Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act*, the Superfund law. PFASs are known to threaten public health.

The amendment, authored by Debbie Dingell (D-Michigan), would have forced the military — which has released these chemicals into the environment through routine fire-training exercises — to clean up PFAS-contaminated water and soil at more than 400 military bases and their surrounding communities in the U.S. Now, however, it has become apparent that Democratic leadership is buckling to the demands of the Pentagon to strip the measure from the NDAA.

When Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jim Inhofe (R-Oklahoma) introduced S. 2731 on October 30 — which he described as a “skinny” NDAA bill, omitting a provision designating PFASs as hazardous substances — Adam Smith (D-Washington), chair of the House Armed Services Committee, expressed doubts about the likelihood of a stripped-down NDAA passing the House.

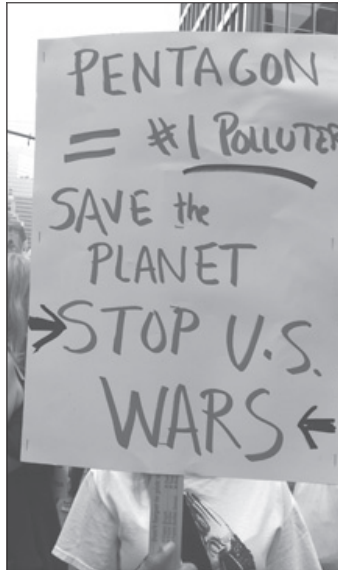
But now the Democrat says, “I will not hold up the defense bill over that PFAS provision, as much as I feel like it should be addressed.... We’re not going to grab something from some other committee’s jurisdiction and jam it into our bill.”

But this is not the whole truth.

These momentous decisions are made at the top levels of the party. The Democrats just are not up to doing battle with the Defense Department. Congress is happy to kick the PFASs can down the road. It is predictable and sadly pathetic. So is the lack of mainstream news coverage on PFAS contamination — one of the greatest public health crises in the U.S.

Representative Smith was an unlikely character to carry water that would have resulted in Pentagon liability in the tens of billions of dollars. The Washington lawmaker’s top contributors include Northrop Grumman, Boeing and General Dynamics — three companies that may be adversely affected if Congress mandates a PFAS cleanup.

Although Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-New York) co-sponsored legislation earlier this year to include all PFAS substances under the Superfund law, he has been publicly silent as the Democrats have apparently folded on this amendment. Likewise, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-California) and Majority Whip Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Maryland) have nothing



to add.

Senator Inhofe and Senator John Barrasso (R-Wyoming), chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, are the point men for the Pentagon in the Senate. Barrasso argues that imposing Superfund liabilities would be unfair because government and industry have used these chemicals “in good faith.”

Barrasso, a top recipient of campaign cash from the chemical industry in the Senate, speaks for a party beholden to the same corporate interests. His logic is an abomination because the Defense Department and the chemical industry have known for 50 years that these chemicals are deadly.

Barrasso says it is unfair to subject airports, refineries, wastewater treatment plants, landfills and other entities that use or handle fire-fighting

foam containing PFASs to new regulations because they have used these substances in good faith to protect workers and the public at large, or they have been unaware of the chemicals’ risks. However, there is plenty in the public record to demonstrate that many of these entities knew of the calamitous health effects of PFASs — hardly what one could call “good faith.”

The point is that someone needs to pick up the tab. People are dying. It is apparent that the federal government and the Pentagon have no intention of doing so. Moreover, if Barrasso gets his way — and it is likely he will — no one will be required to remediate already existing contamination while these entities continue to poison people.

How did it come to this? How could elected officials become so callous and so dismissive when faced with an historic public health crisis? Sure, Barrasso is the Senate’s top recipient of cash from the chemical industry, and he comes from a tiny state with disproportionate power and a population one-tenth the size of Maryland’s, but it goes deeper than that.

Barrasso is the consummate member of a team locked in a battle with opposing forces, like the camaraderie and hype surrounding a homecoming football game against arch rivals. Barrasso and his party are consumed by battle with the Democrats.

If Barrasso is the leading receiver, Inhofe is the quarterback and star player on the home team. The two have their own cheering section made up of entities like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Chemistry Council, American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers, the American Petroleum Institute and the National Association of Manufacturers (among others) that are more concerned with their bottom line than human health.

GAINS MORE LIBRARIANS, NURSES, COUNSELORS, HOUSING FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS

Chicago Teachers Strike Defends the Rights of All

Teachers in Chicago headed back to school November 1, marking the end of an 11-day strike that galvanized teachers, students, staff and parents as they fought for their rights. The teachers organized picket lines, marches and meetings to inform all about the fight. Many of the district's 300,000 students joined in. Park workers also organized solidarity camps with activities and support so students could spend the day in the parks while school was closed.



The 20,000 teachers and staff were joined by 7,500 school staff workers with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). They too had been on strike and settled a few days earlier but stayed with the teachers on the picket lines until the teachers also reached a settlement.

The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) fought for the rights of their students and communities, demanding more nurses, librarians and counselors. They called for housing for the more than 17,000 homeless students and secured increased funding and support staff for them. They insisted that schools in areas with the most need get greater funding. As occurred in their 2012 strike, the teachers affirmed their social responsibilities and fought for conditions necessary to teach and learn and for the funding needed for both.

The city was forced to agree to main demands to hire hundreds more counselors, nurses and librarians. Gains also included smaller class sizes, no increase in healthcare coverage and an increase in salaries by 16% over the next five years. Many teachers were dealing with class sizes of 35-40 students so these reductions are important both for teaching and learning conditions

As Stacy Davis Gates, executive vice president of the Chicago Teachers Union brought out, "Our school communities will have a nurse five days a week in every school, a social worker five days a week in every school. School communities on the South [mainly African American] and West Side of the city [mainly Puerto Rican] are now being prioritized. They will get the wraparound supports that they need. [These include counseling, assistance with housing, legal aid, healthcare aid, etc. — VOR Ed. Note] The class size limits will go into effect faster for them. Look, this sacrifice that our members made has ushered in a new type of Chicago Public Schools that offer sanctuary to their students, that provides homeless students with the necessary supports. And we just really thank our parents in the city for standing by us.

"Our members got a 16% COLA increase — cost of living increase. Our PSRPs are our lowest-wage workers in our bargaining unit, with two-thirds of them with children that qualify for free and reduced lunch [meaning the live at or below the government's poverty line]. Now we have lifted that basement and those women

who serve in our school communities, who are the glue in our school communities, they don't have to exist in poverty anymore."

She added, "The work that teachers did in these ten days is a benefit for the entire city. Our members serve the common good." "The gains made come from a movement of community groups, of parents, of students that amplified in this moment

with their teachers," she said.

In speaking to the joint efforts made by striking teachers and public school staffers with the SEIU Davis Gates said "These are black women who were making wages that did not make sense in a city that is growing increasingly unaffordable. These women went out on the picket line with the teachers and they won gains in their salary structure. I don't think that our gains could have been as transformative without SEIU 73 members on the picket line with us. Those women settled their contract before we settled ours, and the very next day, they were on the picket lines with us. The solidarity that we had with the city, with each other was tremendous." She added, "Look, our children, every single child in the Chicago Public Schools, deserves more than what we even won in this contract. This contract sets forth an infrastructure to help us fight for even more."

She concluded, "When you can take a public subsidy and build a playground in one of the richest neighborhoods in this country but then make teachers picket and strike for 10 days to get a social worker in school communities that have been ravaged by violence, poverty, unemployment and disinvestment, there is something wrong with the priorities and values of those who are in charge. What I am saying today is that I am proud that Chicago lifted its voice in unison to say that we are going to transform the way in which we prioritize children in this city, our school communities in this city and the public sector in this city."

Chicago Follows Teacher Strikes in Oakland and LA

The Chicago strike comes on the heels of teacher strikes in Oakland and Los Angeles, California and those in Colorado and Virginia. Like the United Teachers of Los Angeles who struck in January, CTU negotiated on a wide range of issues that go beyond immediate working conditions, which are important as the learning conditions of students. Both also called for affordable housing for teachers, students and support staff and increased funding for homeless students; an expansion of sanctuary and community schools that provide broad social services for students, such as that related to healthcare, including trauma, and housing; and an extension of the city's moratorium on new charter schools, which are publicly

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funded but privately operated and serve to privatize public schools and remove the public from any say.

Unlike many other cities, charter school teachers in more than 30 Chicago charter schools became part of the CTU and have also organized for their rights. This includes a four-day strike last December by 15 Acero charter school teachers. Teachers at Passages

Charter School in the city's Edgewater area are also considering a strike with demands that include increasing defense of the rights of immigrant and refugee students and their families.

The united efforts of all made clear that the struggle is not only about contracts but about the future of education and necessity to organize for a pro-social, pro-people direction for society.



Fight for Racial Justice Fuels Little Rock Educator Strike Preparations

Barbara Madeloni, Labor Notes, November 9, 2019

The site of struggle to defend unions and public education has moved quickly from Chicago to Little Rock.

The 1,800-member Little Rock Education Association (LREA) began preparing for a potential strike after the Arkansas State Board of Education ended recognition of the union. Their demands: return collective bargaining rights to LREA, give full local control of the school district back to the people of Little Rock, and provide education support professionals with raises that were being negotiated at the time that the union was decertified.

After five years of state control, the State Board of Education was ready to return local control to the people of Little Rock next year, but only to those schools that no longer had “failing grades” in the state’s testing-based accountability system. These were the schools in the whitest and richest neighborhoods. The schools in the poorest neighborhoods, with the most Black students, would remain under state control. For students, staff, and parents, this means that their voices are not part of decision-making.

“We keep yo-yoing back and forth,” says Stacey McAdoo, a communication and college readiness teacher at Central High

School and the 2019 Arkansas Teacher of the Year, “with the district being in the hands of a few people that we didn’t elect, and it just feels really, really wrong. Even if their intention is not to cause harm, that is the way it feels — and we keep saying this and it feels that they are simply not listening or they do not care.”

Historic Venue

In 1957, Little Rock’s Central High School was the site of the famous battle for school integration, in which President Eisenhower had to call in the U.S. Army to protect nine black high school students as they attended the all-white school. In 1958 — called the lost year — the governor closed the school rather than allow it to be integrated.

McAdoo says this history is still an everyday presence at the school. “I could not teach at Central had it not been for the people who fought for desegregation,” she says. “That history is always on my mind.”

Led by the LREA, community members mobilized this October to protest what they identified as the re-segregation of the Little Rock schools. Banners reading “Separate is not equal

— one district for all students” were hung on the highway overpass that divides the black neighborhoods from the white neighborhoods. Thousands turned out for a candlelight vigil to insist that the state return local control to the entire district.

“Everybody is mad,” said LREA President Teresa Knapp Gordon. “People are tired of the state saying that our district schools are failing.”

Kimberley Crutchfield, a sociology and psychology teacher at Central High, says that the community — both black and white — is united in defending Little Rock public schools. “The majority of teachers are white at Central,” says Crutchfield. “It warms my heart going to Central and seeing how passionate and ready we are to stand up for our students — and the white students are right there, too.”

Following the protests before and during a state board meeting in October, the state rescinded its proposal to divide control over the school district, and backed the return of local control to a school board to be elected in 2020.

Minutes later, though, they voted to end the LREA’s right to bargain for the teachers of Little Rock. LREA is the last teachers’ union in Arkansas with a collective bargaining agreement. Removing union recognition also ended contract negotiations that were happening with education support professionals, who are also represented by the LREA.

Charter Schools Encroach

Meanwhile, a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among the state, city, and district actually delays return of local control, even after the election of a new school board in Little Rock. Instead, the state would name an advisory board that would review and be able to override decisions of the elected school board.

The MOU talks about bringing the community school model to Little Rock. Community schools provide resources for students and families beyond academics, including support for housing, mental health, immigration services, and other needs — the types of demands that Chicago teachers and school staff recently fought for and won in their strike.

But Little Rock educators say the community school model proffered in the MOU is just a front for bringing more charters into the district. “The community schools they talk about in the MOU don’t look like any community school I have ever heard of,” says LREA’s Knapp Gordon. “If they had wanted community schools, they would have asked for our help.”

The MOU also calls for closing up to 11 neighborhood schools and opening, instead, several large K-8 schools. The trick here is that state law gives charter schools first refusal of unoccupied public schools — so closing the neighborhood schools opens space for charters.

“I do feel that they are trying to charterize the LRSD like what happened in New Orleans and disenfranchise people and make a separate school system out of the areas that are primarily Black and Latino,” says McAdoo.

Student Sickout



Money from the Walton family — the founders of Arkansas-based Walmart and the richest family in the country — feeds the privatization and union-busting effort, while Republican Governor Asa Hutchinson calls the shots, according to educators. The Waltons also fund the Arkansas State Teachers Association (ASTA), an astroturf organization set up to draw educators away from the LREA and the Arkansas Education Association, the state level National Education Association affiliate.

In the midst of strike preparations within the LREA, the Astroturf ASTA sent an email blast out about why it was both wrong and dangerous to strike and has even set up an alternate GoFundMe page to counter the LREA’s strike support page.

“I think it backfired on them,” says Jenni White, an elementary school teacher. “There were outright lies and misrepresentations. Most union people know who funds that organization. We’ve seen Michele Ballentine [executive director of the ASTA] go in front of the state board and say we should be taken over by the state board.”

In spite of these efforts, the community has been there to support the LREA. “Even the people from the predominantly white suburbs are coming out,” says Crutchfield. On October 30, 7,000 high school students in the 23,000 student district staged a sickout in support of their educators. Knapp Gordon says that the student sickouts “really encouraged educators. They realized they should stand up if students were willing to stand up.”

Teachers at Central High School began working to rule this week, performing no duties and working no hours beyond what is in their contract. Across the district schools also held walk-ins beginning on November 6, where educators, students and parents gathered outside prior to the opening bell and walked in together as a show of solidarity.

On the first day of walk-ins, teachers were ecstatic about the experience and the response from school officials. “I loved ours,” said White. “I saw people come out who had refused to be involved. We chanted the school chant that we teach the kids.”

The union has plans for escalating actions until its demands are met. “We will do whatever it takes to protect our children,” said Knapp Gordon. In the meantime, the union is getting calls from non-members who want to join. “I know 10 people who have joined just since this happened,” Crutchfield said.

More Educators Are Fighting to Bring Arts Education Back Into Schools

Eleanor J. Bader

After 36 years of emphasis on testing, educators are [stepping up efforts to have arts education for every child.]

When it was time for Anani Ramos to think about high school, she had to decide whether to enroll in the zoned school in her neighborhood or compete for a place in one of New York's City's more than 30 specialized programs. It was a huge decision, but since Ramos had been singing classical compositions since age eight, she decided to follow her passion and auditioned for one of 50 ninth-grade seats at the Special Music School (SMS) of the Kaufman Music Center on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

As part of the admissions process, Ramos not only had to perform, she also had to collaborate with a small group of peers — strangers and competitors. The point, she said, “was to evoke leadership and coordinate with people I did not know.”

Since her acceptance into the prestigious program, Ramos has taken many music-related courses: theory, history, technology, composition, orchestra, big band and chorus. She has also studied more standard high school fare: English, history, math and science.

Like most SMS students, Ramos has excelled. Now a senior, she is in the throes of applying to university. Since its founding in 1996, the school has had a 100 percent graduation rate and every student has been admitted to college. Still, SMS, with a student body of just 200, is obviously quite different from most public schools and educational institutions.

Nonetheless, teachers and education activists throughout the U.S. are taking a page from programs like SMS and are becoming increasingly vocal about the importance of integrating the arts — dance, fine arts, music and theater — into the academic curriculum for everyone, regardless of talent level. This demand has been supported by teachers' unions, including the National Education Association, which has advocated for comprehensive, arts-inclusive education for every public school student.

The school board in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as one example, voted in late September to restore music classes in every public school in the city. In fact, the movement is pushing to move from a STEM focus — (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) — to a STEAM focus — (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics).

Research Supports the Shift

Exposure to the arts has been shown to reduce school drop-out rates, reduce school violence and reduce truancy.

Brian Kisida, an assistant professor of public affairs at the University of Missouri's Truman School, has studied the impact of arts education on public school students, first in Bentonville, Arkansas, and later in Houston, Texas.



“The pendulum is starting to swing back in favor of arts education,” Kisida said. “The opt-out-of-standardized-testing movement was an important milestone. Folks have seen the statistics about teen anxiety and suicide and have a general sense that we are not okay as a body politic.” This has resulted in teachers, parents and school administrators looking to the arts as a way to give students a creative outlet for feelings and fears that might otherwise go unexpressed.

These worries have been burbling for a while, Kisida said, adding that about a decade ago he and several of his colleagues became concerned about the “data-obsessed” direction of public education. They shared apprehensions that the constant testing of U.S. students was having a deleterious impact on learning and was creating an atmosphere that left both teachers and students on edge. [As the opt-out of testing movement brought forward, the testing was a form of child abuse, especially for younger children and a form of control, forcing students and teachers alike to engage in an activity that was harmful.]

Testing Does Not Provide Standards

The standardized testing trend started, Kisida said, with the release of a 1983 report called “A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform,” but ramped up with the 2002 passage of No Child Left Behind legislation. Legislation put forward the need for “Rigorous and measurable standards,” to be determined by testing. The upshot was the removal of most arts' education classes. [...]

[Many lawmakers pushed to eliminate art as unnecessary to improve test scores.] A series of legislative measures said to elevate the performance of U.S. students: 2002's No Child Left Behind Act, 2009's Race to the Top Initiative, and 2015's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) were passed, [all imposing standardized testing that was harmful to students, teachers and parents alike.]

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ESSA, like previous legislation, spans fiscal 2017 to 2020 and mandates annual testing in reading and math during grades three to eight and once during high school. [...]

The Arts Provide an Education in Empathy

Kisida began his research at the Crystal Bridges Museum of Art in Bentonville, Arkansas, in 2012. The goal? Determining the short- and long-term impacts of one daylong museum visit, aided by pre- and post-visit curriculum materials, on a small cohort of students.

“You can’t underestimate the power of going into a museum, especially if you’ve never been before,” Kisida said. “It transfers you to a magical place. It can be amazing. The tours we evaluated were thematic, focusing intently on four or five pieces of art, with a docent who addressed the depictions of women, Native Americans and African Americans. After the visit, the students were shown DVDs and other materials to extend the experience.”

After this, Kisida’s team evaluated the students and found increased school engagement and empathy toward others.

The Houston study, conducted five years later, during the 2017-2018 academic year, involved a much bigger sample — 5,000 kids in a control group that received no supplemental arts education, and 5,000 in a group that received enhanced arts instruction from community-based arts organizations. These groups came in to the schools to conduct workshops and classes in dance, music, visual arts and theater for a full academic year.

The impact was measurable.

Creativity, critical thinking and the ability to solve complex problems are enhanced by exposure to the arts.

“We found a decrease in disciplinary infractions at every level, kindergarten to grade 12,” Kisida said. “Their expository writing scores increased and they exhibited increased compassion for others [and], concern about the well-being of people who had been treated badly. For many kids, finding something you like in school makes you want more of it, and as students got more exposure to the arts, they felt better about school. For some kids, this translated into college aspirations.”

This finding is not unique to Houston. An earlier 2012 study, “The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth,” found that an exclusive focus on hard-core academics can backfire. “What’s lost?” the report asked? “The chance for a child to express themselves. The chance for the idiosyncratic child who has not succeeded elsewhere to shine. A sense of play, of fun, of discovery,” said researchers.

Susan Dumais, one of the researchers and now an associate professor of sociology at Lehman College, stresses that the arts teach discipline and perseverance. “For many people, thinking about music taps into skills that help them do well in math,” she

said. “There is also great creativity in producing something that is uniquely yours — a dance, a poem, a story, a piece of art or music that did not exist in the world before. It builds confidence and helps children gain a sense of control over their lives.”

Linda Louis, a professor of art education at Brooklyn College, agrees. “The arts have always been seen as soft subjects that don’t require much thinking,” she said. “For years now, artists of all kinds have tried to make the point that there is actually a lot of thought that goes into making something. We’ve stressed that the arts give students the reflective tools that support profound habits of mind. We use these tools in every aspect of our lives. The arts teach us to think creatively and critically, to be flexible and resourceful.”

Funding Remains Major Obstacle

Nonetheless, restoring arts education programs has remained a hard sell, and the reason is money. Cash-starved school boards across the country have limited financial resources [and given testing requirements, with their focus on math and English, are forced to eliminate art.] Education Week reports that although the share of the federal budget dedicated to education went from 5.4 percent in 1990 to 10.6 percent in 2010, this trend has now reversed. By 2018, federal education spending was at its lowest level in a decade.

Liza Politi, founder of Statement Arts, a privately-funded theater arts program for low-income children and teens throughout New York City’s five boroughs, explained that at one point, she had 72 kids taking part in a production of *The Wiz*. “With that number of kids working on one program, you learn team-building, confidence and communication skills. When you yank the arts out of schools, you pull a lot of the reasons that kids come to school,” she said. “Not every kid learns the same way. You need different programs to accommodate different learning styles. Creative kids are often nontraditional learners. You need to find ways to keep them engaged.”

What is needed is a “bubble-up strategy,” a grassroots community-based campaign to push the arts back into the curriculum, Brooklyn College Professor Linda Louis said. “Trickle down has not worked in economics. Why do we think it will work in education?”

As she describes it, the trickle-down idea — that those who can afford classes in the arts will pass what they learn down to their less moneyed friends and neighbors — is flawed. “A bubble-up strategy starts with a sequential, thoughtful curriculum for all kids,” Louis said. But, she continues, this will require a shift at the highest levels, with both education officials and politicians “valuing children” and working to help them to grow into creative, critical-thinking adults, something teachers and students have long been fighting for. (*Truthout*)

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