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VOICE OF REVOLUTION

Publication of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

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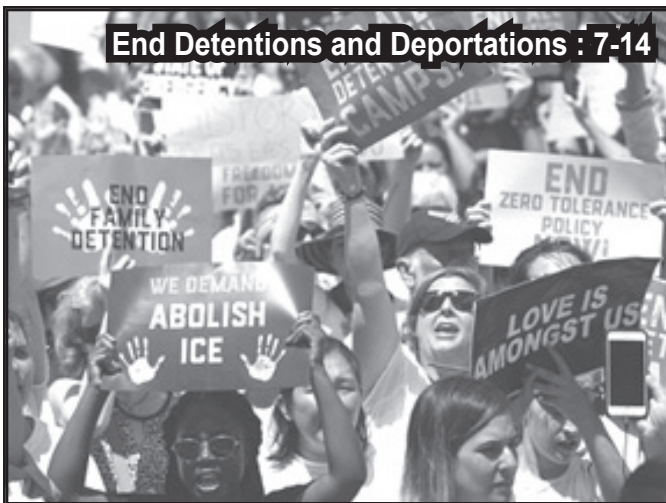


Impeachment, Accountability and the Battle of Democracy

The on-going impeachment process in the House of Representatives has raised the serious problem of accountability. Head of the House Nancy Pelosi has emphasized that “The president must be held

accountable, and no one is above the law.” Impeachment is presented as a mechanism for accountability, and more generally the effort is supposed to send the message

Battle of Democracy • 3



Rights Organizations Fighting to End Detentions, Deportations and Border Militarization

Through a variety of means, immigration rights organizations are speaking out and taking their stands against detentions, deportation and the militarization of the border, which still includes thousands

of troops on the border. Efforts include demonstrations, proposals to “re-envision” the approach to immigration and provide legislation that recognizes rights, legal and

End Detentions • 7



NATO SUMMIT IN LONDON, ENGLAND

Police Fail to Thwart No to Trump, No to NATO Protest

Terina Hine, Stop the War Coalition (Britain)

Thousands assembled on Tuesday evening [December 3] to join the No to NATO protest as NATO leaders came together for the 70th anniversary NATO summit. For a U.S. President to visit the UK in the middle of a Gen-

eral Election campaign is unprecedented and protesters came out in force on this cold December evening to make their feelings known. Not only were anti-war protesters braving the cold but also a large No to Trump, No to Nato Protest • 15

TIME FOR A DEMOCRACY THAT EMPOWERS THE PEOPLE

December edition of ***Voice of Revolution***

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No to Trump, No to NATO

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I • Battle of Democracy

to the public that the “system works” when it comes to this problem.

The House is expected to vote on articles of impeachment the week of December 16. Once that occurs the process moves to the Senate, which first must vote on rules for the impeachment trial and what witnesses will be permitted. Already there is conflict about both.

A two-thirds majority vote by the Senate is needed to convict, something few think will occur, given how the vying factions among the rulers, and their representatives, are currently lining up. For this reason, and the very limited articles of impeachment being presented — for abuse of power, but only concerning the Ukraine/Biden affair, and obstruction of justice — many doubt impeachment will hold President Trump accountable. This is clearly true for the crimes of greatest concern to the people, completely absent from the articles of impeachment even though there is far more evidence. These include war crimes, such as those against Yemen, Iraq and Afghanistan, through use of drones and chemical weapons and more; collective punishment of whole populations using sanctions against Venezuela, Cuba, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and many others; the crimes of family separation and detention camps of children, even babies and more.

People across the country, joined by many abroad have persisted in waging battles for rights and demanding change on these matters. Impeachment provides no accountability for government refusal to do so. The many actions include thousands more worldwide actions to defend Mother Earth November 29 and continuing weekly demonstrations across the country in many places; continuing united actions both sides of the southern border defending migrants as well as the recent not guilty verdict of an activist who aided two young migrants crossing the desert in Arizona; antiwar actions, including those against NATO in London, New York City and elsewhere; strikes by teachers taking social responsibility for problems like homelessness and lack of counselors and nurses in their schools; and many more.

These battles for democracy contribute to the efforts all across the country to give voice to the demands of the people and to affirm their rights. They also raise the central issue of today’s battle of democracy, of who decides, the minority or the majority? The battle of democracy is the battle to advance the content and form of democracy and the institutions for it so as to bring it on

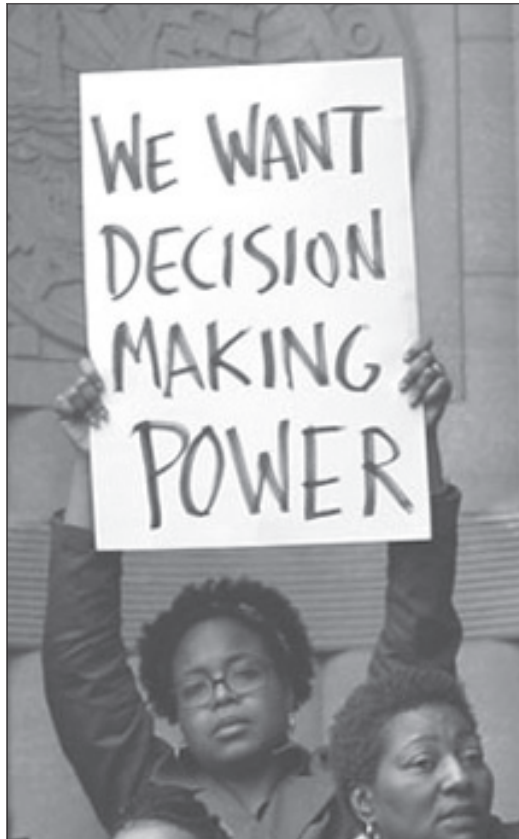
a par with modern times. Empowering the people, the majority to govern and decide, is required. That is the democracy that would put in place the means to have the anti-war, pro-social will of the people — readily apparent in the many united actions, meetings, petitions, strikes — implemented. This is precisely what the rulers are striving to prevent. Impeachment is part of this effort to embroil everyone for and against while attempting to divert the drive of the people to themselves be decision makers.

U.S.-style democracy ensures a small minority rules over the majority, a problem impeachment does not solve. Nor does it solve the problem of accountability. The Constitution and existing law provide no mechanism for the people to hold the president accountable for crimes. The Justice Department has long said it is unconstitutional to charge a sitting president and has not done so. Nor can a citizen’s arrest be made of a sitting president, given that any such effort would be blocked by the Secret Service and the citizen charged.

The need to have a mechanism in the hands of the people to hold the president accountable for crimes brings to the for this need to advance the battle of democracy — the battle for new institutions of governance, a new constitution, that does provide for accountability. People very much despise the ability of government, especially the president, to commit

crimes with impunity. Even elections, given as the way to deal with this issue, do not provide a means to bring criminal charges. Indeed, like impeachment, they are yet another mechanism where the people do not decide the outcome, the rulers, the minority do.

The battle of democracy is the battle of political power, the battle for new arrangements that empower the people to govern and decide. A new constitution and institutions should serve to harmonize the many human relations of the present, the whole ensemble of relations between humans and humans and humans and nature. Harmonizing and providing for accountability are interrelated, so this issue too must be addressed. Steps in this direction today include stepping up organized efforts for the people, as individuals and collectives, to speak out in their own name, voice their concerns, stick to their own agenda for the change needed. It includes discussing and debating this problem of accountability, what is needed for it and how achieving it is related to advancing the battle of the people to govern and decide.



Why We Confronted Joe Biden on Deportations

An interview with Cosecha Organizer Carlos Rojas

Immigrant rights activists asked Joe Biden to repudiate Obama's immigration record. Biden said no and then told them to "vote for Trump." Carlos Rojas, one of the activists, talks about why he spoke out — and why we need an immediate moratorium on deportations.

Immigrant activists confronted Joe Biden at a campaign town hall in Greenwood, South Carolina, November 21. "Every day I live with the fear that ICE will separate my family," explained immigrant Silvia Morreno, who called upon the former vice president to support a moratorium on deportations through executive action on his first day of office. Biden refused.

Before walking out in protest, her translator, Carlos Rojas, from the immigrant activist organization *Movimiento Cosecha*, added: "In 2008, I was a volunteer for Obama because I had hope and I believed in the promises that he made to the immigrant community. The fact is that over those eight years, over three million people were deported and separated from families." Biden's response: "You should vote for Trump."

Eric Blanc of *Jacobin* spoke with Rojas about why they confronted Biden and what it will take to win full rights for immigrants.

EB: People across the country have been sharing the video of your action last night. Can you explain why you decided to challenge Joe Biden?

CR: There's a presidential election unfolding right now where immigration has received a lot of attention.

And the immigration crisis is felt deeply by many people, not only immigrants. We've seen record numbers of allies mobilize to express their outrage about children in cages, family separation, and deaths at the border. Hundreds of thousands took to the streets when Trump declared his "zero tolerance" policy.

But sometimes it feels like the American public thinks Trump started this crisis. So we wanted to take this opportunity to remind voters that even under the Obama administration — with Biden as Vice President — we had a daily immigration crisis, with an average of over a thousand deportations every single day, 3 million in total.

And yesterday was not the first time Biden has been asked about this. It's really concerning to me that Biden continues to embrace Obama as someone who was supposedly a friend of immigrants. I'm terrified when I hear presidential candidates talk only about rolling back Trump's policies. Just going back to the Obama status quo is completely unacceptable; it would be a betrayal of the immigrant community.

EB: One of the things Silvia Morreno told Biden was that, given Obama's broken promises, "it is hard for me to trust you." Can you speak more about this distrust?

CR: Yes, as I mentioned last night, I had been a volunteer for Obama in 2008. I remember hearing Obama sit down with Jorge Ramos from *Univision* and promise to legalize the undocumented. And I bought into that — it gave me hope. I believed.

A lot of people did.

You know, Obama in 2008, and 2012, depended on immigrant voters — Latino, Asian, African — to win. We carried him to victory in states like Florida, Wisconsin, and Michigan. And one of the reasons we did that



is because he promised to pass immigration reform.

But the rest is history; Obama didn't meet his promises. Not only did he never prioritize immigration, he ended up deporting 3 million of the same people he had promised to help.

We've been down this road before. We're used to presidential candidates adopting positive rhetoric on immigration only when it's convenient for them. We've experienced broken promises leading to family separations. That's why we're really focused on this demand that all presidential candidates pledge on day one of taking office to pass a moratorium on deportations through executive order.

Given the magnitude of the crisis, this is the minimum. The mistrust is deep; many immigrants right now are skeptical that either party could be a vehicle for change. Clearly Trump is terrible and he has scapegoated us, but the Obama legacy is still strong. It was not long ago; immigrants remember what happened. So supporting an immediate moratorium on deportations is a critical litmus test — it will take that level of commitment to even begin to restore trust.

We know that Congress is the only body that can pass full legalization, but it would leave candidates off the hook if we only called for a pathway to citizenship. We can't rely only on Congress. Presidents have executive power to protect immigrants — and they need to use it.

EB: Were you surprised by Biden's response that "you should vote for Trump"?

CR: It really shocked me. He actually said it twice; it was a weird answer. Honestly, the first time he said it, I didn't want to engage, because I thought maybe I had heard him wrong.

We are calling on the Democratic Party to support the dignity of immigrants — how does it make sense to encourage us to vote for Trump? I think it speaks to how out of touch the Democratic Party establishment is. They take our communities

for granted.

After Silvia, an immigrant mother, shared her story about why she couldn't trust him after Obama's deportations, Biden's response was basically, "If you don't like what we have to offer — even if it's just bread crumbs — you have to go to Trump." Obviously we're not going to do that.

Biden had the opportunity last night to acknowledge that those deportations should not have happened. He could have showed us he understands the pain of immigrants — but instead he defended the Obama legacy. My takeaway from this was: if Biden becomes president, we shouldn't expect anything different than what we saw under Obama.

EB: What is your take on the immigration stances of the other 2020 candidates?

CR: We in Cosecha are part of the immigrants' rights movement. And I think the role of a movement is to speak to the American public, the majority of whom want to support immigrants. So we're going to keep on pushing boundaries.

In terms of the candidates, our efforts are bearing fruit. Through our efforts and the efforts of many others, we have been able to help get candidates to start to embrace ending deportations on day one.

Senator Bernie Sanders recently issued his immigration plan and we were really encouraged to see him pledge to immediately pass a moratorium on deportations through executive order on his first day in office. It gives us even more energy and strength to keep on pushing the rest of the party on this.

Another thing that struck me was that Bernie finally fully incorporated immigrants into his vision for the working class; he now includes immigrants in a bold way as part of his political

narrative. Because one of the most effective ways to counter right-wing claims — that immigrants are taking jobs, that we're drug dealers, criminals — is to insist that immigrants are part of the American working class. We say: if you are pro-worker, you need to be pro-immigrant.

EB: What do you think it will take to demilitarize the border and win papers for all undocumented people in the United States?

CR: The message that Cosecha wants to send is that a moratorium on deportations is the starting point, not the finish line. We're going to have to stay in the streets to pressure the candidates and Congress to do the right thing.

This country needs a deep transformation of immigration policy — and we're going to have to fight to win it. That's why we think it's necessary to build toward a seven-day immigrant-led strike.

Our organization was born out of the 2006 protests. What did immigrants do in that movement? They leveraged their labor and economic power to pressure politicians and to change the political narrative. After the xenophobia and anti-immigrant hate crimes that had become so widespread following September 11, we know that it was those mega-marches and strikes that made the country turn a page. We believe we have to do that once more.

Immigrants understand that without their labor, this economy will sink. So we need to leverage our power to win a moratorium on deportations, to win legalization for all, and to transform the United States into a country that truly respects immigrants.

(Carlos Rojas is an immigrants rights activist at Movimiento Cosecha)

CRISIS OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

Social Conditions Deteriorate in the U.S.

K.C. Adams

The necessity for the independent politics of the working class and an anti-war pro-social direction for the economy.

In a series of articles, the mass media have presented lurid exposures of inhumane living conditions in the United States. Social conditions for many in cities in California, the Northwest, New York and elsewhere are shown to have become untenable. Thousands of people in city after city live outside on sidewalks and parks with little access to sanitation and other public services. The housing situation for workers in Silicon Valley is said to be so desperate that the Apple Corporation has decided to invest \$2.5 billion to build rental housing for its workers and others on land it owns in San Francisco.

The *New York Times* has detailed serious social problems in health care, education, and housing and the corrupting influence of big money in the cartel party system of the Democratic and Republican parties. The items suggest inequality of social wealth between the rich and poor is the root problem and not a symptom of a deeper issue, and that redistribution of accumulated wealth is

necessary if social problems are to be solved.

Other articles refute this approach and declare the "American Dream" to become rich and to "fend for yourself" have made the nation dominant in world affairs, while state redistribution of wealth is contrary to the "American way." The dispute is often presented as a conflict of outlooks and policy objectives between the two established cartel parties and within the Democratic Party itself.

The articles on inequality of wealth, amongst other sources, rely on recent research from economists Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, found in their book, *The Triumph of Injustice: How the Rich Dodge Taxes and How to Make Them Pay*. They argue the concentration of wealth in a few hands has become so great as to be untenable, resulting in unresolved social problems that only increased taxes on the rich can resolve.

The data reveals that 400 rich U.S. households currently own more social wealth than the entire population of those of African descent, around 48 million, plus a quarter of those of Latin American and Hispanic descent, another 14 million people. The richest top 0.1

per cent has seen its grasp of U.S. social wealth nearly triple from seven per cent to 20 per cent between the late 1970s and 2016, while the bottom 90 per cent has seen its share of wealth decline from 35 per cent to 25 per cent in that same period.

The richest 130,000 families in the U.S. now hold nearly as much social wealth as the bottom 117 million families combined. The top one per cent own 42 per cent of the country's entire social wealth. The articles do not break this down as to what constitutes wealth other than general references to stocks, bonds, ownership of companies and property, houses, cars, disposable income etc.

From this mass of accumulated wealth and investments, ownership of property and companies and from positions as executives and directors, the richest individuals constituting one per cent of the total population realize annual incomes amounting to 20 per cent of the total reported income in the U.S. In contrast, the reported income for the vast majority of working people comes not from investments and ownership of property but from selling their capacity to work to those who own and control the socialized economy.

According to the tax research of Saez and Zucman, the families in the top 0.1 per cent are projected to owe 3.2 per cent of their total wealth and income in federal, state, and local taxes for the year 2019, while the bottom 99 per cent are projected to owe 7.2 per cent of their accumulated wealth and income.

The data and subsequent analysis concentrate on the possession and distribution of social wealth in money form. From this, the analysis arrives at the conclusion that increased taxes on the rich will solve the problems facing the people. But is a lack of money the cause of the dreadful social conditions and problems?

Saez and Zucman point to a period in U.S. history from the beginning of WWII into the 1970s when the rich paid much higher taxes and their share of wealth was one-third relative to what they control of the total today. However, the situation during the earlier period did not result in the realization of the right of all to health care, education, housing, proper sanitation, and security in retirement and when injured, sick or disabled. The increased funds in government hands relative to the total social wealth during and after World War II led to militarization of the U.S. economy. The U.S. ruling elite did not use the increased funds to guarantee the rights of the people with extensive social programs and free public services but to establish thousands of military bases within the U.S. and around the world, wage continuous wars under the imperialist banner of "containment of communism," and build its war arsenal of modern weaponry, including naval armadas, warplanes, tanks, artillery, assault rifles and vast numbers of nuclear bombs and missiles.

The U.S. state does not have a lack of money. It has an annual war budget of around a trillion dollars plus billions more for "homeland security," countless internal and external spy and police agencies, money for "diplomatic" interference in the sovereign affairs of others, pay-the-rich schemes for big business, and money to pay for pro-war imperialist propaganda, armed mercenaries and prisons to incarcerate over two million people.

The research and series of articles in the mass media leading to the conclusion of a lack of money to solve problems ignore the

outmoded relations of production between the working class and financial oligarchy and the contradiction between a socialized economy and its control by competing private interests, which are the root of the problem of inequality and powerlessness of the working people to deal with the conditions they face. Those who do the work and sell their capacity to work to the rich have no economic or political control over the economy and have access only to that portion of the new value they produce paid to them in wages and whatever social programs that may exist in exchange for their capacity to work.

The rich who own and control the productive forces, the direction of the economy and the existing cartel party political system expropriate added-value from the new value workers produce. Taxation has become a broad method of the financial oligarchy to take back from working people what they have been paid in exchange for their capacity to work. The ruling elite of competing factions of the financial oligarchy and their political representatives have control over how that value, in the form of taxes, is distributed and used. The prevailing relations of production dictate the control of the ruling imperialists over the economy and its direction. The politics of the cartel party system of the Democratic and Republican parties reflect the control and domination of competing factions of the ruling elite.

Most social programs such as education and health care result in increased value of the capacity to work of the working class. The companies that consume this value should pay for it not through taxes but by directly paying the institutions that produce the value. To increase individual and socially reproduced-value demands action to bring into being increased investments in social programs and free public services, higher wages, pensions and benefits for workers, an end to paying the rich, and a new anti-war pro-social direction of the economy.

The U.S. working class is faced with a class struggle to organize itself as a viable social force capable of defending its rights, forcing the rich to increase the reproduced-value working people receive in exchange for their capacity to work, and through its own independent politics open a path forward to political empowerment and a new direction for the economy.

An independent political program and nation-building project of the working class and its allies to empower themselves includes increased investments in social programs and free public services to guarantee the rights of all, and actions to stop paying the rich and to dismantle the war economy and give it a new pro-social direction. This can be accomplished through the development of the organized independent politics of the working class and its own thinking, outlook and agenda in opposition to the politics, outlook and agenda of the rich and their cartel party political system of competing factions of the financial oligarchy.

The working class and its allies must develop their own independent politics, media, voice and democratic personality. They cannot rely on the rich and their political representatives within the cartel party system and mass media to act or speak on their behalf, solve the social problems facing the country, chart a new anti-war pro-social direction for the economy and country, and open a path forward to the emancipation of the working class.

I • End Detentions and Deportations

humanitarian aid on the ground, such as providing food and water to those forced to cross the desert, court cases and more.

Demands include an immediate moratorium on deportations and detentions and their elimination. The call is to “center the rights of working people,” at home and abroad, recognizing immigration as a global issue where the U.S. greatly contributes to the violence and devastation imposed on peoples here and abroad. There is recognition that the detentions and many of the deportations, actions also carried out under Bush and Obama, are crimes. The government continues to act with impunity and no one is held accountable for the deaths, violence and family separations daily occurring.

People in cities across the country have repeatedly stood against family separation and detention, especially of children. Many are saying “This is not my America,” and joining in the struggles for rights and a new direction for the country, one that is pro-social and pro-humanity.

Contrary to this demand of the public, detention camps continue to expand, an indication that they are not only for immigrants and refugees, but potentially for those organizing that the govern-



ment targets as “threats.” Or, as has already happened, are charged with human smuggling simply for providing aid to undocumented immigrants (see p.9-11). That is, not only is the government not held accountable for crimes, but those organizing for rights are being criminalized. The increasing militarization of the border and detention camps at military facilities is a further indication that far from solving any problems, the government is further criminalizing resistance, including providing humanitarian aid.

The various organizations standing up for the rights of all at home and abroad are contributing to a path forward that defends the interests of the peoples. It is this spirit and stand that no one is illegal we are one humanity with one struggle for our rights that will further strengthen the work being organized.

Migrant Justice Platform Calls to Demilitarize Border and End Detention and Deportations

National Day Laborers Organizing Network (NDLON)

A new Migrant Justice Platform released on November 19 by a nationwide alliance of immigrant rights groups is calling for a departure from a failed comprehensive immigration reform debate and a complete overhaul of policy strategy, a media release about the platform said.

“This is about re-envisioning how we think about immigration. It’s an exercise to expand our political imagination,” Erika Andiola, advocacy director at RAICES and chair of the Blue Ribbon Commission that created the platform, said in the release. “This platform is a roadmap for a conversation that needs to happen, a conversation that must include grassroots groups, center the rights of working people, and see the global issue for what it is. It’s the beginning of a much-needed policy conversation.”

The work to create this new migrant policy blueprint started in June, when a Blue Ribbon Commission of 20 individuals representing a cross-section of the immigrant rights community convened. The goal was to develop “a policy blueprint for use by the next administration to immediately repair harms and reverse failures caused by previous administrations,” the release explained. RAICES and the National Day Laborers Organizing Network (NDLON) were the initial conveners of

the commission.

“As we confront the harshness of this moment, we must also shine a light on what is possible and what is necessary to move us forward,” Opal Tometi, Blue Ribbon Commission member, former executive director of Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI) and co-founder of Black Lives Matter, said in the release. “There is no single bill that will resolve this country’s racism against immigrants and refugees, but we can start by making clear how much our political representatives have not done, and how much they can still do.”

Some of the concrete policy recommendations from the blueprint include the following:

- Ensure that undocumented people, TPS, DED, and DACA recipients are granted immediate relief and work authorization without fear of persecution.
- Center workers rights within immigration policy.
- Promote a new border policy that includes demilitarization and restructuring of border agencies.

The platform is also promoting “an open-source effort that centers grassroots voices on various aspects of immigration reform,” the release noted.

Below is the summary from the Migrant Justice Platform.

Migrant Justice Platform

The Migrant Justice Platform is a road-map of Executive and Legislative actions from grassroots voices across the United States and abroad that parts ways from the “single-bill” strategy that has defined immigration politics for two decades. It is a unity blueprint intended as a launching point for an open-source effort that centers grassroots voices on various aspects of immigration reform.

The Migrant Justice Platform presents a vision and principles to change course from the failed “comprehensive immigration reform” strategy of previous administrations. It recommends concrete executive and congressional actions in three thematic areas: at home, on the southern border, and abroad.

In its recommendations, it lays out concrete policy recommendations to ensure our undocumented, Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Deferred Enforced Departure (DED), and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) sisters and brothers breathe free without fear of persecution; a centering of workers rights within immigration policy; a new policy approach to the borderlands that includes demilitarization and restructuring of border agencies; and a rethinking of the U.S. impact and role abroad. Overall, it is the beginning of a new discussion for immigration action that must include impacted communities, remedy past mistakes, and see the whole of the global crisis.

Four Principles Behind the Migrant Justice Platform

- 1) We do not believe some must suffer for others to advance. We are in this together.
- 2) White supremacists have implemented their program from the White House. Our agenda must respond accordingly.
- 3) Migrant workers subsidize the global economy. That is not up for debate.
- 4) Immigration is not only a domestic policy issue. We are here, because you are there.

Part I (At Home): Equality and Inclusion for All People

Immediate Administrative Action

- 1) Moratorium on all ICE operations, deportations and detentions
- 2) Shut off Secure Communities dragnet and decouple all federal immigration enforcement from local law enforcement (programs 287g, BOA, WSO, and related ICE Access programs)
- 3) End immigrant detention, including family detention; and all federal detention contracts with municipalities, private detention, and tech companies
- 4) Expand reprieve and work authorization for undocumented population, including those deported unjustly

JUSTICIA MIGRANTE



5) Workplace Relief Order for workers

6) Inter-governmental Task force to review and dismantle rogue Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agencies, beginning with ICE

Congressional Priorities

- 1) Re-establish and modernize various opportunities for citizenship for 11 million, TPS, DED, and DACA holders
- 2) Restoring and scale-up U.S. Department of Labor
- 3) Decriminalize working and enact the *POWER Act*
- 4) Full rights for future workers and Transnational Labor Citizenship
- 5) Enact the *New Way Forward Act*

Part II: Build Bridges, Not Walls (On The Southern Border)

Immediate Administrative Action

- 1) De-militarize the border
- 2) Establish a Truth, Reunification and Reconciliation Commission to address family separation, migrant deaths, and white supremacist violence in border communities
- 3) Eliminate obstacles to asylum: end Zero Tolerance, end Remain in Mexico, end the Muslim Ban
- 4) Establish Welcome Centers at ports of entry and re-purpose failed wall panels as Migrant Memorial Site
- 5) Procedural due process and fairness for asylum-seekers
- 6) End use of entry and re-entry charges

Congressional Priorities

- 1) Demilitarize and restructure the Customs Border Protection agency with a fundamentally humanitarian mission and social service capacities
- 2) Enact a stand-alone Border De-Militarization bill

Part III: We Are Here Because You Were There (Abroad)

Immediate Administrative Action

- 1) Transnational Labor Citizenship Initiative
- 2) Respect sovereignty and promote healthy, public institutions abroad
- 3) Re-enter the Paris Agreement
- 4) Re-engage with international human rights mechanisms
- 5) End deportation diplomacy
- 6) Re-issue Temporary Protected Status (both TPS and DED) for all 13 countries

Congressional Priorities

- 1) Ensure pathways to Citizenship and Permanent Residency for all people from 13 countries with TPS and DED
- 2) New Migration Pathways
(*Latino Rebels, migrantjusticeplatform.org*)

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

New Way Forward Act Opposes Racial Profiling and Mass Incarceration in U.S. Immigration System

National Immigrant Justice Center

The National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) applauds introduction of the *New Way Forward Act* by Representatives Jesús “Chuy” García (IL-04), Ayanna Pressley (MA-04), Pramila Jayapal (WA-07), and Karen Bass (CA-37) on December 10. [...]

The *New Way Forward Act* would roll back harmful immigration laws that have led to racial profiling and disproportionately resulted in the incarceration, deportation, and destruction of families of color and immigrant communities.

At the press conference, NIJC client Alejandra Cano, a single mother of two who came to the United States with her own parents as a toddler, spoke about her road to recovery from addiction, how she has dedicated her life to helping other people along the same road, and the impact her detention would have on her family if she is taken into custody under punitive mandatory detention laws. Ms. Cano is scheduled for a check-in appointment on December 19 at the Chicago office of Customs and Border Protection where she faces possible detention.

“I am here today, with my check-in appointment a week away, to ask that Congress support the *New Way Forward Act*,” Ms. Cano said. “I believe families shouldn’t be separated by detention or deportation for life choices where the debt to society and ourselves has been paid.”

Ms. Cano’s story shows the need for a new approach to immigration law that advances racial justice and due process. The *New Way Forward Act* creates a new vision by limiting deportation for convictions that result from enforcement that disproportionately targets communities of color, allowing immigration judges to consider a person’s individual circumstances during deportation proceedings, and allowing more people to remain with their families and move forward with their lives without fear that an

old conviction could lead to deportation.

“For decades, immigration lawyers at the National Immigrant Justice Center have witnessed how the U.S. immigration system’s obsession with incarceration and punishment puts lives in danger, breaks up families and communities, and violates basic norms of due process that should be the foundation of our justice system,” said NIJC Director of Policy Heidi Altman. “We are grateful to community members across the country and all of the members of Congress who are working to correct these wrongs. Today’s introduction of the *New Way Forward Act* is an important step toward creating a more just immigration system.”

The *New Way Forward Act* would also reduce mass incarceration by ending mandatory detention and banning for-profit immigration jails and by ending federal prison sentences for people who cross the border seeking freedom, safety, opportunity, or to reunite with their families. The legislation would further strengthen fairness by allowing independent federal judges to review certain decisions of immigration judges that immigration laws passed in 1996 unfairly tried to remove from judicial oversight.

Additional key provisions include those ending the harmful practice of allowing local police to assist ICE with deportations, and allowing people previously ordered deported under unjust laws to come home.

NIJC is proud to join formerly incarcerated community members and dozens of immigrant rights organizations from across the country who have endorsed the bill.

Representatives Garcia and Pressley presented the bill in a press conference alongside co-sponsoring Representatives Judy Chu (CA-27), Adriano Espaillat (NY-13), Raúl Grijalva (AZ-03) and Sylvia García (TX-29).

Immigrant Rights Organizations Oppose Criminalization by Border Agencies

Pueblo Sin Fronteras, an organization defending immigrant and refugee rights along the southern border with Mexico was one of many rights organizations targeted in a secretive joint U.S.-Mexican intelligence gathering operation, which also swept up immigration attorneys and journalists working along the border. Documents obtained by NBC News showed that the operation was carried out by officials within U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Border Patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the FBI. It included a secret database of 59 activists, journalists, attorneys, and unspecified “others.” At least 10 of the government’s targets were volunteers

with Pueblo Sin Fronteras (People Without Borders).

Alex Mensing, a volunteer with the organization has been pulled into secondary screening nearly 30 times at U.S. ports in the San Diego-Tijuana area, as well as the Los Angeles airport. His longest interrogation, in late 2018, spanned roughly four hours. “Pretty much every member of Pueblo Sin Fronteras who crossed the border was interrogated during that time,” he said.

While CBP eventually admitted to the operations, which sparked multiple internal and congressional investigations, the federal law enforcement agencies involved have yet to be held accountable. In an effort to make the government criminaliza-

END DETENTIONS AND DEPORTATIONS

tion known, Mensing and others have filed a lawsuit against CBP, ICE, and the FBI for violations of their rights. Though those filing the suit “did not commit any crime, violate any customs or border regulation, or engage in any other activity that could reasonably give rise to a suspicion of criminality,” the suit says, they nonetheless “faced repeated and prolonged detentions and interrogations at the border.”

“The government’s powers are not limitless,” the complaint, filed in the U.S. District Court of Arizona, reads. “It cannot target people for intrusive surveillance, detention, searches, and interrogation because of their expressive political activity protected under the First Amendment. And it cannot use its border control powers — to regulate the import of goods, verify travelers’ identities, and stop the entry of contraband — to conduct suspicionless fishing expeditions for criminal activity unconnected to border enforcement that it could not conduct within the country.”

The Trump administration’s border enforcement agencies illegally and unconstitutionally exploited their border enforcement authorities, the lawsuit went on to say, by “directing surveillance, detention, intrusive searches accompanied by excessive physical restraint, and intensive interrogation at the border” against individuals “because of their lawful humanitarian activities.”

Criminalizing Organizations Defending Migrant Rights

The effort to hold ICE, CBP and FBI accountable comes about one year after thousands of migrants, most from Central America, made their way by caravan to the U.S. border in October 2018. Most were trying to escape the violence and anarchy unleashed by U.S. intervention and interference in the region, including backing a coup in Honduras.

Trump used the caravan’s arrival at the border to justify deploying more than 5,000 troops. These military forces, poised to invade Mexico, remain more than a year later. The troops were part of “Operation Secure Line,” which also included the criminalization and spying on dozens of journalists, lawyers, and rights advocates. In the months that followed, U.S. border forces twice targeted united resistance both sides of the border, launching tear gas into demonstrations in support of the rights of the many families taking part in the caravan. Both times, women and children were among those injured by the tear gas.

Advocates, lawyers, and journalists working in the Tijuana-San Diego area saw increased harassment. Many were pulled into secondary screening as they attempted to reenter the U.S. Their images and electronics were searched, and they were grilled for information about the caravan and the activists working with the migrants. Two award-winning photographers were denied reentry into Mexico, barring them from the place where their journalistic work was focused. Immigration attorneys with the prominent border law firm Al Otro Lado were similarly denied reentry.

By late 2018, interrogations of Pueblo Sin Fronteras’ volunteers had become the norm. Another volunteer, Jeff Valenzuela was sent to secondary screening a half-dozen times from December



2018 through February. He is a U.S. citizen living in Tijuana with family in California. In one of the instances, which occurred on Christmas Day as he was attempting to visit his family, border guards searched his phone and he was held for roughly 2 1/2 hours. When Valenzuela attempted to cross the border again days later, he was taken to a concrete cell and shackled to a steel bench for approximately five hours.

For some, the repeated harassment and interrogations crossing the border meant carrying forward with their work became very difficult. Said Mensing, “I was tired of getting detained. I was tired of getting interrogated. I was concerned about further retaliation. I was concerned it would escalate.” He added, “And so, I did not go to the United States from January until September.”

Jury Acquits Arizona Organizer

The targeting of immigration advocates was also extended beyond the San Diego-Tijuana area. In June 2017, roughly 30 Border Patrol agents swept through a humanitarian camp where the faith-based group No More Deaths was providing medical care to a group of migrants who had crossed the desert in southern Arizona. The raid marked the beginning of a sustained attack on humanitarian aid providers in the state.

In the last two years, the U.S. attorney’s office in Arizona has brought nine federal cases against No More Deaths volunteers for leaving jugs of water in the Sonoran Desert, where thousands of migrants have died. In the most serious case to stem from the crackdown, federal prosecutors charged Scott Warren, a geography teacher from the unincorporated border community of Ajo, with two felony counts of harboring and conspiracy for providing two undocumented migrants with food, water, and beds to sleep in for three days last year. His case ended in a hung jury over the summer. But the government persisted in its criminalization, imposing a retrial and a possible sentence of 10 years in prison.

In November, Warren was acquitted. He put forward that immigrants are human beings regardless of their status and that providing aid is the human thing to do and providing aid to those in need was also called for based on his religious beliefs. The government’s attorney, making clear their plan to continue attacking those defending rights said, “We won’t distinguish between whether someone is harboring or trafficking for money or whether they’re doing it out

of a misguided sense of social justice or belief in open borders.” In this manner, the government is continuing to try and equate those providing humanitarian aid with those, many of them drug gangs backed and financed by the U.S., engaged in human trafficking. The jury in Warren’s case clearly decided otherwise.

Ana Adlerstein, another volunteer, accompanied an asylum-seeker to the Lukeville, Arizona port of entry earlier this year. Adlerstein was taken into custody and told that “the Fourth Amendment doesn’t apply here,” [the Fourth Amendment prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures]. Though she was released after several hours, Adlerstein said U.S. officials accused her of violating the same human smuggling statutes that Warren was charged under. Months later, Amnesty International released a report documenting how the threat of human smuggling charges has appeared again and again in dozens of cases related to the Trump administration’s targeting of aid providers on the border. “By discriminatorily targeting human rights defenders — most of them U.S. citizens — based solely on their political or other opinions, speech and activities, the Trump administration has violated international law, the U.S. Constitution,

U.S. laws, and corresponding Department of Homeland Security policies that acknowledge those legally binding civil liberties protections,” the July report said.

In September of this year, Mensing crossed the border into the U.S. for the first time in more than half a year. “I got sent to secondary,” he said. “And I have been sent to secondary every single time I have crossed the border since.” The constant pressure from the state has taken its toll, Mensing explained, not just personally, but also on efforts to advocate for some of the world’s most vulnerable populations. He explained that he and others would have spent the spring accompanying caravans north, as they have for the last two years. “It’s completely changed the way that the organization operates. There’s a lot of stuff that Pueblo Sin Fronteras and I could have done in the last year to support migrants, to support migrant leadership, to support migrant safety, that we weren’t able to do because of this process of criminalization.” He emphasized, “The constitutional violations that we are suing about are an infinitesimal tip of the iceberg of what the U.S. government is doing to crack down on migrant rights groups.” (*The Intercept, NBC News*)

NOT GUILTY VERDICT IN ARIZONA CASE

No More Deaths Volunteers Speak Out

On November 20, a jury in Tucson, Arizona acquitted Dr. Scott Warren on 2 felony counts of harboring immigrants. He had assisted two people crossing the desert by providing food, water and a place to sleep. *No More Deaths* organizes to provide humanitarian aid to the many thousands crossing the Sonoran Desert, where thousands have died, many from thirst and exposure. The government attempted to equate this humanitarian work with human trafficking, but the jury did not agree. Below are statements shared by Scott Warren and another volunteer Geena Jackson after the verdict was released:

Dr. Scott Warren:

“Everyone here did diligent, detailed, and amazing work. And regardless of the verdict our preparation and commitment has always paid off. I love you all. And to those who aren’t here because they are keeping up the humanitarian work in the desert, I love you, too.

And to local residents who have always provided the stranger at their door with food, water, and humanitarian relief—you know I love you as well. Both in and out of court our work here has been to educate. To explain the complicated context of the border with clarity, and to bring an understanding of the humanitarian crisis to those who will listen. [...]

And to migrants like Jose and Kristian, who are truly the ones at the center of this story, our hearts are with you for the dignity, respect, and self determination that is your right.

Unfortunately, the damage to land and life in the border region not only continues, but has been ramped up, way up, since all of this began. Throughout the trial we mistakenly referred to the land surrounding Ajo as a military range, a wilderness, a Border Patrol area of responsibility. But it’s O’odham land. All of it. And now, a new 30 foot high wall threatens further dispossession of native people and the destruction of this important and beautiful

landscape.

Geena Jackson, Long Term Desert Aid Volunteer:

“My name is Geena Jackson and I am a volunteer with *No More Deaths*.

Today the defense attorneys said in closing arguments that despite varying moralities in our current society, we have one thing in common, and that is the law. But this community, in Southern Arizona, and in every community along any border, we know that we have much more in common. We have our humanity, and no law or border can touch that. We have been saying for years that humanitarian aid is never a crime, and today 12 jurors agreed. But today I also want to remember that just being human is never a crime. They can try to regulate our communities, our movement, our communication, and our humanity, but we will resist. We can never stop caring for each other, and as living, loving beings in this desert we can never stop sharing water, food and our homes.

Scott was accused repeatedly of providing orientation to those who needed it. In court Greg Kuykendall said, “It is a human right to know where you are.” In these borderlands communities, we know where we are. We live near a border, along the lines that the state uses to determine citizenship, to define whether or not you belong. Global migration patterns are going to intensify. The climate crisis will lead to more and more displaced families. This wall being built on stolen land is not just an attempt to stop those currently walking in the desert, it is being built to try and stop the thousands who are coming seeking refuge. Now is a moment for orientation. Know where you are, and give orientation to those who don’t. Know who you are, and how you will respond, and never let any government or law challenge that. In our communities, we know where we are, and we are so much deeper than any border can define. We know what resilient people and

communities look like.

I want to hold space now for the people that this courthouse has violated. Jose and Kristian, the two people arrested with Scott, have been talked about for weeks, their intentions and actions have been deliberated over and over again. Pictures of their faces and their bodies have been flashed in this courthouse over and over again. And that was wrong. I want to take a moment to honor that a smiling selfie during an incredible journey to tell your loved ones you are OK, is a powerful and beautiful act of resiliency and comfort. Jose and Kristian's actions and pictures do not belong anywhere near a courtroom. I want to take a moment of silence for these two men wherever they are today.

I also want to take a moment to honor this desert. Being in that courtroom I heard our home referred to as a vast nothingness over and over again. But this desert is full. It holds the lives and loves of our communities. It holds the spirits of the thousands of disappeared. It holds plants and creatures that thrive on just enough rain. This desert has taken the beating of border militarization

and wall construction and remains powerful, despite what any human hands try to do.

This battle has been long and exhausting. I resent that we ever had to fight this battle in the first place. But through it all, we never stopped providing humanitarian aid. We thank all of our supporters far and wide who have followed this trial and who have taken actions big and small to help us get through to today. We hear you and see you and we know we are not alone. We know that there are communities all over the country, indeed all over the world, that are organizing in their own homes, schools, and churches.. Thank you for continuing to put water in the desert, for searching for the lost and the missing, thank you for welcoming in those who needed a rest.

Thank you to those who never stopped fighting deportations, trying to prevent anyone from ever having to make this journey in the first place. This battle has been long, and there are so many greater battles yet to come, but let's take today and just celebrate that we won.

Abolish Immigration Prisons

César Cuauhtémoc García Hernández

We should shut down these institutions, end the suffering they cause and redirect the money.

Near Denver, migrants are locked inside a prison tucked into an industrial quarter. To the southwest, in the vast space between Phoenix and Tucson, they are surrounded by barbed wire in facilities that seem to rise right out of the Sonoran Desert.

Imprisoning migrants this way is lucrative for prison corporations and politicians, and it's common. But the United States hasn't always embraced the idea. In 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower's attorney general, Herbert Brownell Jr., announced a decision to shut down major immigration detention centers along both coasts, including Ellis Island. While the policy didn't abolish immigration imprisonment, it came close. A few years later, the Supreme Court declared this a sign of "an enlightened civilization."

The United States has veered far from the enlightenment that the Supreme Court imagined 65 years ago. Under President Barack Obama, the Department of Homeland Security locked up more migrants than ever (the average daily population of migrants in detention facilities in 2016 was 34,000); the Trump administration has locked up even more (the average population in 2018 was 42,000).

From asylum seekers to longtime legal residents who have committed crimes, immigration prisons spare no one. In them, people — including children, who the United Nations says should never be detained — often find trauma. Two doctors who regularly work with the Department of Homeland Security were so appalled by the agency's confinement of children that they wrote to Senators Charles Grassley and Ron Wyden in 2018 describing an infant who lost one-third of his body weight over 10 days yet was never given IV fluids or sent to an emergency room. Other children, they added, had their fingers lacerated by

heavy doors in a converted medium-security prison in which they were confined. Detention is so harmful to children, they concluded, that the "fundamental flaw of family detention is not just the risk posed by the conditions of confinement — it's the incarceration of innocent children itself."

Kamyar Samimi, a green-card holder with 40 years in the United States, died 13 days after ICE agents took him into custody. When he arrived at a private prison in suburban Denver, he told prison officials that his doctor had prescribed medicine to control an addiction. The prison's doctor never bothered to see him. Soon his health tumbled; nurses gave him half the medicine that the prison doctor ordered. Nurses said he was faking, hoping to get drugs, an internal review released a year later revealed. Finally, after he had become too ill to be moved into a wheelchair, as he vomited and urinated on himself, prison guards called for an ambulance. Emergency responders arrived four minutes later, but Mr. Samimi stopped breathing before they could get him into the ambulance. His death was tragic, but not isolated. Since October 1, two of ICE's detainees have died.

The United States should shut down its immigration prison system. The federal government should redirect the billions of dollars it spends jailing migrants — \$2.7 billion alone in 2017 for ICE's detention system — to helping them navigate the labyrinthine legal process. To navigate high-stakes immigration court cases, migrants need lawyers, social workers and case managers. Right now, most get none of those. In immigration court, there is no government-paid lawyer, and most detained migrants cannot afford to hire one. But going back to the Reagan administration, pilot projects that offer support consistently display remarkable success getting migrants to show up for court dates and stay out of trouble.

In an immigration court system that handles 200,000 cases

a year, there are bound to be some people who flout the rules. And there will be others who get their day in court only to lose. When that happens, two options are available. We could arrest and deport those people, or we could turn the other way.

For decades, the bipartisan consensus has been to rely on arrest and deportation. But what if we asked this instead: What good comes from locking up migrants? Republicans declare that we need to detain migrants to uphold the rule of law. Democrats add that detention helps keep our communities safe. Neither of these claims stands up to scrutiny.

The rule of law is not a blunt hammer. Prosecutors regularly choose whether to go after citizens who have committed crimes. Even when evidence of guilt is strong, there might be other reasons to let illegal activity slide: Perhaps a first-time offender deserves a second chance or putting a parent in jail would do more harm than good. Whatever the reason, the Supreme Court declared in 1985, prosecutors have “broad discretion as to whom to prosecute”—or in not prosecuting. It is up to prosecutors to weigh the harm that prosecution seeks to remedy. When it comes to immigration law violations, locking up migrants is applying brute force to a minor transgression.

Fears that migrants will endanger the public are similarly flimsy. First, reams of evidence show that migrants are not any more dangerous than people born in the United States. Second, coming to the United States to request asylum, as many people locked up by ICE have done, does not suggest a willingness to commit crime.

Even when migrants have a criminal history, immigration prison is not the right answer. It is the job of police officers to prevent and investigate crime. At best, adding ICE to the mix is redundant. At worse, it is demeaning. Take David Rodriguez’s experience in a Houston prison. Growing up on the streets of Mexico City, he made his way to the United States as a teenager. Years later he had a green card and celebrity status as the chef at a trendy Houston cafe and the owner of a fashionable boutique.

When he and his fiancée were harassed as they returned

home one evening, he swung a baseball bat in their defense. A felony assault charge for the incident was ultimately lowered to a misdemeanor, the judge did not sentence him to jail, and seven years went by without a problem.

When he returned home from his honeymoon in Belize, the idyllic days of beachside lounging turned into a nightmare. He was detained by Customs and Border Protection in Miami and then directed to a private immigration prison in Houston, where he was arrested. Despite never having been convicted of a deportable offense, he had been mistakenly flagged as having committed a felony. He told me he realized how lucky he was to have a family that could afford to hire a lawyer. “Because you’re an immigrant, you’re guilty until proven innocent,” he said.

In the years after the Eisenhower administration led the federal government tantalizingly close to de facto abolition of immigration prisons, the country boomed, our cities diversified, and courts maintained a central role resolving disputes in our messy democracy. Growing pains and all, the United States progressed with migrants free to live as ordinary people. Since then, we have swerved far from that past. To put someone behind bars, we should demand an exceptional justification. So far, the government has not found one. (December 2, 2019)

(César Cuauhtémoc García Hernández is an associate professor of law at the University of Denver and the author of “Migrating to Prison: America’s Obsession With Locking Up Immigrants.”)



ICE Prison’s Dollar-a-Day Wages Faces Class-Action Suit

Robin Urevich, Capital and Main

A federal court ruling allows hundreds of thousands of former detainees to sue the GEO Group.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detainees who allege they were required to work for \$1 a day and, in many cases, for no pay at all, are one step closer to their day in court. The undocumented immigrants were all incarcerated at the Adelanto Detention Facility and the other detention centers operated by the GEO Group. GEO is the nation’s largest private prison company and currently holds more than 10,000 ICE detainees.

On November 26, U.S. District Court Judge Jesus G. Bernal announced his decision to allow hundreds of thousands of former detainees to join together to pursue back pay and damages when he granted class action status in Raul Novoa v. the GEO Group,

dealing a defeat to the private prison firm.

The plaintiffs allege that a so-called voluntary work program in which detainees are paid \$1 a day to do janitorial work, prepare meals and do laundry isn’t voluntary at all. Instead, they argue GEO requires detainees to work under the threat of solitary confinement or even criminal prosecution, saving the company millions of dollars in wages it would otherwise have to pay non-detainee workers. They further contend that GEO has a corporate policy of drafting detainees to do additional janitorial work for free, and that the company requires would-be dollar-a-day workers to also work without compensation until they are officially hired into the paid positions.

Lauren-Brooke Eisen, a senior fellow at the Brennan Center

for Justice and the author of *Inside Private Prisons: An American Dilemma in the Age of Mass Incarceration*, believes that the lawsuits could have implications beyond immigration detention centers.

“If the detainees prevail in their lawsuits,” she says, “this body of litigation may also shape future litigation of convicted individuals in jails and prisons who argue that they are not being

paid fair wages for their work behind bars.”

Three similar cases are pending against the GEO Group — two in Washington state and one in Colorado — where class-action status has already been granted. Five lawsuits challenging detainee labor practices at facilities operated by CoreCivic, a slightly smaller private prison firm, are also making their way through the courts.

Judge Blocks Plan to Use \$3.6 Billion in Military Funds for Border Wall

Courthouse News, December 10, 2019

A federal judge on Tuesday issued a nationwide injunction blocking the Trump administration’s plan to use \$3.6 billion in military construction money to build the president’s long-promised border wall.

The decision followed a previous ruling in a lawsuit brought by a West Texas county and an advocacy group, which determined that the president’s national emergency declaration at the southern border in February was “unlawful.”

U.S. District Judge David Briones ruled in October that the administration’s attempt to spend more than \$6 billion in Department of Defense funds for the wall project violated the will of Congress, which only approved \$1.375 billion for limited border barrier construction in South Texas.

“Because Defendant’s actions are unlawful and the people’s representatives — Congress — declined to augment the border wall budget as Defendants attempt, the public interest would be served by halting them,” Briones wrote in Tuesday’s order.

El Paso County and the advocacy group Border Network for Human Rights had asked the judge for a nationwide ban on the government paying for border barriers with funds originally meant for counter-drug programs or military construction projects.

The plaintiffs did not get everything they wanted with Tuesday’s permanent injunction, which only blocks the use of Defense Department money originally meant for military construction activities. The order does not prohibit the government from diverting \$2.5 billion in counter-drug money toward the wall project, which the Supreme Court in July allowed to continue as separate litigation plays out.

Briones found the Texas plaintiffs’ argument against the use of that separate \$2.5 billion “unviable.”

Still, the plaintiffs hailed the injunction as a victory.

“I think anytime you stop the president from abusing his powers and also stop him from using \$3.6 billion of the taxpayers’ money for an unlawful purpose, it’s a pretty big win for Democracy,” Kristy Parker, an attorney with Protect Democracy and co-counsel for the plaintiffs, said.

The Justice Department said it will appeal the injunction. The government has also filed an appeal to the Fifth Circuit of the



judge’s October ruling in the case.

El Paso County and the Border Network had successfully argued in the lawsuit that the El Paso region would be directly harmed if the government was allowed to move more than \$20 million in construction funding away from the Fort Bliss Army base, a big driver of the local economy.

More broadly, the plaintiffs argued the president’s emergency declaration alone threatened the region’s business and tourism prospects by portraying it in a negative light.

“The president issued an emergency declaration proclaiming this entire community to effectively be the site of a national disaster, declaring it to be a dangerous place where criminal immigrants are pouring over the border,” Parker said. “And those things aren’t true about the community.”

The Trump administration fared no better in a related case in California on Wednesday. There, a federal judge denied the government’s request for summary judgment but granted partial summary judgment to the Sierra Club and the state of California by finding the redirection of the \$3.6 billion in military funds for the border wall ran contrary to Congress’ purposes in allocating the money.

I • No to Trump, No to NATO Protest

contingent of NHS workers along with doctors and nurses, to make it clear that the NHS is not for sale.

Rousing speeches were given as the crowd assembled in the late afternoon. Reiner Braun from the International Peace Bureau and Medea Benjamin from Code Pink gave an insight into how NATO is perceived in Europe and the U.S.; representatives of the Kurds in London protested against [Turkish President Recep Tayyip] Erdogan's recent atrocities against the Kurds, while Tariq Ali and Lindsey German of Stop the War spoke of Trump and the so-called Special Relationship. Kate Hudson (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) told of the devastating impact and escalating cost of nuclear weapons. Speaker after speaker made it clear how NATO is a force for war not peace and how much Trump and all he stands for is reviled by the British public.

The demonstration began in Trafalgar Square and aimed to march down the Mall to Buckingham Palace in time for the arrival of the NATO leaders attending a reception with the Queen. At least that was the plan. In reality, police action inhibited the march and the assembly of the protest. By refusing to close the roads at the assembly point at Trafalgar Square, and twice blocking the route as thousands poured down the Mall, the police succeeded in preventing the protesters from greeting the Queen's guests as they arrived.

Held for forty minutes on the Mall, mounted police announced



to the marchers that they were being kept back for their own safety; in reality it was blatantly clear that crowd safety was the last thing on the police's mind. The crowd was penned into a small, narrow space, repeatedly told to 'stop pushing' although it was hardly possible to move, and when one protester became panicked she was jeered at and mocked by the police officer from whom she sought assistance. Once the 'danger' of being in the line of sight of passing dignitaries had passed, the protesters were allowed to continue to the Palace, to be met by even more police and the handful of Trump supporters who had been permitted to greet their hero.

Not to be deterred, the protest continued and protesters waited for the reception to end so they could make their voices heard. They may not have seen or heard the protest on their arrival at the Palace, but with the drums, trumpets and whistles of the protesters, the NATO leaders could not fail to [notice] it on their departure.

Back at Trafalgar Square, the R3 Soundsystem — Dance Music Against Trump — was in full swing with dancers blocking the road and music echoing down Whitehall throughout the Trump-Boris Johnson meeting at Downing Street. GloSticks, Dump Trump and No to Nato placards were held high and thrust in the air in time to the beat. This was Trump's third visit to London and the third London welcome he has received. Hopefully it will be his last.

Trump Was Right: NATO Should Be Obsolete

Medea Benjamin, CodePink

The three smartest words that Donald Trump uttered during his presidential campaign are "NATO is obsolete." His adversary, Hillary Clinton, retorted that NATO was "the strongest military alliance in the history of the world." Now that Trump has been in power, the White House parrots the same worn line that NATO is "the most successful Alliance in history, guaranteeing the security, prosperity, and freedom of its members." But Trump was right the first time around: Rather than being a strong alliance with a clear purpose, this 70-year-old organization that is meeting in London on December 4 is a stale military holdover from the Cold War days that should have gracefully retired many years ago.

NATO was originally founded by the United States and 11 other Western nations as an attempt to curb the rise of communism in 1949. Six years later, Communist nations founded the Warsaw Pact and through these two multilateral institutions, the entire globe became a Cold War battleground. When the USSR collapsed in 1991, the Warsaw Pact disbanded but NATO expanded, growing from its original 12 members to 29 member countries. North Macedonia,

set to join next year, will bring the number to 30. NATO has also expanded well beyond the North Atlantic, adding a partnership with Colombia in 2017. Donald Trump recently suggested that Brazil could one day become a full member.

NATO's post-Cold War expansion toward Russia's borders, despite earlier promises not to move eastward, has led to rising tensions between Western powers and Russia, including multiple close calls between military forces. It has also contributed to a new arms race, including upgrades in nuclear arsenals, and the largest NATO "war games" since the Cold War.

While claiming to "preserve peace," NATO has a history of bombing civilians and committing war crimes. In 1999, NATO engaged in military operations without UN approval in Yugoslavia. Its illegal airstrikes during the Kosovo War left hundreds of civilians dead. And far from the "North Atlantic," NATO joined the United States in invading Afghanistan in 2001, where it is still bogged down two decades later. In 2011, NATO forces illegally invaded Libya, creating a failed state that caused masses of people

FIGHT FOR AN ANTI-WAR GOVERNMENT

to flee. Rather than take responsibility for these refugees, NATO countries have turned back desperate migrants on the Mediterranean Sea, letting thousands die.

In London, NATO wants to show it is ready to fight new wars. It will showcase its readiness initiative — the ability to deploy 30 battalions by land, 30 air squadrons and 30 naval vessels in just 30 days, and to confront future threats from China and Russia, including with hypersonic missiles and cyberwarfare. But far from being a lean, mean war machine, NATO is actually riddled with divisions and contradictions. Here are some of them:

- French President Emmanuel Macron questions the U.S. commitment to fight for Europe, has called NATO “brain dead” and has proposed a European Army under the nuclear umbrella of France.

- Turkey has enraged NATO members with its incursion into Syria to attack the Kurds, who have been Western allies in the fight against ISIS. And Turkey has threatened to veto a Baltic defense plan until allies support its controversial incursion into Syria. Turkey has also infuriated NATO members, especially Trump, by purchasing Russia’s S-400 missile system.

- Trump wants NATO to push back against China’s growing influence, including the use of Chinese companies for the construction of 5G mobile networks — something many NATO countries are unwilling to do.

- Is Russia really NATO’s adversary? France’s Macron has reached out to Russia, inviting Putin to discuss ways in which the European Union can put the Crimean invasion behind it. Donald Trump has publicly attacked Germany over its Nord Stream 2 project to pipe in Russian gas, but a recent German poll saw 66 percent wanting closer ties with Russia.

The UK has bigger problems. Britain has been convulsed over the Brexit conflict and is holding a contentious national election on December 12. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, knowing that Trump is wildly unpopular, is reluctant to be seen as close to him. Also, Johnson’s major contender, Jeremy Corbyn, is a reluctant supporter of NATO. While his Labor Party is committed to NATO, over his career as an anti-war champion, Corbyn has called NATO “a danger to world peace and a danger to world security.” The last time Britain hosted NATO leaders in 2014, Corbyn told an anti-NATO rally that the end of the Cold War “should have been the time for NATO to shut up shop, give up, go home and go away.”

A further complication is Scotland, which is home to a very unpopular Trident nuclear submarine base as part of NATO’s nuclear deterrent. A new Labor government would need the support of the Scottish National Party. But its leader, Nicola Sturgeon, insists that a precondition for her party’s support is a commitment to close the base.

Europeans cannot stand Trump (a recent poll found he is trusted by only 4 percent of Europeans!) and their leaders cannot rely on him. Allied leaders learn of presidential decisions that affect their interests via Twitter. The lack of coordination was clear in October, when Trump ignored NATO allies when he ordered U.S. special forces out of northern Syria, where they had been operating alongside French and British commandos against Islamic State



militants.

The U.S. unreliability has led the European Commission to draw up plans for a European “defense union” that will coordinate military spending and procurement. The next step may be to coordinate military actions separate from NATO. The Pentagon has complained about EU countries purchasing military equipment from each other instead of from the United States, and has called this defense union “a dramatic reversal of the last three decades of increased integration of the transatlantic defence sector.”

Do Americans really want to go to war for Estonia? Article 5 of the Treaty states that an attack against one member “shall be considered an attack against them all,” meaning that the treaty obligates the U.S. to go to war on behalf of 28 nations – something most likely opposed by war-weary Americans who want a less aggressive foreign policy that focuses on peace, diplomacy, and economic engagement instead of military force.

An additional major bone of contention is who will pay for NATO. The last time NATO leaders met, President Trump derailed the agenda by berating NATO countries for not paying their fair share and at the London meeting, Trump is expected to announce symbolic U.S. cuts to NATO’s operations budget.

Trump’s main concern is that member states step up to the NATO target of spending 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense by 2024, a goal that is unpopular among Europeans, who prefer that their taxdollars go for nonmilitary items. Nevertheless, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg will brag that Europe and Canada have added \$100 billion to their military budgets since 2016 – something Donald Trump will take credit for – and that more NATO officials are meeting the 2 percent goal, even though a 2019 NATO report shows only seven members have done so: the U.S., Greece, Estonia, the UK, Romania, Poland and Latvia.

In an age where people around the world want to avoid war and to focus instead on the climate chaos that threatens future life on earth, NATO is an anachronism. It now accounts for about three-quarters of military spending and weapons dealing around the globe. Instead of preventing war, it promotes militarism, exacerbates global tensions and makes war more likely. This Cold War relic should not be reconfigured to maintain U.S. domination in Europe, or to mobilize against Russia or China, or to launch new wars in space. It should not be expanded, but disbanded. Seventy years of militarism is more than enough.

(Medea Benjamin is cofounder of CODEPINK for Peace)