



PEACE ★ EQUALITY ★ SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY ★ ALL POWER TO THE WORKING PEOPLE!

The Red Phoenix

REAL NEWS FOR WORKERS, BY WORKERS ★ NEWSPAPER OF THE AMERICAN PARTY OF LABOR

AmericanPartyofLabor.com – RedPhoenixNews.com – Issue #31 – January 2024 – Donations accepted – Please copy and redistribute!



Photo: Hundreds of people demanding a ceasefire in Palestine and an end to U.S. aid to Israel demonstrated in downtown Louisville, KY, Dec. 16, 2023. (The Red Phoenix / M.A. Booth)

**ECONOMIC GROWTH,
A DOUBLE-EDGED
SWORD**

By Leonard Zorfass

**ALL MONOPOLIES AND
IMPERIALISTS ARE THE
ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE**

Declaration by the ICMLPO

**“RED CUP REBELLION”
ACTIONS SUPPORT
STARBUCKS WORKERS**

By Victor Vaughn

ECONOMIC GROWTH, A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD



An eagle tops the U.S. Federal Reserve building's facade in Washington, July 31, 2013. (REUTERS/Jonathan Ernst)

Leonard Zorfass | New Jersey | Nov. 15, 2023

Without a curtain to hide behind, or significant opposition to fear, the capitalist system finds itself grappling with soaring inflation even as the economy experiences relentless growth – including the job market, which boasts 33 consecutive months of expansion. Yet, paradoxically to “classical” bourgeois understanding, the Federal Reserve aggressively raises interest rates at a pace not witnessed in decades.

Following a two-day policy meeting, central bankers are confronted with the disarrayed tableau, inadvertent and open exposure of the perils inherent in unchecked economic growth. The prevailing consensus suggests that the Fed's leaders will maintain the current interest rates, or they might even conclude the incessant rate hikes or in the face of such growth, even lower interest rates. However, behind the closed doors of ornate boardrooms, a crucial Fed committee engages in highly technical debates, seeking to decipher the uncertain trajectory of the capitalist economy and navigate the treacherous waters of monetary policy.



AMERICAN PARTY OF LABOR
ALL POWER TO THE WORKING PEOPLE!

The Federal Reserve has been ensnared in a convoluted labyrinth of data ever since the pandemic unleashed its destructive force upon the economy more than three years ago. Ruling elites grapple with the enigma of why critical economic engines, such as consumer spending, job market dynamics, and overall growth, display minimal response to the aggressive escalation of interest rates, defying the simplistic dictates of mainstream Economics 101.

Just a year ago, a substantial majority of economists were steadfast that the nation was teetering on the precipice of a recession due to the Fed's breakneck pace of interest rate hikes. In stark contrast to these projections, recent data reveals a fifth consecutive quarter of growth, with the economy expanding at an annualized rate of 4.9 percent from July to September, marking the most robust growth since 2021.

Moreover, policymakers foresaw a retrenchment in household and family spending, anticipating that individuals would buckle under the weight of skyrocketing prices for essential commodities such as groceries and fuel. However, consumers have repeatedly defied these expectations, shrugging off inflation and the higher interest rates, trapped in a cycle of commodity fetishism and consumer culture. Retail sales in September surged by 0.7 percent compared to the previous month, exceeding expectations by a significant margin.

Despite signs of cooling in the job market, characterized by fewer job openings and subdued (nominal) wage growth compared to the early stages of the pandemic, there has been no trace of

massive layoffs or a surge in unemployment.

Fed officials thus attempt to confront the confounding riddle of these paradoxical economic trends of the market.

Nonetheless, for the Federal Reserve, interest rates serve as the primary tool for combating inflation and steering the capitalist system toward what they perceive as a more “sustainable” path. The Fed's benchmark rate, known as the federal funds rate, currently ranges between 5.25 and 5.5 percent, the highest level in 22 years. Central bankers have left the door ajar for another quarter-point rate increase, possibly at their final meeting of the year in December. Observers are wagering that the central bank will conclude its rate hikes and opt to maintain elevated borrowing costs until inflation retreats to 2 percent. (According to the Fed's preferred metric, inflation currently stands at 3.4 percent, a marked decline from its zenith of 7 percent in June 2022.)

This situation, paradoxically, raises questions that bourgeois economists cannot answer. On one hand, officials have long advocated that workers, employers, and the capitalist system must endure a “period of pain” until the Fed conquers inflation. On the other hand, officials and observers are now entertaining doubts about whether the economy will react to elevated interest rates as predicted by mainstream economic models: subpar growth, a weakened job market, or a decrease in spending.

In a recent speech, Chicago Fed President Austan Goolsbee issued a caution about “excessive faith” in the purported trade-offs between inflation and the job market. He suggested that the Fed has a unique opportunity to quell inflation without causing damage to the capitalist system, a feat that could be subject to scrutiny for years to come, regardless of the final outcome.

The precise implications for monetary policy may remain uncertain for some time. In the immediate future, Fed officials have asserted that they will decide on interest rates in a meeting-by-meeting fashion, contingent upon the unfolding data regarding inflation, jobs, wages, and economic growth. When we take a step back, central bankers still harbor doubts about the extent to which the economy may decelerate in response to their sweeping measures over the past 19 months.

It may take even more time to discern how, or if, the Fed can contain an economy hurtling forward at a breakneck pace.



CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALIST BECOMES SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE



Mike Johnson (R-LA). (Photo: Ting Shen)

Alan I. | Ohio | Nov. 9, 2023

After nearly a month of infighting, the Republicans in the House of Representatives finally elected a new speaker, diehard Christian fundamentalist Mike Johnson. The fiasco surrounding the election of this individual represents not only a profound dysfunction at the top of capitalist government, but also yet another GOP surrender to reactionary "MAGA" forces. The previous speaker, Kevin McCarthy, was ousted on October 3 after fellow Donald Trump-aligned members accused him of being too soft with Democrats. The former speaker had, facing the threat of a government shutdown on October 1, orchestrated the passing of a stopgap bill which funded the government through November 17. This greatly angered his far-right colleagues who regularly use the debt ceiling negotiations to strip more away from the working class in a religious devotion to "balancing the budget" with no regard for human life. In retaliation, McCarthy was ousted on October 3.

On October 25, the GOP elected Mike Johnson as Speaker of the House. Johnson is not only an election denier, but spearheaded the effort to overturn the 2020 election in congress. He is also a fervent bigot. He has claimed that homosexuality is "inherently unnatural" and "dangerous." Johnson is a Bible-thumping extremist in every sense, even going so far as to imply that his election was ordained by God. He claimed in a radio interview that the contents of the Bible are historically factual. He has also claimed that the "founding fathers" of the USA structured the government in such a way to protect the Christian church.

To be fair, Kevin McCarthy was not all that much better. He was the architect of the Republican Party's continued embrace of Donald Trump after the January 6 attack on the Capitol. McCarthy

seemingly saw the cynical and calculating fact that he could still use Trump's brand to garner support for Republicans. Yet, McCarthy's loyalty to Trump was not seen as iron-clad enough for the extremists such as Representative Matt Gaetz, who launched the campaign to oust him. Famously, Trump demands absolute loyalty from his acolytes. It is clear this battle was about who can best serve him, not the people of the USA.

Christian fundamentalists in positions of power are a growing threat to hundreds of millions of people. Women will suffer from lack of access to reproductive healthcare. LGBTQIA+ people will suffer losing their own healthcare access and rights. These fundamentalists oppose the right for same-sex couples to legally marry, and Johnson in particular opposed the decision in Lawrence v. Texas, the ruling that forbade criminal punishment for sexual conduct between consenting individuals – sanctions most often used to prosecute gay men and women. He has also proposed laws banning the mention of sexual orientation or gender identity and criticized the removal of conversion therapy books, a form of abuse forced onto LGBTQIA+ individuals in order to "make them straight." Christian fundamentalist policies also frequently target non-white people and religious minorities – atheists, Jews, and Muslims, and even Catholics at times. Johnson opposes expansion and legalization of marijuana, and anti-marijuana laws have been used to disproportionately imprison Black and Hispanic people.

He also supports allowing prayer in school, a situation which would force non-Christian students to participate or potentially face ostracization. Not only that, but their policies will undoubtedly affect the education of tens of millions of school children. Children may be taught about creationism instead of evolution. They will likely be taught that climate change is either not man-made or does not exist at all, despite nearly every year being hotter than the last. And they will be deprived of sex education, which not only isolates LGBTQIA+ individuals who may lack the words to express their experiences, but also sexually abused children who may not understand what is happening to them or that it is wrong – a story all too common, as millions of teens engaging in unprotected sex leads to increased transmission of venereal diseases and unplanned pregnancies. Perhaps you are fortunate that you do not belong to any of these groups that will be directly affected, but almost certainly others in your life will be.

Trumpism is not supported by the majority of people in the USA. Nearly two-thirds of Americans say they

would not support Trump if he is a candidate in the 2024 election. This is the movement that Speaker Johnson is a part of, one representing a minority in the country. This is not to say that Trumpism cannot win in politics, quite the contrary. Thanks to the electoral college, gerrymandering, judicial overreach, and other flaws in the political system, the extremist minority can lord over the majority.

There is no doubt that the government of the United States does not represent the common worker. The policies and beliefs of the Republican Party and the House of Representatives are not shared by the majority of the nation, and instead appeal only to a small portion of reactionaries. Despite this, the party maintains its hold, and with each election, the Republican Party grows ever more extreme – from McConnell, to McCarthy, and now to Johnson – every step a binding tightening on the wrists of the workers and the oppressed; every step, a step closer to fascism.

APL LOS ANGELES DIVISION IS FORMED

In December, members of the American Party of Labor formally established the party's newest local division in Los Angeles, CA.

We have active members nationwide in almost every state, with divisions in Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Ohio, Oregon, Washington, New Jersey and New York.

For contact information and social media links, and to find the division closest to you, visit us online at:

AmericanPartyofLabor.com/divisions

If we don't have a presence in your city, we'll get to know you and help you establish one! Join today!



FROM WOUNDED KNEE TO DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE, STANDING ROCK STILL STANDS



Survivors of Wounded Knee Massacre, titled "What's left of Big Foot's band," 1891. (Library of Congress)

Nadya H. | Maryland | Dec. 29, 2023

On December 29, 1890, over 250 Lakota men, women, and children were executed in what is known today as the Wounded Knee Massacre. Under pretenses of relocation, 500 soldiers of the 7th Cavalry Regiment of the United States Army, stoked by recent tension after the assassination of Sitting Bull and growing anti-Indian sentiment, opened fire on unarmed civilians with four Hotchkiss cannons and repeating rifles for several hours. The soldiers proceeded to go dwelling to dwelling, executing anyone upon discovery. Fleeing civilians were pursued and shot, some bodies found as far as three miles from the camp. In all, only four men and 47 women and children were left alive to be relocated.

The violence against the Standing Rock Reservation continues to this day, from police aggression against activists during the Dakota Access Pipeline protests to this particularly dark day in history. The series of events that triggered the Wounded Knee Massacre begins both with the forced relocation of the indigenous Sioux to reservations further west with the signing of the Sioux Treaty of 1868, and with the systematic mass slaughter and near-extinction of the American bison. As the United States continued to expand west, it had initiated a series of wars, massacres, and land appropriation against various native populations. One surefire strategy proposed by General Sherman was to target their largest food source: the bison. The buffalo represented a means of survival to countless Plains tribes who, without the buffalo, had little choice but to submit to the demands of the federal government and relocate to a reservation.

As with many reservations, conditions within the Standing Rock Reservation were abysmal. Drought heavily affected Sioux crops, rations were often reduced and late, and only those who lived on the reservation had access to food in a newly depleted ecosystem. In addition, in 1883 a set of laws were introduced, known as Indian Offenses, that made any traditional spiritual gathering illegal, intended to erase the identity of and forcibly assimilate the Sioux Nation. In the depths of squalor and desperate to hold onto their way of life, some Sioux embraced a new pan-tribal religious movement known as the Ghost Dance. The Ghost Dance originated from the spiritual visions of a Paiute man named Wovoka from Nevada, which synthesized Christian doctrine with traditional indigenous belief. This movement appealed to the Sioux as it promised a return to old ways and the

restoration of their lands with bison. This movement, however, was perceived by the government as a potential cause for violence against the settlers and newly established gold mining industry in the Black Hills of Dakota.

On December 15, 1890, tribal police from Standing Rock were sent to apprehend Sitting Bull, a renowned Sioux tribal leader who lived in a large camp on the reservation. Sitting Bull did not participate in the Ghost Dance himself, but it was rumored some members of the camp had at his instigation, prompting a response from uneasy settlers. As members of the camp rushed to help Sitting Bull, a shot was fired at a tribal officer, to which the officers responded by shooting Sitting Bull in the chest and head, killing him and seven members of his camp while police casualties numbered six.

Fearing a reprisal from the encounter, members of Sitting Bull's camp sought refuge with Spotted Elk, his half-brother. Spotted Elk led the band south to the Pine Ridge Reservation in hopes of finding sanctuary under the protection of Chief Red Cloud. Flying a white flag and having contracted pneumonia, Spotted Elk's group was intercepted by the 7th Cavalry and escorted to a camp near Wounded Knee Creek. That night, the 7th Cavalry positioned four Hotchkiss cannons around the camp.

The specific events of the massacre are clouded, but what is known is that the camp was ordered to surrender their firearms by the 7th Cavalry. A firsthand account from tribesman Dewey Beard Lakota states:

"...Most of the Indians had given up their arms; there were a few standing with their guns, but the soldiers had not been to them. The knives were piled up in the center of the council; some young men had their guns and knives, but they had not been asked yet for them. There was a deaf Indian named Black Coyote who did not want to give up his gun; he did not understand what they were giving up their arms for... The struggle for the gun was short, the muzzle pointed upward toward the east and the gun was discharged. In an instant a volley followed as one shot, and the people began falling...."



Sitting Bull, ca. 1831-1890.

Those who were not killed in the immediate volley attempted to flee down a ravine, only to be hunted down by soldiers. Children were lured out of places of hiding and executed. Not even infants, nursing mothers, or the elderly were spared their gruesome fate, all were killed indiscriminately.

After the firing subsided, 250-300 Lakota, half of them women and children, lay slain. The dead were buried in a mass grave, with widespread looting taking place by soldiers. The United States awarded 20 Medals of Honor to soldiers who participated in the massacre, their deeds ranging from "gallantry" and "bravery" with the commanding officer receiving little more than paperwork for facilitating the murder of over 250 people.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

To this day, the wound of the massacre has never been allowed to heal. Standing Rock was once again targeted in 1960 when five dams were built along the Missouri River by the US Army Corps of Engineers, flooding over 200,000 acres of the reservation's land. Sacred grounds were destroyed overnight, graveyards, towns, and historic villages were flooded and lost forever. The reservation's ecosystem and source of timber were largely wiped out when the dams were built, with little compensation paid to the inhabitants.

In 2016, the US Army Corps of Engineers once again dealt a blow to the Standing Rock Sioux Nation with the proposed \$3.7 billion Dakota Access pipeline, which would cut across the Missouri river and contaminate their primary water source, in addition to the potential destruction of archaeological sites the construction would entail. Protestors of the pipeline were met with teargas and water cannons in the cold of winter, with over 300 attendees wounded by law enforcement.

In 2017, Trump reversed the decision to halt construction, and the pipeline was eventually built. The American policy of "do what you want, apologize later" has enabled a history of violence to be perpetuated against our indigenous population since the founding of our country. Fascistic violence has a template in the treatment of Native Americans, and this violence still continues in its original form today. With revolutionary action and solidarity with our indigenous comrades, may we never see another Wounded Knee.



Protesters and law enforcement, including armored vehicles, converge at the front line of demonstrations in North Dakota, 2016. (Alan Berner/The Seattle Times)

UNION-LED AMAZON STRIKE EXPANDS TO BALTIMORE WAREHOUSES



Striking Amazon workers in a picket line in Baltimore. (Photo: Teamsters)

Victor Vaughn | Maryland | Nov. 21, 2023

Striking Amazon workers led by members of the Teamsters union picketed two Amazon warehouses in Baltimore (BW12 and BW15) on the evening of Wednesday, Nov. 8, joining the nationwide protest initiated by unionized Amazon drivers in Palmdale, California. Dozens of other union workers and members of the Baltimore community came out to show support, walking the picket lines at sunset and constructing a "fat cat" inflatable on the intersection.

The protest saw a diverse group of participants, including members of the Baltimore Teachers Union, community supporters and local activists. The response highlights the connection between workers' struggles across various sectors, with workers demanding the reinstatement of unlawfully terminated employees, recognition of the Teamsters Union, respect for negotiated contracts, and improved conditions. The ongoing strike has spread to over 20 Amazon warehouses across the United States.

The struggle started when 84 drivers and dispatchers

from the DAX8 delivery station in Palmdale, CA, chose to affiliate with the Teamsters Local 396, marking the first union of Amazon drivers in the country. Despite the union bargaining a contract with Amazon's Delivery Service Partner (DSP), Battle-Tested Strategies (BTS), Amazon refuses to recognize and honor the union contract. Amazon is accused of dozens of unfair labor practices in violation of federal law within the last six months, including the firing of the entire 84-strong unit of newly-unionized workers on June 24.

A list of the violations include, but are not limited to:

- Eliminating additional routes from BTS to avoid unionization and in retaliation for the worker's decision to be represented by the Teamsters;
- Terminating the entire bargaining unit on June 24, 2023;
- Transferring additional work from BTS to other non-unionized delivery services to avoid unionization;
- Directly causing the discharge of all 84 employees by transferring work away from the unit in direct retaliation to the workers' legally protected union activities.

The four-month-long strike regarding Amazon's illegal labor practices has since expanded to warehouses nationwide, including locations in Connecticut, Georgia, Michigan, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey.

The Baltimore warehouse protests come hot on the heels of Amazon announcing their intention to hire more than 7,500 employees in the Baltimore area to cope with the holiday season, as part of the 250,000

additional workers Amazon plans to hire across the USA for the holiday consumer rush. Many of these workers will face enormous workloads coupled with workplace surveillance and layoffs once the peak of the holiday shopping season passes.

A monopoly capitalist giant, Amazon's enormous expansion has drawn less attention in recent years, even as it has doubled its fulfillment capacity since the pandemic. The strike reflects the broader push by Amazon workers across the U.S. to address issues of living wages, safety regulations, and fair treatment within the company. The California workers initially chose to unionize due to the refusal of management to solve systemic problems within Amazon, such as exploitative labor practices, understaffing, and hazardous working conditions, particularly in extreme weather conditions such as Palmdale's scorching temperatures, which sometimes exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

The strike's key demands include reinstating unlawfully terminated Palmdale employees, recognizing the Teamsters Union, honoring the negotiated contract, and engaging in bargaining to address issues such as low pay and hazardous working conditions.

The solidarity across different cities, and even from coast to coast, highlights a growing movement against Amazon's disregard for its employees' welfare and the exploitation of labor in the pursuit of corporate gains. While Amazon executives amass unprecedented wealth, workers face unsafe conditions, inadequate pay, and job insecurity.

ALL MONOPOLIES AND IMPERIALISTS ARE THE ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE



International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations (CIPOML) | Dec. 6, 2023

The bloody conflicts all over the world re-emphasize every day the importance and urgency of raising the flags of struggle against imperialism. The working class and peoples of the world must shoulder this struggle, because the imperialists are directly attacking the working class and peoples in order to plunder the underground and above-ground riches. In addition to the "trade wars" and the gigantic increases in their mutual armaments and war budgets, the expansion of NATO, for example, and the war in Ukraine, in reality between Russia and US imperialism and its allies and NATO, are manifestations of the struggle between the imperialists, which has sharpened in recent years. As the imperialists are in conflict with each other in Africa and the Mediterranean, the genocide of the Palestinian people by Israeli Zionism, which is directly supported by the USA and its allies in every aspect, is also linked to the conflict between the imperialists. Israel, by completely expelling the Palestinian people from their land or genociding them, is undertaking the task of being the battering ram of the new "Economic Corridor" that will pass through the Saudis and Palestinian lands and extend from India to Germany as a rival to China's Belt and Road project.

Obviously, the increasingly sharpening contradictions between the imperialists and their effects on the international working class and peoples necessitate the strengthening of the anti-imperialist struggle on a world scale. Therefore, starting with the organized revolutionary forces, it is imperative to increase the understanding and alertness of the proletariat and the peoples of the world regarding the current international situation and inter-imperialist contradictions and conflicts.

Capitalism did not become static and unchanging at the beginning of the last century when it reached its imperialist stage, which Lenin characterized by five fundamental features. The division of the world between different imperialist centers that dominate by political and economic means is far from complete. Since then, the imperialist states, which have developed by leaps and bounds at an unequal pace, have been redividing the world among themselves again and again. For this purpose, they have waged wars and turned the world into a bloodbath with two great imperialist wars and numerous local and regional wars.

Despite a certain decline, the United States is still

the world's greatest economic and military power and the most aggressive imperialist, leading NATO and its various alliances with Britain, Japan, Australia and the European imperialists. As rivals, it faces Russia and China, which is developing rapidly with a renewed material technical basis for its industry. The fact that the US is still the world's greatest power does not mean that other powers are not engaged in a redivision of the world in order to realize their hegemony.

Although China has not yet militarily invaded any country, it is continuing its economic expansion on all continents, gaining international influence and becoming a real rival that threatens US hegemony on a world scale. By attacking Ukraine, Russia has proved that it is capable of fighting to defend its interests and possessions, even if its worldwide influence remains relatively limited.

There is not a good and helpful imperialist. All imperialisms represent the domination and interests of finance capital; they exist on the basis of the gratuitous appropriation of labor and the plunder and oppression of the wealth of the peoples. Imperialism is inherent in exploitation and violence.

Our conference is determined to improve the understanding of the exploitative, predatory and tyrannical character of imperialism.

The imperialist character of China and Russia is either denied or recognized as imperialist.

Our conference considers it its duty to neutralize the unscientific positions that either deny the imperialist character of China and Russia or, while admitting them as imperialist, define them as pro-humanitarian, friendly to the peoples, peaceful powers and consider only the USA and its allies and NATO as "enemies." Those who aim at the establishment of a "multipolar" world, claiming

that the USA and NATO are the only enemies of the peoples, as if today is "unipolar" and the imperialists are not fighting to redivide the world, spread the dream that one can fight against US imperialism by relying on Russian and Chinese imperialism. However, one cannot fight against one imperialist by leaning to another! The so-called struggle against a certain imperialist, which does not target imperialist-capitalism, cannot have any content other than being a tool of the imperialists who are rivals of the imperialist allegedly targeted.

As much as it is necessary to fight against the stooges of imperialism who try to confuse the peoples' friends and enemies, it is also necessary to build a real and broad anti-imperialist front of struggle for democracy and independence, for social and national liberation. The main imperialists to be targeted in individual countries may be different, but a real anti-imperialist front must target all imperialists and their collaborators.

On the other hand, the world working class cannot, of course, be content with the struggle against imperialism alone. The end of the rule of the bourgeoisie and the liquidation of the capitalist system based on exploitation are indispensable for the liberation of the working class. The struggle against imperialism and its collaborators is a struggle for the organization of the working class as a ruling class, with the victory of the proletarian revolution.



We call the workers and the peoples of the world to fight against all the imperialists!

Liberation from the imperialist domination should be the liberation from the rule of bourgeoisie!

All proletariat and oppressed nations of the world, unite!



WORLD DISABILITY DAY: THE FIGHT FOR EQUAL RIGHTS IS NOT OVER!



People with disabilities demonstrate in the street with protest signs. (Pedestrian.tv)

Allison P. | International | Dec. 3, 2023

Each year on Dec. 3, the countless struggles and adverse conditions of disabled people are brought to light by observing World Disability Day. (Formally, the "United Nations' International Day of Persons with Disabilities.")

The disabled make up the largest and most diverse of any minority. It is also the only minority population which any person may join at any time, and should they be fortunate enough to live a long life, most people certainly will become disabled eventually. Despite this, the struggles of the disabled are often overlooked and forgotten. Disabled people are more likely to be unemployed, impoverished, homeless, imprisoned, and abused by the systems designed to protect us.

There are roughly 42.5 million people in the US who live with a disability. These can take many forms that vary in severity such as hearing and visual impairments, developmental disorders, physical disabilities including permanent injuries, mental illnesses, and more. Some conditions are primarily disabling due to the effects of the society we live in - falling under the "social model" of disability - while other conditions do have significant disabling effects even without societal barriers.

One thing all disabilities have in common is that they are made worse by the structures of capitalism. We live in a world which values productivity over quality of life. Some disabled people are able to be "productive" and function within capitalist society, however many struggle to survive. The employment rate among disabled people is only roughly 20% compared to 66% of non-disabled people. In addition, those who are employed are more likely to

only work part-time. As a result disabled Americans that do work earn significantly less on average than their non-disabled counterparts, \$28,438 median versus \$40,948, a difference that is significantly larger than the income gap between men and women. However some 80% of disabled people are not employed, a number that can increase to up to 95% for certain populations such as those with schizophrenia.

The process to acquire disability benefits through Supplemental Security Income (SSI) - the federal Social Security program that provides income to those who are deemed unable to work, and who have not worked enough in the past to qualify for full Disability (SSDI) benefits - is a very long and difficult one that often requires multiple attempts over months or years before being "awarded" with a measly pittance of \$914 a month, an income that is 20% below the national poverty line. The monthly SSI benefit amount for a disabled couple receiving is only \$1371. In addition, SSI recipients are penalized if they have a partner who works (even if not legally married), resulting in reduced or eliminated benefits, and are beholden to strict asset limits that make it virtually impossible to save for important necessities like housing deposits, vehicles, and emergencies. Thus, disabled people still face marriage inequality today, especially people who are unable to work and dependent on SSI - a thinly veiled remnant of eugenics laws.

Disabled people are also frequently abused by the state and systems meant to protect them. For instance, disabled people are roughly three times as likely to be imprisoned, and there have been numerous cases of police killing disabled people. Despite making up only 13% of the population, people with disabilities comprise between one-

third and one-half of all people murdered by the police. Even outside direct confrontation, many disabled people - particularly those with mental illnesses - are subject to an involuntary 72-hour psychiatric hold, in which police, without any training in mental health crises, come and take them away and lock them in a hospital. After the initial holding period, they may continue to be held or sent to longer term hospitals. Some people are fortunate enough to be cared for in an adequate and safe hospital, though that experience is very far from universal. Common experiences include being ignored by providers, injected with sedatives, and restrained. The rampant overuse of involuntary holds and the notorious poor treatment inside psychiatric facilities are so ubiquitous that patients have their own colloquial terms for them - getting "5150'ed" refers to being held involuntarily, and being "booty-juiced" refers to the forced sedation injections that are typically used as a form of punishment. These facilities operating within a for-profit healthcare system are only motivated to pacify or penalize their patients and make them "productive." It is a cruel system which does not care for the people in need, instead leaving them scarred and traumatized.

The United States has made some significant strides in its disability protections and access. The Americans with Disabilities Act in particular helped to create better accessibility to many buildings with the inclusion of ramps and elevators. In this one singular aspect, it is among the best in the world. However many of the promises of the legislation have failed to come to fruition. The employment rate of disabled people has dropped from nearly 50% before the ADA to less than 20% now. Many disabled people report discrimination from would-be employers when disclosing their disabilities before being hired, which is unfortunately difficult to prove or to enforce due to labor policies such as at-will employment.

In light of these ongoing struggles, World Disability Day is observed to mobilize mass support while celebrating successes. Disabled people suffer disproportionately under the conditions of capitalism, and doubtlessly many more will be scarred or killed by this cruel system. Despite this, disabled people come together in solidarity, building their own vibrant communities to celebrate their lives and unique ways of living.



WHAT'S THAT SMELL? LOUISVILLE'S "RUBBERTOWN" CONTINUES TO POLLUTE COMMUNITY

M. A. Booth | Kentucky | Nov. 27, 2023

For decades, "Rubbertown" in Louisville, Kentucky, has been a major source of concern for residents of the city. Despite the local government and corporations telling us that the level of Toxic Air Contaminants (TACs) in the area has dropped by 80% since 2005, the noxious odors can still be smelt from miles away. This problem is far bigger than any environmental regulation or reform can solve by itself. It's a problem with the system of capitalism itself.

"Rubbertown" as we know it today came into existence during WWII with the establishment of many new industrial plants along the Ohio River on the west side of Louisville. The companies that moved into the area included Union Carbide, B.F. Goodrich, and DuPont. After the war, the area continued to be a hub for the manufacturing of synthetic rubbers, vinyl fluoride, plastics, and petroleum-based products of all types. This industrial development has provided jobs to hundreds if not thousands of workers over the years, but at what cost?

According to the West Jefferson Community Task Force (WJCTF), the industrial complex in

"Rubbertown" accounts for 42% of all industrial air emissions in Jefferson County. Eleven companies are responsible for this mess. This includes American Synthetic Rubber Co., ATOFINA Chemicals Inc., Borden Chemical Inc, Carbide Industries LLC, E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company, DuPont Dow Elastomers L.L.C., Noveon Inc, OxyVinyls LP, PolyOne, Rohm and Haas Co., Zeon Chemicals LP.

While the Strategic Toxic Air Reduction Program (STAR) has improved local air quality somewhat, it still hasn't solved the problem once and for all. In recent years, the American Synthetic Rubber Company has been fined under STAR for emitting dangerously high levels of toxic chemicals known to cause heart disease, respiratory illnesses, and various forms of cancer in humans and other animals. What was their punishment for this egregious crime against humanity under capitalist law? A measly slap-on-the-wrist fine that amounts to pocket change for a company that's worth millions upon millions of dollars. With weak legislation in place that benefits the owners of the corporations at the expense of regular working-class people, it's no wonder the corporations haven't changed their ways.

As is always the case in American capitalist society, marginalized workers – especially people of color and the poor – suffer the most. In "Rubbertown," nearly 60 percent of the residents that live within three miles are people of color and more than 45 percent live below the poverty line. The inequality is truly staggering. Under capitalism, clean air and many other necessities such as food, water, shelter, and an overall healthy ecosystem, are not considered human rights, but commodities to be bought and sold on the market for their maximum exchange value.

Until the profit motive has been forcibly removed from our society as a whole through the dictatorship of the proletariat, we will continue to deal with the horrendous consequences of capitalist economic development. Socialism (the lower, developing stage of Communism) provides us a clear path out of the environmental and humanitarian crises we find ourselves in. Capitalism may try to temporarily "fix" itself with legislative reforms, but it cannot solve the underlying contradiction that gives rise to these problems: economic and social exploitation by and for the ruling class.

COMMUNIST PALESTINIAN CITIZEN OF ISRAEL ARRESTED FOR ORGANIZING ANTI-WAR PROTEST



Mohammad Barakeh (third from left) speaks at a protest in Jerusalem against gun violence among Palestinian citizens of Israel, on May 31, 2023. (AFP)

Artyom S. | Maryland | Nov. 16, 2023

On the morning of November 9, 2023, leading member of the Israeli Communist Party (Maki), former leader of Hadash, and chairman of the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel, Mohammad Barakeh, was arrested alongside members of the Balad party: Sami Abu Shehadeh, Mtanes Shehadeh, Haneen Zoab, and the party's general secretary Yousef Tatour. Fellow member of the High Follow-Up Committee Mahmoud Mawasi was also detained.

Comrade Barakeh was arrested following his

announcement of a protest to be held later that day denouncing the war in Gaza. The protest was to be organized by Arab officials and the High Follow-Up Committee, and no more than 50 people were expected to attend. Barakeh emphasized that, according to Israeli law, the protest did not require a permit and requested that the police refrain from interfering with its organization. The police however detained him and his colleagues anyway for "defying police instructions and attempting to organize an unlawful protest that had the potential to incite public disorder and disrupt the peace."

On November 8, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that the police have no authority to sweepingly and arbitrarily ban protests by Palestinian citizens in Israel, with no exception being made during wartime. In practice, however, the Israeli Police have been quick to ban and crack down on all anti-war and anti-occupation demonstrations, particularly those held and organized by Palestinian citizens of Israel. The Israeli Police and its ban on demonstrations is intended to silence all forms of criticism and to suppress the freedom of expression of not just Palestinian citizens but any Israeli citizen organizing anti-occupation activities.

The Israeli Communist Party (Maki) stated on November 9: "The unlawful arrests today come at the heels of orders issued by the Israeli Police to ban all demonstrations calling to end the war in Gaza and the occupation, upheld by the Supreme Court yesterday. It reflects the swift intensification of state repression against the Palestinian minority, which includes legal prosecution of citizens who express their solidarity with Gaza or their Palestinian identity on social media, as well as swift amendments to Emergency Regulations, which sanction shooting live ammunition at unarmed civilian demonstrations."

The Israeli Communist Party (Maki) has since reported that on November 10, comrade Barakeh was released from police custody without any restrictions after hours of interrogation. Sami Abu Shehadeh, Mtanes Shehadeh, Haneen Zoab, Yousef Tatour and Mahmoud Mawasi have all since been released after similar conditions of detention and interrogation as well, although have had restrictions placed upon them, such as being distanced from Nazareth for two weeks and are prohibited from organizing demonstrations for a similar time period.

SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE!



After the operation Al Aqsa Flood launched on Oct. 7 by different groups of Palestinian resistance, the Zionist state of Israel, led by the fascist government of Netanyahu, started a terroristic bombing on the Gaza Strip and West Bank with its powerful military forces killing about 15 thousand Palestinians, two-thirds of which were children and women.

With the political, propagandistic, and military support of US imperialism and other imperialist and capitalist powers like Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Japan, Canada, Australia, India, etc., the Zionist state destroyed and damaged about 45% of houses in Gaza, including schools, hospitals and civilian infrastructure, and imposed a total blockade depriving the population of water, food, medicine, fuel, and electricity.

This criminal attack is just the latest chapter of more than 70 years of occupation and colonization of Palestinian land; of expulsion of millions of people from their homes; of denying the Palestinians basic human rights; of a brutal apartheid

regime characterized by racism, war crimes and crimes against humanity; and of murder and imprisonment of Palestinian fighters for freedom, while continuously advancing the settlement expansion along with the settlers' violent attack on Palestinians.

In these dramatic conditions, which could lead to an escalation of the military conflicts in the Middle East due to the sharpening of imperialist disputes, the 28th Plenary of CIPOML calls on the proletariat and people of the world, and the oppressed women and youth, to continue and to reinforce the demonstrations to condemn and stop the criminal attack perpetrated by the Zionist forces and their imperialist allies, and to express full solidarity and support with the suffering people of Palestine and its legitimate armed resistance against the occupying Zionist power practicing state terrorism.

We support and re-launch the urgent call of Palestinian trade unions to the international trade union movement to stop all form of complicity with

Israel's crimes and take action to halt the arms trade to Israel as well as all funding and military research.

We highlight that mass action in defense of Palestinian people has defeated the Zionist and imperialist manipulation of the information and that the mobilizations that are developing overthrow the bourgeoisie measure that deny the right to rebellion and favor the accumulation of revolutionary forces.

We affirm that any "solution" that does not put to an end the occupation of Palestinian territory, that does not recognize the equality of national rights of the Palestinians, especially the right of self determination until the formation of an independent state, serve only to justify the continuation of the genocide of Palestinian people.

- Israel must immediately stop its bloody aggression!
- End the genocide of Palestinian people!
- The Zionist occupation must end and Israel must withdraw from all occupied territories!
- For an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, for the return of refugees and the release of political prisoners from Israeli prisons.
- Long live solidarity with the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people that hit Zionism and weaken imperialism!

Mexico, November 24, 2023

28th Plenary of the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations

SUPPORT PALESTINE AND THE AMERICAN PARTY OF LABOR!

Gaza relief fundraiser:

The American Party of Labor is hosting an ongoing fundraiser for Palestine. 100% of proceeds of our "Free Palestine" merchandise are being donated to emergency relief efforts in Gaza.



How we use financial support:

As observer members of the ICMLPO, we send members of our party to conferences, workshops, educationals, and work programs abroad.

We occasionally run Service to the People Programs in Orlando, New Jersey, and New York City, where we provide necessary supplies to working class families free of charge.

We self-publish our newspaper and tabling materials, as well as perform all of the labor required to do so.

All proceeds go directly into our work. None of our members are paid from party funds; we all volunteer our time and labor. *No profits, ever!*

How you can help us:

Our work is funded by our own members and grassroots supporters, including *Red Phoenix* subscribers and online customers. We accept financial contributions as well as donations of gently-used socialist literature to sell in our store.

Visit our website to donate, shop, or subscribe:
AmericanPartyOfLabor.com/shop

Donations of literature can be mailed to us at:
Red Phoenix Publishing
PO Box 8238
Los Angeles, CA 91346



All power to the working people!

TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE 2023: UP WITH LIBERATION

Ian Ocx | Texas | Nov. 20, 2023

November 20 is Transgender Day of Remembrance, a day that all of us in the LGBTQIA+ community and our allies bring attention to the previous and ongoing struggles faced by our transgender and gender-nonconforming comrades.

Over the years, gender – and other subjects relating to it such as gender identity, gender expression, gender expectation, and one's ability to move through various gender identities and roles or reject them altogether – have not only become subjects of discussion but have also become a legislative battleground in several regions across the US with reactionary lawmakers attempting to legislate, regulate, silence, and erase transgender and gender-nonconforming lives. In 2022 alone, the Human Rights Campaign recorded that “at least 41 transgender and gender-nonconforming people were fatally shot or killed by other violent means.” The attacks and damage to the lives of transgender and gender-nonconforming people do not stop here. So far in 2023, 85 anti-transgender laws have been passed across the US, and another 376 anti-transgender laws are still being debated in legislative sessions across the US as reported by Trans Legislation Tracker. Overall anti-LGBTQIA+ hate crimes “spiked 19%” in 2022 alone as reported by the FBI.

This upsurge in attacks on transgender and gender-nonconforming people, as well as the queer community as a whole, has not come out of nowhere or as the result of random chance. They are instead the result of the capitalist class trying to wage a culture war in order to keep the multinational and multicultural working class within the US divided on lines of identities, instead of united in their common class interests against capitalism and the exploitation it brings. However, this tactic of divisive identity politics on the part of the capitalist class is not working amongst the US population as a whole. A 2022 Pew Research study shows that “[r]oughly eight-in-ten U.S. adults say there is at least some discrimination against transgender people in our society, and a majority favor laws that would protect transgender individuals from discrimination in



Members of the American Party of Labor joined activists and organizers to Protect Trans Youth & Trans Lives, marching on City Hall in Orlando, FL, on Oct. 7, 2023. (Photo: Sebastian Lemba/ Red Phoenix)

jobs, housing and public spaces.” This however does not negate that the US working class currently has vast differences of opinion on gender as a whole. It simply shows that the majority of the masses in the US do not see it fit to discriminate against a person based upon their gender identity and gender status.

Gender, as a social phenomenon and category, has always differed and changed within human society based on culture and historical epoch. While similarities exist, it is hard to find two that are alike in every way. To attempt to regulate the gender identity, gender expression, or gender dynamic of another person is to make the reactionary idealist conclusion that one conception of gender is superior to the other. Nothing in the vast history of human experience with the world and with ourselves leads to this conclusion.

Over the past year, the American Party of Labor has reconfirmed its commitment to ending the oppression and exploitation faced by all members of the queer community, especially its transgender and gender-nonconforming members who face nearly never-ending attacks from reactionary

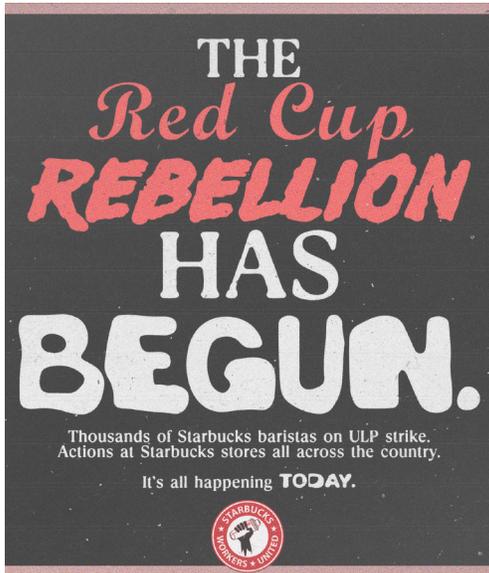
forces within the US. Not only has the APL issued a national call to defend transgender and gender-nonconforming people but we have actively engaged in organizing LGBTQIA+ comrades across the US in the struggle for liberation against the capitalist system that oppresses every member of the multinational and multicultural working class here in the US.

On Transgender Day of Remembrance, we in the APL call for the liberation of all transgender and gender-nonconforming people from the reactionary oppression they face at the hands of the bourgeoisie and capitalist social relations. It is here that the APL also recognizes that no real meaningful liberation can be had within capitalism for transgender and gender-nonconforming workers who face discrimination at their jobs based on their gender identity. Only through the establishment of a socialist society can the root of all exploitation and oppression be eradicated.

**Transgender Lives Matter!
Gender-Nonconforming Lives Matter!
Workers' Lives Matter!
Up with Liberation!**



"RED CUP REBELLION" NATIONWIDE SOLIDARITY ACTIONS IN SUPPORT OF STARBUCKS WORKERS



Victor Vaughn | Maryland | Nov. 30, 2023



Starbucks workers nationwide organized strikes and customer solidarity actions against the company's unfair labor practices on its busiest sales day, Red Cup Day, Nov. 16. Following a year-long struggle, over 360 Starbucks stores with more than 8,500 workers have voted to unionize, seeking a voice in workplace decisions concerning scheduling, compensation, staffing, health benefits, and other job concerns. Unionized stores were encouraged to strike, while non-union locations were supported by volunteers who sought to raise awareness and support from customers, and to provide assistance to the workers in their fight for better working conditions. These actions will be continuing throughout the holiday season.

The coffee giant, despite clocking over \$3.3 billion in profits last year, has refused to enter negotiations with its workers' democratically-elected union and has waged an aggressive union-busting campaign, with tactics including threats, intimidation, and terminations. Starbucks' status as one of the

most labor-hostile corporations, with over 275 violations of federal labor laws reported, including 35 unlawful discharges, contrasts sharply with the company's carefully-cultivated "progressive" public image.

In response, supporters have organized the "Red Cup Rebellion" movement to elevate the workers' demands for fair treatment and representation in the workplace. Nov. 16, or "Red Cup Day," is when Starbucks gives their signature red holiday cups to customers. It's considered the busiest sales day of the year, and a pivotal moment for workers to strike. Solidarity events were held at non-union stores, aiming to apply pressure on Starbucks management during this crucial day of action. Participants are encouraged to gather outside stores with signs, banners, and flyers, engaging customers and passersby to shed light on Starbucks' illegal labor practices, and for customers to flood the corporate hotline to voice support for the workers.

Members of the American Party of Labor hosted solidarity actions in California, Oregon, and Texas, during which the overwhelming majority of customers accepted the flyers and were happy to engage to learn more, professing intentions to follow through with calling the hotline to pressure Starbucks' corporate office. The accumulating successes of the Starbucks workers nationwide – coupled with the enthusiastic support of customers – indicate that labor rights including fair practices are demanded by the proletarian masses, no matter which side of the register they stand on.

To ensure coordination, a comprehensive Action Toolkit was provided to volunteer organizers, featuring guidelines for hosting events, training participants in effective flyer-ing, and providing additional materials. ControlShift, an organizing platform, is being used to map these actions nationwide, allowing participants to register their events, RSVP to existing events in their communities, and to receive further support.

Supporters are urged to join the cause by visiting the Starbucks Workers United website for more information on the workers' demands and how to participate. By standing with Starbucks employees and garnering support from customers, the working classes of the United States can be instrumental in pressuring the company to uphold the values it professes, and recognize and negotiate with the Starbucks Workers United (SBWU) movement, which has continued to gain strength across the country.

Join this nationwide movement in solidarity with Starbucks workers, amplifying their call for fair treatment and democracy in the workplace.

Visit bit.ly/m/SBWU to get involved, and follow **SBworkersunited** on Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter for updates.



All images courtesy of Starbucks Workers United. (Twitter/@SBWorkersUnited)



BIG 3 BUCKLED AS STAND-UP STRIKE SPREAD



Auto Workers leaders carry a Stand-Up Strike banner at the beginning of the UAW's strike against Ford, Stellantis and GM. After six weeks, the union has reached tentative agreements at all three automakers. (Jim West)

Dan DiMaggio | Labor Notes | Oct. 31, 2023

All three dominoes fell in a few days.

The Auto Workers (UAW) now have agreements with each of the Big 3 automakers. The new contracts are a sharp about-face from decades of concessions.

The tentative agreements go further than many thought possible on issues that the companies insisted were off the table. Stellantis agreed to reopen its idled Belvidere assembly plant. GM and Stellantis will include new battery plant workers in their master agreements.

While the contracts don't abolish benefit tiers, they get rid of the many wage tiers the Big 3 had created to drive down pay. Some workers will see their pay more than double as a result.

The gains are a testament to the UAW's bold, aggressive strategy under its new leadership, which ramped up the strikes, at first slowly and then faster until the companies caved one by one. It was a master class in worker power.

On Monday, the UAW announced it had reached a tentative agreement with General Motors, the last holdout. Workers at GM's Spring Hill, Tennessee, Cadillac factory had joined the strike Saturday night.

The union announced tentative agreements with Ford and Stellantis last week. The agreements came after UAW members struck at each company's most profitable truck plant, the latest escalation in the union's six-week Stand-Up Strike.

The 146,000 UAW members at all three automakers will vote on the contracts in the coming weeks. In the meantime, 50,000 strikers are headed back to work.

FORD DETAILS

On Sunday night, UAW President Shawn Fain and Vice President Chuck Browning laid out the details of the Ford agreement for members in a Facebook Live appearance. (Full details, including the highlights document and the "white book" with all changes, are available at uaw.org/ford2023.)

Fain said each year of the deal is worth more to members than the entire 2019 contract.

The agreement includes 25 percent wage increases over four-and-a-half years, including 11 percent immediately. It reinstates cost-of-living adjustments, a

major goal. Combined, that will bring top pay for production workers to \$42.60 by the end of the agreement in 2028, up from the current \$32.05, while skilled trades will earn more than \$50 an hour. Starting pay will increase from \$18.05 to \$28.

Many workers will see much bigger increases, though. It will now take three years to get to top pay, rather than eight. Members now on the progression will receive immediate 20 to 46 percent bumps.

Workers at two Detroit-area plants, Sterling Axle and Rawsonville Components, will now be on the same wage scale as the rest of the UAW's members at Ford, meaning that wage tiers at Ford are eliminated. Workers at these two plants had been on a lower tier since 2007, with wages ranging from \$16.25 to \$22.50. They'll see immediate raises of 53 to 88 percent.

Temporary workers with more than 90 days' service will be converted to permanent status immediately. Future temps will become permanent employees after nine months, and those nine months will count toward their progression to top rate. Over the past two decades the Big 3 have kept temps on for years at low wages; if they were finally "rolled over" to regular status, they would then have to wait another eight years to get to top pay.

To completely end tiers would require that second-tier workers, those hired since 2007, get pensions and retiree health care, as first-tier workers do. Ford did not agree to either of these proposals, which would add significant long-term liabilities.

Instead Ford will put an extra 10 percent of each worker's pay into a 401(k), a big increase from the current 6.4 percent. The union also won the first increase to the pension multiplier (for workers hired before 2007, who do have pensions) since 2003.

Temps at Ford will receive profit-sharing checks starting in 2024, the first time they've been included.

Workers will also have greater ability to choose when to take vacations. Ford will only be able to force workers to use one week of their vacation while laid off for the annual model changeover shutdown.

"While we may not have won everything we wanted, we won more than most people thought was possible," Fain and Browning wrote in their introduction to the Ford highlights document.

STELLANTIS AND GM CAVE, TOO

The UAW and Stellantis reached a deal Saturday. Full details will be announced on November 2, though the agreement appears to mirror the deal with Ford.

One big issue was the status of Stellantis's Belvidere Assembly plant in Illinois, which the company idled earlier this year, forcing 1,200 workers to disperse to other plants.

According to the union, the new agreement will bring jobs back to Belvidere, with the company committing to employ two shifts to produce a midsize truck. Stellantis will also add 1,000 jobs at a new battery plant there. "Under our contract, members from Belvidere who have been scattered across this country will have the right to return back home," said UAW Vice President Rich Boyer.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

Fain and Boyer said Stellantis will add an additional 5,000 jobs by the end of the agreement, an about-face from the company's threats to cut thousands of jobs heading into negotiations. The union won the right to strike over product decisions and investment, as well as over plant closures. "That means if the company goes back on their word on any of these plans, we can strike the hell out of them," said Fain.

The new contract eliminates the lower wage for Stellantis's Mopar parts division, putting those workers on the same wage scale as other Stellantis workers.

At GM, the last of the Big 3 to cave, the UAW won another big victory against tiers. GM agreed to bring workers at its aftermarket parts depots (CCA), its components plants (GMCH), and its Brownstown, Michigan, battery plant, all up to the rate of production workers.

Workers at GM Subsystems, who currently work under a separate, inferior contract, will now be under the GM master agreement. The company has shifted warehouse and material-handling jobs in several GM plants to the lower-wage Subsystems in recent years, and the union was concerned that it would use the transition to electric vehicles to shift even more types of jobs to the subsidiary. The agreement would end this race to the bottom.

MAY DAY 2028

The proposed new contracts will all expire on April 30, 2028. At four-and-a-half years, they're longer than the four-year agreements that have been typical in recent Big 3 contracts.

Fain said the UAW wants to give time for other unions to align their contract expirations with the UAW and strike together on May 1, 2028—International Workers' Day. "If we're going to truly take on the billionaire class and rebuild the economy so that it starts to work for the benefit of the many and not the few," Fain said, "then it's important that we not only strike, but that we strike together."

Fain hinted that the fight for a shorter workday or workweek could be a part of the UAW's contract campaign in four-and-a-half years. One of the union's public demands in this round of bargaining was for a 32-hour week at 40 hours' pay. Auto workers frequently complain of being forced to work mandatory overtime, including 60-hour weeks (six 10-hour days).

"May Day was born out of an intense struggle by workers in the United States to win an eight-hour day," said Fain. "That's a struggle that is just as relevant today as it was in 1889."

Fain said the other reason for the longer contract was that the UAW is planning a push to organize the many nonunion automakers: Tesla, Toyota, Volkswagen, Mercedes, BMW, Honda, Nissan, and others. "When we return to the bargaining table in 2028, it won't just be with the Big 3, but with the Big 5 or Big 6," he said.

Labor Notes received a message from a Toyota worker in Alabama the next day, saying management had called an emergency meeting. Toyota—clearly running scared—was raising top pay to \$32, he said, and shortening the time to get there from eight years to four. Another worker at a Toyota plant in Kentucky said the company was boosting wages and slashing the progression to top rate in half there, too. The new top rate will increase to \$2.94 to \$34.80 for production workers and \$3.70 to \$43.20 for skilled trades.

EV ORGANIZING

At Ford, the union had wanted a pledge that all electric vehicle plants, including

joint ventures, would be brought under the master agreement. It extracted from Ford a pledge to recognize the union at two plants now under construction, the Tennessee Electric Vehicle Center and the Marshall Battery Plant in Michigan, if a majority of workers sign union cards (what union organizers call "card check"). This should be easy for the UAW.

Ford is planning three other battery plants in Tennessee and Kentucky, jointly owned with South Korea's SK On and scheduled to start production in 2025. There, it appears the union will have to organize the old-fashioned way.

At GM and Stellantis, the gains on electrical vehicles were greater. Each agreed to put workers at their joint venture battery plants under their master agreements. "They told us for years that the electrical vehicle transition was a death sentence for good auto jobs in this country," Fain said. "With this agreement, we're proving them all wrong."

BROKE WITH TRADITION

Fain was elected this year in the UAW's first-ever one-member, one-vote election, after a corruption scandal landed two of the union's most recent presidents in jail. His victory ended eight decades of one-party rule in the union.

Fain ran as part of the Members United slate on a platform of "No Corruption, No Concessions, No Tiers." He beat incumbent Ray Curry by just 500 votes, and took office less than six months before contracts expired at the Big 3.

As president, Fain finally took the union back on the offensive. "For decades, we've been fighting with one hand tied behind our back," he said in announcing the Stellantis agreement. "And to tell you the truth, sometimes it felt like both hands." Fain is a Stellantis veteran, having cut his teeth as an electrician in Kokomo, Indiana.

Symbolizing the union's new direction, Fain refused to kick off bargaining with the traditional handshake with company executives. Instead, he and other new UAW leaders inaugurated what they hope will become a new tradition, the Members' Handshake—greeting members at plant gates to launch a very public contract campaign.

Fain also abandoned the UAW's long-term strategy of picking a single lead company among the Big 3 to negotiate with first and win an agreement to set the pattern. Instead, the union negotiated with, and struck, all three companies simultaneously.

Fain broadcast bargaining updates publicly via Facebook Live, breaking with the union's precedent of sharing no information before a tentative agreement was reached. The transparency and boldness won members over—Fain's videos regularly have 40,000 to 50,000 live viewers on Facebook, and more on other platforms.

And he never hesitated to raise members' expectations, laying out demands for a 40 percent wage increase, a 32-hour week, and the restoration of pensions and retiree health care to all UAW members at the Big 3.

Members will decide whether the gains are enough to match their heightened expectations. But the UAW is in a much different place than it was six months ago: on the offensive, framing its battles as fights for the entire working class, and showcasing power like it hasn't done in many years.



THE TRAGIC TALE OF THE IBOT WHEELCHAIR

Victor Vaughn | Maryland | Jan. 12, 2024

The Museum of Failure, an exhibit featuring failed consumer products from around the world, has a startling exhibit on the iBOT wheelchair. Conceived by inventor Dean Kamen, the iBOT (no relation to Apple products) was hailed as a technological marvel: it could climb stairs, traverse uneven terrain, and even stand upright, which gave users increased mobility and independence, embodying the pinnacle of human ingenuity at the time.

Currently however, the iBOT wheelchair sits in the museum, right next to infamous failed ventures like Pets.com, the Ford Edsel, the Segway, and New Coke. What explains this apparent fall from grace? The QR code plaque accompanying the exhibit reads as follows:

“With advanced gyroscopes and sensors, the iBOT offered users a wider range of freedom and movement compared to traditional motorized wheelchairs. The iBOT could climb up stairs, easily maneuver uneven terrain, and lift its owner to a standing height. Expectations were high: ‘This is not a wheelchair. This is an extraordinary machine that will liberate millions of people.’”



The iBOT can go in water up to 3 inches deep. (Photo: Rick Irving/Mobius Mobility)

Developed in the early 1990s by DEKA Research and funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), with the goal of creating a “wheelchair that walks,” the device was unveiled to great fanfare in 1999. In 2003, it was commercially released under the name iBOT 3000. It was considered a beacon of progress, a symbol of the potential for new tech to improve the lives of millions of people.

The exhibit notes, however, that the iBOT was discontinued after only six years on the market. The reasons given are unexpectedly candid:

“After reading some of the other stories in this museum, you might assume it failed to deliver what it promised or it threw a few too many users down some stairs, but in the end the iBOT failed



iBOT user Gary Linfoot stair climbs at Red Rocks, in Colorado. (Photo: Mobius Mobility)

due to high costs. Insurance companies and national insurance programs refused to cover the cost of £18,000 (about \$25,000 USD) per machine. Although the manufacturer did everything they could to lower prices, the technology remained prohibitively expensive.”

In other words, the iBOT wheelchair should have been revolutionary for disabled people but failed, not due to any inherent flaws in the chair itself, but due to capitalism’s gearing of production towards profit and not human need. The problem wasn’t the invention, but the fact that private insurance companies simply didn’t want to pay to provide the chair to patients, and the cost was inaccessible to most working class individuals who couldn’t afford it out of pocket.

The iBOT wheelchair was discontinued in 2009. Johnson & Johnson reported that only 500 units were sold over the course of seven years, though the units that were sold met with universal praise and delivered over 10 million hours of operating time.

It’s worth noting that even the liberal demand of “Medicare for all” would not solve the problems posed by innovations like the iBOT; only socialized and universal healthcare will. Federal programs took a similar attitude towards the device as private industry:

“The FDA classified the chair as a Class III medical device—a higher-risk category that includes pacemakers—instead of as a Class II device, which is the rating for most power wheelchairs. The difference is significant: Medicare and Medicaid might be willing to cover the cost of the iBOT as

a Class II device—and most insurance programs take the lead of Medicare and Medicaid when it comes to their coverage.”

In effect, countless individuals have been barred from accessing this life-changing technology. In 2016, a new version of the chair was developed by Mobius Mobility. The new iBOT PMD (personal mobility device) is more affordable than the original model, but it is still expensive and the manufacturer only provides a limited five-year warranty. Mobius is working to secure insurance coverage for the new wheelchair, which is still not widely available. The Museum concludes that the iBOT should be remembered as a sign that thriftiness matters:

“The story of the iBOT reminds us that the bottom line is always an issue, even with the most useful innovations.”

Instead, perhaps the iBOT should be remembered as another example of how capitalism doesn’t drive innovation, but has become a destructive force to the development of humanity.



The iBOT’s balance mode elevates users to eye level. (Photo: Mobius Mobility)

FASCIST GOVERNOR ARRESTS UNIDADE POPULAR PRESIDENT IN SÃO PAULO FOR FIGHTING WATER PRIVATIZATION



Comrades who were arrested by the fascist police resist with their heads held high. (Jornal A Verdade/SP)

Jornal A Verdade | Brazil | Dec. 7, 2023

Translated from Portuguese

Editor's note: The dealings of corporate overlords to privatize the water utilities of São Paulo are atrocious. We are proud of our Brazilian comrades in Unidade Popular pelo Socialismo for standing up against this crime against the people. It is unacceptable that four UP protestors were brutalized and arrested by police

for their action of disrupting the vote to privatize an essential public utility.



On Wednesday Dec. 6, the São Paulo State Legislative Assembly voted on the privatization of SABESP, the state water and sewage company. Popular Unity activists were at the session fighting against the Tarcísio de Freitas government's privatization project and were repressed by the state police.

During the session, in the midst of the demonstrations, the state police acted truculently against the militants, repressing those present, leaving several people injured and arbitrarily arresting the state president of Unidade Popular in São Paulo, Vivian Mendes. Vivian was arbitrarily arrested while trying to stop the police from attacking two other party activists, Hendryll Luis (União da Juventude Rebelião) and Lucas Carvente. At

the moment, all three are being held inside the São Paulo State Legislative Assembly.

The actions of the Tarcísio government's police demonstrate the way in which the fascist governor acts against social movements. The fascist governor acts to repress strikes and the organization of the people against his privatist and rights-restricting projects. Today, in the São Paulo State Legislative Assembly, was another example of this.

The fascist Tarcísio cannot prevent and intimidate people from organizing against the advance of his agenda of privatization and restriction of rights.

The party is calling on all its militants and other social movements to continue mobilizing there, against privatization and for the freedom of those fighting for the rights of the people.

PALESTINIAN HEALTH UNIONS: URGENT CALL FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

Workers in Palestine | Dec. 15, 2023

workersinpalestine.org

In the face of unprecedented challenges, we, the Palestinian health sector unions, stand as a unified voice representing the dedicated health workers across Gaza and the West Bank. Our unions include doctors, nurses, and other professional staff, alongside committed support workers—all tirelessly serving the people of Palestine. Today, we issue a straightforward and urgent call to health care unions worldwide. We seek your solidarity and immediate assistance.

Israel's relentless genocidal campaign in Gaza, recurrent military assaults, and years of siege have inflicted catastrophic damage upon essential health infrastructure. The toll is measured not just in destroyed hospital buildings but in the heartbreaking injuries and loss of lives, including among our fellow doctors, nurses, paramedics, civil defense and other workers who support access to care.

Since the second week of October, Israel has deliberately targeted Gaza's healthcare infrastructure, leading to the destruction of 22 hospitals, 51 primary healthcare centers, 59 ambulances and the killing of 565 medical workers, including 106 doctors. It has also tightened its siege, denying our members access to basic life-saving equipment and medicine leading to the sector's complete collapse and the death of thousands of injured and sick. Working to provide care amid this ongoing assault has taken an enormous toll on the mental and physical health of the sector's workers.

Even before the latest military campaign, Israel's persistent attacks on healthcare facilities and the restriction on the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza created barriers for health workers, patients, and caregivers, and impeded patient access to vital medical centers. The combination of repeated military assaults and the fuel, water, and cement shortages resulting from the ongoing Israeli siege had thrown Gaza's hospitals and clinics into a dire situation.

They were already shackled, unable to operate, rebuild, import necessary equipment, and compelled to ration fuel to maintain basic operations. Israel also restricted the import of life-saving medicines, vaccines, and essential medical equipment, exacerbating the suffering of our people.

In the face of these formidable challenges, we call upon healthcare unions worldwide to rally in solidarity with the Palestinian health sector. As workers in the sector, we urgently call upon you to organize within your unions and associations to:

- 1. Call for a Ceasefire and End the Siege:** Advocate for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, an end to the siege on Gaza and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.
- 2. End Restrictions:** Demand the unconditional opening of the Rafah crossing, free movement for patients, ensuring their access to care in medical centers outside of Gaza. Call for unimpeded import of medicines, vaccines, and vital medical equipment to address the healthcare crisis effectively.

3. Tangible Support: Organize to provide tangible support in the form of donation of medical supplies, equipment, and resources crucial for providing adequate health care to our communities. Encourage unions to commit to donating essential supplies and lobby their governments to ensure these supplies reach and are distributed across Gaza.

4. Mobilizing Healthcare Workers: Call upon your union to sponsor and facilitate members joining international missions aimed at addressing the critical needs in Gaza's devastated medical sector, including by providing mental health support to the sector's workforce.

5. Commitment to Building Gaza's Medical Sector Capacity: Many medical unions already conduct staff training programs. We urge each union to make a dedicated commitment to extending these programs to include training for healthcare professionals from Gaza.

6. Raise Awareness: Call for health sector unions to raise awareness about the challenges faced by Palestinian health workers. Pass motions with tangible actions to amplify our voices on the international stage and run educational campaigns within your branches.

This call is not merely about union support. It is a plea to the very essence of our profession—the commitment to humanity. We appeal to the compassion that drives us as healthcare professionals and the collective strength inherent in union solidarity.

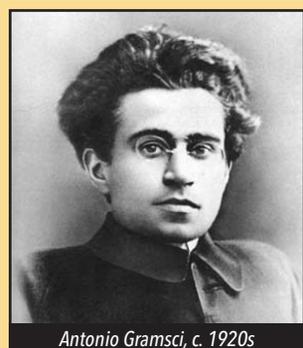
About the Red Phoenix

The Red Phoenix is the mass voice of the American Party of Labor, published online regularly and printed bimonthly. It is a newspaper dedicated to providing a creative and original insight on what is happening in the United States of America and around the world. Along with analysis of important news, events, reviews, and commentary, the paper also includes interviews and letters from workers across the country. The goal of *The Red Phoenix* is to provide a platform for working people of all kinds, without the biases and mitigation of corporate media.

The Red Phoenix is aimed at revolutionary and progressive-minded people, activists, workers, and others who are fighting in firm opposition to the war against the poor and the oppressed. Our political stands are taken from a revolutionary perspective and our writing serves as a medium of expressing that sentiment.

The Red Phoenix was founded in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash, as a way to give a platform and voice for working class people left outside popular media narratives. During the Trump presidential campaign and the George Floyd Movement, *The Red Phoenix* grew to have correspondents across the country seeking to interview workers, analyze the resurgent labor movement, and agitate for a true workers' democracy. In our era of misinformation and rising fascism and union-busting, the need for true working class stories, under the "blue and red" mythology, has never been greater.

To help us with our work by subscribing, donating, or submitting your own articles for publication, please visit us online at RedPhoenixNews.com



Antonio Gramsci, c. 1920s

"I believe that living means taking sides. Those who really live cannot help being a citizen and a partisan. Indifference and apathy are parasitism, perversion, not life."

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937)

"The Indifferent," *La città futura* ('the future city'), February 1917

The Red Phoenix is published bimonthly by The American Party of Labor.

Editor-in-Chief: June Vass

Deputy Editor: Nadya H.

Editorial Board: Victor Vaughn, Camilo Lazo, Benjamin Rizzo, Sebastian Lemba, Leonard Zorfass, Isabelle B., Ian Ocx

Staff: M. A. Booth, Alan I., Allison P., Artyom S., Leon V.



Visit us online to read more, subscribe, or contribute.

The Red Phoenix:

American Party of Labor:



RedPhoenixNews.com



AmericanPartyofLabor.com



**PEACE,
EQUALITY,
SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY**

About the American Party of Labor

The APL is a revolutionary working class organization. Our aim is to abolish the capitalist system and replace it with a socialist, working democracy, a system based on the principle laid out by Marx, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need." There can be no true freedom or democracy when billionaires have more wealth than the bottom 90% of Americans.

★ **An Anti-Revisionist, Internationalist Party:** The American Party of Labor is a dedicated anti-revisionist party, opposed to concessions to capitalists, and critical of all imperialist actions by the US, Russia, and China. The APL is an observer member in the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations (ICMLPO), and participates in the international anti-revisionist struggle.

★ **A Party of Working Class People:** The American Party of Labor is made up of workers fighting for workers' rights. Many of our members are in active union and unionization struggles, and we all do our political work after clocking out.

★ **A Party of Equals:** The APL is active in the fight for the rights of women, oppressed nations, the LGBTQIA+ community, and immigrants, and for the community control of police departments. In 2019, the APL was a founding member in the National Alliance Against Racist & Political Repression.

★ **Forever Anti-Fascist:** We uphold the anti-fascist legacy of the Marxist-Leninist movement. Members of the American Party of Labor are active in movements against the Far-Right on college campuses, and the barbaric treatment of immigrants at the border.

Who can join? How do I get involved?

Every working person who is open to our plan for change, agrees with our Program and Platform, and is over the age of 18 is welcome to apply.

To look at our joining procedure, activity, membership FAQ, and more, please visit:

AmericanPartyofLabor.com

You can find everything that you should know about us here, and you can contact us and connect to members in your area.

If we don't have a presence in your city, we'll get to know you and help you establish one.

Why are we Marxist-Leninists in the USA in the 21st century?

There is an important fundamental difference between Marxism and other so-called anti-capitalist or "third way" theories. Marx, unlike many thinkers of his day, did not see a problem with capitalism that could just be mitigated. Instead, he and his compatriots analyzed capitalism itself to understand how the system worked. Marx's ideas for revolution are based on that analysis, and the experiences of the struggles in Europe of 1848. Solutions to the problems of capitalism can only be reached by understanding and observing the system itself, textured with the political reality of the country and historical struggles. This is why we think revolutionary history is worth talking about, and making part of our platform.

Regarding the regulation of capitalism and emergent social democratic reform movements, it is not uncommon that capitalist states restrict the private sector for various reasons. The problem is that political power is still stacked in favor of the ruling class; they have every avenue and all the resources necessary undo reforms and regulations. What truly led to the collapse of the socialist bloc was not that these countries pursued communism, which was ultimately too radical, but rather that these nations pursued market style reforms until they had more or less become capitalist countries. As we have seen in the US, liberal victories are short-lived.

Today, social democratic movements would have us do much the same, if not less – regulate capitalism, nationalize some industry, and try to maintain a welfare state – without expropriating the ruling class, without giving the nation a clear direction for the future, and worst of all, without putting the working class in power. We cannot face climate change, resurgent fascism, police brutality, the exploitation of oppressed nations, and the threat of American imperialism around the world without a revolutionary, centrally organized movement.

Powered by Labor and made possible by contributions from workers like you.