

'Lesser-evil' politics is a dead end for working class

BY TERRY EVANS

Many workers are looking for ways to change years of declining real wages, worsening working conditions and the many abuses the bosses and their governments bring down on us. But Democrats and Republicans tussling for the White House — Bernie Sanders, Joe Biden and Donald Trump — only offer different ways to prolong the rule of the capitalist class responsible for creating these conditions.

Both parties encourage workers to vote for the lesser evil, offering the hope that the "least worst" might be better than the "most worst." Both try to prevent workers from seeing *ourselves*, fighting together, as a force to defend and advance our class interests in the workplace, the streets and in politics.

Both Biden and Sanders say their chief selling point is they're the best person to defeat President Donald Trump. The president built his victory in 2016 on appealing to workers whose needs

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Solidarity led Cuba's fight to defeat Ebola in Africa

NY meeting counters US rulers' slanders



Inset, March 7 New York meeting, featuring book on Cuba's role in fighting Ebola in West Africa. Above, from left, Martín Koppel and Mary-Alice Waters, co-editors of book, and Ana Silvia Rodríguez, Cuban ambassador.

BY SARA LOBMAN

NEW YORK — "A people aiming to build a society based on solidarity" — that's what Cuba's socialist revolution represents, said Enrique Ubieta,

author of *Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle Against Ebola in West Africa*. He was addressing a March 7 program to celebrate publication of new editions of *Red Zone* in English and Spanish via video from Havana.

Ubieta led a Cuban reporting team to Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia in early 2015 during the Ebola epidemic there.

Also speaking at the meeting of 100 were Ana Silvia Rodríguez, Cuba's

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Coronavirus spread is result of capitalist social relations

BY ROY LANDERSEN

As the spread of coronavirus disease continues worldwide, stock prices have plunged more than any time since the 2008 global financial crisis, reflecting growing concerns among capitalist investors about the effect of the outbreak. World economic growth has begun to contract. And a price war over oil started by the ruling monarchy in Saudi Arabia is exacerbating the fall.

These external shocks highlight the way "globalization" of international production and trade has made the capitalists' crisis worse, threatening to tip into a worldwide recession.

Unable to reach a deal with Moscow to cut oil production in the face of faltering world demand, the Saudi rulers instead boosted production to swamp the crude market, cutting prices and dealing blows to both Moscow and to the U.S. shale oil bosses.

Confirmed cases of COVID-19 have spread to over 120 countries, with more than 125,000 infected and

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Socialist Workers Party candidates tour Washington: 'Workers need gov't-funded cradle-to-grave health care'



From right, SWP candidates Malcolm Jarrett for vice president, and Rebecca Williamson for Congress, speak with Heidi Gomez and mother Susana, a farmworker, in Yakima March 3.

BY EDWIN FRUIT

SEATTLE — With the spread of coronavirus, working people are facing new problems caused by capitalism's for-profit health system, growing economic dislocations and the rulers' insistence that workers are on their own in finding ways to get food and supplies. This was part of many discussions Alyson Kennedy and Malcolm Jarrett, the presidential and vice presidential candidates of the Socialist Workers Party, had while on a

five-day campaign tour here.

Washington is the state with the most reported cases in the U.S.

The SWP platform calls for "health care for all. Fight for universal, government-guaranteed cradle-to-grave health care, and retirement income for all." The disease is a social question, and workers and our unions need to fight to make sure our jobs, income and needed health care are assured.

Speaking at a March 6 campaign

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Cancel Miranda: 'Keep fighting for Puerto Rico's independence!'

BY SETH GALINSKY

Thousands turned out for events in Puerto Rico over three days to honor independence fighter, partisan of the Cuban Revolution and uncompromising internationalist Rafael Cancel Miranda. He died March 2 at 89 at his home in San Juan. Cancel Miranda spent 28 years in prison for his actions against U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico. He was buried

'AN EXAMPLE OF REVOLUTIONARY COURAGE, DISCIPLINE, INTEGRITY'
— SWP message page 4

in his hometown of Mayagüez March 8.

He was first jailed in 1948, serving two years for refusing to register for the draft prior to the Korean War. "To me it didn't make sense to be in the same army that invades your country and massacres your people," he said in a 1998 *Militant* interview. "If you're going to fight, you should fight *them*."

Cancel Miranda is best known for participating in an armed protest in

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Copper strikers' struggle against Asarco bosses needs solidarity

BY BERNIE SENTER

"We're on the picket line standing up to violations and abuse of workers and the environment by Asarco," Eduardo Placencio, recording secretary of striking United Steelworkers Local 937 at the Mission Mine south of Tucson, told the *Militant* by phone March 8. Over 1,700 copper miners have been on strike

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

Minneapolis janitors strike one day in fight for new contracts

Indiana casino workers march for wage raise, health coverage

Chicago protests demand freedom for Gerald Reed

BY MARK CLEMENTS

CHICAGO — More than 40 people gathered outside the Daley Center here Feb. 25 to demand that Chief Judge Timothy Evans intervene in the case of Gerald Reed. Reed is in jail on “evidence” extracted though torture in 1990 by two Chicago police detectives. “What do we want? Free Gerald Reed,” protesters chanted.

Reed’s “confession” led to his being found guilty in 1991 on murder charges and subsequently sentenced to life without any possibility of parole. He was one of dozens of over 100 victims of the “Midnight Crew” run by Chicago Police Commander Jon Burge, who was later exposed, fired and convicted of lying about torturing people.

In 2012, more than two decades after his conviction, Reed won a hearing before the Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission. This panel was established by the Illinois legislature in 2009 after widespread publicity on Burge-led cop torture. Cook County Judge Thomas Gainer ruled in December 2018 that Reed’s confession was most likely the result of the beating he suffered at the hands of cops and threw out his conviction. He ordered a new trial.

On Feb. 14 Judge Thomas Hennelly, who had been assigned to the case after Gainer retired, reversed Gainer’s order and sent Reed back to prison.

In the days leading up to the protest, organizers of Reed’s defense circulated a letter to Judge Evans demanding he intervene. The letter, made public and released to the press, was signed by dozens of organizations and individuals.

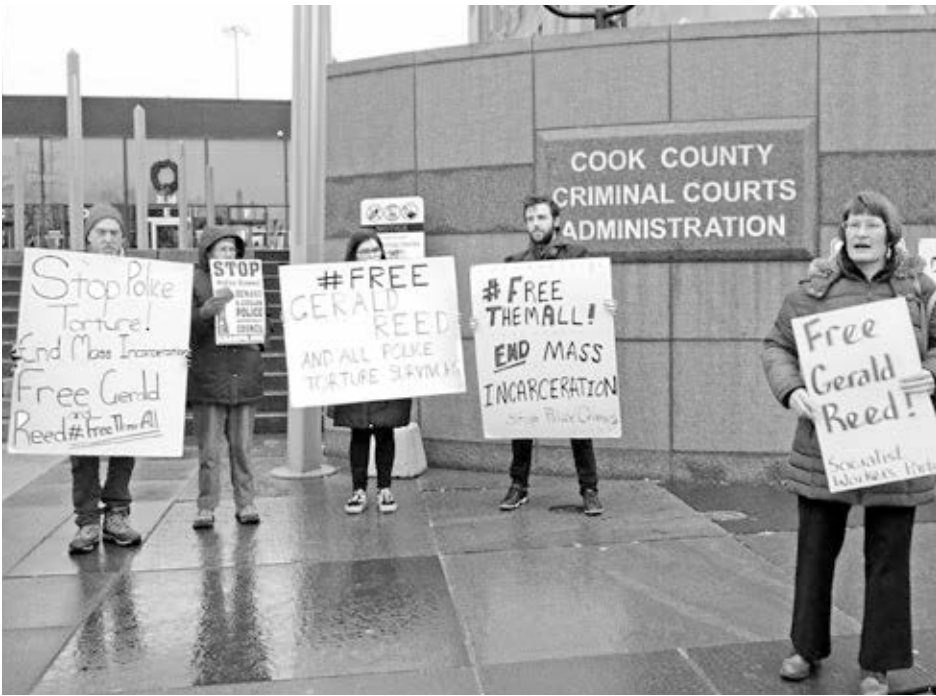
“If they believe Gerald committed the crime they accuse him of, they have to prove it,” Reed’s mother, Armanda Shackelford, told the press and fellow protesters. “They have never proven it, and never will be able to prove it. We’re hopeful Evans will reverse this miscarriage of justice.”

“We have to keep mobilizing in Gerald’s defense,” Aislinn Pulley, co-director of the Chicago Torture Justice Center, told the crowd, “and demand the release of all survivors of cop torture.”

There are over 100 other torture survivors inside Illinois prisons who have not gotten a hearing on claims of torture.

Ilona Gersh, a worker at an area Walmart, announced that at two Walmart stores close to 40 workers had signed a letter urging Evans to reverse Hennelly’s decision.

Mark Clements was a victim of Chicago police torture, railroaded to prison for 28 years on frame-up charges.



Rally in Chicago Jan. 10 demands freedom for Gerald Reed. Cops notorious for frame-ups tortured Reed to force him to confess to murder charges. He has been imprisoned since 1990.

Socialist Workers Party campaign button

Available from campaign offices listed on page 5

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See directory on page 5 to contact party campaign office nearest you.

THE MILITANT

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The ‘Militant’ backs women’s right to have an abortion. Women in Argentina are demanding legalization, and fights in Ireland, South Korea and elsewhere have won or beaten back attacks. The right to choose is a life-and-death question for working-class unity.

National Campaign for the Right to Abortion
Tens of thousands march in Buenos Aires Feb. 19 demanding legalization of abortion.

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- ☐ I want to endorse the Socialist Workers Party ticket of Alyson Kennedy for president and Malcolm Jarrett for vice president.
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‘Workers need health care’

Continued from front page

rally attended by more than 40 people, Henry Dennison, the party’s candidate for governor, denounced the inadequate response and bureaucratic measures used by the federal and state governments to deal with the outbreak. Sixteen people, mostly in an elder care facility in Kirkland just east of Seattle, have died from the virus.

“Bosses tell you to take off work if you are sick but penalize you and don’t offer sick pay,” Dennison said. And the government isn’t even organizing widespread testing for the disease, key for people to get the medical treatment they need and in slowing the virus’s spread.

Jarrett urged everyone to read the new Pathfinder book *Red Zone*, which describes the role of Cuban medical personnel in leading the fight against the Ebola virus in West Africa several years ago. “You cannot just transpose the Cuban system of health and education onto the capitalist United States,” he said. “We need to make a revolution here, like Cuban working people did, before we can organize a workers and farmers government and reorganize health care from top to bottom.”

Kennedy added that “our campaign button has two slogans that capture what working people need: a labor party and workers control of production.” We need our own party, she said, that can help organize and lead our battles against the capitalist rulers and their efforts to force us to pay for the crisis of their system. Doing so will pose the need for working people to fight to take political power into our own hands.

Workers control, including demanding open the books of the pharmaceutical giants and medical companies, would help workers see the truth about how the for-profit health system operates and why working people need to organize in their millions to wrest control over the entire economy.

Nearly \$2,000 was raised for the national campaign.

Campaigning in Yakima Valley

Kennedy, Jarrett and supporters campaigned in Yakima March 3, knocking on doors in this farming center in central Washington.

“I bust my butt for a small amount of money,” construction worker Derick Rivera, 29, told Jarrett. Rivera helped his landlord renovate his apartment, and then the landlord raised the rent so high he had to move out.

Rivera has worked on scaffolding on construction sites where the bosses didn’t provide safety harnesses. They discussed how the bosses’ drive for profits leads to unsafe conditions on the job.

The SWP says that workers and their unions must have the right to shut down production where there are unsafe conditions until they are corrected. Jarrett pointed to the Socialist Workers Party 2020 platform, which starts out with the need for unions and for a labor party. He noted that the *Militant* frequently covers the growing number of injuries in construction and other industries

and the fight for unions and job safety.

Jarrett added that the labor movement must organize the unorganized, including undocumented immigrants. Amnesty is key to uniting working people to stand up to the bosses. Rivera got a copy of the *Militant*, saying he plans to take it into work to show his co-workers.

Kennedy, Dennison and campaign supporter Michele Smith met John Nelson, a disabled railroad worker, who said it took him nearly three years to get compensation from the bosses after he was no longer able to work.

“We live under the dictatorship of the rich,” Kennedy said. “We need our own political party, a labor party, which we can build as we unite in our millions to fight against the attacks of the bosses and their government.” Nelson got a subscription to the *Militant* and the book *In Defense of the US Working Class* by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters.

Solidarity with Asarco strikers!

Kennedy and Jarrett had lunch with campaign supporters and a few workers from a Walmart in Federal Way, south of Seattle, March 12. Rebecca Williamson, the party’s candidate for Congress in the 9th District, also works there. Some 25 workers at the store had recently signed a solidarity card for copper miners who have been on strike in Arizona and Texas against Asarco since October.

“The solidarity they get, like what you offered, is more important than ever. At the Walmart where I work in Dallas, we took up a collection and like you sent a card of solidarity for the strikers,” Kennedy said, as she told them about her recent visit to the strikers’ picket lines in Arizona. This is the largest and most



Militant/Henry Dennison

At rally against conditions at detention center in Tacoma, SWP presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy, left, talks with Luis and Rufina Arenas, who came to visit locked-up family member.

important labor battle in the U.S. today.

Bennie Boggan said that he had worked at an auto plant in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in the 1980s. “I was in the United Auto Workers and the unions seemed to be a lot stronger then,” he said. At Walmart, where there is no union, “you can be fired after five attendance points in a six-month period. You get two points if you take off work on, before or after what they call ‘event’ days.” Now with the coronavirus, Walmart bosses tell you to stay home if you are sick, but you will still get points and not get paid if you are not at work.

Walmart’s stance is typical of bosses everywhere. They leave people on their own to deal with the consequences of the disease or impose bureaucratic measures that end up punishing workers.

Standing up on the job for better wages and working conditions, Kennedy

said, “increases our confidence that we can win when we fight together.”

On March 7, Kennedy, Jarrett and Dennison attended a rally at the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, where many immigrants are imprisoned. The action was called by La Resistencia and held to commemorate the sixth anniversary of a series of hunger strikes in the facility. They demand center officials conduct testing for coronavirus and provide adequate medical care.

Kennedy told the gathering, “The SWP candidates demand amnesty for all undocumented workers in the U.S.”

The campaign table attracted a lot of interest. Five participants bought *Militant* subscriptions. A number of books by SWP leaders were sold, including *Malcolm X*, *Black Liberation*, and *the Road to Workers Power* and *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?*

Socialist Workers Party 2020 campaign platform

This is the SWP’s fighting campaign platform to confront the economic, social and moral crisis caused by capitalism:

UNIONS/FOR A LABOR PARTY Support workers’ struggles to organize to defend themselves, to use union power on behalf of ourselves and all working people. Workers need their own party, a labor party. *One* union for *all* drivers — taxi, Uber, Lyft, other app-based and car service drivers! Support farmworkers in their fight to organize unions and for safe working conditions.

AMNESTY FOR ALL UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS in the US, a life-and-death question for the unions to unite workers and cut across divisions the bosses use to drive down wages. For access to driver’s licenses for all.

JOBS Fight for a federal government-financed public works program to put millions to work at union-scale wages building roads, bridges, hospitals, child care centers, mass transportation and quality affordable housing workers need. Set the minimum wage to allow workers to have a home and support a family.

OPPOSE WASHINGTON’S WARS US hands off Iran, Venezuela and Cuba. US troops out of Afghanistan, Korea, the Middle East. End US colonial rule in Puerto Rico.

CUBA’S REVOLUTION — AN EXAMPLE End the US rulers’ economic war against Cuba; US out of Guantánamo. The Cuban Revolution in 1959 showed it is possible for workers and

farmers to transform themselves in struggle, to take political power and uproot capitalist exploitation.

HEALTH CARE FOR ALL Fight for universal, government-guaranteed cradle-to-grave health care, and retirement income for all.

ABORTION Defend women’s right to unrestricted access to family planning services, including the right to safe, secure abortions.

ISRAEL & PALESTINE For the recognition of Israel and of a contiguous Palestinian state. For the right of Jews to return to Israel as a refuge in the face of capitalist crisis, Jew-hatred and murderous violence.

WORKERS CONTROL OVER PRODUCTION The bosses and their government lie to working people about their production costs and profits, while they insist they can’t afford to pay higher wages. Demand they open their books for inspection by workers and consumers. To prevent capitalist collusion and thievery — and their production of shoddy and dangerous goods like the Boeing 737 MAX — workers in their millions will need to fight for control of production, a step towards taking political power and a school for running the economy for ourselves in the interests of all.

“JUSTICE” SYSTEM Fight against police brutality, racist discrimination and the entire capitalist injustice system with its frame-ups, “plea bargains,” onerous bail and outrageous prison sentences, all of which disproportion-

ately hit workers who are Black. For the right to vote for ex-prisoners and all workers behind bars.

POLITICAL RIGHTS Defend democratic rights — the right to vote, to free speech and assembly and to bear arms, under attack from Democrats and Republicans alike. Stop FBI and other government spying, harassment and disruption.

PRISONER RIGHTS End solitary confinement. End suppression of the *Militant*, books and newspapers by prison authorities. Abolish the death penalty, an anti-working-class weapon in the hands of the rulers.

FARMERS — WORKERS ALLIES ON THE LAND To put a halt to farm foreclosures, bankruptcies and skyrocketing rural debt, we demand nationalization of the land. This puts the soil at the service of the farmers who till it, as opposed to control by the banks and landlords. We demand the government guarantee farmers their costs of production, including their living expenses.

Working people must organize and act independent of the ruling capitalists and break from their political parties — the Democrats and Republicans. For a labor party and a movement of millions to fight for these demands along a course to replace the rule of the exploitative capitalist class with a workers and farmers government.

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Contribute to Socialist Workers Party 2020 campaign \$25,000 fund!

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Cancel Miranda: Keep fighting for Puerto Rico independence!

Continued from front page

Congress on March 1, 1954, along with Lolita Lebrón, Irving Flores and Andrés Figueroa Cordero. At 23, and a press operator at a shoe factory in New York City, he was the youngest of the group. They unfurled a Puerto Rican flag and shouted “Viva Puerto Rico libre!” before firing some shots, most into the air. A few congressmen were wounded.

The island has been a U.S. colony since 1898, when U.S. troops wrested control from Spain. Opponents of U.S. imperialist occupation were brutally repressed. On March 21, 1937, Cancel Miranda’s father and mother, supporters of Albizu Campos’ Nationalist Party, attended a peaceful rally in the city of Ponce that was attacked by cops on orders of U.S. Gen. Blanton Winship, killing 21 people and wounding 200.

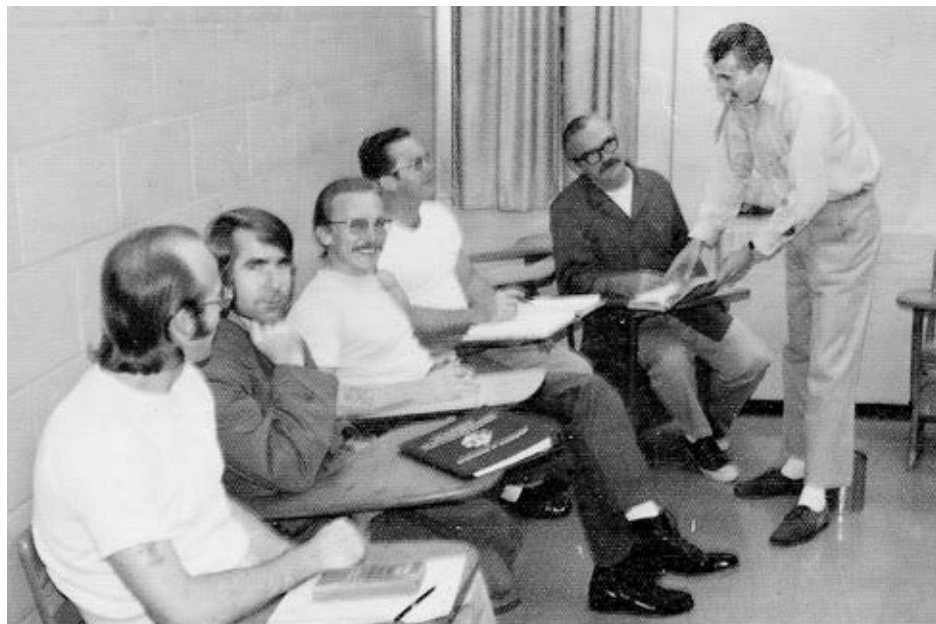
In 1948 Washington imposed Law 53, which prohibited flying the Puerto Rican flag, singing patriotic songs and gatherings in support of independence. Yet in 1953, the U.S. government had Puerto Rico removed from the United Nations list of colonies, claiming the island was a “self-governing” territory.

The four Nationalists “decided to carry out a demonstration that would draw the world’s attention to the truth about Puerto Rico, that would tell the world that there were Puerto Ricans who were willing to die for our independence and that the U.S. government was fooling the United Nations and the world — including my people — with this so-called commonwealth,” Cancel Miranda told the *Militant*.

‘Proven right by history’

El Nuevo Día, the largest circulation daily in Puerto Rico and no friend of the fight for independence, noted that Cancel Miranda and others who rejected Washington’s claim that Puerto Rico was self-governing “were proven right by history.” Virtually no one today denies that Puerto Rico is a U.S. colony.

By the early 1970s there was a growing movement in the U.S., Puerto Rico



Courtesy Rafael Cancel Miranda

Rafael Cancel Miranda teaching Spanish to fellow inmates in Marion prison in Illinois in 1975. He worked with political prisoners and other workers behind bars to defend their rights and deepen their humanity. At right, Cancel Miranda pamphlet available at pathfinderpress.com.

and internationally to free the five Nationalists — the fifth being Oscar Collazo, arrested in 1950 after attacking the temporary residence of President Harry Truman. It was intertwined with the exploding opposition to the rulers’ war against the people of Vietnam, struggles for Black and Chicano liberation and for women’s equality.

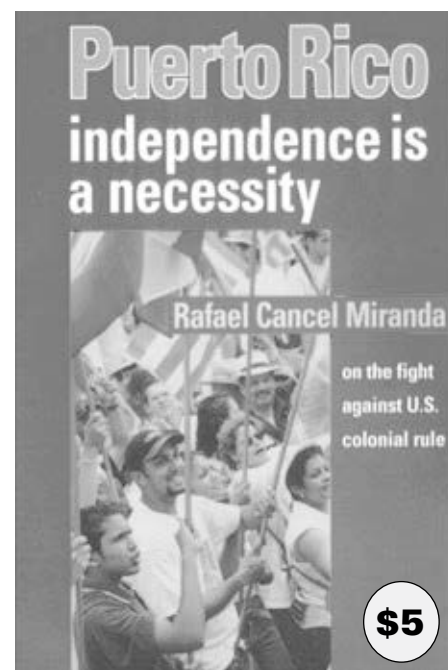
Figueroa was freed in 1978. The remaining four were freed by President Jimmy Carter in 1979. They were greeted as heroes by tens of thousands in Chicago, New York and Puerto Rico.

The Cuban Revolution began while they were in prison. Cancel Miranda realized it was not just a change in faces, “but a true social transformation. I internalized it to the point that the Cuban revolution has become as important to me as the fight for the freedom of my people,” he said in the interview.

Cancel Miranda worked with the Socialist Workers Party to turn his interviews with the *Militant* into a pamphlet — *Puerto Rico: Independence Is a Necessity* — to get out the truth about the fight against U.S. colonial rule to workers here.

In an article he wrote for the *Militant* while still in prison, he said, “I think of myself as part of every struggle anywhere in the world in which people struggle for freedom, dignity, and a just socio-political-economic way of life.”

And that’s how he conducted himself to his death, joining picket lines of striking workers in Puerto Rico, speaking at meetings in the U.S., defending the Cuban Revolution, opposing U.S. imperialist intervention in Venezuela and Latin America. He was a prominent supporter of the fight to free the Cuban Five, revolutionaries framed up by Washington



and imprisoned from 1998 until 2014.

“He came here to Humacao after Hurricane Maria” to support the work of Arecma, Rosalina Abreu said by phone March 7. Arecma, the community group she leads, had organized a communal dining area that served hundreds, in face of the criminal inaction by the U.S. and Puerto Rican governments.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and Minister of Foreign Relations Bruno Rodríguez sent messages to Cancel Miranda’s family. *Granma* noted that he had always been true to his belief “that you arrive at your goal more rapidly standing than on you knees,” and that “he could always count on the friendship of the Cuban people and its central leaders, especially Fidel Castro.”

Cancel Miranda requested that flags not be lowered to half-mast. For independence fighters “the flags must always be held high, as high as possible,” he said.

‘An example of revolutionary courage, discipline, integrity’

The following message to María de los Ángeles Vázquez and Rafael Cancel Vázquez, widow and son of Puerto Rican independence fighter Rafael Cancel Miranda, was sent by Jack Barnes, National Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, for the SWP National Committee.

Dear Compañera Angie and Compañero Rafael,

The flag of Puerto Rico flies high today, as Rafael Cancel Miranda said it must.

Don Rafa, as he was often called by those who loved and respected him, led a life that was an example of revolutionary courage, discipline, and integrity that will live on.

Above all, like Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, Fidel Castro, and other great revolutionary leaders he looked up to, Rafael sought to awaken his people — especially the most exploited and oppressed among them — not to their oppression but to their worth, to their capacity to fight the colonial oppressors,

win, and reorganize society. He urged them to rely on the power of their own collective action, not any government, party, or institution of the oppressors.

Rafael and the four other Puerto Rican Nationalists, who spent a quarter century in US prisons for their pro-independence actions, won support and admiration worldwide because of their unyielding resistance. “We came out of prison standing, not on our knees,” as he put it.

During those years behind bars, Rafael engaged in political activity together with fellow workers of all national origins and skin colors. The experience reinforced his conviction that working people in the United States and Puerto Rico share a mutual enemy. We are allies in struggle, if we understand those common class interests and act intransigently on them together.

Rafael Cancel Miranda was an uncompromising internationalist. As he said in a letter to the *Militant* newspaper in 1978, while behind prison walls, “I think of myself as part of every struggle anywhere in the world in which people struggle for freedom, dignity, and a just socio-political-economic way of life.”

For Rafael, the Cuban Revolution was his own. He defended the socialist road taken by Cuba’s working people as an example to be emulated everywhere by those fighting the brutal consequences of capitalist rule. “Cuba dignifies people,” he said, while “this system dehumanizes people — it’s dog-eat-dog.”

Few things better capture Rafael’s

integrity, dignity, and lifelong record of struggle for Puerto Rico’s independence than his closing words some eight years ago at a Washington, D.C., event to build the “jury of millions” that won the freedom of the Cuban Five. “I was twenty-three years old when I walked up the steps of the Capitol,” Rafael said. “Today I’m eighty-two, and I haven’t changed the way I think about anything. Except that today perhaps I’m a little more revolutionary — because I know the enemy better.”

We honor the life of comrade Rafael Cancel Miranda by continuing to educate working people, as well as the youth who join them in battle, about the road of revolutionary class struggle, the only road to a free Puerto Rico and a socialist world.

With warmest fraternal greetings,

Jack Barnes

Jack Barnes
National Secretary
for the National Committee
of the Socialist Workers Party

Meeting set to celebrate political life, contributions of Larry Quinn

BY JACOB PERASSO

ALBANY, N.Y. — Larry Quinn, a 20-year cadre of the Socialist Workers Party, died March 6 after a battle with cancer. He was a longtime participant and leader in the solidarity movement in the U.S. with the Irish freedom struggle. He joined the Socialist Workers Party in 2000 in Newark, New Jersey.

Quinn was a native of Bayonne, New Jersey, where he worked on state highway maintenance crews and operated a drawbridge. He also worked as a meat-packer and a coal miner, a member of the United Mine Workers union. He ran as SWP candidate for City Council in Troy in 2019, where he worked at Walmart and joined fights against police brutality and other working-class struggles.

A celebration of the life and political contributions of Quinn will be held Sunday, March 15, at the Everly Cromwell Community Center, 260 North Pearl Street. A reception will begin at 2 p.m. with a program at 3 p.m.

Corrections

The article “Indigenous People Debate Building Canada Pipeline” in issue no. 10 should have said the Coastal GasLink pipeline runs from Dawson Creek, British Columbia, to Kitimat on the west coast. In issue no. 9, the article “Striking Asarco Miners Protest Bosses’ Union-Busting Attacks,” should have said Alex Terrazas is USW Local 937 president.

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For-Profit ‘Health Care’ Increases Threat of Coronavirus: Cuban Revolution Shows Road Forward. Speaker: Amanda Ulman, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 20, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5. 1444 Biscayne Blvd., Suite 215. Tel.: (305) 929-8966.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Are you involved in a union organizing drive or strike? Brought solidarity to fellow workers on the picket line? Let us know! Send articles, photos and letters to themilitant@mac.com or through our website, or mail them to 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Indiana casino workers march for wage raise, health coverage

ELIZABETH, Ind. — More than 100 casino workers and their supporters marched through Caesars Southern Indiana casino here Feb. 26 to demand a wage raise and improved health care coverage.

The workers, members of UNITE HERE Local 23, Teamsters Local 89 and International Union of Operating Engineers Local 399, have been negotiating with the company since their contract expired Feb. 1. They say that the bosses have offered raises of just 13 to 25 cents an hour.

“I have worked for Caesars for over 11 years and still make under \$12 an hour,” VIP lounge worker Terri Mitchell told the *Militant*. “We can’t live on these kinds of wages. And our health insurance is expensive — the deductibles are so high it’s hard to use.”

Mike Johnson, who has worked at the casino for 20 years, said, “After my knee replacement I had to fight to try to get them to cover physical therapy and medications.”

The crowd applauded when Ryan Deason announced he came in solidarity with other Walmart workers from across the river in Louisville, Kentucky.

Workers from Caesars Indiana Grand Racing and Casino in Shelbyville, who voted to unionize last December, joined the rally. “We will be here anytime you ask for our support,” said Taylor Cox, a union bartender from the casino there.

—Jacquie Henderson
and Ryan Deason

Minneapolis janitors strike one day in fight for new contracts

MINNEAPOLIS — Janitors, members of Service Employees International Union Local 26, reached a tentative agreement after a strike here Feb. 27.

There are 4,000 commercial janitors in the SEIU local. Many are immigrants from Latin America, East Africa and other parts of the world. They are employed by more than a dozen different subcontractors to clean some of the largest office buildings in the area, such as US Bank, Wells Fargo and Ameriprise.

Nearly 100 janitors, joined by several

hundred supporters, marched and rallied in front of several large downtown office buildings they clean. The one-day strike was called after negotiations had stalled for nearly four months.

“They keep giving us more and more work. You can’t do a good cleaning job with that much work,” Kim Johnson, 70, a 40-year union janitor, told the *Militant*. She also explained the bosses have reduced workers’ sick days and refused to increase wages. “I tell my co-workers, if you don’t fight, you won’t win anything,” she said.

“I’m here because they need to treat us with more respect,” said Augustino Hernandez, another striking janitor.

According to SEIU’s news release, the workers will get a \$2.20 an hour wage increase over the four-year contract and an increase to six sick days per year.

David Rosenfeld, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from



Matt Sepic/MPR News

Commercial janitors in Minneapolis, members of Service Employees International Union Local 26, voted Feb. 8 to authorize a walkout in fight for wage raise, dignity on the job.

Minnesota and a worker at Walmart, joined their picket line. “I am here in solidarity with the janitors. Workers on my job also face speedup and lack of safety,” he said. “My campaign calls for a fight to win the right to control safety on the job and to press the

bosses to open their books to expose the ways they rip us off. We need to conquer workers control of production, a step on the road to taking political power out of the hands of the capitalists who exploit us.”

—Helen Meyers

Oberlin students protest replacement of union workers

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Hundreds of students protested Feb. 18 less than 24 hours after Oberlin College President Carmen Twillie Ambar announced that the university plans to lay off 108 union workers and contract their jobs out. Many workers facing the layoffs joined the protest. College officials claim the job cuts are necessary to save money.

One student held a handmade sign reading, “Student-Worker Solidarity.” Students chanted, “What’s disgusting, union busting!” while lining the corridors outside a meeting between university and union officials.

The layoffs violate the college’s “progressive values,” protest organizer and Oberlin student Matt Kinsella-Walsh told the press. “These are the people who cook our food, who clean our homes, who care for us when we’re sick.”

Ambar released a statement saying these cuts would save up to \$2 million annually and were needed because the liberal arts college was facing “unprecedented financial and demographics challenges, including unsustainable budget deficits.”

Some 52 dining service and 56 cus-

todial employees organized by the United Auto Workers union will be replaced July 1. Erik Villar, chair of UAW Local 2192, told the Elyria and Lorain County *Chronicle-Telegram* Feb. 19 that some workers have worked for the college for more than 30 years, one for 43. Some who are only three or four years away from retirement are members of families that have worked there for generations.

Villar said that since Ambar became president the college has “become more of a business, about money.”

Al Fleming, a plumber at the college for 24 years, told the *Chronicle-Telegram*, “If there’s a problem with the wages we negotiated, why aren’t they looking at their lawyers and administrators instead of us? Change starts at the top.”

Like many privately owned schools, Oberlin is being battered by the capitalist economic crisis and a number of its own mistakes. And like bosses everywhere, the officers look to make workers pay for their problems.

College tries to crush Gibson’s

Oberlin’s administrators also face

another challenge of their own making. They were found guilty in a unanimous jury verdict for organizing a smear campaign to try and crush Gibson’s bakery, a family-owned local business with a 134-year history that has provided pastries to the college for decades.

Top college officials helped organize student protests and a boycott of the bakery in November 2016 — falsely claiming the store owners were racists — after a college student who is African American, with the aid of two fellow students, attempted to shoplift wine from the store and was arrested. The three later pled guilty to attempted theft and testified no racism was involved in the affair.

The jury found the college administration guilty of libel against the Gibsons and the court ruled it must pay \$44 million in damages and fees. Rather than admit its guilt and pay the bakery, the college has appealed and hired an additional phalanx of lawyers to try and bleed the Gibson family and break their spirit. The family says it won’t back down.

The reality is that Oberlin College is a capitalist institution and like any capitalist business, it ultimately rises or falls on having a budget that produces a positive bottom line, despite any “progressive” veneer or non-profit status.

The administrators and trustees have to squeeze the workers and small businesses in town like the Gibson family bakery to bolster that bottom line. And they don’t hide their class contempt for both as they do so.

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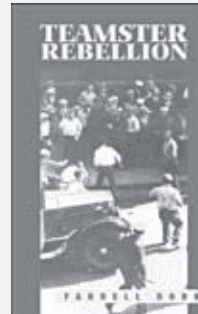
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Teamster Rebellion

by Farrell Dobbs

The 1934 strikes that built the industrial union movement in Minneapolis and helped pave the way for the CIO, as recounted by a central leader of that battle. — \$16

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Virus spread result of capitalism

Continued from front page

4,600 deaths as of March 11. The bulk of those are still in Wuhan, China, where the outbreak began. The number of infections outside China tripled in the past week. The majority were in Italy, Iran and South Korea, but numbers are growing in the U.S. and across Europe.

In addition to the slump in trade with China and disruption to global supply chains, travel bans by bourgeois governments are impacting airlines and tourism.

What is unfolding is a social crisis, exacerbated by dog-eat-dog capitalism.

There are now over 10,000 cases in Italy and 631 deaths, the highest number outside China. Rome imposed a blanket travel ban across the whole country March 9. Authorities said containing the virus required blocking family visits to all prisoners, leading to protests in more than 25 prisons across the country, with six inmates killed.

In Britain, where most jails are overcrowded, the ministry of justice claims to have “robust contingency plans” to protect prisoners from the disease, but these seem to amount to providing them facilities to wash their hands.

For the capitalist rulers, the only measures they know to control the spread of the disease are actions against working people — mass quarantines, travel bans, school closures and other harsh restrictions, reinforced by criminal penalties. For working people there is a different road — exemplified by the Cuban Revolution — of mobilization and solidarity.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has banned virtually all public events for the next month, as much to prevent protests against his moves to extend his presidency through 2036 as to impede the virus.

In northern Italy, hospitals have almost run out of beds for patients. Giorgio Gori, mayor of Bergamo, tweeted, “Patients who cannot be treated are left to die.”

Across the U.S. bosses have been closing hospitals and clinics in rural areas and working-class urban neighborhoods they say don’t generate enough profits. This further constricts the facilities to treat people.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo in New York imposed a National Guard-enforced lockdown in New Rochelle March 10.

And in Kirkland, Washington, outside Seattle — where gig-economy behemoths Amazon and Google told their employees to work from home — patients at a nursing home where the disease has hit are quarantined.

Their relatives are banned from visiting, forced to communicate through closed windows from outside.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says it has five tiers for who should get treatment. At the top are military troops deployed abroad and cops at home, as well as bankers and bosses at pharmaceutical companies. Ordinary workers are at the bottom.

Contrast with revolutionary Cuba

In sharp contrast to the travel bans, harsh shutdowns and class-driven priorities for hospital space elsewhere, in revolutionary Cuba every person is treated, irrespective of their travel or contact history. Everyone arriving by sea or air is checked for signs of the disease and a medical examination conducted if needed. Hospitalization or other treatments are ready. Special care is prepared for the most vulnerable. *No one* is left on their own.

Special efforts are being mobilized by the government, the country’s mass organizations and the unions to keep working people informed and involved. The neighborhood medical system is organized to make sure everyone gets personal attention, and it’s free.

Impact on capitalist economy

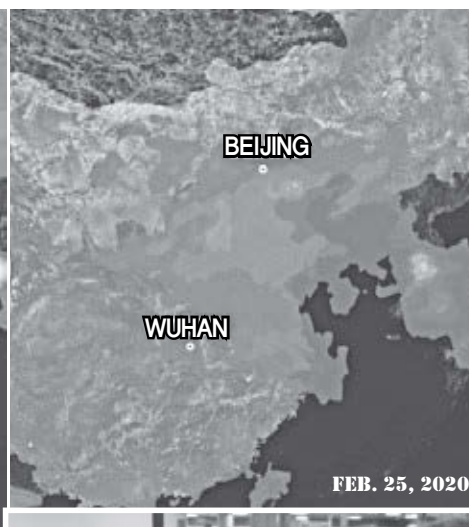
The dual-port complex of Los Angeles and Long Beach, the largest harbor in the U.S., has seen a fall this year of half a million containers, 15%, from the China trade, which accounts for half the volume of the port.

Tens of thousands of jobs, from dockworkers to truck drivers and warehouse workers, are affected as production, trade and shipping falls. Shifts for permanent longshoremen in Los Angeles are down by a fifth and workers employed as “casuals” have lost 90% of their shifts.

Of the 13,000 truckers who transport



Above, NASA; right, Ariel Cecilio Lemus Alvarez, Granma. **NASA satellite images show pollution over China before coronavirus clampdown Jan. 23. Clear skies a month later reflect far-reaching shutdown of industry. Inset, Cuba’s revolution is sharp contrast to border bans, mass quarantines in capitalist world. Travelers are screened for virus symptoms, community medical teams prepare for any further help.**



containers from the port, 80% are “independent contractors,” paid by the load. Many are Latino immigrants, forced to pay for their “own” trucks, gas, etc. With no income and unable to meet mortgage payments, some are faced with having to sell their rigs.

With broad erosion of trust in the capitalist governments’ abilities to cope with the social and health crisis, amplified by social media panic, there has been a rush to stock up on masks and hand sanitizer, food and toilet paper, and more, leaving shelves bare and frustrated customers angry.

The pressure to restock is adding to the bosses’ speed-up imposed on retail workers across the U.S. And the big store owners like Walmart and Target, in addition to their low hourly rates, don’t pay sick leave.

Despite a sophisticated medical system with high levels of science and technology, under capitalist control the “health care” services in the U.S. are driven by pursuit of profits for insurance, pharmaceutical, hospital and medical-equipment corporations. Health

care is a costly commodity beyond the reach of many working people.

More than 27.5 million people in the U.S. have no health insurance. Almost a third of the population were classified as “underinsured” in 2018, meaning they can’t afford the thousands of dollars in “co-pay” charges when they get sick.

A March 5 nationwide survey by the 150,000-member National Nurses United union exposed glaring unpreparedness in many hospitals with no plans, isolation procedures or facilities for the coming surge in COVID-19 cases. There are meager stocks of personal protective equipment for medical staff and few have been trained to properly use what there is.

And — as in all capitalist countries worldwide — there is a critical shortage of kits to test if people have the disease, which facilitates the spread of the virus.

Workers and farmers across the world need to find ways to unite and organize to cope with this social crisis, which the capitalist rulers visit most sharply on the working class.

Syria ‘cease-fire’ in Idlib masks ongoing conflicts

BY TERRY EVANS

The Russian and Turkish governments signed a tentative cease-fire deal March 5 after months of deadly clashes between the rival Syrian forces they back that are fighting for control of Idlib province. Similar “de-escalation” deals between the same powers have failed to overcome their differences and paved the way for new conflicts, with the toll falling on working people.

“We call it the killer cease-fire,” Abdulkafi, a teacher and supporter of the rebels’ nine-year fight against the dictatorial rule of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, told the *Financial Times* March 8. “What’s coming after it is destruction.”

1 million people have fled Idlib

Since December 1 million people have fled their homes in Idlib after a scorched-earth offensive by Syrian forces, backed by Moscow’s air power and Tehran-organized militias. Many of those driven from their homes are living in makeshift camps near the Turkish border in freezing conditions, while others have fled to Idlib city, seeking shelter in bombed-out buildings there.

The Syrian government aims to capture the entire province, the last area of the country beyond govern-

ment control with the exception of the area east of the Euphrates River held by U.S.-backed Kurdish forces.

“What’s the point of the cease-fire if people can’t return home?” farmer Abu Ali told Reuters after fleeing to a refugee camp in northwestern Syria earlier this year. The province has long been the last holdout of different opposition groups that took up arms and seized territory across Syria in response to Assad’s brutal suppression of a popular uprising for political rights in 2011. In the course of the civil war that followed, the Turkish government armed some of Assad’s opponents, including the Free Syrian Army. The price for that support was their agreement to join the Turkish rulers’ invasion of Afrin, a Kurdish-held area in northwest Syria.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is determined to push back the autonomous areas Syrian Kurds have secured control over. Some 30 million Kurds, divided across Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, have fought against government assaults on their struggle for national sovereignty for decades.

The deal between the Russian and Turkish governments registers territorial gains made by the Assad regime and Moscow since December, including control of the M5 highway connecting

Aleppo, Syria’s second-largest city, and Damascus, the capital.

“Even if he [Assad] goes, someone will replace him,” Abdullah Mohammad told Al Jazeera after fleeing from Saraqeb last month. “For decades our issue has been the tight fist of [Syrian] security.”

Erdogan says his forces have no intention of abandoning the observation posts they control in the province. Moscow has used its alliance with Assad to secure its air force and naval bases in Syria. Both governments, as well as Tehran, which deploys sizable forces in Syria, do so to advance their own economic and political interests.

The capitalist rulers in the U.S. maintain far and away the largest armada of air, naval and ground forces in the region. Washington refused to provide the Turkish government, its NATO “ally,” with either air support or the missile defense systems it requested to battle Assad’s forces. The U.S. government is trying to pressure the Turkish rulers to back off the closer relations they have forged with the rulers in Moscow.

Large parts of Idlib remain under control of the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). Syrian government forces continue to shell areas held by HTS since the cease-fire was signed.

In New International no. 10
‘What the 1987 Stock Market Crash Foretold’
Resolution adopted by 1988
Socialist Workers Party convention



“Today, at this advanced point in the stagnation of capital accumulation, any of these partial crises has the growing potential to spiral out of control and trigger a worldwide depression and generalized social crisis.”

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Cuba's fight to defeat Ebola

Continued from front page

ambassador to the United Nations; professor Asha Samad-Matias of the City University of New York; Martín Koppel, co-editor of the new Pathfinder Press editions; and Ike Nahem of the New York/New Jersey Cuba Sí coalition.

Layan Fuleihan, education coordinator of The People's Forum, welcomed people to its venue in midtown Manhattan. Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder and the book's other co-editor, chaired, saying the book is a "powerful introduction to the Cuban Revolution."

Waters and Koppel recently returned from the Havana International Book Fair, where the books were launched at an event hosted by the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). (See March 2 issue of the *Militant*.)

Weapon to defend revolution

Washington is stepping up its economic sanctions against Cuba, Koppel said. This has a big impact on daily life. "What was most striking, however, was the determination and calm confidence, especially among workers, that the Cuban people will resist these imperialist pressures," he said.

"People told us, 'For 60 years 12 U.S. administrations — Democrats and Republicans alike — have tried to defeat us. It won't work any better for them this time. Yes, we face shortages of material goods, but there's no shortage of human creativity. We make sure no one is left on their own.'"

As part of its assaults on the Cuban Revolution, Koppel said, the U.S. government "peddles the grotesque lie" that thousands of volunteer doctors, nurses and technicians who offer life-saving care in parts of the world where they're most needed are "slaves, even victims of human trafficking."

Through interviews with Cuban medical personnel who helped lead in ending the Ebola epidemic ravaging West Africa in 2014-15, Koppel said, *Red Zone* answers Washington's slanders against Cuba's army of white coats. "That's why it's such an effective weapon to defend the Cuban Revolution today."

The 256 medical workers were chosen from some 12,000 who volunteered "to go somewhere they knew they might die," Ubieta said in his video. His remarks had been specially recorded by ICAP for this meeting and for use by defenders of Cuba's revolution across North America and beyond.

Ebola had a high fatality rate, Ubieta said. There was no established treatment. Liberia, Guinea and Sierra

Leone had been "plundered by colonial powers. As a result, an epidemic like Ebola develops rapidly."

Before the Cuban doctors arrived, the standard protocols aimed to "protect the doctors, not the patients," Ubieta said — "'Don't touch them, don't insert intravenous lines!'" While maintaining the highest safety standards, the Cubans put new protocols into practice. "They treated patients as patients, never as customers. They treated them as equals." Only one Cuban doctor contracted Ebola. He recovered and returned to complete his mission.

"The global health system is geared to enrich a few, not safeguard human lives," Ubieta said. In contrast, Cuba's medical missions show the world "what it's possible for a revolutionary state to do."

"The Cubans who take part in these missions return as better people, better revolutionaries," Ubieta said. "The revolution strengthens the dignity of men and women. It strengthens their capacities for social participation."

Ambassador Rodríguez noted that Cuba's first medical mission was to Algeria in 1963, just a few years after the Cuban Revolution. Cuba didn't yet have enough doctors at home, she said, "but we've always shared what we have, not what we have left over."

Since then, more than 400,000 Cuban medical workers have served in 164 countries, treating over 1.8 billion people. Today, almost 30,000 health workers are serving in 65 countries.

"Our doctors and nurses are all volunteers. No one is forced to go. They serve in remote and poverty-stricken areas where a doctor is considered a luxury, not a necessity," she said.

The ambassador urged everyone to read *Red Zone*. "It's exciting and moving," she said. "It made me very proud of my people." Drawing on her own experience, she pointed to the relations of human solidarity underlying how the revolution organizes medical care, at home and abroad. (See accompanying box.)

Don't act 'like doctors'

"This book will help people learn the facts about Cuba's medical missions," Professor Samad-Matias said. She recalled her own experiences talking with people who'd been treated by Cuban health workers in countries she's visited, including Tanzania, Grenada, Guyana and Surinam.

In Grenada, she was told how, unlike most private doctors who only see patients who come to the capital city, St. Georges, "the Cuban specialists visit

'For us, prevention is key,' says Cuban ambassador

NEW YORK — "In Cuba, the neighborhood doctors are the heart of health care," Ana Silvia Rodríguez, Cuba's ambassador to the United Nations, said during the discussion at the March 7 meeting here on *Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle Against Ebola in West Africa*. She was answering a question about Cuba's response to coronavirus.

Cuba has a doctor for every 150 people, the ambassador said. They live in the community and know the people they care for. She described what happened when she and her husband recently returned to Cuba for a visit.

"We both had the flu," she said. After filling out the standard health form, they were each examined carefully by one of the medical workers stationed at the airport. By the time they got home, their family doctor already had been informed and was waiting for them.

"She checked on us daily until we were well," Rodríguez said.

The same attention and human solidarity mark Cuba's missions abroad, the ambassador said. She recalled when she and her husband were assigned to Cuba's embassy in the Caribbean island of Grenada some years ago.

Among her responsibilities there was Operation Miracle, a program established by Cuba in 2004 that has restored vision, free of charge, to more than a million people around the world suffering from cataracts, cataract-induced blindness and other eye problems treatable by laser surgery.

"I got a call from Havana one night," Rodríguez recalled. "We're sending a plane the day after tomorrow to bring people here for the operation," a government official told her.

"I panicked," she said. "'Who's going to jump on a plane to go to a foreign country with so little notice?' I called the first person on my list, a young woman. As soon as I explained she could restore her sight, she said yes!"

"In no time at all that plane was full. And it was only the first."

— SARA LOBMAN



Militant/Mike Shur

rural areas, treat you right there if possible, or offer free transportation to the hospital, if necessary."

"The Cubans don't act like doctors!" former patients would often tell her, Samad-Matias said, with a laugh. "They act like normal people, not like they're superior."

Tribute to Rafael Cancel Miranda

Waters opened the event with a salute to Puerto Rican revolutionary and independence fighter Rafael Cancel Miranda, who died March 2. The last time she had heard him speak, Waters said, was at a 2012 meeting in Washington, D.C., demanding freedom for five Cuban revolutionaries then serving long sentences in U.S. prisons.

In fighting for the Cuban Five, "we're not doing them a favor," Cancel Miranda had said. "Because we are fighting for ourselves, for our freedom."

At 82 years old, "I have not changed my way of thinking at all," Cancel Miranda said in closing. "Except that today maybe I'm a little more revolutionary, because I know the enemy better."

Koppel also paid tribute to Cancel Miranda. The Puerto Rican revolution-

ary was one the most effective defenders of the Cuban Revolution, he said.

That revolution "is a powerful living example for us here in the U.S.," Koppel said, "where there's no system of health care, just medical insurance for the profit of the wealthy." In contrast to Cuba, "we know the U.S. government and medical establishment are not going to respond to the coronavirus in a way that really protects people."

"Cuba shows the road the working class here needs to take," he said. "We're told by our exploiters that the brutal values bred by capitalism — 'everyone for yourself' — is just human nature and can't be changed."

"*Red Zone* refutes that lie. It gives a vivid picture of how millions in Cuba have been transformed through a deep-going socialist revolution."

Koppel said he hoped the successful New York event would spur similar programs across the U.S., Canada and elsewhere.

A discussion period followed the presentations. And a reception hosted by the Socialist Workers Party at their nearby headquarters and book center drew dozens of participants to continue the exchange.

Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle Against Ebola in West Africa

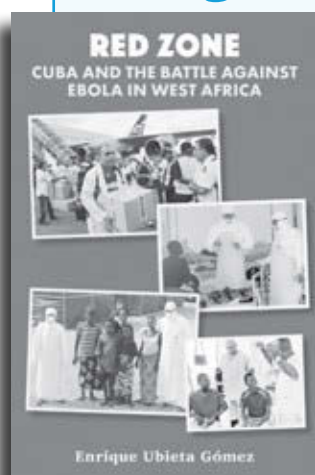
"Just as the Cuban combatants in Angola set an example that can never be erased, the heroic actions of Cuba's army of white coats will occupy a place of honor."

—Fidel Castro, October 2014

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Chicago

Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle Against Ebola in West Africa. Speakers: Enrique Ubieta, author *Red Zone*, via video from Cuba; Naomi Craine, attended launching of *Red Zone* book at Havana International Book Fair; Dr. Howard Ehrman, chief medical officer for Will County during Ebola outbreak, UIC School of Public Health; Jabari Tidmore, Chicago Cuba Coalition. Sun., March 15. Reception, 3:30 p.m.; program, 4 p.m. Donation: \$10. *UE Hall, 37 S. Ashland Ave.* Sponsored by Chicago Cuba Coalition.

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A road forward for workers, our unions

Workers today need to organize together to protect ourselves from the assaults of the bosses and their government. In order to protect their crisis-ridden profit system, the bosses are forced to step up their attacks on workers and farmers the world over.

Their economic and social assaults will intensify. Today the capitalist rulers leave workers to fend for themselves, without adequate testing and a class-divided broken health system, to face the spreading coronavirus outbreak, with deadly results.

The deepening economic crisis will sharpen competition among workers for jobs, access to health care and other necessities. The employers count on these divisions to prevent us from fighting against what they push onto our backs.

But workers won't stop looking for ways to stand up to the bosses' attacks on wages and working conditions. In the process of fighting together we begin to overcome the disunity in our ranks that their dog-eat-dog system imposes. And our fight will win growing working-class solidarity.

We need to spread the word and build solidarity today with copper miners on strike against Asarco bosses' naked union-busting assault in Arizona and Texas.

The Socialist Workers Party 2020 campaign of Alyson Kennedy and Malcolm Jarrett explains that ad-

vancing struggles for higher wages and better working conditions is the foundation on which workers can begin to build broader resistance to the bosses' offensive. Out of experiences in labor struggles workers become more confident that our actions make a difference, more open to seeing our own worth and more interested in discussing the kind of party we need.

We will build and strengthen our unions to reach out to join the struggles of the unemployed, farmers, fighters for women's right to abortion, and victims of racist discrimination.

As millions are drawn into these battles, workers and consumers will be won to fight for workers control of production. We'll find that what is necessary for our class runs into conflict with "property rights" claimed by the capitalist owners. They use their control to hide the truth about how their system of exploitation works.

As we fight to take control of production, we learn that our class will have to take over management of the entire economy to prevent the disastrous impact of capitalism's economic and social breakdowns.

That can only become possible by building a labor party to lead our battles and to chart a course to take power out of the hands of the capitalist rulers and establish a workers and farmers government. Join the SWP campaign in fighting for this perspective.

Lesser-evil politics is dead end for workers

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were ignored by Washington and called for "draining the swamp." He now claims he is responsible for a "blue-collar boom."

Biden is consolidating his lead over Sanders in the Democrats' preconvention voting as the other centrist candidates have dropped out and endorsed him. He says he is the best, most realistic, choice to beat the president.

Sanders denounces both Democratic and Republican "establishments" for failing to provide working people with what they require. He says what workers need is a bigger and bigger government, like that run by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, that will regulate the capitalist system in a more benevolent manner.

By contrast, Alyson Kennedy and Malcolm Jarrett, the Socialist Workers Party candidates for president and vice president, point to what working people ourselves can *become* when we organize and fight together in our own class interests. It is only through working-class struggles — on the job and beyond — that workers gain self-confidence, become more battle-ready and see more clearly we are a class with common interests that are separate from the bosses and bankers that exploit us.

Can we advance working-class struggle?

The real question workers face is how can we advance the struggles we wage, big or small, against what the bosses do to us. How can we link up in solidarity with others fighting today. And how can we strengthen the position of our class by building our own party, a labor party, as our struggles grow. Such struggles are an inevitable product of the deepening crisis of capitalism today. The capitalist lesser-evil electoral setup is a pressure valve the rulers use to entice workers to blow off some steam at the ballot box every few years, rather than rely on ourselves and deepen our struggles.

Over decades the employers have succeeded in driving real wages down, taking advantage of the fact our union officials focus on deals of "common interest" with the bosses — an impossibility under capitalism. They —reject mobilizing the ranks of the unions to fight.

Average hourly wages grew by just 1% last year, yet inflation over the same period ran at 2.3%. And those with the lowest pay shell out a much higher proportion of our wages on basic necessities like rent, food, transportation and a little health care, whose prices are rising even faster.

Almost half of everyone in the U.S. lives paycheck to paycheck today, and even more don't have any savings to fall back on in case of an emergency.

Household debt reached a record high of \$14.15

trillion last month, a boon for the capitalist blood-suckers — as long as they can collect. Last year more people fell behind on credit card, auto and student debts, something bound to accelerate with an economic downturn.

Low wages, mounting debts and rising rents are forcing more young workers to live with their parents, put off getting a place of their own and starting a family. Life expectancy in the U.S. began falling in 2015, largely the result of depression, drug use and suicides.

Side by side with their assaults on wages, the bosses' drive for profits makes them push ever more dangerous conditions onto workers in the mines, on the railroads, in retail stores, warehouses and other workplaces. None of this will end, whichever of the bosses' parties takes the White House.

The union officials insist workers should look to the bosses' parties for help. They tell us to be "realistic" in politics — and in negotiations.

Officials of the American Federation of Teachers; National Education Association; the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; and the Service Employees International Union are hustling to get more of their members elected as delegates to the Democratic Party's July convention, to "have more clout." They're offering financial inducements to attend.

And if Sanders loses the nomination and some of his backers decide to spin off a new, more "radical" capitalist party — it will just mean a three-party shell game.

Getting workers to orient to capitalist electoral politics does nothing to advance the organization of the working class — something that can only occur as a product of working class *action*.

Only the Socialist Workers Party candidates point to the fights working people can be part of today and how we can use solidarity to strengthen these struggles.

They explain why workers need their own labor party, based on union struggles, to implacably fight for the interests of all the exploited and oppressed. The SWP candidates say workers need to take on every attack and indignity the bosses and their governments impose on us and build a movement that can put an end to their class rule.

They point to the example of the Cuban Revolution, where workers and farmers overthrew the U.S. imperialist-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and made the first socialist revolution in our hemisphere. That revolution lives today, something to learn from and emulate.

Like Cuban workers and farmers, in the course of our struggles we'll gain the class consciousness and the capacity to run society ourselves.

Asarco miners strike

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for five months in Arizona and Texas.

The strike was provoked by bosses demanding another four-year wage freeze after 10 years without a pay raise, plus doubling or nearly tripling health care costs, freezing pensions and restricting the unions' right to protect workers on the job. "People understand why we're on strike," Placencio said.

Miners have kept picket lines up 24/7 while the bosses have continued production at three surface mines in Arizona — Mission, Ray and Silver Bell — using newly hired strikebreakers, nonunion contractors, supervisors and around 300 workers who have crossed the picket line.

An important part of the fight by the copper workers is for safety in the mines, an issue of pressing concern highlighted by things that have happened as the company drives to keep some production going during the strike. The United Steelworkers *Solidarity News* reported there was a fire at the Mission Mine Feb. 19 with over 15 emergency vehicles responding.

"Toxic chemical releases from Arizona's industries rose 70% in 2018 from 2017," reported the Feb. 29 *Arizona Daily Star*. "Eight of Arizona's top 10 ranked releases in 2018 came from copper mines and smelters."

Tailings — the rock dust left over from mining and processing copper — contain materials that can be highly toxic, especially dangerous when they're blown around by the wind and are breathed in.

The article noted that the release of toxic materials from Asarco's Tucson-area mines "via tailings and waste rock disposal were, at more than 8 million pounds, more than four times greater than in 2010."

Asarco "considers its profits more important than human life," Placencio said. "At the Mission Mine, the EPA has been notified because winds have stirred up the mountains of tailings. Asarco doesn't have the workforce to take on the task of maintaining it, something we did regularly as part of our job before the strike."

Asarco is owned by Grupo Mexico, one of the world's largest copper producers. The company refuses to negotiate with the unions. The seven striking unions at the copper mines have organized food pantries at the union halls, protests at corporate offices and industry conferences, and weekly public dinners and movie nights at the strike line. Many miners have gotten other jobs to make ends meet while continuing their picket duties. In doing so they've learned first-hand about working conditions when there is no union.

Asarco bosses have aimed to bust the unions from the beginning. They've been aided by a virtual black-out of the strike in the big business press.

In a case filed before the National Labor Relations Board, Asarco is pressing to decertify USW Local 937 as the union representing workers at the Silver Bell Mine in Marana, Arizona, the smallest of the company's operations. The company claims only the 11 workers on strike are union members. Nearly 150 workers are employed there and Asarco says over 90% have crossed the picket line.

The board's regional director postponed ruling on the company's case until the union's unfair labor practice charges filed against Asarco have been decided. Asarco demands the NLRB conduct an immediate review of its call for decertification of the union.

To counter these attacks, solidarity, donations to the strike fund and messages of support are crucial. Send financial contributions and solidarity messages to USW Local 915 Strike Assistance, P.O. Box 550, Kearny, AZ 85137; USW Local 5252 Strike Assistance, P.O. Box 896, Kearny, AZ 85137; USW Local 5613, 4230 Texas Hwy 136, Amarillo, TX 79108; or via paypal.me/palfcommunityservice for Tucson-area strikers. Solidarity messages can be sent to palfchair@gmail.com.

Contribute to the food pantries at: USW 915 and 886 hall, 107 Hammond Dr., Kearny; IBEW Local 570 hall, 750 S. Tucson Blvd., Tucson; USW Local 5613, 4230 Texas Hwy 136, Amarillo, Texas.

'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

The fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. Send a check or money order payable to the 'Militant' and earmarked "Prisoners' Fund" to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018. Or donate online at www.themilitant.com