

\$4 at Newsstands and Bookstores

SocialistViewpoint

★ The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it. —Karl Marx ★

MARCH/APRIL 2026 VOL. 26 NO. 2



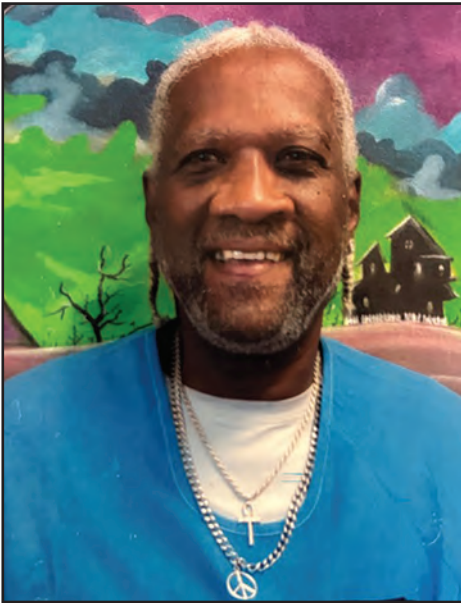
Fighting Fascism - Page 4

Resistance Grows to Trump's War Against Humanity - Page 6

Lessons of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement - Page 13

U.S. War on Vietnam: A GI's Story - Page 22

A Message from Kevin Cooper in Memory of Reverend Jesse Jackson



Kevin Cooper

I'm Kevin Cooper and I am still on Death Row in the state of California in 2026.

In 2004, on February 10th, at one minute after midnight, California was planning to torture and murder me *via* poisonous lethal injection drugs. However, at 11:00 A.M. on February 9th, the late Reverend Jesse Jackson came to San Quentin prison with one of my attorneys and brought me the stay of execution paper work from the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. But it wasn't over because the U.S. Supreme Court could still overturn the stay.

He told me about the struggles we Black people have in the criminal justice system and that the death penalty was no more than a modern-day lynching. He told me that we had to have faith that one day we would put an end to the death penalty and I believed him. I believe that still.

From 11:00 A.M. until 6:00 P.M. Reverend Jackson stayed with me and other visitors in the visiting room. He did everything he could to take my mind off of the fact that I still could be executed if the Supreme Court lifted

the stay of execution. He told jokes and made me laugh. He prayed with me and for me. He told me about the struggles we Black people have in the criminal justice system and that the death penalty was no more than a modern-day lynching. He told me that we had to have faith that one day we would put an end to the death penalty and I believed him. I believe that still.

At six o'clock I was taken to the death chamber, but I was not executed. The stay held.

I thanked him then and I thank him now for his kindness and his humanity and for caring for everyday people like me.



Jesse Jackson, second from right, singing "We Shall Overcome" with the gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, left, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Albert Raby, right, in Chicago on August 4, 1966.

SocialistViewpoint

March/April 2026 Vol. 26, No. 2

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT
www.socialistviewpoint.org
email: info@socialistviewpoint.org

CONTENTS

U.S. and World Politics

- A Message from Kevin Cooper in Memory of Reverend Jesse Jackson** 2
By Bonnie Weinstein
- Fighting Fascism** 4
By Mark Harris
- Resistance Grows to Trump's War Against Humanity..** 6
By Isaac Saney
- Trump's Assault on Cuba and the World** 9
By Isaac Saney
- State Violence Against Black Americans Laid the Groundwork for Fascism** 12
By Jason Stanley
- Lessons of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement** 13
By Carole Seligman
- U.S. War on Vietnam: An Antiwar GI's Story** 22
Howard Petrick Interviewed by Dianne Feeley
- Trump Is Not a Nationalist. He's Something Worse..** 27
By Jean Guerrero
- Venezuela, Cuba, and the U.S. Empire** 30
By Brian Schwartz
- Fate of Gaza's Disappeared** 33
By Khaled El-Hissy

- Israel Continues to Strangle Palestine** 35
By Noah Kenner
- Mutual Aid or Mutual Assured Destruction** 37
By Joe Lauria
- The Battle Of Minneapolis** 45
By Anna Barnett and Jesada Jitraphakhan
- ICE Is Not the Only Problem** 50
By Monika Langarica
- "This Is Our New Normal"** 52
By Talya Minsberg
- Why Labor Unions Can't Ignore ICE** 54
By Alex N. Press
- "Backing Down Isn't an Option"** 56
By Lex McMenamin

Incarceration Nation

- From Ploughshares to Palestine Action** 59
By Dan Glazebrook
- Kevin Cooper, 68, Still Fighting After 41 Years on Death Row** 64
By David Greenwald
- Drop the Charges Against Nick Tilsen** 67

Socialist Viewpoint (ISSN 1535-5438) is published bi-monthly by the Socialist Viewpoint Publishing Association, 60 29th Street, #429, San Francisco, CA 94110. Rates: For one year (6 issues): Introductory rate in the U.S. \$20.00; Regular rate in the U.S. \$30.00; Bargain rate: \$35.00 for two years; All other countries \$50.00 (Money orders, checks, etc., should be in U.S. dollars.)

Periodicals Postage Paid at San Francisco, California.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Socialist Viewpoint, 60 29th Street, #429, San Francisco, CA 94110

Fighting Fascism

The need for mass, independent organizations of the working class

By BONNIE WEINSTEIN

The continued extreme use of force against working people by the capitalist class here and across the globe is in preparation for what they know will become a massive uprising in opposition to the extreme austerity, anti-democratic, racist, sexist, police-state measures they are planning to enforce to guarantee a steady increase in profits for themselves.

Trump is pursuing a policy putting American business interests above all others worldwide—in essence—to, “... expand territorial power for a class of transnational elites who believe they’re above the law.”¹

His goal is to form “special economic zones” in countries around the world controlled by a select group of U.S. and international business partners devoted to establishing rapidly multiplying forms of private territories with their own business-friendly laws, like looser environmental regulations and labor

standards. (It’s what the Trump administration brokered for Gaza in its cease-fire with Israel.) And not only internationally, but here in the U.S. as well.

It is a continuation and intensification of past U.S. imperialist actions, but with a new blueprint for establishing the military and political domination of U.S. capital over all the natural resources in the world, and to control the labor to extract them in every country in the world.

This is a new form of fascism—led by the United States—in this universal capitalist war against the working class.

The only thing that can hinder this new stage in this imperialist war on the world is the power of a massive, independent and democratically-organized working-class movement in solidarity against it. This movement must include working-class organizations, social jus-

tice groups, community organizing groups and, most importantly, all those unorganized people opposed to capitalism’s turn to fascism—all those who are not in any groups or organizations—the overwhelming majority of people in the world!

Capitalism’s inevitable decent into fascism

To accomplish their goal of crushing the working class, the Trump administration has used immigration enforcement to militarily occupy our communities and criminalize anyone opposed to ICE, racism, sexism and fascism. The U.S. has become a model for criminalizing immigrants in countries across the world—rounding them up, deporting them, incarcerating and killing them—and criminalizing anyone who dares to speak up in defense of immigrants.

The surveillance state

Along with the all-out assault on immigrants and anyone who supports them, they have an ulterior motive—to identify anyone who has been on a demonstration, a strike, students walking out of schools—targeting anyone opposed to Trump’s assault on immigrants and democracy and on the living standards of the masses of workers.

In order to enforce their plan, they have created a surveillance program that not only uses new technology—drones, satellite imaging, social media platforms, *etc.*—they are using facial recognition, car license cameras on public streets, private surveillance cameras—even hacking private cell phones—to identify us and put us in their data base of “undesirables.”



ICE and federal agents in Minneapolis after Alex Pretti was killed on Jan. 24, 2026. Photo by Richard Tsong-Taatarii/The Minnesota Star Tribune.

According to a February 3, 2026, article in the *New York Times* titled, “ICE Is Watching You,” by Tressie McMillan Cottom:

“You don’t need to understand how digital tracking works or have a degree in constitutional law to grasp what is happening to your privacy. You need only know this: Whatever is happening with your data, it is important enough to the most egregiously lawless administration in American history that it be collected and consolidated. It is important enough that a federal cowboy kept one hand on his phone even as his other hand reached for his gun. A militarized federal police force that acts out of loyalty on the whim of a political leader who relishes retribution and adulation is the tip of an iceberg. You don’t build a nuclear bomb for peace any more than you build a national surveillance apparatus just to manage a border wall. This kind of weaponry could effectively nullify our Fourth Amendment right to protection from unreasonable search and seizure. It also could more easily enable the government to trample on your free speech. And it could do all of this without meaningful transparency or oversight.”

But this is not new. The surveillance state has been forming for a long time. In a February 4, 2026, article in the *Times*, titled, “ICE’s New Surveillance State Isn’t Tracking Only Immigrants,” by David Wallace-Wells:

“Last month Tom Homan, the president’s border czar, bragged to *Fox News* about how he was pushing to ‘create a database where those people that are arrested for interference, impeding and assault — we’re going to make them famous.’ But Homan, Trump, his adviser Stephen Miller and the homeland security secretary, Kristi Noem, haven’t conjured a new surveillance state out of whole cloth. We are now several decades into the militarization of American law enforcement and the expansion of the homeland security mandate, which have together yielded an un-

nering mix of imperial impunity and national-security-style policing that the historian Nikhil Pal Singh has called a new form of ‘homeland empire.’ Last May, researchers at Georgetown Law republished a 2022 report, ‘American Dragnet,’ which found that ICE spent \$2.8 billion on expanded surveillance capabilities from 2008 to 2021. The spending had nearly tripled since 2015, and most of the increase was invested in geolocation. ... By 2022, the researchers found, ICE had already scanned the driver’s license photos of one-third of American adults and had access

You don’t build a nuclear bomb for peace any more than you build a national surveillance apparatus just to manage a border wall.

to the information contained on a typical license for many more. It was tracking the movement of drivers in cities home to three-quarters of American adults and could locate three-quarters of American adults through their utility records. ... This may not feel like a significant escalation, given how police officers routinely radio in to check the records of those they’ve pulled over, for instance. But giving indiscriminate checkpoint-style power to every agent in the field, Bier said, is ‘a total reshaping of law enforcement in the United States.’ Instead of investigating a crime by identifying a suspect and then pursuing information about him or her, officers instead begin with someone they want to treat as a criminal and then use the technology to find a justification.”

Taking the control out of the hands of the minority-dictatorship of capitalism

Capitalist democracy is defined as the right of corporations to reap private

profits by any means necessary. They have the right to buy businesses, land or property anywhere in the world it’s for sale. They are not bound by borders! They can kidnap and jail presidents of other countries as they have most recently done in Venezuela; they can shut-down virtually all trade with Cuba—essentially trying to starve the Cuban population into capitulation to U.S. imperialism.²

The U.S. is and has always been a slave-state

The U.S. is a country that was founded upon the right of European invaders to subjugate the indigenous population and enslave masses of Black, Brown, and Asian Americans as outright slaves—and subjugate Irish, Italian, Eastern European, Muslim, Jewish, and other American immigrants.

The power of grass roots movements based upon democratic participation of groups and individuals working together

There is a rich history of resistance to U.S. imperialism. Great victories have been won by workers in the early 20th century marking the beginning of the formation of a massive labor movement to organize unions, voting rights for women, the Civil Rights Movement, voting rights for Black Americans, the Vietnam Antiwar Movement.³

The most successful movements and organizations included mass participation of individuals and groups in a democratic decision-making processes. They were successful *because* masses of people became involved in the decision-making process.

The good news is that the people of Minneapolis, and elsewhere around the country, are organizing on a door-to-door basis in their communities. Churches are delivering food to undocumented families who fear going to the grocery store, neighborhoods have organized ICE “watches” in order to warn people when ICE is sighted in the

area and then confronting them and actually forcing them to leave in some instances. So far, hundreds-of-thousands of people have signed up for “ICE Watch” training across the country.

This is a concrete example of true grass-roots organizing springing up among the working class. The overwhelming majority are opposed to ICE and to Trump and feel it’s important to take a stand in support of their neighbors under ICE attack. This is happening without the direction or leadership of political parties or organizations in the communities. It’s happening because there is a mass radicalization going on right now among the working class here and everywhere.

We need coalitions that welcome everyone—groups, labor unions, as well as people who are not in any organization—based upon an open, transparent and democratic structure with one person, one vote and majority rule—organizations that are independent of capitalist parties and controlled by the working-class majority with leaders chosen by that majority.

This is our most important message now.


If we are for socialism, we must be for empowering the working class to rule in our own defense and for the good of all.

1 Read, “Trump Is Not a Nationalist. He’s Something Worse.”

By Jean Guerrero elsewhere in this issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*.

2 Read, “Trump’s Assault on Cuba and the World,” elsewhere in this issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*.

3 Read, “Lessons of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement,” “An Antiwar GI’s Story,” and “Not Minnesota Nice.” elsewhere in this issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*.



HOLT LABOR LIBRARY
Gerth Archives and Special Collections University Library
California State University, Dominguez Hills
1000 East Victoria Street, LIB South 5039
Carson, CA 90747
phone: 310-243-3895
email: archives@csudh.edu

Labor Studies & Radical History

- Over 6,000 labor & socialist books and pamphlets
- 90 current subscriptions to labor & left periodicals
- 300 labor & radical movies and documentaries
- Trotskyist bulletins, documents, and papers
- Scrapbooks & ephemera from the Anti-Vietnam War movement and Fairplay for Cuba
- Audiotapes of classes by Tom Kerry & Larry Trainor

Monday through Friday
9:00am-12pm
and 1pm - 4:30pm
Appointment suggested

Visit us on the web: <https://libguides.csudh.edu/Holt-Labor-Library>

Resistance Grows to Trump’s War Against Humanity

BY MARK HARRIS

If there is any hope for humanity’s future, it is in the vision of the day when war criminals, authoritarians, fascists, and other enemies of democracy can no longer threaten the world with impunity.

We are far from that reality at present. As we enter a new year, global power remains decidedly in the grip of a *status quo* dominated by corporate politicians, war criminals, and financial elites. Led by President Donald Trump, the worst of these political mobsters represent leadership on a moral caliber with history’s most malevolent barbarians.

In Minneapolis, the murder of Renée Good on January 8 by a federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement

(ICE) agent has rightly provoked an outpouring of popular grief, anger, and resistance. In turn, the Trump administration’s response makes it clear that even the pretense of accountability or expectation of due process are nonexistent for this government. With even more federal agents flooded into Minneapolis in response, this lawless administration has made it clear it is at war with the American people.

A man with a reputation for lying about almost everything, President Trump has recreated his second administration in his own likeness. It took director of Homeland Security Kristi Noem only a couple hours after the shooting to brand Good a “domestic

terrorist,” claiming the ICE agent acted in “self-defense” when she attempted to strike him with her vehicle. Noem also claimed Good had been stalking and impeding ICE’s activities “all day,” even though it was only just after 9:30 A.M. when she was shot. She offered no evidence to support these charges.

In fact, ICE agents reportedly waited nearly three minutes before even calling 911 emergency services. Nor did they initiate CPR on Good or allow a doctor on the scene to assess her in the moments after the shooting. Instead, ICE agents briefly assessed Good and then left her bleeding and unattended until paramedics arrived several minutes later. It was more than ten minutes

before Good, who reportedly still had a pulse, received CPR from paramedics.

MAGA's hack propaganda

Not surprisingly, President Trump and MAGA loyalists in the media and elsewhere quickly echoed Noem's fantastical narrative. But anyone who watches video of the incident and thinks this victim blaming is a closed case requiring no further investigation is just serving the cause of hack propaganda.

Incredulously, it took Homeland Security more than a week to claim the agent who shot Good, Jonathan Ross, had received medical treatment for "internal bleeding" in the torso after being hit by Good's car. No corroborating evidence was offered in support of this claim. But what does this claim even mean? That Ross was slightly bruised after being bumped by Good's car as she attempted to drive away? In videos of the incident Good is clearly turning her vehicle to the right (not toward Ross) as she attempted to drive away. Further, the ICE agent is plainly visible standing to the side of Good's vehicle when he fired two more shots at her. Did Good also deserve to be shot in the face because she didn't immediately comply with one agent's order to exit her vehicle? Actually, the MAGA hive mind has no shortage of reasons to justify her murder. She was a "lesbian agitator" with pronouns in her bio, after all.

But not to worry. Vice President JD Vance has assured us the ICE agent who killed Good has "absolute immunity" from prosecution, a view many legal experts strongly refute. The Trumpified FBI has also barred Minnesota state criminal investigators from access to materials in the case, exposing the Trump administration's utter disregard for both the law and the truth. Tellingly, the U.S. Department of Justice shows zero interest in even investigating the killing, a move that has prompted resignations of several federal prosecutors in Minnesota.

The litany of ICE atrocities in the past year are many. For months, these thugs have terrorized American neighborhoods, pursuing a mass deportation policy that is inhumane and racist. In the first nine months of 2025 alone, approximately 220,000 people were arrested by ICE officers. Despite the president's bogus claim that the immigration crackdown is necessary to target murderers, rapists, and gang members, more than 75,000 of those arrested last year had no criminal record. Can Trump make the same claim?

The Trump presidency is an authoritarian cancer on what's left of the body politic of democracy, led by the mendacious real estate blowhard turned politician and his hand-picked cabinet of sycophants, grifters, opportunists, and assorted incompetents.

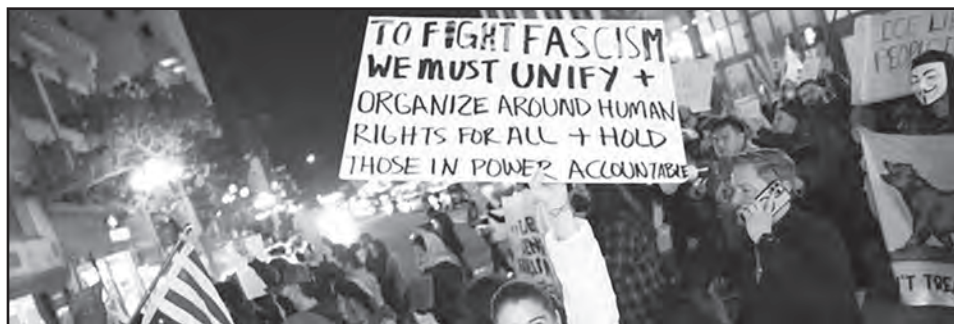
Actually, available data does not distinguish detainees with serious legal offenses from those with minor violations. In many instances, being in the United States illegally is a civil violation or misdemeanor offense, not a felony. As of early December, there

were about 65,000 or more persons being held in ICE detention facilities.

The shooting of Good is also not an isolated incident of government violence. In fact, since September, ICE agents have been involved in 11 shooting incidents. In Santa Ana, California, federal officers shot two people in the face with "less lethal" projectiles, causing permanent eye damage. In Minneapolis, federal agents deployed flash-bang devices and tear gas on a family with six children in their car who were driving home from a sports practice.

The exploding lawlessness of the Trump administration now constitutes a blatant threat to democratic and human rights everywhere. Indeed, it's a sign of the urgency of our times that scheduled antiwar rallies across the United States on January 10 to oppose the recent U.S. military assault on Venezuela and kidnapping of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Celia Flores, initiated by the Democratic Socialists of America and the Party for Socialism and Liberation, had to be quickly amended to include a response to Good's murder and the escalating threats from ICE.

Obviously, the military assault on Venezuela's sovereignty was less about drugs and democracy than oil, power, and money. Maduro's alleged complicity in narco-terrorism and weapons charges is only a specious pretext for an attack on a nation that just happens to have the world's largest oil reserves. Venezuela's real crime is that it operates independently of U.S. foreign policy,



Protesters hold placards during a rally against Immigration and Customs Enforcement in downtown San Diego, California, where demonstrators first gathered outside a federal building before marching through the city, on January 8, 2026.

which under Trump's crudely resurrected version of the Monroe Doctrine now constitutes an unforgivable sin. Does anyone seriously believe Trump, who recently pardoned convicted former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez of drug trafficking and weapons charges, actually cares about narco-trafficking?

With escalating threats now against Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Denmark, Greenland, and Iran, there is little coherent or reasoned policy in this intensifying U.S. global aggression. But there is Trump's need to distract the American people from his personal scandals and failures as a leader, and from the basic truth that he has absolutely nothing to offer to improve life for the majority of the people.

Gaza: preface to a world under siege

Of course, we should not be surprised at what is happening now in the United States. Trump's wild assault on democratic and human rights, his unhinged violent imperialism, are just the logical next expression of two years of genocidal destruction unleashed upon the people of Gaza by the Israeli state. This was a campaign of pure evil facilitated with decisive military support from both the Biden and Trump administrations.

Ironically, in 2025 the president who thought he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize conducted military attacks on seven countries and launched air assaults on alleged drug boats in the eastern Pacific and Caribbean. But don't feel too sorry for Trump the Nobel loser. To thank him for bombing her country, Venezuelan right-wing *coup* plotter Maria Corina Machado has now given Trump her Nobel Prize. In his own name, Trump has also been awarded the Israel Prize by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a war criminal and fugitive from an international arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court.

These war criminals and obsequious grovelers before the American president can give each other all the awards they want, it won't erase the moral censure they deserve. Whatever hope for this world exists belongs instead to the many millions of human beings who don't support targeting Palestinian children with bullets to the head or chest, starving families, bombing hospitals and schools, the forced displacement of around two million people, and other crimes against humanity. They don't believe 250,000 Palestinians deserved to die, to be maimed or left buried under rubble by a genocidal apartheid state. Nor do these many millions believe in kidnapping leaders of foreign states, bombing and threatening other nations with capricious indifference to their sovereignty, and ignoring international law.

**Watching Trump and
MAGA politics in action
over the past year is like
viewing a film
documentary in reverse
motion, as established
rights are undone and
the rule of a lunkhead
mob of far-right
extremists takes over.**

The Trump presidency is an authoritarian cancer on what's left of the body politic of democracy, led by the mendacious real estate blowhard turned politician and his hand-picked cabinet of sycophants, grifters, opportunists, and assorted incompetents. Watching Trump and MAGA politics in action over the past year is like viewing a film documentary in reverse motion, as established rights are undone and the

rule of a lunkhead mob of far-right extremists takes over. For what it's worth, Trump is already floating his interest in finding a way to subvert or even cancel this year's midterm elections. That's the direction his addled extremism is going.

Those who support the democratic and human rights of migrants and citizens, who oppose genocide and imperialist violence, are in a moment now that demands an escalation in mass action, solidarity, and resistance. Enough of the entrenched timidity of the Democratic leadership, many of whom remain hesitant even to curtail ICE funding. We need a mass united front built on grassroots organizing power, fueled by the activism, energy, and strength of unions, communities, students and everyone with a vested desire to stop ICE terror and the larger and growing authoritarian threat.

The call by labor and community leaders in Minneapolis for a general shutdown of the city on January 23—an "economic blackout"—to protest Good's murder and the ongoing harassment, abductions, and violence by ICE is an important initiative. This means no school, no work, and no shopping. Significantly, the Minnesota Labor Regional Federation AFL-CIO has announced support for the Minneapolis Day of Truth and Freedom, demanding ICE leave Minnesota now and the agent who killed Renée Good be held legally accountable.

This call for justice represents a significant step toward building an ever more forceful campaign of popular mass resistance to the current threats to our democratic and human rights.

—*Common Dreams*, January 21, 2026

<https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/resist-trump-s-war-on-humanity>

Trump's Assault on Cuba and the World

BY ISAAC SANAY

February 3, 2026—Donald Trump's declaration that Cuba constitutes an "unusual and extraordinary threat" to the national security and foreign policy of the United States is not merely false; it is a deliberate fabrication rooted in imperial ideology, Cold War mythology, and domestic political opportunism. The White House's "Addressing the Threats to the United States by the Government of Cuba" is a cynical attempt to cloak decades-long U.S. hostility and aggression against Cuban sovereignty in the language of emergency, security, and morality—none of which withstand even minimal scrutiny.

The decision to impose punitive tariffs on countries that trade oil with Cuba constitutes a reckless, vindictive, and illegal escalation of Washington's decades-long economic war against the Cuban people. This measure is not about "security," nor is it about democracy or human rights. It is an act of economic warfare—extraterritorial in reach, collective in punishment, and imperial in intent.

By targeting third countries for engaging in legitimate, sovereign trade with Cuba, the Trump administration is once again asserting its claim to be judge, jury, and enforcer over the global economy. These tariffs trample international law, violate the principles of national sovereignty, and seek to coerce the international community into complicity with a policy that the overwhelming majority of the world has repeatedly and unequivocally rejected at the United Nations.¹

Cuba: A force for peace and dialogue

Trump's specious claims about Cuba's so-called "malign influence" collapse under even the most cursory scrutiny. Far from being a destabilizing force, Cuba has consistently acted as a force for peace and dialogue in international affairs. Moreover, the repeated claim

that Cuba "hosts terrorists" has been thoroughly discredited. The U.S. government has never produced credible evidence that Cuba provides material support to terrorist organizations.

On the contrary, Cuba has been internationally recognized for its role as a mediator in peace negotiations, including hosting Colombian peace talks—an act praised by the interna-

tional community that brought an end to more than half-a-century of civil unrest. These negotiations—conducted in Havana at the request of the parties involved and with international backing—saved countless lives and earned global recognition, including praise from the United Nations and the international community. That Washington now vilifies Cuba for precisely this

OPEN LETTER

STOP DONALD TRUMP'S CRUEL ASSAULT AGAINST THE CUBAN PEOPLE

SIGN AT LETCUBALIVE.INFO

INITIAL SIGNERS

MARK RUFFALO ALICE WALKER KAL PENN BOOTS RILEY

SUSAN SARANDON VIC MENSA ALEXA AVILÉS

+ OVER 24 ELECTED OFFICIALS

...AND MANY MORE

contribution to peace exposes the profound cynicism and bad faith underlying U.S. policy.²

Trump's assertion that Cuba "aligns itself with" Russia, China, Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah is a textbook example of imperial guilt-by-association. It deliberately conflates lawful diplomatic relations and limited cooperation with allegations of terrorism and malign intent—without presenting evidence.

The manufactured moral outrage directed at Cuba exposes the profound hypocrisy of U.S. foreign policy.

Cuba, as a sovereign state, has the legal right under international law to conduct relations with any country it chooses.

The United States itself maintains diplomatic, economic, and intelligence relations with regimes that engage in systematic human rights violations, wars of aggression, apartheid practices, and mass civilian killings. The manufactured moral outrage directed at Cuba exposes the profound hypocrisy of U.S. foreign policy.

The claim that Cuba hosts "Russia's largest overseas signals intelligence facility" threatening U.S. national security is a recycled Cold War talking point long abandoned by serious analysts. Even U.S. intelligence assessments have acknowledged that Cuba lacks the strategic or technological capacity to compromise U.S. national security in this way. If intelligence cooperation between Cuba and other states constitutes a "national emergency," then by that logic the United States—whose intelligence agencies operate across the globe—would be in a permanent state of international illegality.

This allegation functions not as a factual claim, but as a pretext—

designed to rationalize escalation, sanctions, and economic warfare under the guise of defense.

U.S. "concern for human rights" devoid of credibility

Trump's sudden concern for human rights in Cuba is devoid of credibility. His administration openly embraces dictatorships, supports apartheid-like systems, arms regimes engaged in mass atrocities, and systematically attacks civil liberties and human rights within the United States itself.

Cuba is a country under constant siege, denied access to global markets, finance, medicine, fuel, and technology. The United States has no moral standing to posture as a "defender of human rights" while simultaneously enforcing policies designed to immiserate the Cuban population.

The "accusation" that Cuba "destabilizes the region through migration" is a stunning inversion of cause and effect. Cuban migration is not the product of Cuban aggression; it is the direct consequence of U.S. policy—namely, the economic strangulation imposed through the blockade, extraterritorial sanctions, and financial prohibitions designed explicitly to "bring about hunger, desperation, and overthrow."

To weaponize the humanitarian consequences of U.S. coercive policies as evidence of Cuban malignancy is morally indefensible. It is akin to setting a house on fire and then blaming the occupants for fleeing the flames.

The declaration of a U.S. "national emergency" with respect to Cuba is a legal fiction designed to circumvent constitutional constraints and international law: a crude instrument of economic warfare.

The claim that Cuba—a small, economically besieged Caribbean nation subjected to over six decades of U.S. economic warfare—poses a threat to the world's largest military and economic power is patently absurd.

The United States spends more on its military each year than the next several countries combined, maintains over 750 military bases worldwide, and exercises overwhelming dominance across every domain of warfare. Cuba, by contrast, has no capacity—military, economic, or technological—to threaten the territorial integrity, political stability, or security of the United States.

"Extraordinary threat" is Cuba's refusal to submit to U.S. domination

This "threat" narrative is not evidence-based; it is ideological. It recycles the same logic that justified the Bay of Pigs invasion, Operation Mongoose, biological warfare, hundreds of assassination attempts against Cuban leaders, and a comprehensive blockade universally condemned by the United Nations. What Trump labels an "extraordinary threat" is, in reality, Cuba's enduring refusal to submit to U.S. domination.³

What Trump labels an "extraordinary threat" is, in reality, Cuba's enduring refusal to submit to U.S. domination.

Trump's declaration tells us far more about the United States than about Cuba. It exposes an empire unwilling to tolerate defiance and determined to punish any nation that insists on charting its own path.

Cuba does not threaten the United States. What it threatens is the long-standing assumption that U.S. power is absolute, unquestionable, and eternal. And it is precisely this refusal to kneel—not any genuine security concern—that Trump seeks to criminalize under the fraudulent banner of a "national emergency."

But what, fundamentally, is it that Washington seeks to destroy? What is the society that the U.S. government is so zealously committed to undermining?

Cuba is a society in which universal education and healthcare are not privileges reserved for the wealthy but fundamental human rights. It is a society that affirms housing, food security, and access to culture as social responsibilities rather than market commodities. Within its limited resources—and despite the relentless external pressures imposed by the United States—the Cuban state has consistently sought to translate these aspirations into lived realities for its people.

In Cuba, there are no homeless children abandoned to the streets, forced to survive in a brutal, dog-eat-dog social order so characteristic of profit-driven, capital-centered societies. There is no normalization of mass deprivation alongside obscene wealth.

Cuba's "offense" is its socialist project outside U.S. control

At its core, Trump's declaration is not about "security," "terrorism," or "democracy." Cuba's real offense is not violence or destabilization, but its persistence as a socialist project outside U.S. control. This is precisely what makes Cuba intolerable to Washington: resistance and the enduring example of an alternative social project.

The objective of U.S. policy is unmistakable. It is to overturn the Cuban people's revolutionary process and to discredit socialism—not only in Cuba, but as a viable alternative on the world stage. The tariffs on oil trade are simply the latest weapon in a broader campaign of economic strangulation and destabilization designed to induce hardship, scarcity, and despair.

This campaign constitutes collective punishment in its purest form. It targets every facet of Cuban life: healthcare systems deprived of fuel and supplies, schools and universities strained by

shortages, food production undermined, transportation paralyzed, and infrastructure pushed to the brink. To claim concern for the Cuban people while deliberately engineering such suffering is not hypocrisy—it is cruelty.

In Cuba, there are no homeless children abandoned to the streets, forced to survive in a brutal, dog-eat-dog social order so characteristic of profit-driven, capital-centered societies.

All countries must unequivocally reject the U.S. economic war against Cuba. Silence or rhetorical disapproval is no longer sufficient. Each and every country must take immediate, concrete action to counteract the effects of this illegal blockade, defend the right of countries to engage in sovereign trade, and uphold international law against U.S. imperialist *diktat*.

At stake is not only Cuba's right to self-determination, but the right of all nations to chart their own paths free from coercion and punishment. To acquiesce is to normalize economic warfare. To resist is to affirm the principles of sovereignty, solidarity, and justice that must underpin any genuine international order.

Isaac Saney is a Cuba specialist who coordinates the Black and African Diaspora Studies program at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. With roots in the African Nova Scotia community and the Caribbean, his teaching, research, and scholarship encompass Cuba, Africa, the Caribbean, Black Canadian history, the global Black liberation struggle, and reparations. A

major area of his research is Cuba's relationship with Africa.

—World Outlook, February 3, 2026

<https://world-outlook.com/2026/02/03/u-s-blockade-of-oil-to-cuba-threatens-sovereignty-of-all-nations/>

1 Every year since 1992, except for 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations General Assembly has passed overwhelmingly a non-binding resolution that condemns the ongoing impact of the U.S. embargo and declares it in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law.

2 The Colombian peace talks took place between the government of Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) aimed at ending a decades-long conflict. Formal negotiations began in September 2012 and were primarily held in Havana, Cuba. The talks culminated in the Final Peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP; Cuba and Norway were guarantor nations for the agreement.

3 Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs) was where counterrevolutionary forces—organized and backed by the U.S. government—landed in an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Cuban Revolution in April 1961. Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces, alongside mobilizations of most of the island's the population, succeeded in crushing the invading forces three days later. Operation Mongoose was an extensive campaign of terrorist attacks against civilians and other covert operations carried out in Cuba by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. U.S. president John F. Kennedy authorized it on November 30, 1961. It was a secret program aimed at toppling the Cuban government.



State Violence Against Black Americans Laid the Groundwork for Fascism

BY JASON STANLEY

In a recent *Saturday Night Live* episode, when asked about Minneapolis, one of the white hosts intones: “Well, the first word that comes to mind is unprecedented. You’ve got federal officers roaming the streets just pulling people out of their cars based on how they look. This just doesn’t happen in America.” The joke is, of course, that “this” has been happening forever, but to Black people in America. Now that it is happening to others, and particularly now that white protesters are being killed in the streets, it is suddenly a national emergency.

In his 1955 work *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire, the French poet and politician, argues that fascism was the result of bringing to bear on domestic populations the tactics European countries used on their colonial subjects in Africa. This is what has been called in the literature the “imperial boomerang thesis.” As many have been pointing out on social media and elsewhere, if we think of the U.S. Black American population as an internally

colonized population, then you can see what is happening on the streets of Minneapolis as a manifestation of the imperial boomerang thesis.

As Ida B Wells noted in her 1892 book *Southern Horrors*: “They forget that a concession of the right to lynch a man for a certain crime ... concedes the right to lynch any person for any crime.”

It is an old point in the literature on fascism that if you allow fascism somewhere—in Guantánamo Bay, in Israel, on the streets of American cities—it will soon leak out everywhere. As Ida B Wells noted in her 1892 book *Southern Horrors*: “They forget that a concession

of the right to lynch a man for a certain crime ... concedes the right to lynch any person for any crime.”

Some commentators have taken the fact that the violence we are seeing is familiar in the U.S.—arbitrary killings by legal authorities—to draw the conclusion that what we are seeing is not fascism, but just America as it always has been. But fascism is characteristically arbitrary legal practices applied outside of what had been a standard exception—in the case of the United States, that would be generalizing the arbitrary violence directed at Black populations to the population as a whole. Fascism feeds off exceptions to equal personhood, adopting practices honed on those considered lesser-than to apply to the regime’s political opponents. America has always been structured on exceptions to equal personhood. These exceptions laid the groundwork for the descent of the U.S. into full-blown fascism.

We can also not maintain that the situation is merely the expansion of America’s fascist practices directed against non-white populations to the population at large. Fascism brings with it an intensification of the campaign against the exceptions, since it rips off the facade of pretense.

Right now, the official state policy of the U.S. government is white supremacy. We are in the phase of autocracy where the government is arresting journalists. And of course, the government is beginning this phase with publicly arresting Black journalists. The regime has publicly targeted Black people in positions of power, as well as sectors that employ large numbers of Black women. And of course, long-standing U.S. targeting of non-white immigrants has escalated, with the regime spending billions to build a vast system of concentration camps.



Federal agents in full military gear confronting peaceful protesters in Minneapolis in January 2026.

The terror campaign against Somali immigrants in Minneapolis and (it looks like) a coming pogrom against Haitian immigrants in Ohio will be opportunities to showcase the regime's capacity to impose terror. Under fascism, everything becomes dramatically worse for everyone—including the working-class white families whose access to healthcare and other basic human rights are dramatically rolled back to pad the pockets of the dictator and his billionaire friends.

Under fascism, everything becomes dramatically worse for everyone—including the working-class white families whose access to healthcare and other basic human rights are dramatically rolled back to pad the pockets of the dictator and his billionaire friends.

Fascism harshly targets LGBTQ+ acceptance. Again, this works in steps. The campaign against trans acceptance

was promoted in large part by mainstream media. But it was taken up as a central plank of the Trump campaign, and we can expect this “exception” to tolerance to be the springboard of a more widespread attack against the American LGBTQ+ community.

We are seeing classical theories of fascism unfold in real time, as exceptions to liberal ideals are used as launchpads for a full-scale assault on the ideals themselves. This should also serve as a vindication of another analysis—the response to fascism must include the dismantling of the pre-existing structures that enabled and justified its rise.

In other words, we cannot put the fires out one by one—the response to American fascism must necessarily involve addressing America's longstanding legal violence directed against its Black population, chiefly in the form of mass incarceration (nine U.S. states have higher incarceration rates than every country in the world except El Salvador; the U.S. state with the lowest incarceration rate still has an incarceration rate three times as high as Canada.) And the most obvious immediate step to dismantle the pre-existing structure that brought us to this moment is to abolish ICE, and indeed the entire Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The DHS was founded in the wake of the terrorist attack on 9/11. It immedi-

ately began infringing on the civil rights of Muslim Americans. Any would-be autocrat with a modicum of imagination would recognize it as an ideal institution to employ against the civil rights of all Americans. The DHS must be abolished. Any politician who argues otherwise is complicit in the rise of American fascism.

Jason Stanley is the Bissell-Heyd chair of American studies at the Munk School at the University of Toronto. He is the author of Erasing History: How Fascists Rewrite the Past to Control the Future.

—*The Guardian*, February 6, 2026

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/feb/06/state-violence-black-americans-fascism>

...(nine U.S. states have higher incarceration rates than every country in the world except El Salvador; the U.S. state with the lowest incarceration rate still has an incarceration rate three times as high as Canada.)

Lessons of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement

BY CAROLE SELIGMAN

We present this, and the following article about the history of the massive Vietnam Antiwar Movement which ended in defeat for the U.S., forcing the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam and the region. Both articles are written by participants of the movement at the time. Understanding the success of this movement—how it was organized to involve millions of people including the troops themselves—can help us to move

forward in the fight against the fascist trajectory of world capitalism today.

—*Socialist Viewpoint*

Introduction

I begin with a quote from the Vietnamese declaration of independence from France delivered in a speech by Ho Chi Minh in 1945.

“All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Cre-

ator with certain inalienable rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

“This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples of the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free.

“The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the

Rights of Man and the Citizen also states: 'All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights.'

"Those are undeniable truths.

"Nevertheless, for more than 80 years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice.

"In the field of politics, they have deprived our people of every democratic liberty.

"They have enforced inhuman laws; they have set up three distinct political regimes in the North, the Center, and the South of Vietnam in order to wreck our national unity and prevent our people from being united.

"They have built more prisons than schools. They have mercilessly slain our patriots; they have drowned our uprisings in rivers of blood.

"They have fettered public opinion; they have practices obscurantism against our people.

"To weaken our race, they have forced us to use opium and alcohol.

"In the field of economics, they have fleeced us to the backbone, impoverished our people, and devastated our land.

These few facts indicate a most important lesson of the Vietnam war: the brutality of the U.S. ruling class, the lengths to which they are willing to go to get their way. This is a fundamental truth that those who want to change society must know and teach. This is a society that cannot be meaningfully reformed.

"They have robbed us of our rice fields, our mines, our forests, and our raw materials. They have monopolized the issuing of bank-notes and the export trade.

"They have invented numerous unjustifiable taxes and reduced our people, especially our peasantry, to a state of extreme poverty."¹

Much of what the Vietnamese were revolting for are the things people want for themselves and their children throughout the world, but to get these things, the Vietnamese were forced to make a social revolution. And their revolution could not be one like the U.S. revolution they hoped to model their revolution upon, because capitalism had exhausted all its progressive character, its ability to develop the productive capability that could improve life for the workers. They were forced to fight against the world's most powerful capitalist countries—imperialist powers—especially the United States. They were forced to go beyond capitalism.

The Vietnamese revolution and the international response to the U.S. government's efforts to smash it is an event full of rich lessons for people who want to learn from history with the idea of changing the world, especially those with the idea of ridding the world of its brutal wars and brutal capitalist system of oppression.

Background to the revolution

Vietnam gained independence from China in the 10th Century A.D. and took its present geographical shape early in the 19th century. Vietnam fought China six different times over its first 800 years and had a strong national identity as a people.

The modern 20th century Vietnamese Revolution and war take place during a century of war and revolution—all a result of the world capitalist system's inability to solve the problems of humankind.

French colonial, and then imperialist, rule consolidated in 1913, treated Vietnam, and the other countries of formerly French Indochina, as a servile colony, extracting minerals and rubber and later developing and investing cap-



Martin Luther King Jr. famously labeled the U.S. government as the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world" in his 1967 "Beyond Vietnam" speech given at the Riverside Church in New York, citing the Vietnam War, military industrial complex, and systemic injustice.

ital in the rubber industry and manufacturing. The great Russian Revolution, arising in part out of the First World War, is very much a part of the background to the Vietnamese Revolution, whose leaders were inspired by the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, and later, very negatively influenced by the Stalinist leadership of both the Soviet Union and China.

The Second World War, and its re-division of the world's markets between the great imperialist powers saw the French colonial regime in Vietnam, when France was defeated and occupied by Germany, and declare its allegiance to the Vichy, Nazi-occupation government. Japan occupied Indochina in 1940 and ruled Vietnam through the old French colonial administration, but when the German armies were thrown out of France, Japan ousted the French administration from Vietnam and declared Vietnam independent, under Emperor Bao Dai, who cooperated with the Japanese.

That year, 1940, marks the beginning of indigenous guerrilla resistance in Vietnam to both the French Vichy colonialists and the Japanese invaders. Ironically, the Anglo-American Allies actually helped supply the Vietminh, which was a front of the Communist Party and nationalist forces in Vietnam lead by Ho Chi Minh, who was the leader of the underground Indochinese Communist Party. It was a popular front of workers, peasants and capitalist forces. During the anti-colonial struggle, the Vietminh succeeded in gaining control of most of the countryside and then, with the surrender of the Japanese to the Allies, a popular revolution swept the cities of Vietnam on August 19, 1945, and brought the Vietminh to power.

Ho Chi Minh issued a declaration of independence—quoted above—modeled on the U.S. declaration of independence of 1776 and set up the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

At the end of World War II, the Potsdam Agreements provided that British troops were to occupy Vietnam. The Vietminh government, under the influence of the Stalinist government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) welcomed the British soldiers into Saigon. Revolutionary forces, including Trotskyists, with influence in important sections of the mass movements of workers and peasants, mostly in the South of Vietnam opposed the British troops coming in and warned that they would come as conquerors, not allies.

The left wing said that the U.S. had no right to negotiate for anything in Vietnam and that the only demand on the U.S. government that honored the right of the Vietnamese people to determine their own destiny was for the U.S. and all foreign powers to withdraw.

Vietnamese Trotskyists wrote advocating a revolutionary policy of opposition to imperialism and support for world revolution, a worker-peasant united front, the creation of people's committees (soviets), establishment of a constituent assembly, arms for people, seizure of land by the peasants, nationalization of factories under workers' control, and the creation of a workers and peasants' government.

Second betrayal

The Communist Party of Vietnam ordered the disarming of the revolutionary Trotskyists, many of whom were then shot without trials, and the

revolutionaries' prediction about the intentions of the British came true. The Brits attacked the independence forces and handed power in the Southern part of Vietnam back to the French colonists (now under the DeGaulle government in France). The French and the Vietminh signed an agreement in which France recognized the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) government as a semi-autonomous part of the French Union, but only in the Northern part of the country, and then only for a short time.

The same agreement allowed the French to land troops in Hanoi, from which they launched a massive bombing of Haiphong Harbor and drove the Vietminh into the countryside from which they launched a prolonged guerrilla war against the French.

U.S. involvement against the Vietnamese revolution began during the Truman Administration when the U.S. started to provide military aid to the French in their colonial war of aggression to reconquer Vietnam for its colony.

With the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949, the U.S. stepped up its aid to the French, but the Vietnamese defeated the French during this eight-year war culminating in the decisive battle at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

The Geneva Accords of 1954 were the formal agreements for ending the war with the French, and they constitute another major betrayal of the Vietnamese revolution. The Accords, although requiring free elections to reunify the country in 1956, also established a line of demarcation, the 17th parallel, both sides of which the French (to the South) and the Vietnamese nationalists and communists (to the north) were to withdraw troops. This division was supposed to be a temporary measure, with elections to be held in 1956 to reunify the country. Why, we may ask, would the victorious Vietnamese concede territory again to foreign influence?

The Pentagon Papers reveal that this disastrous concession was “the result of heavy pressure on the Vietnamese delegation at the Geneva Conference from Molotov and Chou En-lai, the two representatives respectively of the Soviet Union and China!”

France did withdraw from Vietnam, but, in violation of the Geneva Accords, the U.S. came in and set up a brutally murderous, repressive, puppet dictatorship government headed by Ngo Dinh Diem, south of the 17th parallel. Diem, under the tutelage of the U.S., refused to hold elections as agreed to by the Geneva Accords for 1956. The South Vietnamese proxy government proceeded to undo the results of the war against the French in which the peasants had taken over much of the land from which the French-supported landlords had fled. New guerrilla fighting broke out and spread.

The war waged by the U.S. against the people of Vietnam mobilized the men and material of the wealthiest and militarily strongest state in the world against a small, war-torn poverty-stricken nation. Does this sound familiar?

The succession of proxy puppet governments set up by the U.S. in the South were so isolated from the people of Vietnam, they were chosen from among the Vietnamese mandarin class² who had been part of the French colonial administration, like Diem, or had even fought on the French side during the anti-colonial war. The U.S. and South Vietnamese puppets (the first of who was Diem) violated the letter and spirit of the Geneva Accords, which were supposed to unite Vietnam under the Vietminh government. The Vietminh was a coalition of the Vietnamese Communist Party and nationalists. It was a popular front of several classes. It enjoyed the popular support of the population of all of Vietnam. Even early U.S. government documents (as the publication of the Pentagon Papers³ proved) show U.S.

political and military leaders acknowledging that Ho Chi Minh would have won the leadership of a united Vietnam if free elections were held in 1956.

The Geneva Accords, with U.S. maneuvers, turned the unqualified victory of the Vietnamese over the French into a defeat for the Vietnamese, in that it allowed time and territory for the U.S. to gain a foothold in the South of the country and build a small, privileged group of Vietnamese Catholics into a support base for the puppet government by giving them land and special economic incentives.

By 1959, American combat soldiers, called “advisers” to the South Vietnam army, were dispatched to Vietnam and in response, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN), based in the north, began to help the resistance movement in the South. In 1960, the National Liberation Front was formed.

The U.S. War against the people of Vietnam lasted 15 years. By its end in 1975, the Vietnamese had won against the mightiest state of all time at a cost of over four million dead, millions wounded, the countryside poisoned, the economy destroyed. The U.S. lost over 58,000 killed; hundreds-of-thousands wounded; at least one-half-million veterans who suffer from postwar psychological trauma, chemical poisoning, hundreds-of-thousands drug-addicted and imprisoned, and an economy which had provided both “guns and butter” for the last time. In 1971, before the Vietnam war ended, a post-World War II trend of steadily-improved standards for American workers was permanently reversed.

Unprecedented U.S. brutality

To provide a small inkling of the brutality the U.S. government unleashed against the people of Vietnam here are a few statistics about the air war: During World War II the U.S. dropped two million tons of bombs on all theaters of war put together.

- By the end of 1971—and this is before the U.S. had stopped bombing Vietnam—the U.S. had dropped 6,300,000 tons of bombs in Indochina.
- In the two-year period of 1968-69 the U.S. had dropped over one-and-a-half more tonnage of bombs in South Vietnam than all Allied Forces dropped on Germany throughout World War II.
- By 1969 North Vietnam was being hit each month with bombs, the explosive force of which equaled two atomic bombs.
- In the 1972 Christmas bombing alone, the U.S. dropped more tonnage on Hanoi and Haiphong than Germany dropped on England from 1940 to 1945.
- From 1965-69 the U.S. dropped bombs with the equivalent of 50 pounds each for every man, woman, and child in Vietnam.
- The U.S. created 21 million bomb craters in South Vietnam alone.
- In the Northern part of Vietnam, the target of U.S. bombing was the economy, such that almost the entire modern industrial output was halted. Hospitals, schools and churches were especially targeted as well.

In the South, the U.S. targeted villages in order to force the peasant populations into eroded concentration camps, called strategic hamlets, or the Pacification Program. In 1961 President John F. Kennedy authorized massive chemical warfare, Operation Ranch Hand, which lasted over ten years.⁴ In South Vietnam alone the U.S. sprayed 18 million gallons of poisonous chemicals including Agent Orange and napalm, to defoliate the land, poison the crops, farm animals, and the people,

including American soldiers, and causing birth defects (through generations!), among other horrendous results.

My Lai

To cite only one specific event and give an idea of what the U.S. perpetrated in Vietnam, consider the village of Xom Lang—(the U.S. military mistakenly called it My Lai). U.S. Charlie Company, First Battalion, 20th Infantry, Americal Division went into the village Xom Lang. They were completely unopposed. They saw no soldiers of the National Liberation Front, no weapons at all, but they proceeded to massacre 504 villagers, mostly old men, women and girls (some of whom were gang-raped before being murdered), and children, including babies in arms. It was a racist slaughter against unarmed civilians. The massacre, which was not an exception to U.S. war policy in Vietnam, was a holocaust which, in its cruelty, rivals the slave trade and the Nazi death camps.

Another example of the extreme heartless brutality of the American side was revealed by television producers and reporters April Oliver and Jack Smith, fired from *CNN* for telling the story of a top-secret U.S. mission into Laos (where supposedly the U.S. never went,) to drop poison gas on American defectors and Indochinese revolutionaries and kill them. This story was revealed for the first time 28 years after the fact. Not only has the U.S. government again been caught in lies, because yes, it did make sarin gas weapons (30,000 of them during the Vietnam war), but it has been caught carrying out a secret war against another country, Laos. It has been caught using weapons of mass destruction that all international peace conferences have banned, using weapons which it accused Iraq of having, that it used for its reason for sanctions against Iraq that were responsible for killing hundreds-of-thousands of Iraqi children and other civilians.

These few facts indicate a most important lesson of the Vietnam war: the brutality of the U.S. ruling class, the lengths to which they are willing to go to get their way. This is a fundamental truth that those who want to change society must know and teach. This is a society that cannot be meaningfully reformed. To end this kind of brutality, power must be wrested from the U.S. ruling capitalist class and its government and state and taken over by those who have no reason to do violence against other peoples.

Vietnam was no mistake. The policies that led to these brutalities were the conscious policies of a capitalist system willing to use any and all means to maintain that system at any price. The beauty of the antiwar movement that developed in the U.S. is that it made the price to pay too high at home while the Vietnamese made the price to pay too high in Vietnam.

Many of the people in the antiwar movement against the war in Iraq (and subsequent antiwar movements) participated against the Vietnam War and were deeply and personally affected by it—especially the young men who were drafted to fight on the U.S. side. Some became socialists during the course of the war. Some veterans of the war became antiwar and revolutionary socialists. Some of the people who were born and grew up after the Vietnam war and revolution have also been effected because that war and all the events surrounding it changed the course of history in many ways.

Lessons from the antiwar movement

The age of war and revolution affected the U.S. directly. Just ten years after the end of World War II, the Black Civil Rights Movement burst out throughout the South and spread throughout the whole country, winning majority support, forcing a division in the ruling class with the decisive sector moving to partially end the

Jim Crow system of legal segregation in the South and granting civil rights for the Black population. The Civil Rights Movement dealt the decisive blow to McCarthyism and created the openings for a militant student antiwar movement and the student radicalization of the 1960s. The Cuban Revolution of 1959 was also a main inspirational source of the nascent radicalization in the United States. The spread of the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. accounts for the different reaction of students, and later, the working class in its majority, to the war against Vietnam, in contrast to the response to the U.S. war against Korea.

From the very beginning of the movement against the Vietnam war in 1964 (which was five years after the U.S. had begun its direct military intervention) the various people and groups who participated in the movement engaged in sharp debates over the course, strategy, and tactics for the movement. Some of these debates had decisive consequences for the movement and the war itself. During the ten years of the antiwar movement from 1965 to 1975, the working-class revolutionary, Marxist wing of the movement, went from being a small minority within a small movement to becoming part of the leadership of a movement of millions, a movement which came to have a decisive impact on the course of the war itself. Not only that, but the impact of the Vietnamese Revolution on the U.S. population while it could not, at that time, lead to the U.S. workers coming to power here, contained within it many of the seeds of a future socialist revolution in the U.S. itself.

Likewise, the debates in the developing antiwar movement mirror in many ways the elements necessary for a change in the entire class structure of the U.S. This may sound far-fetched, but I don't think it is and I will try to make the case for it.

The main task

Underlying the approach of the left wing of the antiwar movement, (which began as a mostly student movement), was the Marxist view that the class struggle is the engine of society, and that the working class is the only class with the potential and actual power to transform society. That fundamental, basic idea informed the whole approach of revolutionaries to the developing antiwar movement. Related to that idea is that masses of people generally only move into action, political action, as they perceive their self-interest is affected. Therefore, the task for the antiwar movement was to appeal to the masses of American people. This is true for the new Antiwar movements too.

Our strategy had these components: mass action; independence from ruling class politics and parties—Democrats and Republicans; organized on the basis of principled demands on the government that respect the rights of the Vietnamese people for self-determination. Our strategy was internationalist, that is, we sought to link the interests of the Vietnamese revolution with the interests of American people and ordinary people all over the world. Each aspect of this strategy is based on the idea that only a mass working class movement could force the U.S. out of its war.

Mass action provides the alternative to the government, independence from the Democratic and Republican Parties, and principled demands keep the movement from being co-opted by the ruling class. Mass action is a working class strategy, as opposed to say, petitions, letter writing, lobbying, electoral projects (though all of these could be useful tactics from time to time) because it involves the main strength that the working class has—its numbers, its relation to the functioning of society in industry, and the potential to rule society in its own name (though the Vietnam antiwar movement never developed to that point.)

The most effective tactics flowed from this basic strategy. The mass actions were street demonstrations called by united fronts of all who could agree to come together in common antiwar actions. We organized them to be peaceful and legal demonstrations with permits. (It's important to remember that the early and mid-sixties were not that far removed from the Joe McCarthy witch-hunt of the 1950s.) Demonstrations in opposition to U.S. foreign policy at that time were not that common. In the beginning of the Vietnam antiwar movement there was a significant amount of red-baiting, intimidation, and even physical attacks on the antiwar movement. It was important to make it as easy as possible for people to take their first tentative steps into opposition to their government. Thus, the revolutionaries of the Socialist Workers Party promoted the tactic of peaceful, legal street demonstrations because we had the confidence that in fact the movement would be able to win a majority to the antiwar cause and this method would put no roadblocks in the way of that goal.

The strategy of independence was tactically implemented through the creation of independent, single issue, antiwar committees and single issue united front coalitions, usually organized to build a specific action with a date, time, and place. Some coalitions lasted for more than one action, others were so tenuous that they were really *ad hoc* coalitions that could only stay together for one event, then the political differences between the organized participants drove them apart.

The student movement, having organized first, and being the most supportive of self-determination for the Vietnamese, generally played the role of left-wing in the broad coalitions that formed to carry out city-wide, regional or national demonstrations. They were the left-wing because they were the most resistant to the electoral aspirations of the organized reformists

in the peace movement—the Communist Party, the Social Democrats, and assorted liberals, who, every time an election campaign came around tried to get the movement to support the “lesser of two evils” candidates instead of demonstrating against the war. This problem got more difficult as the movement got bigger. At first there weren't any antiwar candidates, but later, as the movement got massive, there were lots of “peace” candidates, and, when the American casualties started to become unacceptable to larger numbers of the American people, even Presidents Lyndon Johnson (Democrat), and Richard Nixon (Republican) ran for president on promises to de-escalate the war.

The slogans the revolutionaries advocated for the movement likewise reflected our strategic orientation to the working class. “End the War in Vietnam, Bring our troops home now!” was the central demand of the left wing in the antiwar movement. Believe it or not, it took several years before the majority of the organized antiwar movement came to agree with that slogan. After all, the conscious reformists, who played a big role in the organized movement, were opposed to that solution to the war. Many sought to compromise with the U.S. government and proposed calling for a negotiated solution to the war. The left wing said that the U.S. had no right to negotiate for anything in Vietnam and that the only demand on the U.S. government that honored the right of the Vietnamese people to determine their own destiny was for the U.S. and all foreign powers to withdraw.

The “Out Now!” slogan was the most important slogan because the biggest obstacle to real Vietnamese self-determination was the U.S. To withdraw U.S. troops, bombs, and bases was to guarantee the reunification of Vietnam and the carrying out of their social revolution. The conscious revolutionary wing of the U.S. antiwar movement under-

stood this. But there was another important reason for the slogan to bring our troops home now, and that was the strategy of building the movement into a working-class movement with the social power to effect the actions of the U.S. government. Calling for bringing the U.S. troops home, was a concrete way of reaching out to the soldiers themselves and their families, friends, and loved ones at home with the message that the antiwar movement is not a movement to hurt the soldiers, but a movement that, if successful, would save their lives too.

The U.S. government and the capitalist media did everything in their power to convince the public, the workers, and the soldiers that the student demonstrations were against the soldiers, against “our boys,” would harm them and lead to their deaths. This was a cranked up, powerful propaganda machine coming out of the reactionary patriotic 1950s (an *era* which could produce soldiers who could go along with officers in carrying out brutal war crimes against civilians like the My Lai massacre). So, the far-sightedness and optimism of those in the antiwar movement who fought for this “Out Now!” slogan that could actually reach out to the soldiers themselves is quite amazing. The fact is that the impulse came from the revolutionaries who knew that historically, during great revolutionary developments, that masses of working people, even those serving in the armed forces of the capitalist state, could come over to the side of the revolutionaries, that they could change. And that happened.

The Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance were so serious about this orientation and the possibility that antiwar agitation could develop among the soldiers, who were overwhelmingly working class men, and disproportionately (to their numbers in the population as a whole) Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and American Indian, that they made a

conscious campaign of educating the movement by publishing a pamphlet and touring the author of it, Mary Alice Waters, called “GIs and the Fight Against War.”

Calling for bringing the U.S. troops home, was a concrete way of reaching out to the soldiers themselves and their families, friends, and loved ones at home with the message that the antiwar movement is not a movement to hurt the soldiers, but a movement that, if successful, would save their lives too.

The subject of this tour and pamphlet was the actual events following World War II in 1945 and 1946 (but not written about in U.S. history books, a real hidden chapter). Then, a large-scale “Bring Us Home” movement developed among U.S. soldiers in the Pacific Theater who were being used to intervene in the Chinese civil war on the side of Chiang Kai-shek against the Communist revolutionaries. This movement was suppressed but it probably played a role in demobilizing U.S. troops more quickly than the U.S. would have liked, which probably advanced the Chinese Revolution, which the U.S. would definitely have liked to stop.

The Bring Us Home Movement was organized within the armed forces with meetings, leaflets, and propaganda. Our point was that it could happen again and that the U.S. antiwar movement could, with an orientation toward the soldiers, help it to happen.

Fred Halstead’s book *Out Now! A participant’s account of the movement in the U.S. Against the Vietnam War*⁵, quotes a speech by James Johnson, one of the Fort Hood Three, soldiers who were among the very first to speak out publicly against the war and announce that they were refusing orders to go to Vietnam. Private first class (Pfc.) James Johnson said:

“Now there is a direct relationship between the peace movement and the civil rights movement. The South Vietnamese are fighting for representation like we ourselves.... Therefore, the Negro in Vietnam is just helping to defeat what his Black brother is fighting for in the United States. When the Negro soldier returns, he still will not be able to ride in Mississippi or walk down a certain street in Alabama. There will still be proportionately twice as many Negroes as whites in Vietnam....

“It is time that the Negro realizes that his strength can be put to much better use right here at home. This is where his strength lies. We can gain absolutely nothing in Vietnam. All this is leading to the decision I have made. I know it is my right to make this decision.” [p. 182]

Another one of the Fort Hood Three, David Samas, made a speech in which he urged the peace movement to:

“Give the G.I. something to believe in and he will fight for that belief. Let them know in Vietnam that you want them home, let them know that you are concerned about their lives also. Tell them you want them to live, not die. Bring home our men in Vietnam!....

“In the end we depend entirely upon the public. We have placed ourselves in the hands of the people of the United States, and all of our hopes lie with them....” [p.183]

These speeches and the signs of GI resistance to the war were early signs of what was to come later, when antiwar sentiment and opinion became so strong amongst the soldiers that the strongest

military machine in the world became an unreliable fighting force in Vietnam!

In 1971, Colonel Robert D. Heinl, Jr. wrote an article in the *Armed Forces Journal* entitled the “Collapse of the Armed Forces (1971).”⁶ He wrote:

“The morale, discipline and battle-worthiness of the U.S. Armed Forces are, with a few silent exceptions, lower and worse than at any time in this century and possibly in the history of the United States.

“By every conceivable indicator, our Army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non-commissioned officers, drug-ridden, and dispirited when not near mutinous.

“Elsewhere than Vietnam the situation is nearly as serious.”

In the same article Heinl wrote that the “conditions among American forces in Vietnam have only been exceeded in this century [the 20th Century] by the French Army’s Nivelles mutinies of 1917 and the collapse of the Tsarist armies in 1916 and 1917.” He documents the existence in 1971 of 144 underground newspapers published on or aimed at U.S. military bases [having increased 40 percent from the previous year]; the existence of at least 14 GI dissent organizations including two made up solely of officers; the existence of 11 to 26 off-base antiwar GI coffee houses, and more.

These conditions of breakdown in the military, which constitutes a breakdown in a pillar of the capitalist state apparatus, had their roots in the war itself, the many casualties, the fact that politically the war could not be justified to the U.S. soldiers and, the alternative of peace presented by the civilian antiwar movement.

But just as significant, and in fact fundamental, was the effect of the Civil Rights Movement, the growth of Black nationalism, and the role of the con-

scious Black leadership in opposing the Vietnam War as well as exposing the disproportionate deaths and wounding of non-white soldiers in Vietnam, due to the disproportionate numbers of these soldiers in combat.

A pivotal turning point for the growth of Black GI resistance to the war and the antiwar movement as a whole was a speech made by Reverend Martin Luther King in 1967 at Riverside Church in NYC. This was a thoroughly revolutionary speech that defends the right of the Vietnamese people to revolt against their puppet dictators and the U.S.

King laid out all the key arguments against the war from the point of view of Black people. That “America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destructive suction tube. So, I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and attack it as such.”

King pointed to the irony of sending “young Black men who had been crippled by our society 8000 miles away to [supposedly] guarantee liberties which they hadn’t found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem.” He pointed out the irony of the country sending Black and white soldiers to kill and die together but unable to seat them together in the same schools. “So, we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would never live on the same block in Detroit.”

King said, “I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without first having spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government.” What a bombshell this speech was—calling the U.S. government the greatest purveyor of violence in the world!

In 1970 Commander George L. Jackson, writing in the *Naval War College Review* acknowledged that the

effect of Martin Luther King’s speech “was of profound significance on the national scene.” To quote:

“The growing public disillusionment with the Vietnam war, of which Dr. King’s declaration was an essential part, made it more difficult for the military...by reducing its ability to generate effective military-political pressure.... Just as the civil rights movement has served as a restraint upon the ability of American forces in Vietnam...so it has altered and restricted the use of military resources....”

“The most apparent effect that the civil rights movement has had upon military force employment has been the necessity of using troops to quell civil disturbances. The National Guard has traditionally been used for this purpose. During the fiscal year 1968, 104,665 National Guardsmen were called to quell civil disturbances, many of which were precipitated by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King....”

In this same article the author states that the most important constraint on the military introduced by the civil rights movement “is that produced by the coalition of civil rights organizations and the antiwar organizations. This coalition has spearheaded the shift of public opinion away from support of the Vietnam conflict.”⁷

The Pentagon Papers confirm that the U.S. government agreed with just this analysis. One recommendation from the Secretary of Defense to President Nixon acknowledges that “In dealing with public opinion and congress, the administration would have to prove that the administration would have the resources ‘for the ghetto fight’ in order to justify continued intervention in Vietnam.”

While objective factors of the body bags and the experience of being part of an invasion force against a popular revolution played a giant role in shaping the attitudes of soldiers and working people in general toward the

Vietnam War, the actions of the antiwar movement helped the objective factors to become part of the conscious response to the war.

One of the biggest debates in the antiwar movement, a debate held almost twice a year for ten years, was whether or not to call another mass street demonstration nationally. The left wing of the movement was consistent in calling for escalating street demonstrations. This was the form that made it possible to reach more and more workers, as objective events changed their minds, and more and more soldiers as well.

In 1969 almost 1000 Marines participated in an antiwar march in Oceanside, California. An anti-racism rally in Heidelberg, Germany in 1970 drew over 1000 GIs. One thousand sailors out of a crew of 4500 on the Naval Attack Carrier USS Coral Sea, scheduled to sail to Vietnam for a bombing attack tour in the Fall of 1971 signed a petition circulated secretly on board the ship stating that “We do not believe in the Vietnam War,” and that the ship “should not go to Vietnam.” Three hundred men from this ship led the antiwar demonstration November 6th in San Francisco.

During the debates over whether or not to call another mass demonstration, there were those who argued that the government ignored the antiwar movement, so what was the point? The publication of the Pentagon Papers proved once and for all that the government only pretended to ignore the movement. The movement, and its steady growth, its growth in the Black and Chicano communities, its impact on the armed forces, all these were watched and carefully gauged by the government. At the same time, the government decided to give up its effort to win the war. They calculated that the system would have more to lose *vis a vis* the American population than if they persisted in escalating and

trying to militarily defeat the Vietnamese people.

While it is true that the Vietnam antiwar movement didn't develop into the kind of a movement that could prevent the next series of U.S. imperialist interventions into the affairs, and revolutions of other countries—Chile, Panama, Grenada, Iraq, Dominican Republic, Peru, Colombia and Afghanistan—it did alter and narrow the U.S. government's prerogatives in future ventures.

In order to deprive U.S. imperialism of the ability to use its military might against other countries and revolutions, we need a massive antiwar movement. But, for a permanent end to war we also need a self-conscious, organized working class who will take control and run society democratically in its own name for its own benefit.

During the Vietnam War the U.S. working class was at a very low ebb of class-consciousness, though probably most of the participants in the antiwar movement, at least at its height from 1968 on, were working class people. Most, however, were not there with the support of their unions or other working class organizations. The unions themselves never joined in the antiwar actions in a major way, with some exceptions among hospital workers, teachers, and other progressive unions. That is the major reason that the antiwar movement couldn't go beyond its single issue of ending the war, to ending the U.S. war machine permanently. That will take more than a movement. That will take a revolution.

Postscript

The conscious intervention of a working-class Marxist organization—the Socialist Workers Party⁸—had a strong influence on the antiwar movement. Many people became converts to Marxism and revolution in the course of participating in the antiwar movement. That is the strongest reason for continuing to build and recruit to the

socialist movement now, while a new mass movement is developing in response to the government's attack on immigrants—fellow workers. The success of a social revolution in this country depends on building a strong revolutionary political party before, and in the course of, the development of a social revolution.

I hope that this talk/essay has proven that a consciously organized movement, serious about reaching out to ordinary people in great numbers can affect the war aims and the attacks on working people here and abroad of even the most powerful country in the world.

Talk given at a Socialist Action Educational Conference August 1998.

1 Vietnam Declaration of Independence, September 2, 1945, prepared and read to a massive crowd in Hanoi by Ho Chi Minh.

2 The Vietnamese mandarin class refers to the Confucian scholar-official bureaucracy that historically managed state affairs, often characterized as conservative, intellectual elites. During the era of the Vietnam War (specifically the 1950s-60s), this traditional, authoritarian governing style was embodied by South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, described as a “Cold War Mandarin” whose autocratic, centralized approach alienated the population.

3 “Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense [Robert McNamara] Vietnam Task Force,” is a 7,000-page top-secret history of U.S. political and military involvement in Vietnam from 1945 to 1967.

4 1961–1971

5 “Out Now! A Participant's Account of the Movement in the U.S. Against the Vietnam War” By Fred Halstead, 1978, Monad Press for the Anchor Foundation, Inc.

6 Published in “Vietnam and America, A Documentary History” edited by Marvin E. Gettleman, Jane Franklin, Marilyn Young, and H. Bruce Franklin, 1985, Grove Press, Inc.

7 p. 318 in “Vietnam and America, A Documentary History”

8 The SWP is no longer a revolutionary organization, having completely abandoned its support for Palestinian self-determination and adopting a position of support to Zionism and the Israeli and U.S. assault on Gaza and the West Bank.

U.S. War on Vietnam: An Antiwar GI's Story

HOWARD PETRICK INTERVIEWED BY DIANNE FEELEY

Dianne Feeley: How did you first get interested in politics?

Howard Petrick: I grew up in Erie, Pennsylvania but left after high school for Minneapolis where I worked on the railroad. I was in Chicago the summer of 1965 when Martin Luther King held anti-discrimination meetings and demonstrations. When I moved back to Minneapolis that fall, I contacted the Socialist Labor Party.

I'd read an article in *Esquire* magazine about the free speech movement in Berkeley. I knew I was against the war in Vietnam; I decided to go to their office. They told me to read Daniel DeLeon, that these were not socialist but petty bourgeois movements led by young people who didn't know anything. I thought, well that's me. I wanted to do something and not sit around and read books about it.

I heard there were antiwar committee meetings taking place at the University of Minnesota and I started going to them. I decided by then I didn't want to work for the railroads anymore. I was just bouncing around from job to job. I

had a job sanding down hockey sticks and another putting handles on screwdrivers. I was drifting along.

It never occurred to me that I could join anything; I just went to the antiwar meetings. When they planned a rally, I said I'll help.

The rally was at Seventh and Hennepin in downtown Minneapolis. We were trying to inform people about the war in Vietnam. There were probably 25 of us standing on a street corner with a step ladder. Someone would go up a few steps on the ladder and start talking.

Finding socialism

As the rally was winding down, Larry Siegel, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party, asked me if I wanted to come up to the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) office right across the street. They were having a social event. I talked to people who were involved in the antiwar movement and it all sounded good to me.

They said Farrell Dobbs, who was a leader in the Socialist Workers Party and led the 1934 truck driver strike,

was going to be speaking the next Friday. I went to that forum; it convinced me that I should be involved with these people. They had a nice library there and on the days I wasn't working I'd go down and sit and read in their library.

One day I went up to Ray Dunne, another participant in the 1934 strikes, and asked if he could tell me a little more about them. He said he could talk to me for weeks but urged me to read the bound volumes of *The Organizer*¹. I read them from beginning to end. It was like reading a novel that you couldn't put down.

Dianne Feeley: You were really thirsty to learn!

Howard Petrick: Yeah, I think I was. I felt I owed it to Ray because I asked him a question and he gave me an answer. If I wanted to talk to him again, I'd have to have a specific question.

Dianne Feeley: When did you get a draft notice?

Howard Petrick: I left home when I was 17. At that time, you were supposed



1971 Demonstration against U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war, led by active-duty GIs.

to update your address with the draft board, but I didn't. Once when I went home and saw some of my old high school friends. They said every time people went to the draft board, they called out my name. I thought, well no sense telling them where I am now.

But one day I answered my door, and it was the FBI. They handed me a subpoena to show up at the draft board in Minneapolis. That was for a physical.

By that time, I had joined the YSA. They said the board probably wouldn't draft me and advised me not to be overly cooperative. When I was handed papers to fill out at the draft board I wrote my name at the top, then turned them in. I wouldn't give them any more information.

They said okay and sent me home. Then they did an investigation on me. In July 1966 they called me for induction. By that time, I was a member of both the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the YSA. Everybody said I didn't have to worry because the FBI knew I was a member.

I went to the office not expecting to be drafted but sure enough they drafted me. They asked if I was going to refuse induction; I told them no I was just refusing to fill out the forms.

For the induction procedure, they call everybody's name and you would just stand up and take the oath of allegiance. They asked me if I would take the oath and I told them no. That day they called everybody's name and announced that if you don't want to take the oath of allegiance, don't stand up. So, I sat there while everybody else got up and took the oath of allegiance. And that was it.

We were sent to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, near St. Louis. They had been having a heat wave that killed 125 people in St. Louis if I remember right. When we got there at 4:00 A.M. it was 92 degrees. We were assigned to a barracks but just laid around for a week.

Some of the guys asked me why I was being treated differently. Was my dad a senator or something? I said no, I'm against the war in Vietnam and I wouldn't fill out my papers.

They asked why was I against the war. I told him I didn't think we should go halfway around the world and try to kill farmers because they don't agree with us politically. Some of them would say they're for the war and they thought we should be fighting communism. I said, "People have the right to believe whatever they want, don't they? Why should we tell them what their government should be?"

When we finally got into basic training, Mullen, a guy in my platoon from Michigan, told me he had been a school teacher. He got fired for not having the students recite the Pledge of Allegiance. And then he got drafted.

He and I started talking to some other guys about the war and pretty soon we had a group that would get together nights and talk. We decided to send a petition to President Lyndon Johnson and ask him why we might be sent to Vietnam when a war hadn't been declared.

We hung the petition up on the bulletin board; about 20 guys signed. But before we could take it down and send it off to Johnson, one of the officers took it and we never got it back.

There was a class in basic training on "Know Your Enemy, the Viet Cong." The captain who was leading the class was telling us what he had been told.

Mullen and I would take turns raising our hands and asking questions. The captain said, "You can't tell communists from regular people." I said that if elections have been held in Vietnam when they were supposed to have been, Ho Chi Minh would have won the election by about 80 percent. If they were so worried about democracy, why didn't they let them have the election? The captain said that's "communist propaganda." I said, "No, that's

what President Eisenhower said."

And then Mullen got up and asked a question. The captain was so rattled by us asking a couple of questions that he dismissed the class early and said we'll deal with these questions next week.

A lot of guys started coming by our room asking us, "How'd you find out all that stuff about Vietnam?" Soon we had a pretty good-sized group of guys who were antiwar. I was getting a lot of stuff sent from the antiwar committee in Minneapolis. And guys were taking it and reading it.

We also had a Black drill sergeant who had just come back from Vietnam. He saw me reading *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. He asked why I was reading that. I told him that Malcolm X was a pretty interesting guy and I wanted to know more about his life and why he thought what he did.

He knew I was against the war and said, "I wish you guys wouldn't be quite so vocal in the classes you're having. You're just raising a lot of trouble." He told me that "It doesn't make it easy on me because I'm supposed to discipline you guys." He added, "I just came back from Vietnam, and I've got to admit things are pretty messed up over there." He was as lenient with us as he could be.

We carried on regular discussions about the war and were pretty open about it. There were guys who were pro-war, but they never had any reasons for their views.

At Fort Hood

Dianne Feeley: After basic training, where were you sent? What did you do?

Howard Petrick: By the end of the summer, I was sent to Fort Hood, Texas, 60 miles north of Austin. At that time there were 40,000 GIs at Fort Hood, it was one of the country's biggest bases. All they did was train infantry and armored battalions to go to Vietnam.

I was to become a field wireman, the

guys who ran wires between companies. The job was to run radio connections in the jungle. Since the life expectancy on that job was about a week, I did not cherish the assignment.

While we were still at the reception center, a sergeant came out and said, "We need a dozen volunteers." Of course, nobody volunteered. Then he said "Okay, you first 12 guys in the front row, you're all going to be cooks." And I was one of them. That turned out to be really a great thing if you wanted to get to know everybody and try to organize people.

At Fort Hood the guys were mostly from New Jersey and California—totally different from the guys I was with in basic training who were mostly farm kids from the Midwest. This group were getting marijuana in the mail from their girlfriends.

We were into the Jefferson Airplane and Janice Joplin, and that the whole music thing. A lot of them were against the war. They'd say, "Yeah, man, I'm against the war, fuck this war, I don't want to go fight."

Within a couple of weeks, seven or eight of us were meeting and talking about how we could get more people talking against the war. We would go into the barracks—big bays with 50 people in a bay—and we'd stand up on a footlocker and start talking about the war.

We would try to get someone who was for the war to debate with us. We found that was the easiest way to bring up all the discrepancies of why we were fighting in Vietnam. There weren't a lot of guys who would get up and speak for the war. But when there were, we wouldn't try to destroy them, we would just try to reason. Having this open debate was how we could get many people to listen. It worked really well.

Then we started reaching out to the other companies in our battalion. And we were able to do that. We treated everybody like they were against the war. After all, the Fort Hood Three case

had happened right before I got there.

[On June 30, 1966 Private First-Class James Johnson, Private David A. Samas, and Private Dennis Mora, stationed at Fort Hood, refused their deployment to Vietnam and were subsequently court martialed. At their courts martial each argued the war was illegal and immoral and cited the Nuremberg Code. Their case was widely followed in the press. —ed.]

A couple of chaplains built a meeting place for everybody. They posted signs around the base announcing a coffee house for GIs with an open mic. You were invited to do what you wanted to do—stand-up comedy, songs, poetry. They had tables and chairs and a soda machine. It wasn't something you could do every night but at most once a week, or maybe twice a month.

Dianne Feeley: What was the atmosphere like? Was it pretty much an antiwar hangout?

Howard Petrick: For us it was. Guys would bring their guitars and sing folk songs. It was a place to meet people. We did it in sort of a more organized way. Those of us who were already against the war used it to talk with people from around the base. It wasn't a real big place, probably 50 people on a good night. There would be two or three guys from this company and two or three from another.

Then I think they just realized that we were using it to our advantage. They didn't want it to be a political thing. They just wanted to get guys together. So, they shut it down.

The movement

Dianne Feeley: Did you go into Austin?

Howard Petrick: There was a huge Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) down at the University of Texas, several hundred members. There was also a much smaller Committee to End the War. I got in touch with them and they said I should come down and speak at an antiwar meeting. I spoke in

uniform at a pretty good-sized public meeting, probably 75-100 people.

A lot of the students were interested in antiwar GIs; it was a novel thing to them. They said, "We run into guys from Fort Hood all the time down here, looking for something to do." I said they should start talking to them about the war.

We had demonstrations down there that were led by GIs. A lot of GIs at Fort Hood were politically active and wanted to do stuff. They would have these celebrations down there at Pease Park and 15-20 GIs would show up.

Dianne Feeley: Were there GI coffee houses in the Austin area that you might go to?

Howard Petrick: None existed at that time. I got out in March of '68 and was just hearing about coffee houses. Eventually they did have one down in Austin. It was called The Strut. [The GI coffee house was called the Oleo Strut, and it was in Killeen, not Austin. —ed.]

I actually thought it was one of the worst because instead of making it about the war, they organized guys to boycott the jewelry stores. Guys would buy stuff to send to their girlfriends; they thought these stores were charging too much money. And so that's what they started organizing the GIs around.

When this coffee house started, it sort of pulled them away from their being antiwar into other political stuff—around the elections and stuff like that. I just thought you're missing the whole idea.

Interrogation

Dianne Feeley: Did you get in trouble because of speaking in uniform?

Howard Petrick: No, not then. But in the spring of 1967, I attended the YSA convention in Detroit and got back to Fort Hood on April 1. I went to the barracks to drop my stuff off and a roommate told me that the day after I left, they had a big shake down inspec-

tion and took all the antiwar and socialist literature away from everybody who had it.

Then they quarantined about 20 guys, interrogated them and offered them all undesirable discharges. They all took them. By the time I got back, the guys I had been working with were gone.

After I heard that story, I went to sign in with the battalion authorities. They called military intelligence, who came down with a Jeep and a couple of MPs. They took me up to their headquarters saying they wanted to ask me some questions. I told them I wasn't going to answer any unless I had a lawyer. They said that had been arranged. The Judge Advocate General (JAG) officer, a lawyer, was waiting for me.

He told me that they were thinking about arresting me for creating "disaffection" and possibly treason. He said "They want to arrest you and that's why I'm here. But I don't think they have evidence of anything that you've done that's illegal."

He said the answer to their questions would determine whether or not I would be arrested. All he could tell me was that he'd sit with me at the hearing. If I wanted to talk with him about how to answer a question, we would stop and I could consult with him.

We went back out and the captain said they'd like to ask me some questions. I asked how many and he replied 72, and depending on how I'd answer, maybe more.

I said, "I'm not going to answer any. I've been traveling all day and I'm really tired." They said they thought I should, that it's to my benefit to answer. I said no and then they went into the captain's office and shut the door.

They called someone, who I assume was at the Pentagon or in military intelligence. All I could hear is the one side of the conversation, "well, no, he won't," and "he won't answer."

Then the captain came back and had

the clerk type up a statement. The statement said, "I refuse to answer any questions." He wanted me to sign it. I said, "No, I'm not answering any questions and I'm not signing anything. I haven't done anything wrong."

About one o'clock in the morning, after another call to intelligence, they let me go back to my barracks, where I was under "barrack's arrest." When the lawyer drove me back, he said that they really didn't have anything that they could charge me with, and that's the problem they're having. He advised me to get a haircut, not walk on the grass, make sure I always salute Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) when I go by. Just keep my nose clean.

Then I called Larry Seigel, who had been my roommate in Minneapolis, and told him what was happening. He said, "We'll see what we can do here, and I'll get back to you." He called back in a few days and said he talked to the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee. The Rabinowitz and Boudin law office had been looking for a case about civil rights in the Army, and they would take the case *pro bono*.

The YSA would help start what became the Committee to Defend the Rights of Pfc. Howard Petrick. A couple of weeks later Carolyn Lund and Lou Jones [from the YSA national office] came down and interviewed me. They put together a pamphlet for my defense.

Dianne Feeley: How long were you confined to your barracks?

Howard Petrick: Until they found out that Leonard Boudin was my lawyer, which was four or five days. Then my lawyer and I went to Military Intelligence (MI) headquarters where they said I didn't have to answer questions and I was off barracks arrest. That was it.

Dianne Feeley: After you got off barrack's arrest and your 20 closest friends were gone, what was the mood in your barracks and at work?

Howard Petrick: My company got notification that they were going to go to Vietnam. But I was transferred to another company. They had asked me if I would go to Vietnam if I was ordered. I said, "Of course, why not? All the other guys are going, why can't I go?"

I think they thought I was going to refuse and they were going to get me on that. The next day, I was transferred into a company of guys that were mostly coming back from Vietnam. I think once that happened, they'd decided I was going to be discharged, but they wanted to give me an undesirable discharge. I refused; I wanted an honorable discharge because I hadn't done anything wrong.

Later that fall I spoke at an antiwar convention in Chicago. Given that Westmoreland had come back from Vietnam and spoken before the New York City Press Club and Congress in his uniform, I decided to speak in my uniform. Why shouldn't I be able to speak at an antiwar conference in my uniform?

An interview with me made national news. That created a stir in all of Fort Hood. Everybody in my battalion knew about the interview because it was played on the rock and roll station we listened to in the mess hall. And then it was on the national news, which I think was *The Huntley-Brinkley Report*. Guys from all over the base started coming by the barracks asking for me.

I realized I had the upper hand at that point. My lawyer said, "They don't have anything on you so you can do what you want as long as what you're doing is legal. You can talk about the war anywhere you want." I asked, "in uniform"? He said, "There's no regulation that you can't. So, yeah."

Dianne Feeley: Were people scared of you while you were under arrest?

Howard Petrick: I was transferred from the company mess hall where there were three or four cooks to a battalion mess hall, which had like nine or ten of us on a shift. Instead of feeding

150 we fed up to 2500-2900 people. When I first got there all the other cooks were standoffish.

One night I asked one of the cooks on my shift, Ernie Shank, a Black guy from Philadelphia, if he'd like to go into town and see a movie with me. At first, he said no, but then he said, "Yeah, fuck him, I'll go with you." On the bus ride there I asked why the guys were hesitant to talk to me.

Before I had arrived, a guy from Intelligence came to the mess hall and announced that, "A cook is coming here who's a communist, so you guys don't want to get to get to know him too well. He's going to get you in a bunch of trouble."

Shank explained, "We were expecting some big thug of a guy who beat the shit out of us if we didn't do what you told us to do. But hell, you're just a nice guy and a really good cook so everybody's sort of saying well he seems okay to me.

"They're all afraid to talk to you. They don't want to get in trouble. I just figured, fuck it, if you're a good cook, I'll hang out with you because you make it all the easier for me. I'll tell the guys you're okay, not that they listen to me."

His recommendation broke through the barrier in two or three days. Guys treated me like one of the regulars. Of course, there were a couple guys, like one from Oklahoma who was real anti-communist and another from West Virginia. Sometimes they'd give me a bunch of shit, but it never turned into anything.

Another guy busted into my room one afternoon as I was lying on my cot reading; he wanted to fight me because I was a pacifist. I said "I don't know where you heard that but I'm not a pacifist. If you want to fuck with me then expect I'm going to give you some shit back." I told him I'm against the war in Vietnam, and that seemed to be okay with him.

Once the Tet Offensive happened [the beginning of 1968 —ed], a lot of stuff started happening. That happened right before I got out.

GIs coming back from Vietnam were bringing back duffel bags of marijuana. They were bringing back heroin. The company clerk in my company sold drugs openly. Everybody knew him and you could buy heroin, marijuana, LSD, amphetamines. It would have been hard for the officers not to know that.

I knew one guy that that never said anything other than "Wow." He was totally stoned. He was just ruined, really ruined.

My lawyer kept telling me that I was going to get an undesirable discharge, and I wouldn't have the option of turning it down. What happened is that I think the paperwork was sent to the Fourth Army at San Antonio. It got lost in a file there.

But on March 15, 1968, I came back from Austin, and when I signed in the first sergeant told me I was getting discharged. Normally a discharge takes two weeks, but he told me to get my equipment, and a driver would take me around to get my medical stuff. I did it all in about three hours. I was to be off the base by 5:00 P.M.

By the time I was discharged there were over 300 newspapers that GIs published on bases all over the world. I did a tour to gather support in appealing my undesirable discharge. I spoke at the April 27, 1968, international demonstration against the war on the Boston Commons to 15,000. Even though I was barred from all military property, I was able to go onto bases. My discharge accused me of fermenting "disloyalty and disaffection." [Originally Petrick said he received a dishonorable discharge, but it was really an undesirable one, as his lawyer informed him it would be. —ed.]

Just a few months later, a company from Fort Hood was called up to go to Chicago for the 1968 Democratic Party convention. The whole group of Black GIs refused. It was a big deal at the time that these Black GIs refused orders to go and be used as cops. [One hundred and sixty Black GIs sat down on the base, protesting the direct order. Eventually 43, including several who had returned from Vietnam, were court martialed —ed.]

—*Against The Current*, January/February 2026

<https://againstthecurrent.org/atc240/an-antiwar-gis-story/>

1 *The Organizer* was a newspaper published by the Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee.

<https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/organizer/index.htm#:~:text=The%20Organizer%20was%20a%20newspaper%20published%20by%20the%20Philadelphia%20Workers%20Organizing%20Committee.>

Trump Is Not a Nationalist. He's Something Worse.

BY JEAN GUERRERO

This week, Honduras inaugurated a new president, Nasry Asfura, a construction magnate backed by seemingly strange bedfellows: members of the notorious MS-13 gang and President Trump. Mr. Trump had urged Hondurans to vote for Mr. Asfura days before MS-13 gang members posing as election observers threatened to kill anyone who didn't vote for that candidate. Amid weeks of election uncertainty and protests, Mr. Trump warned Hondurans of "hell to pay" if they chose a different outcome. Mr. Asfura's victory marks the success of Mr. Trump's campaign to resuscitate a political party tainted by its widely known ties to cartels.

The story of how Mr. Trump came to intervene in Honduran politics and align himself with a foreign terrorist organization is essential for understanding the world he is trying to build. He has been meddling in multiple elections in Latin America, and recently captured Venezuela's president, Nicolás Maduro, in a military operation to have him face federal drug trafficking charges. He's now threatening to arrest the president of Colombia on suspicion of drug trafficking and to bomb cartels in Mexico. His actions may seem contradictory. But there is a coherent logic to them: They expand territorial power for a class of transnational elites who believe they're above the law.

Trump expands power of transnational elites

Last month, Mr. Trump pardoned one of the country's best-known convicted drug traffickers: Juan Orlando Hernández. Mr. Hernández was the president of Honduras from 2014 to 2022; in that time, there was a steep surge in migration from that country to the United States as families fled his narco-state. In 2024, he was sentenced

to 45 years in prison for his role in what the U.S. Department of Justice called "one of the largest and most violent drug trafficking conspiracies in the world." He was convicted of conspiring to distribute hundreds-of-tons of cocaine, reportedly boasting of plans to "stuff the drugs up the gringos' noses." In explaining his pardon, Mr. Trump relied on a conspiracy theory circulating in conservative circles: that Mr. Hernández was a political prisoner of former President Joe Biden's. It was, in Mr. Trump's words, a "witch hunt."

But Mr. Trump's real motivations are hidden in plain sight. Not long after his second inauguration, the Claremont Institute, an influential conservative

think tank in California, published a call for him to pardon Mr. Hernández. So did Mr. Trump's longtime friend and fellow felon Roger Stone¹ in a blog post, written with Shane Trejo². Both argued that the pardon would hurt President Xiomara Castro, a democratically elected progressive and the first woman to be president of Honduras. They wrote that it would re-empower the right-wing party, presumably by rehabilitating it.

The goal, Mr. Stone wrote, was to save Próspera, a semiautonomous city on the Honduran island of Roatán. Próspera was backed by Mr. Hernández and Trump-aligned tech moguls such as Peter Thiel and Marc Andreessen;



Kimberly Elliott

corporations there pay incredibly low taxes to Honduras. It was built in a “special economic zone,” a rapidly multiplying form of territory with its own business-friendly laws, like looser environmental regulations and labor standards. (It’s what the Trump administration brokered for Gaza in its cease-fire with Israel.)

...how Mr. Trump came to intervene in Honduran politics and align himself with a foreign terrorist organization is essential for understanding the world he is trying to build.

Special economic zones

Special economic zones were pioneered in Puerto Rico, where in the mid-1900s the entire archipelago was transformed into such a zone and much of the native-born population—including most of my maternal relatives—subsequently left amid widespread unemployment. Proponents of the zones claim that they create prosperity for domestic populations. Patrick Neveling, a political economist, calls this an excuse “used to funnel a lot of state money into private hands.” In the case of Puerto Rico, its taxpayers paid for the infrastructure for transnational corporations to conduct tax- and customs-free manufacturing there, and for government-backed loans for foreign investors.

Globally, more than 5,400 special economic zones have become home to dozens of start-up cities like Próspera, corporate-led jurisdictions with their own laws. In *The Network State*, a 2022 book that was influential in Silicon Valley, the tech entrepreneur Balaji Srinivasan, a leading proponent of start-up cities, fantasizes that these territories

will not only compete with nation-states but someday replace them.

Many Hondurans, including Ms. Castro, opposed Próspera as an affront to national sovereignty. Not long after Ms. Castro’s inauguration, the Honduran Congress repealed the law, passed by the country’s right wing, that had opened Honduras to start-up cities. This was unacceptable to the pillaging class. As Mr. Stone wrote on his blog, “May the Próspera experiment prevail, the common good be saved and global leftism be damned by the benevolent hand of President Trump!”

The people behind start-up cities like Próspera have long been whispering in Mr. Trump’s ear about bringing their neocolonial experiments to the United States, branded as “freedom cities.” Mr. Trump has publicly advocated them. For all his rhetoric about putting America first and making America great, Mr. Trump isn’t a nationalist. He’s in league with transnational elites who lack allegiance to this or any country. While distracting voters with anti-immigrant rhetoric, he is laying the groundwork for the disenfranchisement of working people across the Americas.

MAGA Republicans often complain that the United States is turning into the “third world” because of immigration. But it’s Mr. Trump who has remade the United States in the image of the Latin America that our government and chief executives helped create with foreign interference: a place where masked men routinely leap out of unmarked vans to snatch citizens, where people are disappeared and human rights activists publicly killed, where soldiers patrol cities to crush dissent, and where organized crime and the state blend into a single machinery of power that protects the interests of the oligarchs.

The victims

At first glance, it may seem like *karma*: The terror that the United States

wrought for generations in Latin America has come home. But the victims are not the transnational elites who have long colluded with corrupt officials to take vulnerable people’s territories and feast on their oil, fruit and precious metals. The victims are the displaced migrants forced to leave their homelands and the American workers who have to compete with their criminalized labor. This isn’t an accident. It seems to be the goal: to entrench a permanent underclass across the Americas. Mr. Trump claims that his goal is to remove immigrants from this country, but in fact he is expanding the pool of vulnerable labor for transnational elites. By stripping millions of people of legal status in the United States, Mr. Trump likely created more undocumented people than he removed last year.

In many liberal circles, it is treated as an article of faith that immigration is nothing but positive for the economy. The silence about how criminalized labor depresses wages is born out of both ignorance and fear of fueling anti-immigrant hatreds. But that silence allows people like Mr. Trump’s homeland security adviser Stephen Miller to caricature liberals as elites who want a cheap labor force. The American left needs to break its silence on this issue and articulate a politics that connects labor and immigrant rights.

By stripping millions of people of legal status in the United States, Mr. Trump likely created more undocumented people than he removed last year.

Elites in both parties have long benefited from a manufactured underclass. The right-wing party in Honduras came to power in a 2009 military *coup*, after

which the Obama administration briefly cut off aid to the country, then resumed it, including tens-of-millions of dollars for the military and police. In 2015, after tens-of-thousands of Hondurans marched against the narco-state, the U.S. ambassador, James Nealon, claimed that relations between the two countries were “perhaps the best in history.”

The American left needs to break its silence on this issue and articulate a politics that connects labor and immigrant rights.

In the mid-2010s, protesters of the corporation- and cartel-friendly regime were kidnapped, raped and killed. This oppression and instability were partly responsible for the surge in migration from Central America that President Barack Obama confronted. But in the administration's discussions about the “root causes” of the exodus, there was no reckoning with the role of the U.S. government or American investors.

During the Biden administration, Próspera's backers sued Honduras for nearly \$11 billion under an international tribunal governed by investor-state dispute settlement rules, in response to the country's efforts to reclaim its sovereignty. In 2024, dozens of Democratic lawmakers asked Mr. Biden to remove liability from the corporate-friendly rules from trade agreements for Central America and the Caribbean, to protect vulnerable economies from litigious elites. But Mr. Biden failed to act. The ongoing lawsuit and similar ones threaten to bankrupt Honduras, one of the poorest countries in the hemisphere.

Fighting to protect sovereignty

Human rights activists in Roatán have been fighting for years to protect

their ancestral lands and resources from Próspera. But many are now afraid for their lives; at least one prominent activist recently fled the community in fear, two members of the Honduran Black Fraternal Organization told me. Everyone there knows what tends to happen to people who resist the pillaging classes in Central America: They're killed, even the activists with international reputations such as the Honduran land defender Berta Cáceres, whose assassination in 2016 was ordered by the U.S.-military-trained president of an internationally financed hydroelectric company she was protesting.

The start-up city Próspera's billionaire architects insist that the project creates jobs for Hondurans and boosts economic development. Some clearly believe that. They're so sure of the backwardness of the population that they can't help seeing themselves as saviors. It's the same attitude that Democratic elites have toward rural Americans. The truth is that the fates of working-class Americans and Hondurans are entwined.

With the return of the right-wing party to Honduras, calls for oversight are likely to be ignored. The right-wing party, an ally of Próspera, governed its citizens the way Mr. Trump and his allies envision governing Americans: through violent dispossession and exploitation. In the United States, a mirror world has already begun to form with the unleashing of multiple federal police forces that have already killed at least three citizens and a number of immigrants. These police forces do not protect the body politic; they protect the bottom line of transnational corporations that surveil and jail us for profit.

We don't stand a chance against them until we bridge the engineered divide between America's native-born working classes and the rural poor of Latin America, including those who are now undocumented workers in the United States.

Politicians who care to restrain the expansion of transnational corporate power need, first of all, to abandon their cowardice on amnesty. A pathway to citizenship for longtime undocumented people with no criminal records would open the door for millions of disenfranchised people in this country, many of them Mexican, to start organizing with working-class Americans. Only by expanding who counts as an American can we rebuild the solidarity necessary to confront the elites who profit from our precarity.

A moral framework

That doesn't mean embracing an open-border policy that favors mass migration. What is missing from the immigration debate is a complete moral framework. This framework has to recognize not only the right to migrate but also what Miriam Miranda, a Honduran activist for the Afro-Indigenous Garífuna, calls “the right to stay.” A politics that celebrates movement while ignoring displacement serves capital, not people. Its logical endpoint is a world where we all become migrants—where communities everywhere are hollowed out again and again so that extraction can continue uninterrupted.

Everyone there knows what tends to happen to people who resist the pillaging classes in Central America: They're killed

What Mr. Trump is doing in Latin America is not an aberration. The pardon, the blessing of a former—and likely future—narco-state in service of private power, the military strikes: This is the governing model that he and his allies are trying to globalize. A world where national sovereignty is dead, the

rule of law is nonexistent for corporations, and convicted felons like Mr. Trump and Mr. Hernández run the world for the pillaging classes. MAGA was never a revolt against elites. It was the elites' most effective instrument.

Mr. Trump's meddling reveals what his movement is for—not borders, nations or workers but a cross-continental free-for-all where people are uprooted so profits can move freely.

Jean Guerrero is a contributing Opinion writer for The New York Times. She is the author of Hatemonger: Stephen Miller, Donald Trump and the White Nationalist Agenda and CruX: A Daughter's Quest for Her Border-Crossing Father, which won a PEN Literary Award.

—New York Times Guest Essay, January 29, 2026

<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/29/opinion/prospera-honduras-trump-pardon.html?searchResultPosition=1>

1 Roger Jason Stone is an American right-wing political activist, consultant and lobbyist. He is a prominent consultant and lobbyist within the New Right, and Donald Trump's longest-serving political adviser.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Stone#:

2 Shane Trejo is from a group called Republicans for National Renewal and supports a third term for Trump calling him “our Julius Caesar-type figure.”

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/2591173/amp>

Venezuela, Cuba, and the U.S. Empire

BY BRIAN SCHWARTZ

The January 3, kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and First Lady Cilia Flores by the United States is a body blow to the International class struggle. Hugo Chavez's “Bolivarian Revolution,” continued by Nicholas Maduro, provided a continuous supply of oil to revolutionary socialist Cuba. Cuba reciprocated, providing doctors for the Venezuelan working class, rural and poor people who never had access to them before. Thirty-two Cuban bodyguards for President Maduro were killed by the United States. It cannot be emphasized enough that without oil, the Cuban Revolution is placed in the gravest danger, probably more so than during the “Special Period of Peace,” when the Soviet Union collapsed back to capitalism, cutting off huge amounts of trade and supplies to Cuba during the early nineties.

Both Mexico and Venezuela have submitted to armed and economic blackmail cutting oil shipments to

Cuba. Under threat of U.S. bombing, invasion, and further economic strangulation, the Chavismo¹ movement, under Delcy Rodriguez, has privatized Venezuela's oil. A working-class revolution that takes the Cuban road is the only way to liberate Venezuela. So that Venezuela and Cuba do not have to stand alone, masses of people have to stand against their governments to take the heat off Cuba and Venezuela and allow them access to the world market and neutralize the aggression of their imperial overlords.

A *Financial Times* January 31, article titled, “Cuban Doctors’ Departure From Venezuela Saps Havana Of Vital Revenue” by Joe Daniels and Ana Rodriguez Brazor, reports, “In the weeks following Maduro's daring nighttime abduction, scores of Cuban doctors—a pillar of the country's populist health programs and a symbol of close ties between socialist allies, have quietly left their posts and returned to



Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair

Havana.” “Some patients organized send-offs for their Cuban caregivers.” “It’s not fair,” said one of the patients who identified as a Chavista, as supporters of the government are known. “We revolutionary Chavistas support the Cuban doctors but after January 3, they started taking them away.”

As revolutionary socialists, we are required to stay optimistic, giving us the ability to shine the light on the weaknesses of international capitalism even when it appears invincible. While Trump and a significant part of the ruling class—that ruling class who projects their perspectives through the editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal*—celebrated the Maduro kidnapping and seizure of Venezuelan oil assets, the setting up of a CIA office, and placing the entire country into a receivership with the Qatar banks controlling Venezuela’s finances. That same U.S. ruling class, represented by the Trump regime, is being resisted by citizens all over the United States.

In Minneapolis, Renee Good and Alex Pretti laid down their lives to resist ICE raids sweeping up working-class immigrants. Bruce Springsteen wrote an anthem song dedicated to the fight against ICE and the cruelty of the Trump regime. Lady Gaga paused during a concert expressing dismay at the government’s hatred and intolerance of immigrants. President Trump and Vice President Vance can’t even attend sporting events without getting booed.

The U.S.-enabled Gaza genocide has laid bare the apartheid and exterminatory nature of the Zionist project in Israel. It has united Jewish and Arab peoples to oppose it aggressively in the United States. Many citizens have turned against their nation states for supporting Israel. Even within Israel, a small portion of the population assembled in the streets denouncing genocide. As the 21st century comes into its third decade, mass action becomes a tool of resistance as capitalist wars,

genocide, and austerity compel people to act in self-defense.

Our future, to right the wrongs inflicted by the international capitalist class, will be determined in the streets and eventually, the working class will have no choice but to use their innate power at the point of production to shut down capitalist machinery and choke off the profits to begin the process of self-defense and ultimately, remove this increasingly dangerous minority capitalist class from power.

We can never acquiesce to the idea that the United States has the right to lay hands on Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro and the First Lady, Cilia Flores, even though most of the world, except Cuba, has abandoned them to their fate. The Trump regime is unhinged and openly defying international standards like blowing up speed boats traveling the Caribbean Sea, killing the passengers without out a shred of evidence that they are running drugs. The international standard is to gather evidence and not summarily execute innocent people.

Drug running is an absolute phony issue. Trump has pardoned Juan Orlando Hernandez, a former Honduran President convicted of drug running, prosecuted on a mountain of evidence for his complicity and sentenced to 45 years in prison by the United States.

“Fort Bragg Cartel: Drug Trafficking and Murder in the Special Forces” by Seth Harp and “One Nation Under Blackmail Vol 1 and 2” by Whitney Webb, exposes the United States Special Forces and CIA involvement in drug running and doing business with banking concerns known for laundering drug money. The United States occupation of Afghanistan enabled the entire globe to be flooded with cheap heroin. This is detailed thoroughly in Harp’s book. The CIA and the Joint Special Operations Command looked the other way on poppy cultivation, hoping the Afghanistan war lords would make reli-

able allies against the resurgent Taliban. Harp’s book notes that the JSOC essentially ran a death squad war.

Professor Michel Chossudovsky, reporting for a think tank called Global Research, cited in his article, “Heroin Addiction in America Spearheaded by U.S. Led war in Afghanistan” published in 2018, cited:

“There were 189,000 heroin users in the U.S. in 2001, before the U.S.-NATO invasion of Afghanistan, by 2012-2013, there were 3.8 million users in the U.S. according to a study by the Columbian University Mailman School of Public Health.”

A country like the United States, neck-deep in the drug trade, has no right to falsely accuse President Nicholas Maduro and Cilia Flores for drug trafficking.

On February 9th, U.S. military forces seized an oil tanker carrying Venezuelan oil in the Indian Ocean that was bound for China. A posting from the U.S. Department of War explained, “The Department of War will deny illicit actors and their proxies the ability to defy American power in the global maritime domain.” The United States has pirated a total of eight tankers carrying Venezuelan oil. This aggressive declaration by the U.S. Department of War, proclaims—expect piracy and violence if we deem your commerce runs counter to American interests. We are in charge of the entire maritime globe.

Imagine if any nation declared itself the supreme arbiter of global maritime commerce? The U.S. would mobilize all its military assets to terrorize that nation into submission. The world is realizing that the United States is a rapacious, expansionist state using brutal military power and economic strangulation, desperate to hold its diminishing influence on the planet.

A telling January 5, 2026, *Wall Street Journal* editorial titled, “The

International Law Illusion ‘In Venezuela’” reveals how the U.S. ruling class sees its place in an ever-competitive world where nation states pursue their independent aims in the marketplace and their political relations with other nation states:

“It would be nice to think that we live in a Wilsonian garden where international law governs relations among nations. We don’t. The closest we’ve come was in the aftermath of the Cold War, when the U.S. was dominant globally and rallied coalitions to enforce international norms in the first Gulf War and the Balkans. Today rogue regimes are on the march and international law, and institutions upholding it end up protecting the law breakers.”

(Quite a laughable piece of writing coming from the U.S. ruling class engaged in high seas piracy and blowing up speed boats, killing their passengers as a prelude to abduct a head of state.)

The editorial continues:

“The only defense against global rouges is the deterrent of Western military force. [What arrogant, racist bluster!] That force was on display with flawless precision in snatching Mr. Maduro. And the demonstration of U.S. nerve and military prowess will do more than a thousand UN resolutions to the free world and make Russia, China, and Iran think twice.”

China is showing great restraint not responding to their oil being stolen on February 9th. War with Russia and China would bring ruination to the United States. There was a time when empires could declare a “*Pax Romana*.”² Humanity functions at a higher level now. We have a sense of inalienable civil rights, a belief that wealth should not be hoarded while imposing austerity on the majority of the population. There is a healthy nationalism, in even the most backward states, that independence is worth fighting and dying for rather than be occupied by a great power. China and Russia think twice? The entire world saw the United States defeated in

Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Nation states are dealing most carefully using caution, appeasement and holding out olive branches for negotiations with the United States, much like you would deal with any unpredictable insane person that could lash out and cause you great harm. The United States will not be able to play the unhinged, crazy-like-a-fox-game before its bluff is called. There will be a push back from the capitalist nation states.

Cuba and Venezuela have suffered decades of life-choking sanctions devastating both their economies. Access to the world marketplace is a necessity for obtaining raw materials, medicines, food, machines and spare parts. There are rules to participating in the world marketplace. Rule number one, profits come before people. Cuba and Venezuela were sanctioned by the United States and enabled by a docile international capitalist class who posed no real opposition to this criminality. Cuba and Venezuela committed the most grievous offense by using their resources to raise the material and cultural level of their working and farming people. Breaking rule number two, they committed insubordination against the United States running their countries independently. The world capitalist class accuses Cuba and Venezuela of mismanagement when they were receiving nothing from the world market to manage their economies with.

Cuba has exported medical doctors, technicians, and even helped secure the independence of Angola. They’ve militarily fought the apartheid state of South Africa. There are pictures of kids from African nations attending international camps on the Isle of Pines where the banners of their countries fly on the island. Cuba has made breakthroughs in cancer treatments where even American citizens were able to go to get treated. There are daycare centers, nursing homes, cultural centers, sports gymnasiums, dance and music schools available for all their citizens.

For all these great things, heroic Cuba could collapse because the Trump administration has resorted to 16th and 17th century piracy that was practiced by the emerging maritime powers of the day, Spain, Britain and France.

Cuba and Venezuela’s fate are bound up with the international class struggle. Until mass forces hit the stage, we hope that Cuba can find a powerful nation state great enough to ship oil to its shores. Solidarity with the Venezuelan and Cuban working-classes! Oil for Cuba! Release President Maduro and Cilia Flores. Down with U.S. Imperialism, the number one criminal state against humanity.

1 Chavismo is a Venezuelan political ideology and movement based on the ideas of former president Hugo Chavez emphasizing “socialism in the 21st century,” nationalism, and anti-imperialism.

2 The Pax Romana (“Roman Peace”) was a roughly 200-year period of relative stability, prosperity, and territorial expansion in the Roman Empire, lasting from 27 BCE to 180 CE. Initiated by Emperor Augustus, this “golden age” featured economic growth, 70 million people, and major architectural advancements like concrete, though it still involved military expansion and, often, brutal repression of border revolts.

Fate of Gaza's Disappeared

BY KHALED EL-HISSY

On October 19, 2025, Gaza's Ministry of Health announced it had received 150 bodies from Israel.

The corpses were handed over by the International Committee of the Red Cross, and their return followed the ceasefire agreement that came into effect on October 10th.

With at least 8,000 people still missing in Gaza—presumed either buried under rubble, in mass graves dug by the Israeli military or detained by Israel and held outside Gaza—determining the fate of the missing is a top priority.

But as Israel still keeps crossings into Gaza shut to all but the bare minimum of aid, Gaza's authorities are without heavy machinery to shift millions of tons of rubble or relevant scientific materials to properly identify sometimes deeply decomposed corpses. This undermines efforts to provide information to families of the disappeared.

It was left to the forensic teams at Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis to examine and document the corpses that were returned in October.

"The bodies were bound from the hands and ankles and had abrasions and bruises all over," Ahmad Dhiar, director of the Forensic Medicine Department in Gaza, said in an October 20th interview with *Palestine TV*.

"Some bodies were naked except for their underwear. Others were fully naked."

Dhiar said that the bodies had all been frozen, preventing the forensic teams from performing autopsies until the tissues thawed after two days.

Two bodies, he added, had been blindfolded and had constraints around their necks. Others bore signs of physical abuse.

"Several bodies had gunshot wounds to the head and chest," he said, suggesting that they may have been executed.

Some were just skeletons while others were in an advanced state of decomposition.

Identifying the dead

The Israeli side provided 90 DNA profiles along with the 150 bodies, but no names.

Yet the Gaza Strip, as Israel is well aware, lacks equipment and tools for DNA or tissue analysis.

"We only have a rudimentary procedure relying on the body's length, trying to specify the age, the nutritional status, the presence of personal belongings, from the teeth, the bones, previous surgeries or amputations, distinguishing marks on the body like scars or moles in distinctive locations only the family can recognize," Dhiar said.

Providing DNA profiles is futile as a result, he said.

Based on the October "ceasefire" agreement, Israel was to hand over bodies according to a 15-to-one ratio—15 Palestinians for every Israeli.

As of January 2026, the Ministry of Health in Gaza had received 345 bodies, from which, so far, only 99 have been identified.

Dhiar explained the process of identifying these bodies in a video published by Gaza's Ministry of Health on October 14th.

Forensic teams examine the bodies to determine the cause of death, how long since death and the types of injuries suffered.

A criminal evidence team then documents and photographs these injuries along with the body's general features and clothing.

These photos are uploaded—please be warned, the pictures are harrow-



On December 1, 2025, 15 unidentified Palestinians handed over by Israeli authorities were buried in a mass grave in Khan Younis, southern Gaza. A sign placed on the grave reads: "To preserve their dignity and ensure future identification, please do not remove." Doaa Albaz ActiveStills

ing—to a website created by the Ministry of Health in Gaza, where people can view the photos to try to identify the corpses.

If someone recognizes a body, they head to Nasser Medical Complex to view the photos again. After confirming that it is the right body, and that they have a close relationship or are relatives, they are allowed to take the body for burial.

If a corpse is not identified, it will be buried in a designated location where every grave is numbered—a mass grave for unidentified martyrs.

In case someone later identifies a body from photos, they will know where their loved one was buried.

Lost in detention

On November 16th, Israel handed Hamas through mediators a list that contained 1,468 names of those Israel said it had captured over the two years prior to October's ceasefire.

Hamas accused Israel of hiding the true number of detainees, however, and the Palestinian Center for Missing and Forcibly Disappeared, a missing persons center in Gaza, reported that the list is incomplete and “does not reflect the true number of those detained.”

Based on reports from families and its own field monitoring in the Gaza Strip, the center suspects hundreds of individuals have been detained by the Israeli military whose names did not appear on the Israeli list.

Israel doesn't disclose information about the numbers, whereabouts and fate of Gaza's prisoners held in military detention camps such as Sde Teiman.

As of January 1, 2026, according to prisoner rights group Addameer, Israel is holding 9,300 Palestinian detainees. The group noted that “this number does not include detainees held in military camps affiliated with the occupation army.”

In all, the fate of at least 8,000 missing and disappeared persons from the

Gaza Strip remains unknown as of January 5, 2026.

In addition to the Israeli military withholding information, there are at least three other reasons why some people remain missing.

First, the Israeli army has reportedly dug a mass grave near the Zikim crossing containing an unspecified number of bodies.

Second, some bodies may have been completely vaporized or damaged beyond any possible identification. This is also known as total body disruption. Israel has been accused of using thermal weapons by human rights groups like the Euro-Med Monitor. Such weapons can melt bodies from the heat and intensity of the blast.

But even without such weapons, bodies have been completely obliterated. Nooh al-Shaghnoobi, 24, a member of Gaza's Civil Defense, told the *Electronic Intifada* how, in the first months of Israel's genocide, he witnessed how two of his colleagues “instantly evaporated” when an Israeli missile struck them directly while they were responding to an emergency in Gaza City's al-Tuffah neighborhood.

Beneath rubble

A third reason for the missing numbers is that Israeli military ground forces are still occupying more than half of Gaza behind its so-called yellow line. How many bodies are buried under rubble in these areas is impossible to say until Palestinian authorities gain access.

As of October 11, 2025, approximately 81 percent of all structures in the Gaza Strip are damaged, with 123,464 structures completely destroyed out of a total of 198,273 damaged structures, according to a preliminary analysis by the United Nations.

Israel has wreaked havoc across the Gaza Strip. The UN estimates Israel's bombing campaign has generated more than 61 million tons of debris, or about

as much as “if you build a 12-meter wall around Central Park and fill that with rubble,” according to Jaco Cilliers, the United Nations Development Program Representative in Palestine.

With so much rubble, retrieving the bodies of those buried beneath is a complicated and time-consuming task.

Israel, which is still committing genocide in Gaza, has only recently allowed heavy search equipment to enter Gaza in order to search for the remains of Israeli captives.

Most of the heavy equipment in Gaza was destroyed over the past two years. Al-Shaghnoobi, who has been working with Gaza's Civil Defense for seven years, told the *Electronic Intifada* that in the first few months of the genocide, Civil Defense teams deployed diggers and bulldozers.

But the Israeli military targeted municipality warehouses and destroyed almost all remaining equipment used by the Civil Defense and municipality workers.

“We started using rudimentary tools, like a shovel, sledgehammer, hoe, pickaxe and axe,” he said. “But you can't dig through concrete with a shovel.”

There were so many distress calls in the early days of the genocide that it became overwhelming, al-Shaghnoobi said.

“Most days, there were so many distress calls, we wouldn't get any rest or sleep,” he said. “Sometimes we would go three days straight with consecutive missions.”

Al-Shaghnoobi described how he and his colleagues tried to respond to emergencies. When they arrive at a location, he said, they first examine the scene to determine whether the damage is to a single-family house or a multi-story building and how to section off search areas to look for survivors.

“Ninety percent of the people [trapped] under the rubble are unconscious, or they can't make a sound, or their voice is very faint,” al-Shaghnoobi said. “We have to try as much as possible to follow the sound or see where

there is blood.”

They try to keep the area around the location quiet in order to hear better. Sometimes they were called back because people heard someone start shouting from under the rubble after they regained consciousness.

The time spent rescuing one person, al-Shaghnoobi said, depends on the specific circumstances.

“Sometimes we find people just as they were, on the ground with only two or three stones on top of them,” he said.

At others, when a person is buried under a block of concrete or a concrete slab or if they are injured, requiring them to be handled with extreme caution, it takes longer to get them out.

The lack of heavy machinery and equipment is a major obstacle, forcing al-Shaghnoobi and his team to prioritize emergencies.

“We will always start with younger people,” he said, adding that with better equipment, it would have been possible on “thousands” of occasions to save more people.

“I feel a profound sense of helplessness as a civil defense worker when there are people alive under the rubble, but I can’t reach them because of the bombing or the lack of equipment.”

Khaled El-Hissy is a journalist from Jabaliya in the Gaza Strip and an assistant editor at the Electronic Intifada.

—*Electronic Intifada*, January 13, 2026

<https://electronicintifada.net/content/fate-gazas-disappeared-remains-unknown/51157>

Israel Continues to Strangle Palestine

BY NOAH KENNER

The focus of U.S. imperialism and much of the world has partially shifted away from Palestine as Trump targets Latin America and Greenland. But dynamics in the Middle East and the question of Palestinian liberation remain unresolved, despite Trump’s claim to have “ended the war in Gaza.” Palestinians in Gaza are facing their third winter under Israel’s genocidal campaign without adequate shelter, food, or safety. Israel continues to violate the terms of the U.S.-imposed ceasefire by obstructing aid entry and conducting daily killings.

Since the ceasefire began on October 10, 2025, Israel has directly killed more than 450 Palestinians through airstrikes and shootings while creating conditions that lead to further deaths from lack of food, medicine, and shel-

ter. Nearly all of Gaza’s two million residents are forced to live in tents or makeshift shelters, enduring freezing nights and frequent storms, which have led to at least 24 deaths from cold exposure alone. Meanwhile, residents often go hungry as Israel turns away aid trucks and prevents organizations from delivering humanitarian aid. The ceasefire stipulates the entry of 600 aid trucks each day, but only 145 have been allowed to enter on average.

In the occupied West Bank, Israel persists in its assault on human rights, demolishing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) headquarters in East Jerusalem while settler attacks escalate. In the town of Ras Ein al-Auja, 450 out of 650 Palestinian residents have fled because of violence and

Israel continues to violate the terms of the U.S.-imposed ceasefire by obstructing aid entry and conducting daily killings.



Trump’s “Board of Peace.”

theft by nearby settlers. Settler violence increased by 27 percent in 2025 and took a particularly heavy toll on olive farmers in the fall. Masked settlers roamed towns with Molotov cocktails, burning cars, houses, and olive groves, and forcing farmers to leave their fruit to rot on the trees to avoid lynch mobs.

Across the world in Davos, Switzerland, Jared Kushner promised Western investors “amazing investment opportunities” during a presentation by Trump’s newly unveiled “Board of Peace.” The board was established as part of the Trump-brokered ceasefire deal in October and is framed as an “internationally verified” overseer, cynically presented to the world as a “Palestinian-led” initiative to rehabilitate Gaza.

Despite the board’s stated intentions of peace and rehabilitation, it was created to perpetuate the genocidal war on Gaza and further cleanse Palestinians from their land at a time when traditional imperial means of slash-and-burn colonialism had failed to force their capitulation. The board has also opened opportunities for various vested parties in the region to exert influence through the imperial symposium. As new members of the board are invited (and disinvited) every day, its precise political stance remains unclear.

Netanyahu seeks to leverage the board to preempt any diplomatic pressure that might force the Israel Defense Force (IDF) to withdraw from Gaza or limit his ability to bomb at will. Turkey and the Gulf states aim to use the board to project regional power while inserting vague references to a “future Palestinian state” in hopes of placating their restless citizens. Yet this diplomatic association with Israel could easily backfire, further tarnishing the reputation of Arab states as collaborators in genocide. The Egyptian government, in particular, has long faced criticism for allowing Israel to control the Rafah border crossing and for its violent repression of activists participating in the grassroots-led Samud Land Convoy¹.

Meanwhile, Trump and his Western allies seek lucrative business deals from the reconstruction of Gaza while avoiding any fallout should the project run aground as many Western-led nation-building exercises do.

The new and unstable balance of forces

The genocide continues to reshape the balance of forces in the Middle East, as Israel has failed to impose a decisive military victory, and the war has instead spread instability across the region. Rather than resolving the Palestinian question, the conflict has multiplied points of tension and crisis. This is already evident on Israel’s northern front. Israel failed to achieve a decisive military victory over Hezbollah in Lebanon, despite heavy losses. Instead, military action against Lebanon has only created a more fragile and volatile situation.

The ceasefire stipulates the entry of 600 aid trucks each day, but only 145 have been allowed to enter on average.

The collapse of state authority in Syria points in the same direction. After 14 years of civil war, the country remains shattered by sectarian violence and social collapse. The recomposition of state power under authorities seeking recognition from Western governments does not represent stabilization but rather a new layer of dependence and repression. Minorities in the country face an uncertain future; Alawites in particular have suffered dozens of brutal massacres at the hands of Sunni forces, with more than 1,500 killed in 2025.

Iran is reeling from a wave of large protests in which thousands have been killed by state forces, attracting the attention of Western governments,

who see a ripe opportunity to undermine a regional competitor with regime change. The protests were fueled largely by the deterioration of living conditions brought about by the heavy Western sanctions regime. The government has responded to these protests with a heavy hand, opening fire on civilians and jailing thousands of dissidents, while tensions with imperialism have resulted in an ongoing military standoff that could generate even more regional instability.

Taken together, these developments reveal a stark reality: the war has destabilized the region without resolving the structures of occupation. The October ceasefire in Gaza changed the daily landscape of the conflict, but the Strip remains a killing field. Even the terms of the ceasefire, however loosely followed by Israel, were forced by international pressure from below, including working-class action. The most advanced expression of this struggle is the Global Samud Flotilla² and the Block Everything³ movement in Italy, which raised the political and economic cost of the war and forced temporary concessions, highlighting the potential of an independent working-class response.

The fragility of the ceasefire underscores that negotiations between imperialist and regional capitalist powers cannot resolve the war in the interests of Palestinians. For the pro-Palestine movement, every failed ceasefire reaffirms the same reality: Palestine will not be liberated through negotiations between states but through struggle from below. The decisive force is the regional working class, whose independent action can shift the balance of forces against Israel and its imperialist backers.

—*Left Voice*, February 5, 2026

<https://www.leftvoice.org/israel-continues-to-strangle-palestine-under-the-auspices-of-the-board-of-peace/>

Continued on page 37

Mutual Aid or Mutual Assured Destruction

BY JOE LAURIA

Consortium News Editor-In-Chief, Joe Lauria, gave this speech at “The Courage to be Ethical” conference in Sarnach, Switzerland, August 29, 2025.

In our youth there were certain books that stood out and left a lasting impression on us. At the time, these books seemed to change our entire lives, young as our lives were. One would-be genius told me she was eight years old when she read Montesquieu¹. I guess I was a late bloomer as I reached about 17 before I started reading serious books.

One of those books came to mind as soon as I read these words in *Zeit Fragen* (the newspaper of the conference organizers) on what this conference is about:

“The world has changed radically in recent years, and changes radically still. The forces that persist in striving for global supremacy are opposed by others working for

peace and a world order based on equality and equal rights. The quest for supremacy comes at a high price: Reason and humanity fall by the wayside, so endangering all of us—those who insist on preserving their power, as well as all others.

“This seems to be something those who lead the West, heirs to long traditions of imperial superiority, have not (yet) understood. They have forgotten the treasures of the humanistic tradition, the idea of *bonum commune*—a good life for all.

“We in the West are missing an ethic of common identity, common purpose—an ethic of togetherness. In direct consequence, democracy, the rule of law, and international law are being dismantled. Warmongering supplants the ability to build peace. A cult of irresponsibility prevails.

“This makes it all the more important to rethink or return to cultural traditions that have proven their worth in the way people and nations live together.”

The book that immediately came to mind when reading these words was

Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution by the Russian prince, Peter Kropotkin.

Who was Peter Kropotkin?

Born into an aristocratic family in 1842 in Moscow, he became a page to Tsar Nicholas I. As a military officer in Siberia, he took part in geological expeditions for which he won a gold medal from the Russian Geographical Society for discovering that the land from the Ural Mountains to the Pacific Ocean was a plateau and not a plain. A Siberian mountain range was later named for him.

As Siberia correspondent for a St. Petersburg newspaper, he studied peasant social organization. He continued his geographical studies at St. Petersburg university and took part in a polar expedition in 1870. Kropotkin was just as interested in human society as the natural world and was stirred by the 1871 Paris Commune. In 1872 he traveled here to Switzerland where he became involved with the Jura Federation², led by Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin.

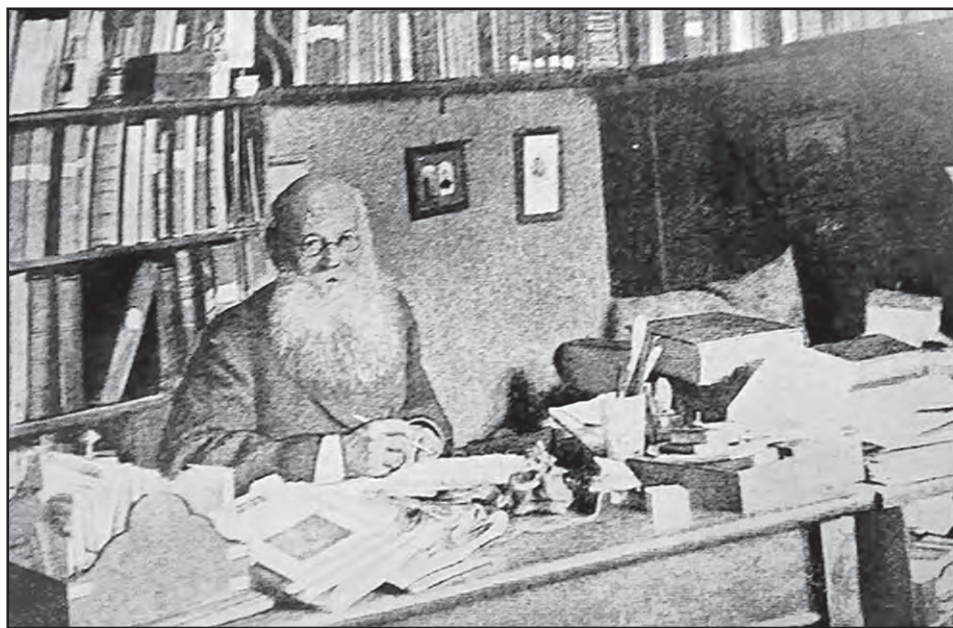
Continued from page 36

(Endnotes)

1 The Sumud Land Convoy is a grassroots-led initiative, primarily originating from North Africa (Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania) in June 2025, aimed at breaking the blockade of Gaza by delivering aid. Named for the Arabic word for “steadfastness,” it involved over 1,000 volunteers, including doctors and activists.

2 The Spring 2026 flotilla includes a dedicated medical fleet with over 1,000 healthcare professionals and ships stocked with essential medicines and medical equipment that have been unjustly blocked from entering Gaza. The medical mission works in partnership with Palestinian healthcare workers to reinforce emergency care and support a health system devastated by siege and ongoing assaults.

3 The “Blocchiamo Tutto” (Block Everything) movement in Italy, occurring prominently in 2025, was a series of grassroots, union-led general strikes and direct actions designed to halt economic activity in protest against the Italian government’s alleged complicity in the Gaza conflict. It involved blocking ports, roads, and rail, causing significant transport disruption.



Kropotkin at his desk c. 1890 (Unknown/Public Domain/Wikimedia Commons)

Radicalized in Switzerland, Kropotkin returned to Russia with contraband literature and joined an anarchist circle. His first political writings in 1873 argued for a stateless society of workers and peasants owning the factories and the land.

The secret police came after his group for advocating these ideas and Kropotkin was arrested for agitation in 1874 and imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress, a scandal for a member of the Russian elite. In jail he was allowed to complete a report he was writing on the Ice Age.

Because of ill health he was moved to a lower security prison from which he escaped and arrived back here in Switzerland in 1876, where began the publication *Le Révolté*.

Five years later, in 1881, he was expelled from Switzerland at Russia's request after the assassination of Alexander II, though there was no proof he had a direct role in it. Kropotkin exiled in France and then London after he learned that the Holy League, a tsarist group, intended to kill him for his alleged link to the assassination.

Back in France he was imprisoned for four years before returning to London where he began a publication called *Freedom*. Inspired by reading *Mutual Aid* in 1983 I went to its offices in Whitechapel and induced its editors to publish an article I'd written. The paper is still published online.

After the Bolshevik Revolution Kropotkin returned to Russia in 1917 where, despite being opposed to Marxism, he was treated as a friend of the revolution. He refused the offer of a cabinet seat from the Petrograd Provisional Government. His application for residency in Moscow was personally approved by Lenin with whom he met and corresponded. Kropotkin argued with him against the centralization of authority to no avail.

After he died of pneumonia in February 1921 aged 79 his family refused a state funeral offered to him.

His Moscow funeral was the last public demonstration of the anarchist movement in Russia as it was fully suppressed by the end of 1921. But in 1935 a station in the Moscow metro was named after Kropotkin.

Kropotkin's argument

Kropotkin's political ideas arose largely from his study of animal life and peasant society during his time in Siberia. It was on the basis of his observation of animal and human cooperation that he concluded that mutual aid, and not mutual struggle, is the primary factor in human evolution and survival. This was an argument in direct contradiction to the evolving consensus at the time put forward by Herbert Spencer and Thomas Huxley of a war for survival of the fittest.

It was on the basis of his observation of animal and human cooperation that he concluded that mutual aid, and not mutual struggle, is the primary factor in human evolution and survival.

Kropotkin's argument is essentially this: Human individuals and societies are both competitive and cooperative. The question is which has been more important in the survival of species. *Mutual Aid* was a response to Huxley's 1888 book *Struggle for Existence and its Bearing upon Man*, which promoted the idea of Social Darwinism—that it is, a competitive struggle against others for survival.

This was a misinterpretation of Darwin, Kropotkin argued. In his book's vast and incisive overview of human history, he shows that it has been predominately the cooperative side of our

natures, not the competitive, that has led to our survival until today.

Mutual Aid should be considered, he wrote, "not only as an argument in favor of a pre-human origin of moral instincts, but also as a law of Nature and a factor of evolution."

It's not love

He rejected the idea that it was love or parental feeling that led to mutual aid.

"It is not love to my neighbor—whom I often do not know at all—which induces me to seize a pail of water and to rush towards his house when I see it on fire; it is a far wider, even though more vague, feeling or instinct of human solidarity and sociability which moves me. So, it is also with animals. It is not love, and not even sympathy (understood in its proper sense), which induces a herd of ruminants or of horses to form a ring in order to resist an attack of wolves; not love which induces wolves to form a pack for hunting; ... and it is neither love nor personal sympathy which induces many thousands of fallow-deer scattered over a territory as large as France to form into a score of separate herds, all marching towards a given spot, in order to cross there a river.

"It is a feeling infinitely wider than love or personal sympathy—an instinct that has been slowly developed among animals and men in the course of an extremely long evolution, and which has taught animals and men alike the force they can borrow from the practice of mutual aid and support, and the joys they can find in social life.

"But it is not love and not even sympathy upon which Society is based in mankind. It is the conscience—be it only at the stage of an instinct—of human solidarity. It is the unconscious recognition of the force that is borrowed by each man from the practice of mutual aid; of the close dependency of every one's happiness upon the happiness of all; and of the sense of justice, or equity, which brings the individual

to consider the rights of every other individual as equal to his own.”

Response to Huxley

Mutual Aid published in 1902 is a collection of articles written between 1890 and 1896 for the publication *Nineteenth Century* as a direct response to Huxley’s 1888 *Struggle for Existence and its Bearing upon Man*, which Kropotkin writes “to my appreciation was a very incorrect representation of the facts of Nature.”

Social Darwinism emerged during the Gilded Age—the unrivaled heyday of unregulated capitalism until the resurgent Gilded Age of our own neoliberal era.

In the introduction to *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin quotes Huxley about “gladiator’s show” of prehistoric people: “... the weakest and stupidest went to the wall, while the toughest and shrewdest, those who were best fitted to cope with their circumstances, but not the best in another way, survived. Life was a continuous free fight, and beyond the limited and temporary relations of the family, the Hobbesian³ war of each against all was the normal state of existence.”

Kropotkin said,

“There are a number of evolutionists who may not refuse to admit the importance of mutual aid among animals, but who, like Herbert Spencer, will refuse to admit it for Man. For primitive Man—they maintain—war of each against all was the law of life.”

Kropotkin went on:

“We have heard so much lately of the ‘harsh, pitiless struggle for life,’ which was said to be carried on by every animal against all other animals, every ‘savage’ against all other ‘savages,’ and every civilized man against all his co-citizens—and these assertions have so much become an article of faith—that it was necessary, first of all, to oppose to them a wide series of facts showing animal and human life under a quite different aspect.

“It was necessary to indicate the overwhelming importance which sociable habits play in Nature and in

the progressive evolution of both the animal species and human beings: to prove that they secure to animals a better protection from their enemies, very often facilities for getting food (winter provisions, migrations, etc.), longevity, and therefore a greater facility for the development of intellectual faculties; and that they have given to men, in addition to the same advantages, the possibility of working out those institutions which have enabled mankind to survive in its hard struggle against Nature, and to progress, notwithstanding all the vicissitudes of its history.”

Kropotkin gives us a tour of history, beginning with mutual aid among animals; among pre-historic people; among what he calls barbarians; in the medieval city and finally in his own day.

**Social bonds
take precedence over
individual survival. In the
sea, even lobsters and crabs
will practice collective
defense.**

His history describes elite institutional efforts over succeeding generations to repress people’s natural instinct to cooperate, imposing conditions of life to divide them so they pose little threat to ruling interests. Despite increasingly sophisticated efforts over the centuries, both ideologically and through the use of force, the resilient, cooperative instinct continues to emerge, however.

Ultimately, Kropotkin says essentially that humanity has a stark choice: cooperate or die.

Distorting Darwin

Kropotkin begins his book discussing the distortion of Darwin’s ideas, arguing that Darwin himself acknowledged cooperation in species such as bees and ants and that his followers overemphasized competition in natural selection. He wrote:

“[Darwin] foresaw that the term which he was introducing into science [survival of the fittest] would lose its philosophical and its only true meaning if it were to be used in its narrow sense only—that of a struggle between separate individuals for the sheer means of existence.

“He insisted upon the term being taken in its ‘large and metaphorical sense including dependence of one being on another and including (which is more important) not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny.’

“While he himself was chiefly using the term in its narrow sense for his own special purpose, he warned his followers against committing the error (which he seems once to have committed himself) of overrating its narrow meaning.

“In *The Descent of Man* he gave some powerful pages to illustrate its proper, wide sense. He pointed out how, in numberless animal societies, the struggle between separate individuals for the means of existence disappears, how struggle is replaced by co-operation, and how that substitution results in the development of intellectual and moral faculties which secure to the species the best conditions for survival.

“He intimated that in such cases the fittest are not the physically strongest, nor the cunningest, but those who learn to combine so as mutually to support each other, strong and weak alike, for the welfare of the community. ‘Those communities,’ he wrote, ‘which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring.’”

Animals’ mutual aid

Drawing on his experience studying nature in Siberia, Kropotkin then gives copious evidence to demonstrate mutual aid among animals.

He describes how ants share food and work, including building bridges with their bodies to overcome obsta-

cles. Bees work collectively to create and maintain hives.

Migratory birds, such as cranes and swallows, cooperate in long-distance flights by taking turns to lead the flock to reduce wind resistance. Birds protect each other's young in the nest from predators.

The same goes for mammals like deer, buffalo, and wild horses grouping together to ward off predators. Wolves hunt in packs, share their food and together care for the sick and injured.

Social bonds take precedence over individual survival. In the sea, even lobsters and crabs will practice collective defense.

Environment

Kropotkin points out that harsh conditions, such as in the Siberian tundra, are more likely to engender mutual aid than in less challenging circumstances where individual survival through competitive behavior may take precedence. But even in such circumstances cooperative behavior is essential for group survival.

When defense isn't needed at a grassroots level, but is instead provided by the state, individualism can start to supplant mutual aid. Hence Kropotkin's absolute opposition to the state.

In his discussion of animals, he shows how mutual aid in primates leads to more sophisticated social structures. Monkeys and apes share food, grooming and defense, protecting the weaker members of the group.

Small mammals and rodents build and share a tunnel system and use calls to communicate alarm. Penguins and seagulls share incubation of newborns and gather together for defense.

He also points out mutual aid between species, such as birds removing parasites from large mammals and different species of fish banding together to defend against common predators.

Overall, Kropotkin establishes that mutual aid is a natural instinct, not a device, which boosts adaptability and

resilience in order to reproduce the species with traits favoring sociability.

Individualistic competition may benefit certain individuals, but it weakens the survival of the group. Competition is found mostly in one species against another. Within a species it is less common than cooperation. When competition does occur within a species it is mostly the result of human-made scarcity, in other words inequality, he says.

With examples from the animal kingdom Kropotkin laid the groundwork to demonstrate that mutual aid is actually fundamental among humans too.

Laws were developed to enforce mutual obligations such as communal support during famine, and laws were enforced through communal consensus, not centralized authority.

Mutual aid among prehistoric people

Focusing on the San people of Southern Africa and Australian Aborigines, Kropotkin demonstrates that hunter-gatherer societies share tools, food and land. Hunting and gathering is a collective endeavor and the spoils are shared for the benefit of group survival.

Cooperative behavior becomes institutionalized in clans and tribes, held together through ceremony and ritual—without hierarchy or central authority. Disputes are resolved within the tribes through collective mediation promoting social cohesion.

The great transition: mutual aid among “barbarians”

Agriculture and the domestication of animals led to a social and political revolution that has challenged mutual

aid among humans forever. Sedentary life led to the alliance between chiefs, warriors and shamans, becoming a ruling establishment for centuries—divine kings, priests to legitimize the state and generals to enforce its will.

What Kropotkin called barbarians were tribes transitioning from hunter-gathering to agricultural or pastoral economies. Germanic, Mongols, Slavs, *etc.* were outside of Greek, Roman and ancient hierarchical and centralized authority. These ancient and classical states dominated through military conquests and the imposition of social stratification, including slavery, enforced through ideology and state violence to repress the natural instinct of mutual aid still dominant in barbarian tribes.

Mutual aid inside barbarian tribes was challenged by emerging hierarchies in the transition to sedentary life. Nevertheless, Kropotkin shows how mutual aid still persisted.

Even though the means of production had changed from hunting and gathering to settled agriculture, in the villages of this era, land, tools and harvests were still shared communally.

Defense also remained a largely a shared obligation in tribal society outside the dominance of standing armies. Social bonds were reinforced in assemblies like the Germanic *volkmoot* or thing.

Laws were developed to enforce mutual obligations such as communal support during famine, and laws were enforced through communal consensus, not centralized authority.

Kropotkin quotes the Roman historian Tacitus's description of barbarian societies to show that even as societies and economies became more complex the lack of repressive central authority among barbarian tribes allowed mutual aid to flourish through cooperative institutions.

Battle lines are drawn

The battle lines were drawn in this era within barbarian tribes between the emerging alliance of chiefs, warriors and priests

defending private land ownership on the one hand versus the vast population still operating under tribal mutual aid.

This competition within the group that created the division between ruled, and ruler eventually led to Social Darwinism, a distortion of nature pitting everyone against each other. It is still very much with us today.

Battle lines between the tribes and central authorities such as in Rome had already been drawn and were in time breeched, as barbarians overtook the empire. Their control in the West eventually developed into feudalism.

Throughout all of these momentous changes, Kropotkin argues that the natural instinct of cooperation remained resilient despite increasing assaults against it.

Mutual aid in the medieval city

Despite social stratification, especially in the countryside, mutual aid survived in medieval cities in the form of guilds (financial aid, training, and protection for members), communes (free cities as semi-autonomous republics governed by assemblies, like Florence and Ghent) charitable institutions (hospitals, almshouses, community granaries), and in defense and infrastructure such as building canals, cathedrals and city walls.

These cities resisted monarchs and feudal lords to preserve mutual aid even when overseas colonies with the rise of mercantilism and the emergence of the capitalist class undermined the autonomy of the free city states.

Mutual aid vs. capitalism until Kropotkin's time

Capitalism creates artificial competition and fosters individualism, undermining the natural instincts of cooperation, Kropotkin argued. Resistance to capitalism has come in the form of trade unions, cooperatives, fights against enclosure, strikes and the development of socialist, communist and anarchist organizations and parties as well as charities. Peasant rebellions

and utopian movements were efforts to maintain social bonds in the face of the ravages of capitalism and centralized authority.

Kropotkin concludes his book by arguing that humans have a natural propensity to cooperate, which has preserved the species and though suppressed by central authorities, continues to survive despite all efforts to destroy it.

As an anarchist, Kropotkin believed that only decentralized communities could practice mutual aid and not the state.

Peasant rebellions and utopian movements were efforts to maintain social bonds in the face of the ravages of capitalism and centralized authority.

Mutual aid and world war

Battle lines between elites and the public—and between elites themselves—twice in the 20th Century led to supreme conflict. The First World War was a war within capitalism itself, each against the other, for dominance of the system, a senseless battle of survival of the fittest in the capitalist bloc and their overseas colonies. The remnants of the feudal system that tried to suppress the mutual aid of the medieval cities collapsed with the fall of the Hohenzollern (Germany), Habsburg (Austria-Hungary), and Romanov (Russia) eagles.

After the war Germany and Turkey were severely weakened, Britain maintained its empire for the time being and a new player made its entrance into the entanglements of Europe, the United States, which had just 20 years earlier emerged as an empire beyond its shores by finishing off the decrepit empire of Spain.

The accumulated greed for wealth and power that culminated in the

Gilded Age of capitalism led to the war that was supposed to end all wars. It was the most destructive conflict to that point in history. Competition had not proven to be the engine of progress the Social Darwinists professed it to be but an engine of utter destruction.

Kropotkin surprised and disappointed many of his followers by supporting the Allied side rather than opposing the war altogether, arguing that German aggression needed to be defeated.

The unbelievable carnage in the fields of Europe led to a collective reassessment. The Social Darwinist ethic, which attempted to use science to legitimize socially predatory behavior, had clearly contributed to the unimaginable horrors.

First post-war resurgence of mutual aid

There was a widespread implicit acknowledgment post war that a return to mutual aid was needed to put humanity back on a course to survival.

Out of this came a series of developments. The League of Nations was established, ill-fated as it turned out to be. In Italy in 1920, in perhaps the most striking example of mutual aid in defiance of capitalist rule, 600,000 Italian workers took part in factory takeovers. These weren't sit-down strikes.

The workers ran the factories as well as freight trains that moved raw material and finished goods in a demonstration of anarcho-syndicalism which showed the bosses weren't needed to run an industry. The people, through mutual aid, alone could do it by themselves.

Italian capitalist leaders freaked out. They reacted by supporting a movement to repress this massively successful display of mutual aid which threatened capitalism itself. It was called fascism.

Then in 1928, in another display of institutional mutual aid in direct reaction to the breakdown of World War I, 62 nations signed onto the Kellogg-Briand Pact, named after the U.S. and French foreign ministers who negotiated

it. The pact sought to outlaw war as an instrument of foreign policy and to promote peaceful resolution of conflicts.

In the U.S. a best-selling 1934 book, *Merchants of Death*, claimed U.S. banks and corporations plotted to draw the U.S. into WWI. A Senate subcommittee chaired by Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota investigated the book's charges and found U.S. companies had made massive profits from the war.

Nye's hearings led to Congress passing laws in 1935, 1936 and 1937 known as the Neutrality Acts making it illegal to lend money or sell arms and ammunition to any country involved in war.

But none of these measures to restore mutual aid would last.

It took only 22 years for Europe to again be plunged into world war.

The second post-war resurgence of mutual aid

Once again Big Power competition squashed cooperation among and within nations, leading to a second round of worldwide destruction.

When the worst war in human history was over, once again attempts at cooperation emerged. The world sought to take stock of itself, considering it had threatened its own survival through the disruption of mutual aid.

The United Nations was formed to "end the scourge of war," U.N. agencies were to foster health, development and worldwide cooperation. The U.N. was institutionalized Mutual Aid so to speak.

Adding to the 1945 U.N. Charter's attempted blueprint to end war, the U.N. enshrined the principles of mutual aid in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948. These sought to ensure basic rights that preserve mutual aid among peoples. Its preamble reads:

"Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human

beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

"Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law..."

There were other examples of peoples and nations coming to together in cooperation and in opposition to the predatory and individualistic behavior that led to global devastation. The post-war, non-aligned movement, the precursor of today's BRICS⁴, saw newly decolonized developing countries practice a kind of mutual aid against the dominance of the U.S.-led West.

In Italy in 1920, in perhaps the most striking example of mutual aid in defiance of capitalist rule, 600,000 Italian workers took part in factory takeovers.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe was an attempt to create a mechanism to defuse Cold War tensions and foster *detente* and cooperation on key international issues such as disarmament and the uses of outer space.

State-run mutual aid

Workers in Britain threw out wartime leader Winston Churchill and the first government-run health service since Bismarck, the NHS, was established the same year, 1948. Across Western Europe government was put into the service of the public as never before.

Kropotkin of course would not have agreed with government-directed mutual aid in the form of social democracy. Here is where I differ a little with

the great Russian anarchist. He saw no positive role for government. Mutual aid had to be practiced locally, from the ground up, without the involvement of the state, he held.

Ideally, this is what the world should strive for. But the world is much more complex than in Kropotkin's time, and social democracy, as practiced in Western Europe after the war, with a mixed economy and a strong social safety net, may be the best system human beings will ever be capable of.

The U.S.—the greatest threat to mutual aid

In opposition to these moves to revive mutual aid, the forces of individualism and greed fought back to maintain control. The beginning of the Cold War by the Truman administration, and the subsequent nuclear arms race, was in direct contradiction to efforts to preserve the species through the revival of mutual aid.

The Cold War was driven by the U.S. emerging from WWII with troops and intelligence scattered around the world ready to enforce U.S. access to new markets and resources through invasions and *coups* installing foreign governments subservient to U.S. interests.

To support this global empire, the U.S. developed a permanent military state that still dominates at home and with declining authority abroad. This militarized economy takes away from the administration of mutual aid among the people and glorifies a single leader and the interests of an elite class over the population.

This came about despite three U.S. presidents who at least tried to warn about the consequences to society of U.S. power.

James Madison warned in 1795:

"Of all the enemies to public liberty, war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded, because it comprises and develops the germ of every other ... In no part of the constitution is more wisdom to be found than in the clause which confides the question of war

or peace to the legislature, and not to the executive department. Beside the objection to such a mixture of heterogeneous powers: the trust and the temptation would be too great for any one man ... War is in fact the true nurse of executive aggrandizement."

After every previous war U.S. soldiers returned to the fields and factories and the economy returned to civilian pursuits. But after the Second World War fear of a return to the Depression led to the permanent military economy. Eisenhower's 1961 warning that this would threaten American democracy—and world peace—has come true.

After Cold War competition nearly led to nuclear annihilation in the Cuban Missile Crisis, John F. Kennedy's warned in his famed June 1963 American University speech not to humiliate a nuclear weapons state—the Soviet Union. The warning, as seen in today's Ukraine crisis, has been ignored.

[See: *A History of Humiliation*⁵]

Kennedy sought to humanize the Soviet people for an American audience in an effort to restore global cooperation and the survival of the species. Some analysts think it led to his own death five months later as it clashed directly with the interests of American militarism. JFK favored mutual aid over Big Power competition and potential mutual destruction.

Throughout the Cold War 1950s and into the 1960s, dissent was crushed. If one sought *detente*, as Kennedy did in his speech, one was usually denounced as a traitor.

Then Henry Kissinger achieved *detente* in the 1970s. Today one is back to being a traitor if one seeks cooperation rather than confrontation with Russia.

After McCarthy's 1950s witchhunt was disgraced, sociability led to mass protests against the U.S. war in Vietnam that were not easily crushed. The 1960s anti-consumerist counterculture, and the spread of social revolution in the

developing world, posed a threat to the Social Darwinists.

The attack of the neoliberals

The Chicago School of neoliberal economics, in which the state plays almost no role in the economy, leaving individual greed to dominate, facilitated fascistic, U.S.-led dictatorships in Latin America and brought two supreme Social Darwinists to power in the West.

The regimes of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the U.S. began working diligently from 1980 to dismantle whatever government-run mutual aid exists. It was nearly 50 years ago that the neoliberal movement was begun in earnest, and we are still living with.

This competition within the group' that created the division between ruled, and ruler eventually led to Social Darwinism, a distortion of nature pitting everyone against each other. It is still very much with us today.

Thatcher and Reagan set out a worldwide agenda of privatization, free trade, deregulation, and destruction of trade unions and the social safety net. This meant selling off state-owned heavy industries, railways and the gradual privatization of government-run health services. It seems all that will remain of commonly-held property will be parks and public libraries.

Thatcher went much further than saying mutual aid doesn't exist or shouldn't exist. She said society itself does not exist. Only the individual does.

There was no clearer declaration that Social Darwinism was alive and well in the late 20th century.

Global competition vs. global cooperation

Multilateral institutions such as the U.N., created after the war to foster mutual aid and cooperation between nations, became paralyzed at the Security Council by the Cold War rivalry. (The non-binding General Assembly became the focus of international solidarity during the decolonization period.)

In the fourth decade of the Cold War, Reagan and Thatcher drummed up Big Power competition, heightening tensions, leading to a second near nuclear war in Project Able Archer in 1983.

But in the midst of the Thatcher-Reagan social repression came one of the great outpourings of mutual action geared towards survival of the species. It was a prime example of the resilience of mutual aid that Kropotkin wrote about.

Mass demonstrations against nuclear weapons, especially one million protestors in New York's Central Park in June 1982, and millions across Western Europe in October 1983, including one million in The Hague and 400,000 in London's Hyde Park, eventually led Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to agree at the 1986 Reykjavik Summit to what became the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

The demonstrations had been particularly against the deployment of intermediate-range U.S. cruise missiles in Europe. These were removed along with Soviet SS-20s in the agreement.

Will we survive this time?

After both world wars the world remembered what had allowed the human race to survive: cooperation and mutual aid. Post-war attempts were made to minimize competition between nations and peoples and to increase mutual aid. The first attempt failed when world war came for a second time. After the Second World War multilateral institutions were put in place in the hope that this time international

cooperation could stave off the descent of man to utter destruction.

The Chicago School of neoliberal economics, in which the state plays almost no role in the economy, leaving individual greed to dominate, facilitated fascistic, U.S.-led dictatorships in Latin America and brought two supreme Social Darwinists to power in the West.

The end of the Cold War in 1991 brought a brief hope of international cooperation. In the United States there was talk of a “peace dividend,” meaning spending on weapons would now be spent on society. There would be no triumphalism over the defeated Soviet Union, then President George H.W. Bush said. There was talk of a united Europe at peace from Lisbon to Vladivostok.

Instead, Wall Street and U.S. corporate carpetbaggers swept into the former Soviet Union in the 1990s, eyed its enormous natural resources, asset-stripped the formerly state-owned industries, enriched themselves, gave rise to oligarchs and impoverished the Russian, Ukrainian and other former Soviet peoples.

The humiliation intensified with the decision in the nineties to expand NATO eastward despite a promise made to the last Soviet premier Gorbachev in exchange for reunifying Germany. Even Washington’s man in the Kremlin, Boris Yeltsin, at first objected to NATO expansion, while then Senator Joe Biden supported it though he knew it would provoke Russian hostility.

Yeltsin’s successor, Vladimir Putin then closed the door on Western interlopers in order to restore Russian sovereignty and dignity, ultimately angering Washington and Wall Street. Russia sought in treaty proposals with the U.S. and NATO in 2009 and again in 2021 to create a new security architecture in Europe.

Instead, Russia’s enormous natural resources and its obstacle to U.S. global dominance has led the West to provoke Russia in Ukraine with the overthrow of the democratically-elected government in 2014. The U.S.-installed government attacked ethnic Russians in the breakaway Donbass region, which defended its democratic rights against the *coup*.

After failing at repeated attempts of diplomacy, Russia intervened in the civil war in 2022. Fighting continues against NATO-trained and equipped Ukraine amid realistic fears of a nuclear confrontation between NATO and Russia. Despite clear warnings from Moscow of a potential nuclear retaliation, American and German soldiers have attacked Russia by firing U.S. and German missiles into Russia from Ukraine territory risking the ultimate disaster.

Nearly 50 years of neoliberalism and a new Cold War have weakened the institutions of mutual aid. The U.S. seeks to replace international law and the principles of mutual aid in the U.N. Charter with a so-called rules-based order, in which the U.S. alone makes the rules and sets the order.

After two world wars humanity nobly tried to return to mutual aid to save the species. Both times it failed to preserve the peace.

While the old bonds that knit clans and tribes together may have been broken by the individualism of capitalism, Kropotkin saw that it is impossible to completely crush the natural instinct of people to aid one another.

But the tragedy is that this time with nuclear weapons aimed at one another, there may not be another post-war

period to try to return to the sanity of aiding one another to survive.

Joe Lauria is editor-in-chief of Consortium News.

—*Consortium News*, December 26, 2025

<https://consortiumnews.com/2025/12/26/mutual-aid-or-mutual-assured-destruction/>

1 Charles Louis de Secondat, 1689-1755, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, generally referred to as simply Montesquieu, was a French judge, intellectual, historian, and political philosopher. He is the principal source of the theory of separation of powers, which is implemented in many constitutions throughout the world.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montesquieu>

2 An anarcho-collectivist branch of the First International, established in 1870-71 in the Jura region of Switzerland.

3 Thomas Hobbes 1588-1679, was an English philosopher, best known for his 1651 book *Leviathan*, in which he expounds an influential formulation of social contract theory. He is considered to be one of the founders of modern political philosophy.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Hobbes#:~:text=Thomas%20Hobbes

4 BRICS is an intergovernmental organization comprising ten countries: Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BRICS>

5 By Joe Lauria, *Consortium News*, November 26, 2024.

Thatcher and Reagan set out a worldwide agenda of privatization, free trade, deregulation, and destruction of trade unions and the social safety net.

The Battle Of Minneapolis

The way forward for the anti-ICE movement

By Anna Barnett and Jesada Jitpraphakhan

January 30, 2026—An epic battle has been unfolding in the Twin Cities, between ICE’s homicidal state terror on the one hand, and the ingenuity, determination, and solidarity of working-class people on the other. On January 23, tens-of-thousands did not go to work and instead rallied in downtown Minneapolis following ICE’s murder of Renee Good, sending a clear message that their brutal occupation will not be tolerated. Whole sections of the local economy ground to a halt, and hundreds of solidarity protests took place across the country. This was the first mass political strike against the Trump regime, a major leap forward in the fight against ICE, and a historic development in the class struggle in the United States.

Not even 24 hours later, a gang of Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) agents executed 37-year-old Alex Pretti, a nurse and member of American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Local 3669, who was peacefully observing ICE/CBP and helping someone who had been shoved by an agent. Another horrific, execution-style murder was captured on video and immediately defended by the Trump regime.

Trump’s unhinged escalation has been propelled by the regime’s need to decisively stomp out working-class resistance and pave the way for the unchallenged dominance of their reactionary agenda. This, they see as necessary to prepare U.S. capitalism for a period of increasing global tumult and inter-imperialist conflict.

Already, the mass movement is having an impact, but the regime will not back down easily. Border Patrol commander Greg Bovino has been removed from his post and returned to El Centro, California. Trump’s new chief of operations in the Twin Cities, Tom Homan, also a vicious reactionary,

speaks of a “drawdown plan.” We should celebrate the ouster of Bovino but also be clear that this change of face is meaningless without an actual back-down on the reign of terror, and that we can have no confidence in Democrats like Governor Walz to negotiate on behalf of the movement.

Trump’s unhinged escalation has been propelled by the regime’s need to decisively stomp out working-class resistance and pave the way for the unchallenged dominance of their reactionary agenda.

The world is watching the developments in Minneapolis and the stakes

are high. If federal agents leave the Twin Cities, they will be deployed elsewhere. The city-wide general strike set a bold and inspiring example for precisely what’s needed in the fight against ICE terror: mass, coordinated strike action. But we can’t be satisfied with a partial retreat or fake negotiations from Trump. That means we need to escalate, to strengthen and expand the strike in Minneapolis, and to spread it across the country.

ICE brutality sparks resistance

Over the past two months, “Operation Metro Surge” quickly became Trump’s largest and most brutal detention operation yet. The thousands of deployed federal agents far outnumber Minneapolis police and have arrested over 3,000 people since December.

The episodes of brutality are seemingly unending. ICE agents reportedly smashed a car window to pull a pregnant woman out who they then dragged through the street. When bystanders tried to assist the woman by blocking



Tens-of thousands take to the streets in Minneapolis protesting ICE on January 23, 2026.

ICE with their cars, the agents sprayed them with chemical irritants. A young U.S. citizen was arrested, called racial slurs, brutalized to the degree that she got a concussion, and then detained for two days. Multiple children have been sent to detention centers including five-year-old Liam Conejo Ramos and two-year-old Chloe Renata Tipan Villacis, despite a court order to release her.

Trump's attacks have spurred resistance in the Twin Cities on the highest level we've seen against Trump so far. Scenes of people rallying around an ICE raid to defend the person being detained are commonplace in the Twin Cities. Thousands carry whistles every day and dozens of neighbors flock to respond when they hear them. Sophisticated rapid response groups developed to monitor the movements of ICE agents, respond to raids and detentions, and document ICE arrests to provide legal support to those abducted. Neighborhood meetings attract hundreds.

The organic development of these networks shows the impressive creativity and dedication of working-class people who are doing whatever they can to defend their neighbors. Early on, they succeeded at stopping some detentions, but as the occupation multiplied in size and brutality, the mainly defensive strategy of rapid response groups began hitting its limits. To begin to push ICE into retreat, the movement would need to go on the offensive, namely through mass working-class action—the strike.

A historic escalation in the anti-Trump movement

In mid-January, SEIU Local 26 and an initial handful of union locals, immigrant rights, and community organizations in the Twin Cities made history calling for a one-day citywide strike against ICE. As the call gained momentum, a number of other unions joined as well as the AFL-CIO labor federations in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

This didn't just drop out of the sky. At least 36 members of SEIU 26—which

represents janitors, rideshare drivers, and more—and UNITE HERE Local 17 have been detained in the last year, many during this operation. This was a serious factor pushing these unions to escalate. The militant mood to fight back and the development of neighborhood organizing on a mass scale, which included many rank-and-file union members, created a dynamic that provided confidence to, and pushed, a section of the labor leadership into action. Organizing by rank-and-file workers, such as rallies to kick ICE off postal property organized by Build a Fighting NALC, a reform caucus in the National Association of Letter Carriers, also provided important pressure.

In a general strike, a work stoppage is generalized across multiple workplaces and multiple sectors of the economy, supported by a whole host of unions, and draws in big sections of the unorganized working class too. This is what took place in the Twin Cities.

The morning of the strike, thousands protested outside Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport against its role in over 2,000 deportations, blocking access to Terminal 1 for hours. Some 100 clergy were arrested in an act of civil disobedience. In deep sub-zero temperatures, over 50,000 marched through downtown Minneapolis (nearly ten percent of the population of the Twin Cities) and converged on the Target Center arena to rally.

Much of the corporate media has been determined to paint January 23 as a shut-down driven by businesses, but this is a lie designed to obscure the distinct role of the working class in this fight. Sections

of the local economy, especially union workplaces, were pressured to power down through the pressure of workers committed to the call for work stoppage. St. Paul School District was shut down while educators filled the streets. Without workers, theaters and museums shuttered. All United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) union grocery co-ops (which employ hundreds of workers), and many coffee shops and restaurants shut their doors. At a unionized AT&T call center, it's reported that up to 80 percent of workers called out. It was in the wake of this momentum, and often with active sympathy for the movement, that some small business owners did choose to close of their own accord. Of particular note immigrant-owned businesses including in Karmel Mall and Hmongtown Marketplace were shut down. In all, over 700 businesses were closed. While many large businesses such as Target and Amazon remained open, they were impacted by sickouts and in some cases depended on managers to open.

It is a characteristic of mass working-class movements, including general strikes, that the overwhelming power of the working class pulls sections of the middle class (primarily small business owners) to its side. When the momentum of class struggle is not with the working class, the middle class is often pulled more towards the big bosses, or unconfident, is lulled into inaction. In a general strike, a work stoppage is generalized across multiple workplaces and multiple sectors of the economy, supported by a whole host of unions, and draws in big sections of the unorganized working class too. This is what took place in the Twin Cities.

Not all unions took the same approach to building for the strike: some locals held stewards' meetings to organize maximum mobilization. Others took a more hands-off approach, leaving the decision on whether to participate up to individual members. There remained large parts of the econ-

omy which were not shut down, due to the timidity of some union leaders. But despite these weaknesses, the strike shook the Twin Cities and was the most substantial work stoppage in decades. The electrifying impact of the general strike across the Twin Cities metropolitan area shows the huge potential for future strikes to be even bigger. The cat is out of the bag and it's not going back. Political strikes as a tactic to fight Trump and ICE are here to stay.

After the strike

The impact of the strike came quickly.

Trump and his inner circle first tried to blame Democrats for Pretti's slaying, claiming that their unwillingness to collaborate with ICE is what led to these killings and that "the mayor and the governor are inciting insurrection."

But it soon became clear that, for now, Trump had run out of room to blatantly escalate without risking an even bigger upheaval in society. At least a thousand Twin Cities residents occupied the site of the shooting all day. Pretti's memorial vigil that night swelled to thousands. The call for another strike echoed loudly throughout the city. It was clear that the Twin Cities wouldn't back down.

Over 60 Minnesota CEOs, of companies including Target, UnitedHealth, Cargill, General Mills, and 3M, issued an open letter calling for "an immediate deescalation of tensions." Their letter did not even mention ICE, and they are clearly not motivated by any genuine concern for those being terrorized. What this signified is that a section of the capitalist class thinks Trump has gone too far. Mass strike action is the stuff of nightmares for the billionaires, and they knew that once this threat had been unleashed, it was much more likely to be used again, especially in the wake of Alex Pretti's brutal murder.

A recent poll found that 46 percent of people support abolishing Immigration and Customs Enforcement, up from 27

percent in July. These shifts reflect that the reality of ICE's brutality is setting in for a section of people but also are an indication of the impact that the movement against the deportation machine has had in changing attitudes.

It is only the united mass action of the January 23 strike, and the threat to profits posed by the specter of continued escalating strikes, that have forced Trump to act more cautiously.

Many Republican lawmakers are now raising their discomfort with Trump's excesses, and the GOP candidate for Minnesota governor has withdrawn from the race. Even prior to the strike and Pretti's murder, developments in the Twin Cities were causing fractures and discontent in sections of state apparatus and parts of Trump's base. Police officers have come out in opposition to the ICE operations, complaining that ICE is undoing years of work they've done to rebuild trust. ICE is having difficulty recruiting agents to the operation in Minneapolis, despite the incredibly lax hiring process. At least six prosecutors in the Minneapolis U.S. Attorney's office resigned after the administration demanded that rather than investigate the killing of Renee Good, they open up an investigation into Good and her background.

No trust in Walz and Frey

In the aftermath of Pretti's murder and the ensuing backlash, Tom Homan has held discussions with Governor Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey. While weeks ago, Frey was adamant that ICE needed to "get the fuck out of our city," this was always theater.

If a deal is reached, it will certainly be a rotten compromise. Trump is feeling the heat of the movement and understands that at this stage, further escalation could be dangerous, but a full withdrawal would cause him to lose face. Trump's demands—which would essentially entail a full scrapping of all "sanctuary city" policies—are a clear indication that he's prepared to drive a hard bargain. Most recently, Homan reported agreement from Democratic state Attorney General Keith Ellison that county jails can notify ICE of the release dates of immigrants. Homan reiterated that regardless of what a "drawdown" looks like, "we are not surrendering the president's mission on immigration enforcement."

This racist, violent, authoritarian regime cannot be reasoned or negotiated with. It only understands power and force. It is only the united mass action of the January 23 strike, and the threat to profits posed by the specter of continued escalating strikes, that have forced Trump to act more cautiously. Escalation along these lines is the only way to stop Trump's deportation machine. Instead, Walz cheers from the sidelines, telling Minnesota how proud he is, and signaling that he can take it from here. Walz has activated the National Guard, but we should have no illusions that they will be a counter to ICE. Walz will not direct the Guard—the same force that was sent in to crush the George Floyd uprising—to defend the movement, but primarily to contain the movement and quell protests. If such orders are issued, Guard members should disobey.

The dead-end Democrats

Even now, the Democratic Party is not fully united in its opposition to ICE. Squabbles ensue over whether ICE should be abolished or merely reined in (with Frey still supporting the latter.) Seven Democrats in the House voted to increase DHS funding by an additional \$65 billion, including \$10 billion more for ICE. Others have made calls for

“better training” and bodycams. But the issue is not bad training: this is a conscious offensive by the Trump regime to terrorize immigrants and send a message to the working class as a whole. Despite the handwringing, the Democrats themselves actually laid the groundwork for the regime’s war on immigrants. The opposition to the slogan “Abolish ICE” from sections of the party is not surprising considering the Democratic Party has never really opposed the deportation machine, only what they see as its excesses.

Since their last vote, Senate Democrats had laid out new conditions for voting to fund DHS—a stop to ICE patrols, unmasking ICE agents, instituting a code of conduct and independent investigations of violations. Yet days later, rather than trigger a government shutdown, Senate Democrats reached a deal with Republicans to fund DHS for two more weeks while continuing to negotiate reining in immigration agents, completely surrendering the little leverage they have within the halls of Congress. But even their requests—such as bodycams and documentation for arrest warrants—are completely insufficient in the first place. ICE is a fundamentally reactionary force that needs to be abolished, though we should be clear that this would still not mean an end to the deportation machine.

Many Democratic Party politicians in other cities have made a big show of telling ICE to stay away. The movement needs to put them in the hot seat and demand that these statements be backed up with real action, including kicking ICE and DHS out of courthouses, keeping them off of city-owned property, and stopping all data sharing between police or social services and ICE. There should be concrete measures taken to protect undocumented people like eviction moratoriums and free grocery delivery. Genuine opposition to ICE has to involve actively building the resistance—mobilizing

supporters to protests and organizing for strike action, rather than trying to put the brakes on the movement with empty speeches and legal challenges.

Our movement needs to be fully independent from the Democratic Party and rooted in the power of the working class. We need a new workers’ party independent of big business, which could in moments like these serve as a launchpad to bring together all the different elements of our movement—including unions, immigrant rights groups, students, rapid response groups, and mutual aid efforts—and coordinate the way forward.

The reality is, the Democratic Party is not an effective vehicle to fight back. They won’t call for the type of tactics and movement necessary to stop Trump in his tracks because such a movement could get out of their control and threaten their rule as well. The strength of the strike and protest on January 23 came from the organization of working-class people in their unions, workplaces, and communities, not the Democratic Party. Our movement needs to be fully independent from the Democratic Party and rooted in the power of the working class. We need a new workers’ party independent of big business, which could in moments like these serve as a launchpad to bring together all the different elements

of our movement—including unions, immigrant rights groups, students, rapid response groups, and mutual aid efforts—and coordinate the way forward.

We need a nationwide strike to shut down the deportation machine

Since last year, Socialist Alternative has been consistently pointing towards the necessity of strike action and for the labor movement to step decisively into the ring in the fight against Trump. Strike action is powerful because it shuts down business as usual and hits Trump and his billionaire friends where it hurts: their profits.

Tens-of-thousands of people in Minnesota now have the experience of taking collective action with their coworkers and neighbors. This needs to be seized on to build for another strike—wider, deeper, and capable of shutting down all profits. Warehouses, factories, public transportation, and airports are key profit-making centers and economic chokepoints that would need to join the strike. But the Twin Cities can’t be left to fight alone: the strike must spread nationwide. Every city invaded by ICE should take up the strike tactic to beat back Trump’s offensive. But more than that, we need a coordinated nationwide strike action with the organized labor movement in the driver’s seat.

A call by student organizations at the University of Minnesota for a nationwide shutdown on January 30th went viral and quickly gained the support of hundreds of organizations nationwide. Socialist Alternative has joined this call, and is building for student walkouts, as well as some workplace actions. Days of action like these are crucial for keeping up the pressure, but they won’t be able to reach their full potential without the weight of sections of the organized labor movement behind them. The leaders of major unions in the U.S. have a serious responsibility to take the lead in coordinating the strongest possible strike action, because they have the power to shut down entire workplaces without

organizing from square one. Where labor leaders are dragging their feet, rank-and-file workers need to apply pressure. Anti-ICE union members can propose resolutions at upcoming union meetings pledging organized non-cooperation with ICE, make plans for the defense of immigrant coworkers, and initiate and join mass actions.

But it can't stop there. A nationwide strike must also include serious organizing of nonunion workers (who unfortunately make up the majority of the workforce.) This can also lay the basis for new union drives in many workplaces and build the labor movement, and there are already signs of this beginning in the Twin Cities.

A bigger strike will require going beyond sickouts, including defying anti-union no-strike clauses. In moments like these, it becomes quite clear that the laws serve the billionaires' system, not working people. The right to strike, the right to a union, and more, were not always protected by law, but were won through mass collective action that took place in defiance of the law. Trump has shown he doesn't care about the law, because he wields power. But the power of the united working class can trump both the president and what's written on paper.

Strike action and civil disobedience can also be built in neighborhoods, on every block, linked to walkouts in every school and campus. In the Twin Cities in the lead-up to the strike, a number of neighborhood groups came together for a citywide assembly, an important example of the type of organization needed to step up the fight against ICE. Socialist Alternative members were able to propose a "work stoppage committee," with representatives from rapid response groups who were interested in building for the January 23 strike action in their neighborhoods. This is the type of organizing we need in every city. Strike organizing should become a key priority of neighborhood groups,

training activists to bring the strike call into their workplaces. Unions, immigrant rights organizations, rapid response networks, and socialist organizations should come together for conferences of resistance to discuss and debate the way forward and map out next steps.

The movement across the country needs to take its cues from the struggle in Minneapolis. We need to build for a strike nationwide that can shut down this murderous regime and its terror against our communities.

A bigger strike will require going beyond sickouts, including defying anti-union no-strike clauses.

End terror against immigrants for good—Fight for socialism!

Divide-and-rule terror is an age-old tactic of the capitalist class, and the Trump regime has distilled it to its most grotesque form. Trump, presiding over the crisis of U.S. capitalism, is using the scapegoat of "illegal alien criminals" to distract a section of the population from the problems he'll never be able to and has no desire to solve.

It could not be more clear that this crisis is baked into the capitalist system and working-class people are the ones who pay the price. A system that locks up children, drives working-class people into hiding, and shoots people point blank in the streets cannot be tweaked. Racist violence and authoritarianism have not come out of nowhere—they're an outgrowth of a system rotting from the inside. This is why Socialist Alternative fights for revolutionary change. We fight for socialism, which means reorganizing society on the basis of the needs of the masses of workers and the poor in the U.S. and

internationally, not in the interests of a handful of ruling elites.

Socialist Alternative Calls For:

- ICE out of Minnesota and everywhere! We need bigger, stronger, and deeper strike action in the Twin Cities and a nationwide strike, with unions leading the way, to shut down Trump and ICE!
- Jail all killer ICE/CPB agents!
- End all deportations! Immediate, unconditional legalization and equal rights for all undocumented immigrants, regardless of their job status.
- Abolish ICE and put the deportation machine's \$170 BILLION budget toward funding public schools, expanding programs like SNAP, and building high-quality affordable housing.
- Shut down all for-profit detention centers! 32 people died in ICE custody in 2025: Put GEO Group and Core-Civic out of business!
- Eviction moratoriums in all cities invaded by ICE/CBP! Thousands of workers targeted by ICE are in danger going to work and will find it hard to make rent.
- The Democrats can't and won't stop Trump and ICE: we need a new party for working people!
- Build a movement against the destructive policies of U.S. imperialism around the world that drive working-class people to flee their home countries. We need an international struggle for socialism to fight for a world that works for us, not the ruling elite.

—*Socialist Alternative*, January 30, 2026

<https://www.socialistalternative.org/2026/01/30/the-battle-of-minneapolis-the-way-forward-for-the-anti-ice-movement/>

ICE Is Not the Only Problem

Border Patrol has acted with impunity for decades

By MONIKA LANGARICA

The idea of a “border crisis” has long been used by both Republicans and Democrats to justify harsh immigration policies. From Biden’s sweeping asylum processing restrictions intended to gain “control of our border,” to Trump’s near-total suspension of asylum processing predicated on a proclaimed “invasion” at the southern border, the playbook is nothing new.

Whether you have believed that “crisis” to be illusory or real, by all measures, it is now over. The number of people encountered at the southern border began falling even before the start of the second Trump administration (and before the “invasion” proclamation), and it is still dropping. Yet the current administration has continued to use the canard of a so-called “border invasion” to unleash extreme anti-immigrant strategies far beyond the border. And it’s not just the “invasion” narrative that is being exported from the border to the interior of the country—it’s the cruel enforcement scheme,

too. There is a direct through line between the violence and evisceration of rights at the border and the increasingly violent incursions from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in the interior of the country.

Take, for example, the deployment to the interior of Border Patrol—a DHS agency tasked with enforcing immigration and customs laws in areas, as its name suggests, near the border. For months, Border Patrol’s former commander-at-large, Gregory Bovino, led immigration raids in cities across the country—most recently resulting in massive community resistance in Minnesota (where Bovino was recently seen personally launching smoke canisters at protesters). Bovino may be on his way back to his post in El Centro, California, but nothing suggests a withdrawal of Border Patrol from the interior—indeed, DHS has confirmed that Trump’s so-called “border czar,” Tom Homan, is taking over in Minnesota.

As part of these raids and other interior enforcement, Border Patrol has been carrying out violent arrests, separating parents from their babies, and even arresting and detaining children as young as five years old. At least three tragic flashpoints have involved Border Patrol-trained agents: Jonathan Ross, who shot and killed U.S. citizen mother Renee Good in Minneapolis, started his post-military immigration enforcement career at Border Patrol’s El Paso sector in 2007, where he remained for eight years before becoming an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent. The shooter of 37-year-old ICU nurse Alex Pretti, who died on January 24, is a Border Patrol agent. And the men in Portland who shot Luis David Nino-Moncada and Yorlenys Betzabeth Zambrano-Contreras, who are both Venezuelan, are current Border Patrol agents conducting enforcement in Oregon. The administration has repeatedly offered disproven justifications for these actions.

While truly horrific, this kind of violence is not isolated or new; border communities have experienced abuse and impunity at the hands of Border Patrol for decades, including incidents like the 2023 shooting and killing of Raymond Mattia, a U.S. citizen and citizen of the Tohono O’odham Nation, and the 2010 torture and killing of Anastasio Hernández Rojas, a Mexican father of U.S. citizen children. Border Patrol also operationalized the cruel separation of families seeking asylum at the border. The agency routinely detains vulnerable children, including when it took into custody a ten-year-old girl with cerebral palsy who was on her way to an emergency surgery in 2017. And Border Patrol has long engaged in these practices with little to no accountability.



Border Patrol Commander Gregory Bovino speaks during a press conference at the Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building on January 22, 2026, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Now, Border Patrol has taken its show on the road, delivering harrowing abuses to communities far from external U.S. boundaries, and in operations that have nothing to do with its purported mandate of securing the border.

It's not just Border Patrol's violent tactics that are encroaching on interior communities; it's the harmful legal rules as well. Take, for example, summary deportations without due process of established community members. "Expedited removal" is a process by which immigration agents unilaterally and rapidly deport people without the involvement of any courts. For decades, this authority was reserved in practice for recently-arrived migrants encountered at or near the border, and courts rationalized its legality based on the lack of ties that those subjected to that removal authority have to the United States. But the Trump administration has expanded expedited removal to apply to anyone in any part of the country who cannot prove they have lived in the United States for at least two years. In recent months, DHS attempted to apply expedited removal to a mother of three U.S. citizen children who has resided in the United States for thirty years.

There is also a new bond policy that subjects longtime community members to indefinite detention by denying all undocumented immigrants who entered the country without permission the right to seek release before an immigration judge. This marks a massive expansion of a detention system previously reserved for newcomers and now being applied regardless of how long someone has lived in the country. Strikingly, a federal court has declared this policy unlawful, but the administration has refused to restore the rights of people unlawfully denied bond.

Together, these practices subject, for the first time, longstanding community members—noncitizens and citizens alike—to a system of unjustified and

sometimes deadly stops and arrests; rapid deportation without due process; and indefinite detention. We can only expect further escalation at the hands of new ICE leadership drawn directly from Border Patrol, a reorganization announced late last year.

Many are rightfully horrified by these abuses (and by what is yet to come). But we should not be surprised. These practices are well known to those of us who for years have been defending newly arrived migrants against cruel enforcement tactics at the border.

Many are rightfully horrified by these abuses (and by what is yet to come). But we should not be surprised. These practices are well known to those of us who for years have been defending newly arrived migrants against cruel enforcement tactics at the border.

To be clear: The Department of Homeland Security's current attack against longtime noncitizen and citizen community members is unacceptable and we must demand an end to it. But this will require that we also reckon with the history of border enforcement that helped bring us to this moment—in which the administration is expanding abusive border practices to the interior of the country—and continue the fight against the unfair treatment of new migrants at the border.

After all, if rapid deportation, indefinite detention, and abusive conduct is intolerable for longtime immigrants and other community members, why should we accept that treatment for

newcomers? Many have journeyed to the United States for reasons that resonate with those of us whose parents and grandparents arrived decades ago, including the search for refuge from persecution, extreme humanitarian need driven by economic sanctions and other instability, and displacement caused by war and military intervention. Importantly, the law does not require such disparate treatment, and reserving the most basic protections only for those with the longest ties to the United States betrays the promise of the Constitution. It is also a slippery slope for the rest of us; as we are witnessing today in Minnesota and in Maine, conceding the rights of newcomers at the border eventually endangers communities on the interior.

To protect all of us—and to uphold our legal and moral obligations—we must name and resist the continued erosion of rights at the border, including the right to seek safety in the United States. Efforts to defund and abolish ICE must also account for the need to dismantle Border Patrol's cruelty campaign in interior and border communities. If not as a full-throated rejection of the idea that newcomers at the border are inherently less worthy, then as a preemptive defense against what will inevitably come down the pike for our loved ones across the country.

—*Truthout*, January 31, 2026

<https://truthout.org/articles/ice-is-not-the-only-problem-border-patrol-has-acted-with-impunity-for-decades/>

“This Is Our New Normal”

Small businesses in Minneapolis serve a city in crisis

BY TALYA MINSBERG

February 2, 2026—Customers were ordering doughnuts with names like Flirty Frenchie and Vanilla Darling when an employee at Glam Doll Donuts called Teresa Fox, the co-owner, with a chilling report: ICE agents were on Nicollet Avenue in Minneapolis, just outside the shop.

Another call came soon after. “They just killed someone on the street,” an employee told her. Outside the pink-framed windows of the doughnut shop, Alex Pretti lay on the ground, shot multiple times by immigration agents.

In the aftermath of the shooting on January 24, the employees of Glam Doll opened their doors and began giving away doughnuts and coffee as clouds of tear gas spread through the streets. A medical station was set up in moments.

Allison Bross, the owner of b. Resale, next to Glam Doll, did much the same. Medical gear was quickly brought in, food was delivered, hand warmers appeared at the front of the door and personal protective gear came soon thereafter.

Businesses across the city have fundamentally changed their mission in the weeks since immigration agents descended on Minnesota. That new mission—to care for those too afraid to leave their homes and for those protesting on their behalf—has only intensified in the days since Mr. Pretti was killed.

“It’s everybody, everywhere, trying to do anything...”

For the business owners, the return has been twofold. There is pride in helping your community, they say, that goes beyond serving those who walk through their doors. And that sense of duty has resulted in overwhelming support from strangers and customers alike, expressed in emails, orders placed from around the world and donations to help keep the businesses afloat.

Never have they been prouder to be Minnesotan, they said.

“This is what Minneapolis does: It shows up,” Ms. Bross said. “I mean, we’ve done it for decades.”

Restaurants take the lead

It’s hard to drive far in Minneapolis or St. Paul without seeing signs that protest the presence of immigration agents. Highway overhangs have “ICE OUT” signs, lampposts display “Protect our neighbors” placards and restaurants have “Know your rights” pamphlets pasted on the windows and “Everyone welcome here, EXCEPT ICE” signs in the doors.

Restaurants have been squarely on the front lines since immigration agents began arriving in the Twin Cities in droves in December. Some employees called in to say they did not feel safe going to work or even going outside. The same was true for customers.

After Renee Good was killed on January 7, the immediate reaction of some business owners, like Breanna Evans and Jeff Rogers of Wrecktangle Pizza, was to close their shops and find their footing: What could they do to help their community and their employees?

The answer came to Mr. Rogers on the evening of Ms. Good’s death, he said. The employees knew how to cook and knew how to feed people, so they mobilized to feed what he called high-risk employees from Wrecktangle and other local restaurants and to run a “pizza for pizza” promotion: one pizza donated for every pizza bought.

They were immediately overwhelmed with support. People ordered pizzas from all over the world with notes like “Don’t make this, just donate it.” Orders came in from China, Canada, Sweden, Alaska and California. The restaurant began making pasta salads



Businesses near the site where Alex Pretti was shot are serving as warming shelters and resource centers for the Minneapolis community resisting ICE.

too, to feed more people, and started coordinating with various local organizations for meal deliveries and pickups.

Wrecktangle opened a Venmo account to help facilitate the donations. After a few days, the account hit \$80,000. Days later, it was at \$200,000. The restaurant began accepting physical donations, too, coordinating with local mutual aid groups and businesses. The basement of the Wrecktangle's Lyn-Lake location was filled to the brim with groceries, toiletries, and games for kids. The sheer volume was unsustainable, and it had to stop accepting physical donations.

"It's everybody, everywhere, trying to do anything," Elizabeth Klimenko, the director of sales and marketing, said as she assembled meal kits.

The attitude in Minnesota, said Ms. Evans, a Wrecktangle co-owner, is "Give me a task, tell me what to do, let's go."

Volunteers have raised their hands to help assemble pizzas and meal kits. Delivery people restocking the restaurant's beer have asked if they could help deliver food. And person-to-person organizing has helped to get a steady stream of meals to after-school programs, families, and organizations coordinating a rapid response in the Twin Cities.

Ms. Evans and Mr. Rogers said they have lost track of exactly how much they have donated, but that they are keeping track of inventory as if they ran a stadium. They also said they have no intention of slowing down.

Feeding the Twin Cities

Some businesses have changed their approach altogether, including Modern Times, a diner that sits just blocks from where Ms. Good was killed.

The day after Mr. Pretti was killed, Dylan Alverson decided his diner would be renamed "Post Modern Times" and would transform into a donation-based restaurant until immigration agents leave the city. The diner would continue to work with local gro-

cery stores and organizations to help with food and meal deliveries, he said, while also serving community members who come in.

"We're in a conflict zone. We are in a crisis," Mr. Alverson said. He's fielded calls and donations from around the world since making his announcement, and while he was speaking with the *New York Times*, he accepted an unannounced delivery from Wisconsin farmers: pounds of carrots and maple syrup. All free.

"I think it's giving people hope in this dark time, and I'm so happy that I can be a part of doing that," he said.

A few miles away, Stephanie Ayala and Peter Elton, co-owners of Easy Day Cafe, decided to start a food drive. They put up a list of items needed by families, and by the end of the day, the entire front of the coffee shop had turned into a makeshift food pantry.

"I think it's giving people hope in this dark time, and I'm so happy that I can be a part of doing that,"...

"We were just getting our legs underneath us, and then this happens, and we put business second," Mr. Elton said, noting that the shop had opened just four months ago. "We're just like, 'Well, we are not going to be focusing on our seasonal drinks. That's going to be at the bottom of the list.'"

They decided to accept food donations twice a week, on Fridays and Saturdays, and sort and deliver products on Sundays. Supporting families across the Twin Cities would be a marathon, not a sprint, they thought, and they also needed to make sure their employees could handle the constant stream of donations.

Over the course of a 30-minute conversation on a recent Saturday morn-

ing, more than two dozen people came in to drop off donations. Some of them asked if they could stay to help organize, including Sofie Holub, 25.

"Everyone wants to help. That's how Minnesota is," Ms. Holub said.

"Oh yeah, if you need help, we got you," Kimberley Schuler, another volunteer, echoed.

The shop was overflowing with donations. The area outside the cafe became a makeshift freezer (at 20 degrees, it worked out well), and Ms. Ayala began putting some products in her car to help handle the overflow.

"As a business owner, you have a platform, and you can do what you want," Ms. Ayala said, adding, "This is our new normal now."

A new Nicollet

On Nicollet Avenue, most local businesses now act as warming spaces for those coming to visit the memorial for Mr. Pretti.

Black Forest Inn, a German restaurant, has provided warm drinks and soup, and has shared messages of support on its windows. "Cleveland, Ohio V.A. Hospital nurses are with you. They send love and support," one reads. "Rhode Island stands with Minnesota" says another.

Pimento Kitchen, a Jamaican restaurant, has offered free food and a place to get warm. My Huong Kitchen has kept its doors open for warm pho and hand warmers.

Ms. Fox shook her head as customers were flooding into her shop on January 27 for doughnuts and coffee. She repeated a sentiment she shared the day Mr. Pretti was shot.

"We're just a dumb doughnut shop," she said, with a mix of awe and exhaustion.

—*New York Times*, February 2, 2026

<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/02/us/minnesota-business-owners-ice.html>

Why Labor Unions Can't Ignore ICE

BY ALEX N. PRESS

On January 23 in Minneapolis, more than seven hundred businesses closed their doors, and thousands of workers joined Minnesotans of every variety to demand that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) leave the state. Nearly a century after the city erupted in a general strike¹, Minneapolis has again become a center of resistance—this time against federal immigration forces who have now killed two people and have turned the city into what many residents describe as a war zone.

Unions endorsed the January 23 action in a way we rarely see in the United States, where labor leaders often stay tightly within the bounds of “bread-and-butter” issues. The Minnesota AFL-CIO, backing the strike, warned that ICE’s operations were leaving people afraid to do the most basic things: going to work, shopping for groceries, sending their kids to school. That fear, its president Bernie Burnham said, was already harming working people across the state.

National labor leaders echoed the point. After the killing of Alex Pretti,

an intensive care unit nurse and member of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO president Liz Shuler called for ICE to leave Minnesota “before anyone else is hurt or killed,” explicitly linking immigration enforcement to danger for workers.

The labor movement has had language for this for a long time: an injury to one is an injury to all.

It’s about time organized labor took a clear stand against ICE. Rather than being adjacent to work, immigration enforcement is one of the key ways work is governed, and not in a way that benefits working-class people, U.S.-born or otherwise. ICE is not simply a border agency that occasionally intrudes into the economy. It is a labor-market institution: an apparatus that disciplines

workers, structures whole industries, and makes organizing riskier.

Economists have measured what happens when immigration enforcement expands. It reduces employment for likely undocumented workers—no surprise there—but it also lowers employment and wages for U.S.-born workers. In a flagship study of Secure Communities, the federal program that turbocharged deportations by linking local policing to ICE, labor economist Chloe East and her coauthors find employment declines among likely undocumented immigrants alongside negative spillovers for U.S.-born workers’ employment and hourly wages.

A Brookings Institution review of the post-2010 research landscape puts the point plainly: the weight of rigorous evidence does not show deportations “freeing up” good jobs for U.S.-born workers. Instead, deportations tend to damage local labor markets and worsen outcomes for natives as well.

That alone should be enough to puncture the belief that this form of immigration enforcement “helps American workers.” But the more consequential effect—especially for anyone who has tried to organize a workplace—is not captured by wage averages. Enforcement doesn’t have to culminate in deportation to function as discipline. The mechanism is fear, distributed unevenly across a workforce so that solidarity becomes harder and retaliation easier.

ICE doesn’t just remove people; it changes behavior among those who remain. When immigration enforcement intensifies, workers become significantly less likely to report safety violations, even as injury rates rise in workplaces with large immigrant workforces. The right to complain—to be visible, to put your name to some-



The labor movement has no choice but to take on ICE. (Richard Tsong-Taatarii / Minnesota Star Tribune)

thing—is one of the basic building blocks of worker power. When the cost of visibility rises, organizing erodes. ICE is producing a labor market with a built-in underclass.

There are plenty of recent examples of what that looks like in practice. In June 2025, ICE raided Glenn Valley Foods in Omaha, Nebraska. Reporting described the plant losing roughly half its workforce, with output dropping to a fraction of normal—an operational shock that did not raise wages so much as reduce production and ricochet through the supply chain.

When the state creates a category of workers whose continued presence is conditional, it hands every employer an extra lever of power over their workforce.

Even the business press has acknowledged the dilemma: aggressive deportation and workplace enforcement disrupt meatpacking, agriculture, construction, and hospitality—sectors structurally dependent on immigrant labor—creating shortages, delays, and price pressures rather than some newly empowered native workforce.

Agriculture makes the logic impossible to ignore. As enforcement intensifies, workers don't show up, farms can't harvest, and companies scramble. Wages do not magically leap. *Wisconsin Public Radio* has reported farmers' fears that surging deportations will worsen already severe labor shortages.

The labor movement has had language for this for a long time: an injury to one is an injury to all. The Industrial Workers of the World slogan was never just a moral appeal. It was also a diagnosis of how employers and the state

undermine working-class power. They always try to segment the working class—by skill, by race, by nationality, by legal status—so that harm inflicted on the most vulnerable can be treated as isolated or deserved, all while undermining the standards of all workers.

History bears that out. Immigration enforcement has repeatedly been used to fracture workplaces and derail organizing drives. *Labor Notes'* reporting on a 2008 raid documents how a single enforcement action shattered an organizing effort at an Iowa meatpacking plant, removing workers central to the union campaign and terrorizing those who remained. Mass immigrant boycotts and “days without immigrants,” most notably in 2006, made visible the same truth from another angle: entire sectors of the economy depend on labor that the state tries to render disposable.

When the state creates a category of workers whose continued presence is conditional, it hands every employer an extra lever of power over their workforce.

Immigration enforcement is a working condition. It determines whether you can file a complaint, talk to a reporter, sign a union card, testify in a wage-theft case, or simply insist that a job is unsafe. When the state creates a category of workers whose continued presence is conditional, it hands every employer an extra lever of power over their workforce. Even bosses who never touch that lever benefit from its existence.

U.S. labor law tries to draw a bright line here. You are permitted, in narrow ways, to fight your boss. You are not supposed to fight the state. When workers violate that demarcation—when they treat deportability, detention, or raids as union business—it is a recognition that the world beyond their workplace structures the jobsite itself.

Minneapolis's working class is refusing to keep pretending that immigration enforcement sits outside the world of work. But ICE operates everywhere. The lesson is not that every city must replicate

Minnesota's exact tactics. It is that workers elsewhere face the same underlying choice: whether to accept a system that weakens organizing by design, or to name that system as a labor issue and act accordingly. If an injury to one is an injury to all still describes anything real, then the response cannot remain local to Minnesota.

—*Jacobin*, January 26, 2026

<https://jacobin.com/2026/01/minneapolis-ice-immigration-worker-organizing>

1 The Minneapolis general strike of 1934 grew out of a strike by Teamsters against most of the trucking companies operating in Minneapolis, the major distribution center for the Upper Midwest. The strike began on May 16, 1934, in the Market District (the modern-day Warehouse District). The worst single day was Friday, July 20, called “Bloody Friday,” when police shot at strikers in a downtown truck battle, killing two and injuring 67. ... With a coalition formed by local leaders associated with the Trotskyist Communist League of America, a group that later founded the Socialist Workers Party (United States), the strike paved the way for the organization of over-the-road drivers and the growth of the Teamsters labor union. This strike, along with the 1934 West Coast Longshore Strike and the 1934 Toledo Auto-Lite Strike led by the American Workers Party, were also important catalysts for the rise of industrial unionism in the 1930s, much of which was organized through the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minneapolis_general_strike_of_1934

When workers violate that demarcation—when they treat deportability, detention, or raids as union business—it is a recognition that the world beyond their workplace structures the jobsite itself.

“Backing Down Isn’t an Option”

Minnesota ICE shootings mobilize Americans to join ICE observer groups

By LEX McMENAMIN

On Monday night, January 26, 2026, nearly 80,000 people hopped on a video call to learn how to “observe ICE,” a non-violent and constitutionally protected practice of documenting federal immigration agents’ activities in public. Some wrote in the chat where they were from: Arkansas, Texas, Michigan, Florida and many other corners of the country. Others typed why this was important to them: calling for “ICE out” of their communities and demanding the abolition of the agency itself. “The fact we’re all here gives me hope we’ll come out the other side,” wrote one participant. Within 24 hours, another 200,000 people had watched the recording on YouTube.

The rising interest in ICE observing came two days after Minneapolis resident Alex Pretti was shot and killed by a federal immigration agent and less than three weeks after an agent killed Renee Good.

“Two of my neighbors have been killed, but because of ordinary people documenting the actions of ICE, we’re able to show the truth of what happened to Renee and Alex,” a Minneapolis resident named Marjorie told those on the call. “And we’re also able to track what is happening in our

community and ensure that our neighbors are not being simply disappeared.”

While ICE raids continue in the Twin Cities, as well as Phoenix, Arizona, southern California and other parts of the country, organizers say the killings of Pretti and Good have inspired thousands of people to join local ICE observer groups. In addition to documenting ICE operations, a heavy presence of observers can deter agents from detaining people. Earlier this week, Minneapolis city council president Elliott Payne said: “Because we had so many patrols out, multiple abductions were prevented.”

Even those who had been observing ICE for months, from the Pacific north-west to the southeastern U.S., told the *Guardian* that they were more determined than ever to keep documenting federal agents. This was despite escalating violence from agents, the threat of harassment or detention, and the government continually casting observers’ work as “domestic terrorism,” as federal officials did after Good and Pretti’s deaths. In fact, witness testimony and footage countered what the White House said about Pretti’s killing being an act of “self-

defense”—a testament to how vital ICE observing is, organizers said.

“I am petrified, to be sure,” said Andrea, an ICE observer in Chicago who asked to be identified by a pseudonym for safety reasons. “But [I have] no intentions to back down or not show up. That just isn’t an option.”

Navigating ‘shifting’ legal risks and unpredictable agents

Adding to the threat of ICE agents escalating violence against observers is the federal government’s threat of legal ramifications. Recording police and federal authorities in public areas is a protected first amendment right. Still, White House officials have claimed that it is “illegal” and an act of “violence” to record ICE agents, equivalent to “doxing.” After the deaths of Good and Pretti, federal officials called both residents “violent” and “terrorists,” even though video evidence showed otherwise.

The White House and DHS accused Good of charging officers with her car, but video footage captured by observers showed Good had slowly turned her car away from, not toward, agents. White House officials claimed Pretti sought to “massacre” immigration agents because he had carried his permitted handgun that day, but video captured by observers showed federal agents had already taken his handgun before shooting him on the ground. The White House and DHS have since attempted to walk back some of these statements, and the Department of Justice announced January 30, 2026, that it would investigate Pretti’s killing.

The White House did not respond to questions from the *Guardian* about an apparent crackdown on protesters and legal observers, or the characterization of them as “domestic terrorists.”



The killings of Minneapolis residents Renee Good and Alex Pretti have inspired people across the U.S. to document federal agents’ activities in their communities.

White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson said: “President Trump is taking important action to make America safe again and protect federal law enforcement officers from violent left-wing rioters when local Democrat leaders refuse to act.” DHS did not respond to request for comment.

At the same time, the Trump administration is investigating Minneapolis’s ICE watch organizing. On Monday, January 26, 2026, FBI director Kash Patel said he intends to criminally investigate group chats on the encrypted app Signal used by Minneapolis residents for organizing purposes, calling them “clearly a coordinated infrastructure” and comparing them to the mob. The justice department declined to comment.

“Post-Trump[’s re-election], you can’t deny that there has been a shift” in the level of risk for engaging in civil disobedience, said attorney Lauren Regan of the Civil Liberties Defense Center, which has represented activists and organizers facing charges from their advocacy since 2003. “When I’m doing ‘Know Your Rights and Risks’ training for activists and movement people, we are talking about a higher-risk moment in time, in terms of the potential for arrests, potential consequences of political activism.”

However, Regan said there’s been little evidence that federal charges against observers or protesters have stood up to legal muster. An analysis from the *Associated Press* found that in 100 federal charges between May 2025 and December 2025, 55 were reduced to misdemeanors or dismissed outright, and over 40 percent of cases in what the Trump administration deemed “domestic terrorism” were “relatively minor misdemeanor charges.” Those still charged with felonies had allegedly physically assaulted officers or thrown rocks at federal vehicles.

For example, Chicago resident Marimar Martinez was charged with felony assault after being shot five

times by federal immigration agents who claimed she drove into them in October. The charge was dropped a month later, as Martinez and her legal team challenged their depiction of events. Now, in the wake of Good and Pretti’s killings, Martinez is seeking to have evidence from her case unsealed.

“There is a lot of propaganda rhetoric and threats around making run-of-the-mill protest into ‘terrorism’... but at the end of the day, right now, from my vantage point, when you look at the statistics of what cases have actually been indicted and prosecuted and sentenced? You’re not seeing a huge shift in that stark line,” Regan said.

Regan and other legal experts believe that the threat of heightened charges is an intimidation tactic, not necessarily a legal effort that will pay off.

Several organizers said that the administration’s aggressive tactics have, perhaps contradictory to the administration’s intent, also led to wider collaboration between organizations.

Regan added: “They lean into the propaganda war far more than the legal war.”

Protecting citizens from unwarranted ICE escalation has proven more difficult. On January 16, a federal judge in Minnesota barred ICE agents from retaliating against ICE protesters, including with pepper spray and arrest, or stopping drivers without reasonable cause; in less than a week, an appeals court overturned the ruling. In the five days in between, clips of an observer being pepper-sprayed directly in the face circulated online. Within 72 hours of the ruling being overturned, Pretti was killed.

How organizers are adjusting tactics to stay safe

In the wake of Good and Pretti’s deaths, with more people outraged, scared and looking to get involved, organizers said they’re doubling down on basic community organizing safety practices.

“What we’re telling folks right now is that [the administration] will continue to criminalize observers and supporters. And unfortunately, they have a very large megaphone,” Armando Gudino, executive director of the Los Angeles Worker Center Network, which advocates for the rights of low-wage and immigrant workers in the city, said after Good’s killing. “So, we have to be even more careful.”

During the Monday night online training, staffers role-played filming an ICE officer, while viewers weighed in about how they could be safer—did she back away fast enough when the agent told her to? Was she still recording while engaging with them? In the chat, some viewers encouraged others to carry makeshift body cameras for interacting with ICE.

“As things become more popular on the side of the people, you see more desperate attempts by the regime to try and deter it, shut it down, minimize it,” said Regan. “One of the goals of an authoritarian regime is to scare the people into submission, and the most important thing that we can do to counteract that is to continue showing up.”

When leading trainings, Regan advises attendees to make a “safety plan,” sharing with a loved one where they’re going and establishing an emergency contact person if they are arrested or injured. They train attendees to read the crowd and law enforcement for intensity and potential inflamed situations.

Fearing government tracking, organizers say they’ve been turning off their Bluetooth and Wi-Fi at protests and areas they expect to be in direct confrontation with ICE, and most are anonymizing their online usernames when using encrypted

NO US OCCUPATION IN VENEZUELA

NO ICE OCCUPATION IN OUR CITIES

NO ICE
NO WAR

apps like Signal to communicate—tactics that have been a part of community organizing tech safety since before the 2020 Black Lives Matter uprisings.

Several organizers said that the administration's aggressive tactics have, perhaps contradictory to the administration's intent, also led to wider collaboration between organizations. At a time when immigrants and people of color are especially fearful of being racially profiled and arrested by immigration enforcement agents, Gudino said, it has been helpful to coordinate with legal aid groups and volunteer networks who can patrol neighborhoods for the presence of ICE agents and help provide immediate legal aid and assistance in the aftermath of raids.

Organizers also let people know they can help their communities without engaging in ICE watching—whether that's providing mutual aid and meal trains for vulnerable people unable to leave home amid an ICE siege, or bulk ordering whistles for local ICE watchers to warn their neighbors about nearby agents. "Everybody has a different risk assessment, but everyone can still show up," said Regan. "There is a place and a way to participate for everyone."

Growing participation in ICE observing

Despite these challenges, every organizer and volunteer who spoke with the *Guardian* asserted that they were undaunted, even if shaken, by the federal government's backlash.

David Chung, an organizer with ICE Out of New York, said the day after Good's killing, hundreds of New Yorkers gathered at a press conference held by DHS secretary Kristi Noem to make their feelings—and presence—known.

"For about two-and-a-half hours, the energy was really electric, of people showing their defiance, their anger towards this administration," said Chung. "And it wasn't just the energy but having conversations with people who are there. They wanted to know: 'How can I get more involved? How can I take the next step? What are some things that we can do?' I didn't hear anyone that was saying: 'I'm too afraid to come out now.'"

Omar Flores of the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression recounted the same type of energy at an emergency action in Chicago after Good's death, then again, after Pretti's, saying "several thousand" people

showed up. "While people are taking more precautions, folks seem to be undeterred," Flores said.

At the January 26 ICE observer training, the chat was active with people wanting to help, connect and share gratitude for those who have already been doing this work. "Many thanks to Minneapolis for the weight they have been carrying," one participant wrote.

Majorie, the Minneapolis resident who opened the call, emphasized that being in community is getting involved. "I know some of you think you're not qualified, or that you're waiting for someone to tell you how to do this right," she said. "But let me tell you that the person who is going to do that is you. You're on this call; you have five neighbors right now who are waiting for you to talk to them and get organized. And that's how you start. You won't be perfect, you'll make mistakes, but you just have to start."

—*The Guardian*, January 31, 2026

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2026/jan/31/ice-observer-document-immigration-agents>



Downtown Minneapolis after Alex Pretti was killed, January 24, 2016.

From Ploughshares to Palestine Action

By DAN GLAZEBROOK

January 25, 2026—*This week, the trial of six young activists who attempted to disarm Israeli weapons in a British arms factory draws to a close. Thirty years ago this month, four women undertook a similar action; in both cases, the defendants argued that their actions were legal and reasonable attempts to prevent genocide. The political climate—and legal rights—have deteriorated significantly between the two actions: but the state is more afraid now than ever.*

Thirty years ago this month, on January 29th, 1996, three women broke into a British arms factory near Liverpool and set about disarming a Hawk fighter jet, built by British Aerospace for use by Indonesia in their genocidal war against East Timor. Hammering on the wings, fuselage, nosecone and control panel, they caused somewhere between £500,000 and £1.7million of damage to the plane and delayed the plane's delivery to Indonesia by an undisclosed amount of time.

The action was first conceived at a “Ploughshares” workshop at a peace camp in 1995. The Ploughshares movement takes inspiration from the biblical injunction to “turn swords into ploughshares” and uses nonviolent direct action to disarm the weapons of war. The first Ploughshares action took place in the U.S. in 1980, when eight people hammered on the nosecones of nuclear warheads at a General Electric factory in Pennsylvania; ten years later, Stephen Hancock and Mike Hutchinson inaugurated the movement's presence in Britain when they snuck into USAF Upper Heyford in Oxfordshire intending to disable warplanes. At the workshop in 1995, several of the female participants agreed it would be great for such an action to be undertaken specifically by a group of women.

For the next ten months, Andrea Needham, Lotta Kronlid, Angie Zelter, Jo Wilson and their support group comprising six more women spent an intensive weekend each month in preparation for what they were about to do. Their target was to be one of the 24 Hawk fighter jets British Aerospace were building for Indonesia, which were being used to bomb Timorese villages, contributing to an estimated death toll of one third of the population since the occupation began twenty years earlier. General Suharto, head of the Indonesian state and military, had taken power in 1965 in a *coup* facilitated by the U.S. and Britain, which saw hundreds-of-thousands of suspected communists executed using hit lists provided by western intelligence services. He was their man, and they were determined to use him to cull a resistant population threatening neocolonial designs in the region. John Pilger's 1994 film, *Death of a Nation*, with its footage of the 1991 Santa Cruz

massacre (filmed and smuggled out of the country by Max Stahl), had highlighted Suharto's crimes for the first time to many in Britain—including the Ploughshares women.

At their monthly meetings, the women discussed everything from their fears about prison life, how they would respond to violent security guards, and how to deal with the media; to philosophical discussions around militarism, patriarchy and authority—not to mention the detailed planning of the action itself. As the agreed date approached, grueling reconnaissance operations were undertaken, involving lying on frozen ground overlooking the factory from dawn until dusk until they were finally able to ascertain which hangar was housing the Hawks. At the last meeting of the full group, meditations were conducted on the themes of fear, violence, and despair, with each of them writing down what these meant to



The four members of the Seeds of Hope East Timor Ploughshares action who were arrested celebrate outside the courthouse after their victory. (WNV / Andrea Needham)

them, before burning the paper. Another was held on the theme of hope, whilst holding a handful of seeds which were then mixed with the ash from the burnt papers to sprinkle at the scene, and which gave the name to the action: Seeds of Hope Ploughshares. Then the hammers, some of them hand carved by members of the group, were given a blessing—and on the night of January 29th, three of the women headed out to BAE Systems Military Air & Information in Lancashire.

Several things went wrong. Someone was out late working on their boat in the usually deserted boatyard they had to cross on the way to the factory, forcing them to climb up an almost vertical bank and over a barbed wire fence, their heavy bags full of hammers and iron crowbars. When they got to the site, the lights on the site were unexpectedly on, unlike every other Sunday they had been there. They decided to proceed regardless—any delay would mean the Hawks might have already been shipped to Indonesia. Then, at the hangar itself, after smashing the glass window of the fire escape, they couldn't find the bar on the other side to get it open. Jo ran around the building and managed to find another entrance on the folding metal shutters, which between them they managed to crowbar open. They were in.

In her brilliant book on the action, *The Hammer Blow*, Andrea Needham recounted that “One of the beautiful things about Ploughshares actions is that anyone can do them. You don't need to be a technical genius or an engineer, you don't need to be physically strong, you don't need any expensive equipment or special skills. All you need is a hammer and a functioning arm. We each had both of those things. We started hammering.”

Working quickly, and expecting to be discovered any moment, they focused on the nosecone and control panel, where they knew they could do the maximum damage in the least time. They scattered

their seeds, hung a banner on the plane, and left a video and booklet outlining the situation in East Timor in the cockpit, hoping they'd be seen by the British Aerospace management, the police—and ultimately the jury.

In the end, they had far more time than they'd expected. They could probably, in fact, have damaged all of the Tornados and Hawks in the hangar, several of which were bound for Saudi Arabia, another neocolonial client state charged with repressing resistant populations on the west's behalf. But they restricted themselves to the plane bound for Indonesia, “to keep the issue clear.” Several times a security buggy drove by the hangar but failed to spot them, even when they were jumping up and down to attract their attention. Getting caught—in order to explain themselves and be accountable for their actions—was always part of the plan, but “the one possibility we hadn't discussed was that of not being able to let British Aerospace know we were there.” In the end, they decided to call the press from a phone they found in an office, so that the company would be alerted to their presence when they were called for a comment. They also took the opportunity to call their comrade Angie and Lotta's relatives in Sweden and were on the phone to John Pilger¹ when the security finally arrived.

Like the Filton 24 (24 UK activists in prison without trial for opposing genocide) on trial this week, they were denied bail and remanded in custody, facing prison sentences of up to ten years if found guilty. And like the Palestine Action prisoners currently on hunger strike, they found the *diktat* of the prison regime—capricious and arbitrary at the best of times—even more vindictive than usual due to the political nature of their charges. Locked inside for weeks at a time—despite the statutory right to an hour's outdoor exercise per day—they were then barred from running when they finally got out; and even barred from walking round the perimeter, supposedly on the grounds

that they might pass things to the women on the hospital wing as they passed by.

They were then barred from being moved to the usual wing for prisoners with “good behavior”—where they would have had a chance to work on their defense preparation together—as, the governor explained, the Home Office had claimed they represented a “security risk.” The governor had already told Lotta they were worried the women might attempt to organize a “sit-down protest” amongst their fellow prisoners, but did eventually let slip the real reason for the supposed “threat” posed by the women: “You've embarrassed the government once,” she told them, “and we don't want to give you the opportunity to do it again.” They were also barred from attending prison education and art classes.

The 29 Palestine Action prisoners currently on remand in British jails (the Filton 24 and the Brize Norton 5) have also been deemed a security risk, with some even reclassified as “terrorists” following the government's banning of Palestine Action last summer. Amu Gib, of the Brize Norton 5, was barred from art classes after they embroidered “Free Palestine” onto a cushion they were making, and others have apparently been barred from socializing, going to gym, and receiving mail. Amu explained recently that this arbitrary abuse of their rights was a significant part of the reason for the current hunger strike.

In July 1996, after nearly six months on remand, the women's trial began. They wanted to represent themselves but had decided it would be useful to have a barrister in the room, so in the end Jo agreed to be represented by Vera Baird whilst Lotta, Andrea and Angie represented themselves. It turned out to be an excellent compromise. On a psychological level, seeing the women seated behind a desk taking notes rather than only in the dock—effectively in

the role of barristers as much as defendants for much of the trial—may well have given them a certain legitimacy and respectability in the subconscious mind of the jury. But having a trained barrister able to take on the judge over points of law also turned out to be extremely helpful.

They had been charged under the Criminal Damage Act 1971, which makes it an offence to destroy or damage property “without lawful excuse.” And, as Andrea put it, “on that three-word rider hung our whole case.” Their excuse was that of using reasonable force to prevent a crime, as allowed under section 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967.

Early on in the trial, three key decisions were made that proved crucial for their case.

Firstly, after a long battle by their tenacious barrister, the judge allowed them to bring in expert witnesses to demonstrate that British-made Hawk fighter jets were indeed being used in East Timor to commit war crimes. The judge had initially denied their request out of hand. The “reasonable force” defense technically rests on whether the defendant genuinely believes that a crime is taking place. The prosecution argued that, as the Crown had conceded that the defendants did genuinely believe this, there was no need for them to prove that a crime actually was occurring in East Timor. But Vera challenged this, arguing that the defense still needed to prove that the belief that Hawks were carrying out war crimes in East Timor was a reasonable one. She pointed out that the prosecution, like British Aerospace themselves, had consistently referred to the Hawks as “trainer” jets, downplaying their lethal capacity, and thereby attempting to sow in the jury’s minds that it was unreasonable to believe they were being used to commit war crimes. Eventually the judge relented, on the condition that the state would not be expected to pay for witnesses to be flown over from East Timor. This

decision allowed the women to completely turn the tables and use the court to put British Aerospace and the British government on trial for complicity in genocide. One witness after another—including esteemed documentary maker John Pilger, Timorese resistance leader Jose Ramos Horta, and former political prisoner and founder of the Indonesian human rights campaign group TAPOL, Carmel Budiardjo—all testified that Hawk jets were indeed being used to terrorize the Timorese people. “It would be almost impossible for the Indonesians to maintain their occupation without the use of ground-attack planes,” explained Budiardjo, adding that the cancellation of the Hawk deal would “lift an enormous burden” from the Timorese.

Secondly, the judge dismissed the prosecution’s attempts to prevent the jury from seeing the video the women had made explaining their actions. The video provided crucial context as to what was happening in East Timor, including first-hand accounts of the genocide, as well as excerpts from British Aerospace’s own advertising materials for the Hawk, proudly proclaiming its attack capabilities: the very capabilities which the prosecution had desperately been trying to hide from the court. This video had completely changed the attitude of the magistrates when it had been shown to them at the women’s initial committal hearing, and the defendants hoped it would do the same for the jury.

Finally, the judge allowed each member of the jury to read a copy of the booklet produced by the women. The prosecution claimed it was propaganda and the jury should not be allowed to see it, but the judge ruled they were “sensible enough” to view it if they wished. Allowing the jury to read and view first-hand accounts of what was going on in East Timor brought home the gravity of what was at stake—and leaving the materials at the site, ensuring they were seized as evidence, was a

genius act on the part of the women.

The prosecution case was weak from the start. Conceding that the women genuinely believed that Hawk jets were facilitating war crimes in East Timor, they were reduced to arguing that stopping these crimes wasn’t their real motivation. They knew, the prosecution claimed, that the Hawks would be sent to Indonesia anyway, and therefore that their actions would not be preventing the crimes they claimed to be concerned about. Their true aim, they claimed, was not to prevent a crime, but to gain publicity for the cause. The prosecution case was fundamentally weakened, however, when British Aerospace themselves admitted that the Hawk’s delivery to Indonesia had been delayed by the damage the women had inflicted on it.

Throughout the trial, the defendants were never defensive, but always on the front foot, knowing they had not only morality and justice, but law, on their side. They utterly rejected the state’s attempts to project its own guilt onto them, throwing it back where it belonged every time:

“Do you not accept that this was a very, very irresponsible thing to do?” the prosecution barrister asked Jo Wilson. “Not at all,” she replied, “What is irresponsible is selling weapons to a regime which Amnesty International has described as casual about mass murder.”

“Do you think it was right to take the law into your own hands and go and attack someone else’s property?” he asked Lotta. “I think the people who have taken the law into their hands are British Aerospace and the British government,” she replied. “They are blatantly breaching the Genocide Act. I’m not breaking the law, I’m upholding it.”

The jury agreed. After a tense four hour wait, the foreman announced that the four defendants had been found not guilty on all charges.

Indonesian foreign minister Ali Atlas had once described East Timor as an

annoyance, “like a pebble in the shoe,” before admitting years later that the pebble had become “a veritable boulder.” Three years after the women’s break-in at RAF (Royal Air Force) Warton, the Indonesian military was forced out of East Timor by a combination of popular resistance and international pressure; Andrea later said she believed that “what we did contributed in some small way to the goal of turning the pebble of East Timor into a boulder.”

Still arming genocide

Since then, much has changed—but not everything. Britain is still arming genocide, and activists are still doing all they can to sabotage the weapons of war. Palestine Action has led the recent wave of nonviolent direct action against the manufacture of weapons for use in Israel’s attempts to annihilate the resistant people of Gaza, coordinating an incredible 400 actions against Elbit, an Israeli arms company with multiple factories in Britain, and the chief supplier of weapons to the Israel Defense Force (IDF). Their tenacity—especially after one of their actions shifted focus to the complicity of the RAF itself—resulted in the group being banned last August, the first time an entirely nonviolent protest group had been pro-

scribed as a “terrorist organization.” Supporting the group now carries a sentence of up to fourteen years.

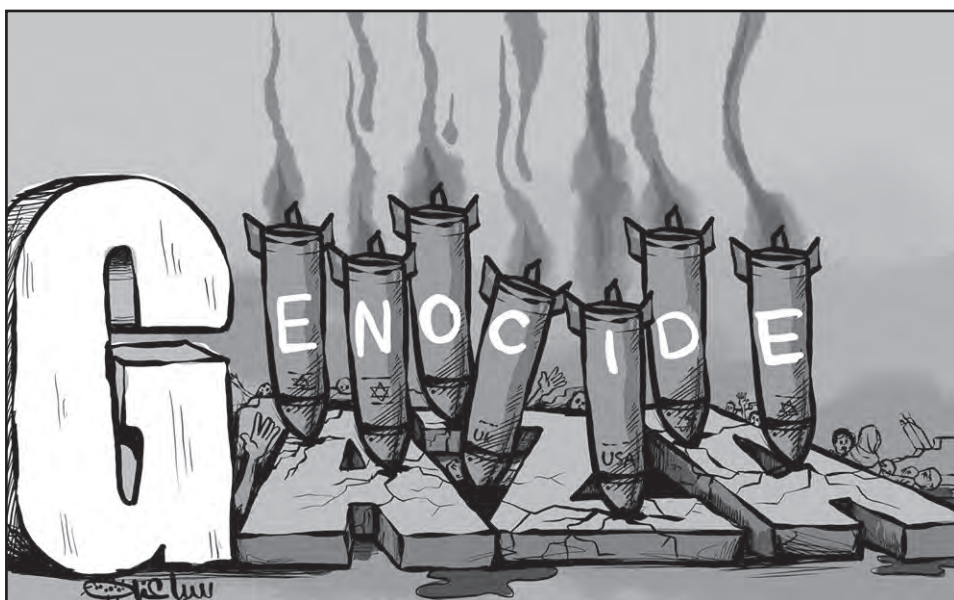
And an obscure House of Lords ruling in 2005 has been seized on by British courts recently to prevent a repeat of what happened in Liverpool Crown Court in 1996. Lord Hoffman, in an aside, claimed that, in a democratic state, no use of force to prevent crimes committed by the government can ever be reasonable, as the only reasonable way to challenge the government is through parliament or the courts. Therefore, he concluded, “evidence to support the opinions of the protesters as to the legality of the acts in question is irrelevant and inadmissible.” In the Filton 24 case being heard this week, the result is that, whilst the quadcopters targeted by the activists have been responsible for some of the most heinous war crimes of the whole Gaza war—as testified by respected surgeon Nizam Mamode in Parliament—none of this evidence has been allowed in front of the jury. Using the court to put UK complicity in genocide on trial, as the Ploughshares women did in 1996, has been rendered far more difficult now than it was then.

There were other factors in favor of the not guilty verdict in 1996. Liverpool

was a fortuitous place for the trial to be held, with a long tradition of anti-imperialism and skepticism towards authority due to its large Irish heritage population and proud working class identity—not to mention being the victim of a massive state and media onslaught to justify the unlawful killing of 97 Liverpool fans at a football match in the 1989 Hillsborough disaster. Had the trial been held in Preston—the nearest court to where the action was held, where a significant proportion of the population work for British Aerospace, and where the local press had been unremittingly hostile to the action—the result may perhaps have been different.

Furthermore, unlike Palestine Action today, there was no insinuation made that the Ploughshares women were terrorists; portraying them as such would likely have backfired on the prosecution, making them appear ridiculous and even unhinged. The Filton activists, however, were initially arrested for terrorism offences; their supporters and families were rounded up in dawn raids by masked police with automatic rifles; their group was banned as a terrorist organization; and their trial is being held in Woolwich Crown Court, famous for its terrorism trials. Although not charged in the end with any terrorism offences, the state has labelled their crimes as having a “terrorism link,” meaning the judge is able to arbitrarily increase their sentences beyond what would normally be considered acceptable should they be found guilty. The result of all of this is to create a context and atmosphere almost entirely absent in the Seeds of Hope trial, in which the defendants are a-priori demonized as terrorists and traitors.

Finally, it cannot be ignored that the Seeds of Hope action chimed more easily with existing colonial prejudices in a country like Britain. Although this was never a part of the argument made by any of the four women or their supporters, the fact is that the perpetrator in that case was a Muslim country





(Indonesia), attacking a largely Christian population (East Timor). Much of the support for the women came from the Christian community—especially Quakers but also Catholic groups in Liverpool; and Jo Wilson’s character witnesses came from an Anglican vicar and a Catholic priest. In the case of the Filton 24, the perpetrator is a fellow “white” country (Israel) and the victims, in much of popular discourse, are widely portrayed as terrorists (Palestine). Islamophobia and white supremacy may be working against the Filton activists in a way that did not apply in the Seeds of Hope action in 1996.

Nevertheless, all of these sordid tactics by the state suggests they are running scared. The whole point of prison is to render the prisoner insecure and vulnerable, to make them feel powerless. Yet they are not powerless—the governor’s unguarded comment to Lotta about their fears of a sit-down protest shows how insecure the prison officers themselves are about prisoners conducting civil disobedience. This was revealed again last year by their utterly disproportionate response when Palestine Action prisoner Heba Muraisi actually did start a spontaneous sit-down protest in solidarity with her comrade Jon Cink, who was being arbitrarily persecuted by the prison officers: she was sent to another prison hundreds of miles away in punishment, so she is unable to receive visits from her mother, who suffers from mobility

problems. Around 2000 people have been arrested for supporting Palestine Action since the ban was announced, and the last thing the state wants to do is to send 2000 fearless activists into the prison system. Prisons are often full of people with nothing to lose, rejected by society and perhaps the most potentially revolutionary demographic in the country. Injecting them with an influx of committed activists experienced in civil disobedience could be the state’s worst nightmare.

Meanwhile, the Palestine Action prisoners’ hunger strike continues with Heba Muraisi now 67 days without food, and Teuta Hoxha, Kamran Ahmad and Lewie Chiaramello on days 61, 60 and 46 respectively. Anything after 21 days risks permanent physical damage. But as Amu Gib, who was on hunger strike for 50 days recently, explained: “when you decide to take action despite being in prison, you’re free. Our action is a way of declaring that the state can’t stop you even when it has you in prison; that we are not going to give up the focus and the responsibility to people, whatever conditions we’re in.” That kind of spirit is infectious; and that is the genocidal

state’s greatest fear.

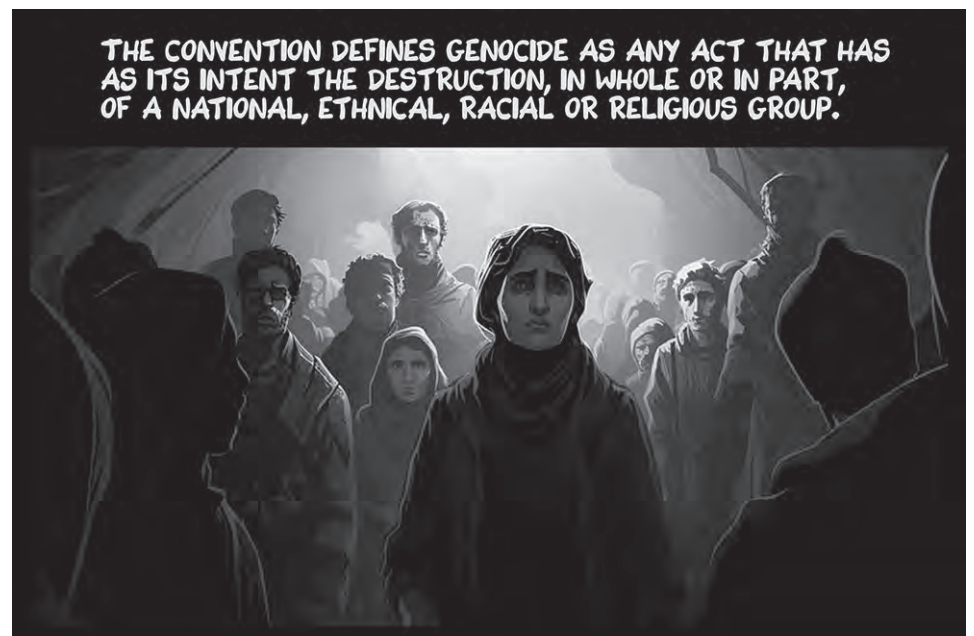
Dan Glazebrook is a political commentator and agitator. He is the author of Divide and Ruin: The West’s Imperial Strategy in an Age of Crisis (Liberation Media, 2013) and Supremacy Unravelling: Crumbling Western Dominance and the Slide to Fascism. (K and M, 2020)

—CounterPunch+, January 25, 2026

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2026/01/25/disarming-genocide-and-the-law-then-and-now/>

¹ John Richard Pilger, October 9, 1939 — December 30, 2023 - was an Australian journalist, writer, scholar and documentary filmmaker. From 1962, he was based mainly in Britain. He was also a visiting professor at Cornell University in New York. Pilger was a critic of American, Australian, and British foreign policy, which he considered to be driven by an imperialist and colonialist agenda.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Pilger



Kevin Cooper, 68, Still Fighting After 41 Years on Death Row

BY DAVID GREENWALD



Kevin Cooper

After more than four decades on California's death row, Kevin Cooper says the question at the center of his case has never changed. He maintains that he did not commit the 1983 murders of four members of the Ryen family in Chino Hills and has spent the past 42 years trying to force the courts to reexamine evidence he says was tampered with, destroyed or withheld.

"I'm an innocent man on death row," Cooper said during a recent phone interview from California Health Care Facility in Stockton.

Cooper, now 68, was convicted in 1985 and sentenced to death for the brutal killings of Doug and Peggy Ryen, their daughter Jessica, and family friend Christopher Hughes. A fifth victim, Joshua Ryen, survived the attack and became the only eyewitness. Cooper came within hours of execution in 2004 before a federal court granted a stay.

What followed were decades of appeals, forensic disputes and legal battles that have made his case one of the most contested capital convictions in

California history. At the core of Cooper's claims is the argument that the physical and DNA evidence used to uphold his conviction cannot be trusted.

"One person, especially me, weighing 155 pounds in 1983, could not do what the prosecutors say was done," Cooper said. "To murder four people and attempt to murder a fifth person in three to four minutes is impossible."

He has also consistently pointed to Joshua Ryen's early statements to police identifying someone else as the attacker. Cooper said the child repeatedly told investigators that Cooper was not the man he saw. "If he had said I was the person who did it, I'd have been executed back in 2004," Cooper said.

The prosecution's case relied heavily on blood evidence and later DNA testing that purported to link Cooper to the crime scene. Cooper disputes both the origin and handling of that evidence. At the time of his trial in the mid-1980s, DNA testing did not yet exist, and blood-typing methods were used instead. Cooper said a criminologist waited until after his arrest to test a tiny drop of blood found at the crime scene next to his own sample.

"That pinhead drop of blood was supposed to have been used up, discarded," he said. "So how could something that is no more, come back into being?"

Cooper said that in 1999, the same evidence was removed from storage without a court order and held for a full day alongside his own blood and saliva. He said his attorneys were not notified at the time. When DNA testing was later conducted, the results were used to reaffirm his guilt.

"I'm the one that asked for the DNA testing," Cooper said. "But how could something that was completely consumed, completely used up, thrown

away, come back into existence?"

He also cited findings involving EDTA, a chemical preservative used in test tubes but not found naturally in the human body. Cooper said EDTA was detected on a beige T-shirt prosecutors said was linked to him.

"EDTA does not come from your body. It comes from a test tube," he said. "Meaning that the blood that came from me came from a test tube that they put on that shirt."

Federal courts later sent those EDTA findings out for further review, a decision Cooper said exemplified what he describes as a pattern of judicial avoidance rather than scrutiny.

Beyond the forensic disputes, Cooper has long argued that racial bias and political pressure shaped every stage of his prosecution and appeals. He described the handling of his case as part of a broader historical pattern in the United States.

"This is the DNA of this country," Cooper said, "if they'll do this to white people in 2026 [referring to the ICE murders of Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis], [this is] what they was doing to Black people all throughout the history of this country."

Cooper referenced what he sees as contemporary parallels in federal law enforcement actions and said misconduct is not confined to the past. "Their police are some lying motherfuckers, excuse my language, but they are, and the prosecutors too," he said.

In 2021, California Governor Gavin Newsom ordered an independent review of Cooper's conviction, a move Cooper initially welcomed. His legal team had requested the formation of a full innocence commission, similar to those operating in other states, to review every aspect of the case.

“We asked him to form a commission to look at every aspect of my case,” Cooper said. “But he gave me the bogus ass innocence investigation.”

Cooper said the review failed to conduct meaningful testing or inquiry and instead relied on reports prepared by hired experts. While one expert validated the reliability of Joshua Ryan’s childhood memory, Cooper said that conclusion missed the point.

“This is not a memory case. This is a DNA case,” Cooper said. “That’s not for him to say.”

Cooper said the failure of the state review directly led to his current legal strategy, which centers on California’s Racial Justice Act. His case is now being handled by faculty and students at the University of San Francisco School of Law’s Racial Justice Clinic along with *pro bono* counsel from a private law firm.

“They pick and choose what cases they take,” Cooper said of the law school. “What happened to me is so outrageous to them.”

Under the Racial Justice Act, Cooper’s attorneys are seeking discovery from law enforcement agencies and the San Bernardino County District Attorney’s Office to demonstrate racial bias in charging and sentencing decisions. Cooper said he knows the effort will be resisted.

“They’re going to fight like hell not to get it,” he said. “But we got to keep fighting.”

If successful, Cooper believes the litigation could lead to an evidentiary hearing and eventually a new trial. “If I

get that, then it’s all about getting a new trial,” he said.

Throughout the interview, Cooper repeatedly returned to the destruction of evidence, including bloody coveralls and a blue shirt he said police initially logged as evidence but later claimed never existed. He said internal records show the coveralls were destroyed under orders from a supervisor, a fact not disclosed at trial.

“That’s a Brady violation,” Cooper said, referring to the constitutional requirement that prosecutors disclose exculpatory evidence. “The jury didn’t know about that. The judge didn’t know about that.”

Cooper also pointed to unidentified DNA found on other items, including an orange towel, that he says does not belong to him or the victims. He said that evidence suggests multiple perpetrators.

“That’s three people,” Cooper said. “That ain’t me.”

Asked what he wants the public to understand beyond his claim of innocence; Cooper did not hesitate. “This criminal justice system is fucked up,” he said. “America claims that it don’t torture or convict its innocent people. But that’s a damn lie.”

He described daily life on death row as a form of ongoing punishment. “They tortured me for murders that I did not do,” Cooper said.

Cooper said the political dimensions of his case have only intensified in recent years. He accused former California Attorney General Kamala Harris of denying earlier requests for DNA testing. Cooper noted that Harris

later apologized publicly after becoming a U.S. senator.

“She ended up apologizing after she became a senator,” Cooper said. “But she didn’t apologize to me. She didn’t apologize to my family.”

Even after DNA testing was finally conducted, Cooper said most of the samples were degraded. He said only one bloodstain, identified as item A-41, was deemed a match, a result he disputes.

“How could that drop of blood not be as degraded as what was in the test tube?” Cooper said. “That don’t make no sense.”

Now 68 years old, Cooper said he has spent most of his adult life awaiting execution.

“I have come within three hours and 42 minutes of being strapped out to that gurney and executed,” he said.

What he says he wants now is not special treatment, but a trial free from misconduct.

“Grant me a new trial,” Cooper said. “A trial that is free from prosecutor and police misconduct. Put all the evidence out there. Everything.”

Whether the courts will agree remains uncertain. But Cooper said he intends to keep fighting.

“I am alive. I am still fighting,” he said. “If I do die in prison, it won’t be because I didn’t try.”

—*Vanguard News Group*, February 1, 2026

<https://davisvanguard.org/2026/02/innocence-kevin-cooper-case/>

**FREE
KEVIN
COOPER**

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

Where to find us:

www.socialistviewpoint.org

info@socialistviewpoint.org

EDITORS

Carole Seligman, Bonnie Weinstein

GRAPHIC & WEB DESIGN

Mykael

BUSINESS MANAGER

Carole Seligman

The Socialist Viewpoint Publishing Association publishes *Socialist Viewpoint* in the interests of the working class.

The editors take positions consistent with revolutionary Marxism. Within this context the editors will consider for publication articles, reviews or comments. The editors may publish comments to accompany these articles. Photographs and cartoons will be appreciated.

Socialist Viewpoint reprints articles circulated on the Internet when we deem them of interest to our readers.

No limitation will be placed on the author(s) use of their material in their subsequent work provided acknowledgment is made of its publication in *Socialist Viewpoint*. The Socialist Viewpoint Publishing Association retains for itself rights to reprint articles as collections, educational bulletins, and similar uses. With the inclusion of an acknowledgment and a notice of the copyright ownership, permission is hereby given educators to duplicate essays for distribution gratis or for use in the classroom at cost. The author(s) retain all other rights.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of *Socialist Viewpoint*. These views are expressed in editorials.

Socialist Viewpoint is printed by members of Local 61, Allied Printing Trades Council, San Francisco, California.

Special Introductory Subscription Offer!

One year of *Socialist Viewpoint* for \$20.00,

Bargain rate: \$35.00 for two years;

(Regular rate: \$30.00/International Rate: \$50.00)

Make your check payable to: *Socialist Viewpoint*, & mail to:

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

60 29th Street, #429

San Francisco, CA 94110

Please include your name, address, city and zip code.

To help us know who our subscribers are,
please tell us your occupation, union, school,
or organization.

Note to Readers:

Socialist Viewpoint magazine has been edited and distributed by revolutionaries who share a common political outlook stemming from the old Socialist Workers Party of James P. Cannon, and Socialist Action from 1984 through 1999.

After being expelled from Socialist Action in 1999, we formed Socialist Workers Organization in an attempt to carry on the project of building a nucleus of a revolutionary party true to the historic teachings and program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

What we have found is that our numbers are insufficient for this crucial project of party building. This problem is not ours alone; it is a problem flowing from the division and fragmentation that has plagued the revolutionary movement in capitalist America and the world since the 1980s.

What we intend to do is to continue to promote the idea of building a revolutionary Marxist working class political party through the pages of *Socialist Viewpoint* magazine. We continue to have an optimistic outlook about the revolutionary potential of the world working class to rule society in its own name—socialism. We are optimistic that the working class, united across borders, and acting in its own class interests can solve the devastating crises of war, poverty, oppression, racism, sexism and environmental destruction that capitalism is responsible for.

We expect that revolutionaries from many different organizations, traditions, and backgrounds will respond to the opportunities that will arise, as workers resist the attacks of the capitalist system and government, to build a new revolutionary political party. Just as we join with others to build every response to war and oppression, we look forward to joining with others in the most important work of building a new mass revolutionary socialist workers' party as it becomes possible to do so.

Drop the Charges Against Nick Tilsen

In 2022, an incident took place where a Native unhoused relative was being harassed and assaulted by Rapid City Police (RCPD) in Rapid City, South Dakota. Nick Tilsen, CEO and Founder of NDN (Indian) Collective, pulled over to conduct a routine cop watch. One officer accused Nick of assaulting him despite no physical contact being made with the officer. During the interaction, Nick remained in his vehicle because he felt unsafe surrounded by several police cars. Nick communicated with an officer, who then got approval from someone off-site and allowed Nick to leave.

Despite no immediate action being taken at the time, more than a year later, the officer involved accused Nick of attempting to run him over, leading to a complaint and warrant for Tilsen's arrest being filed on June 30, 2023—the same day NDN Collective announced they would host a July 4th March Towards Justice.

Nick was originally charged with aggravated assault and obstruction of a police officer. But just a few weeks before the trial date (January 12, 2026), Nick was notified that the Pennington County Grand Jury added a “simple assault” to the list of charges.

Nick is being systematically targeted as local prosecutors intentionally sought out the police officer named in this case and encouraged him to press charges. The charges brought against Nick are false and inflated to criminalize, silence, and ultimately isolate him from his community through imprisonment. Nick is being targeted by RCPD because he has unapologetically stood on his values and has called for accountability and justice for people harmed by police in Rapid City.

NDN Collective has been pushing for a federal investigation into the Rapid City Police Department for over three

years. This fight is bigger than just Nick Tilsen. It's about protecting movement leaders, movement organizations, our right to free speech, and to demand justice for those harmed by colonial white supremacist systems and structures.

NDN Collective believes this to be a politically motivated effort to silence a movement leader by criminalizing his actions and misusing the legal system. If found guilty of these charges, Nick could face up to 26 years in prison.

Nick's trial is set to begin January 26, 2026, at 9:00 A.M. MT at the Pennington County Courthouse in Rapid City, SD.

As we see continued targeting of movement leaders, including Nick, we need your support to continue fighting

these legal battles. Trials are expensive and are tactics used to drain movement resources. We need resources to continue this fight against legal repression and to continue our work.

This fund safeguards our organization against legal attacks aiming to suppress our leaders, imprison our people, and obstruct our movement's objectives.

Update:

The jury could not reach a verdict on January 26th, so a mistrial was declared. However, the State could re-instate the charges against him, and re-try him.

Donate to NDN legal fund here:

<https://ndnlegalfund.org>



Photo by Brooke Anderson | @movementphotographer

Nick Tilsen



Kropotkin at his desk c. 1890 (Unknown/Public Domain/Wikimedia Commons).
Read *Mutual Aid* or *Mutual Assured Destruction* on page 37.



Read *Trump's Assault on Cuba and the World* on page 9.

On the Front Cover: Photo, looking down from a high-rise in Minneapolis, of the massive General Strike in opposition to ICE on January 30, 2026. Read *Fighting Fascism* on page 4.



Tens-of thousands take to the streets in Minneapolis protesting ICE on January 23, 2026. Read *The Battle Of Minneapolis* on page 45.

★ ★ ★ **Attention Prison Mail Room:** ★ ★ ★

Prisoners retain their free speech rights under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. That means you cannot legally suppress the expression and consideration of ideas. Prison walls do not form a barrier separating prisoners from the protection of the Constitution, according to the *Turner v. Safley* ruling. [482 U.S. 78, 107 Sct 2245 (1987)] If you exclude printed matter on an improper basis, or give a false pretext or rationale for its exclusion, because of the ideas expressed in it, you are breaking the law. The prisoner denied access to material he wants to read can bring a civil rights lawsuit against you with cause for seeking punitive damages. In the case of *Police Department Chicago v. Mosley*, 408 U.S. 92, 95, 92 Sct 2286, 2290 (1972) the court found that “[A]bove all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, subject matter or content.”