

## Fighting for human needs in the 2024 elections

By the League Basic Needs  
Electoral Committee

The deteriorating economic situation for millions of Americans is generating both a rising tide of people fighting for their basic needs and a ruling-class turn toward fascist solutions to crush the resistance. This clash is setting the stage for possibly the most unstable presidential election season in a hundred years and the further polarization – and possible destruction – of one or both major parties in America’s two-party system.

The underlying cause of the crisis is the leap to automated digital production, including artificial intelligence (AI). The technological revolution is literally replacing and discarding human workers. This not only creates a surge of impoverishment, but it also makes it impossible to circulate commodities. As industrial profitability declines, capital flows to the financial and real estate sectors instead. When financial profitability falters, it leads to the host of regional bank failures we are experiencing and threatens the collapse of the commercial real estate market.

The result is further impoverishment. Workers are facing a rash of post-pandemic evictions, rent increases and government reductions in basic services. Rents in the United States rose an average of over 14% from 2021 to 2022, with increases over 40% in some cities. Some 17 million Americans are losing their Medicaid health care as we speak, due to the expiration of pandemic requirements for states to maintain their coverage. Food stamps were already cut in March for some 50 million Americans and the child tax credit has been slashed. The spike in poverty has made it the fourth leading cause of death in the richest country in the world. People of color are disproportionately impacted.

### A MOMENT OF HISTORY

The underlying economic transformation and the breadth of the resistance are driving the social movements toward new tactics and increasing class unity to defend their livelihoods. Nowhere was this better expressed than in the remarks by SAG AFTRA union president Fran Drescher when she announced the screen actors strike on July 13:

*“What happens here is important because what’s happening to us is happening across all fields of labor, when employers make Wall Street and greed their priority and forget about the essential contributors that make their machine run. ... This is a moment of history and is a moment of truth. If we don’t stand tall right now, we are all going to be in jeopardy of being replaced by machines and big business, who cares more about Wall Street than you and your family. Most of Americans don’t have more than \$500 in case of an emergency. ... At some point, you have to say ‘No, we’re not going to take this anymore.’ ...*



The demands of all the various social movements are pushing them toward a class program, class unity and political struggle.

Illustration: iStock

*We’re not going to keep doing incremental changes on a contract that no longer honors what is happening right now with this business model that was foisted on us.”*

But the screen actors and writers – who are directly threatened by the introduction of AI in their industry – are only articulating a transformation also being expressed in strikes by hotel workers, school workers, teachers and academic workers at the University of California. They have found they cannot defend themselves without defending their communities and without addressing all the major social and political issues impacting their lives: housing costs, homelessness, immigration rights, access to health care, public education, reproductive freedom, reimagining police and protecting the earth. All the various social movements are experiencing the same challenge. Their demands are pushing them beyond one-sided economic or social struggles and step by step toward class demands, a class program, class unity and political struggle.

As more people unite around basic demands, they enter the electoral arena and run for office on working-class programs. The ruling class, in turn, responds with desperate measures designed to limit voting, restrict or outlaw protests, divide and attack groups based on race and gender and, ultimately, to crush democracy altogether.

### PARTY POLARIZATION IN 2024

The result is the profound instability we are experiencing in the political arena as we approach the 2024 elections. Both major ruling class parties are polarizing, due to the

absolute inability of party leaders to offer solutions to the desperate demands and rising resistance of people in either party, whether urban or rural.

The Biden-McCarthy so-called debt ceiling negotiations were an attempt to restore and shore up the ruling class bipartisanship of 2011-2016, but just as happened in 2016, it is only aggravating the polarizations and proving once again that the ruling class can no longer rule in the same old way. The bipartisan austerity legislation protected the profits of corporations but it is threatening HUD housing subsidies, health care, nutrition, childcare and education of the working class. There is no question that austerity is the overall agenda of the ruling class, but it is increasingly difficult to advocate poverty and hardship and get elected.

The Republican Party is evolving into two wings. The grouping around Trump is coalescing around its plan for an outright fascist seizure of the federal government. Its election denialism and open support of the January 6 insurrection make it clear that if elected, it has no intention of ever surrendering power again. The other (equally dangerous) wing around the Southern governors is organizing for a more incremental approach to fascism, spreading step by step outward from its base in the Southern state legislatures and state and federal courts. A Trump victory in the Republican primaries may split the party by producing a third-party No Labels candidacy. And a Trump loss in the primaries may also split the party, by leading to a Trump third-party candidacy.

Polarization in the Republican Party

also opens the door to instability among Democrats as well. The desperate attempt to unite the Democratic Party behind the pro-corporate candidacy of Joe Biden is already shaky enough, based on his failure to deliver on Build Back Better, voting rights,

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From the editors of Rally! 6



# Across the South, the battle for democracy is raging

Democracy often demands more than voting, critical as that is. We are now seeing open battles for political power across the South, battles where democracy rises to defy the edicts of red state governors.

In Florida, professors vow to defy Republican governor Ron DeSantis's horribly limited Black History requirements. In Arkansas, at least six school districts are publicly refusing to curtail the national Advanced Placement Black History exam. In Atlanta, Georgia, former president Trump is under indictment for conspiracy to interfere with the 2020 election. Some Virginia school districts refuse to implement anti-LGBTQ+ decrees. In every case, officials, backed by active popular movements, are rising to stop what

can only be called fascism.

Now Tennessee is jumping off again. The mass shooting last March 27 at Nashville's Covenant School sparked a large-scale revolt of students of all ages. They besieged the Republican-controlled state assembly to demand laws to protect them against gun violence. The assembly refused to do this, even though they have passed laws to cover the legal costs of the state's 82 gun manufacturers against anti-assault rifle lawsuits! Then legislators voted to expel two of three pro-student state representatives! A motion to expel the third failed by one vote.

In late August, Republican governor Bill Lee called a special legislative session to pass *his* bills to address gun violence. Lee roped

off the capitol to drive away people who are legally empowered to watch deliberations. He militarized hundreds of state patrol to menace protestors. He pushed for laws bills making it perfectly legal to carry a gun into the assembly building. But when mothers sat quietly inside the state capitol with signs that said, "Stop Gun Violence," the speaker of the House had them arrested. This occurred as Proud Boys and counter protestors toting AR-15 assault rifles marched outside!

More battles will come. Pro-abortion organized resistance is active across the country. Now resistance is beginning to become more determined and more mobilized as fascism continues to structurally block democracy. This battle for political power is not

going to go back into its shell.

"Victory cannot be won without class unity based on exposure and rejection of the white supremacy and hetero-patriarchy so deeply rooted in the structure of the American economy, politics, and history. In the practical struggle, people are uniting from below. The growing equality of misery is forming them into a social force. We rely on this developing practical unity to build conscious political understanding. Victory cannot be won until we gain the political power necessary to defeat fascism and organize the cooperative society we need." (<https://lrna.org/lrna-program/>)

Check out the League! **R**

## Fighting for human needs in the 2024 elections

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student debt cancellation and many of the other promises he made when he ran in 2020. The right-wing populist campaign of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is polling at up to 20% and is capable of delivering major damage to Biden. Lyndon Johnson was undone in the 1968 Democratic primaries despite polling numbers some 10 points above Biden's at a similar point in the campaign.

It is also important to remember that the funders of both No Labels and RFK Jr. include significant fascist and former Trump supporters and both could easily be weaponized to support the fascist offensive in the general election campaign.

### REVOLUTIONARY TACTICS

The intense instability demands revolu-

tionaries who train and equip themselves to be able to make rapid tactical decisions as the situation develops. The path forward demands a clear-eyed and disciplined fight for unity of the revolutionary movement of displaced workers – and those in danger of displacement – for their basic needs, including fighting forward for the still unmet demands of the George Floyd rebellion. The movement is for both economic and political democracy. Moving into 2024, we need to elevate the victories won in Los Angeles, Oakland, Chicago and Michigan as the foundation for national work, while continuing to push forward locally where new, young working-class candidates are running for office. "Take Back Our City" movements can serve as essential organizing bases. Local elections are where many of the most basic economic demands of the workers

are being fought out – as well as one of the key targets for the Bannon-Trump fascists to build their base. We need to rely on and double down on the victories of the reproductive freedom movement from Kansas to Kentucky as well as unite with efforts to pass ballot measures in Ohio, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington and elsewhere.

In 2020, it was relatively straightforward for workers to unite with the Bernie Sanders program during the primary season. This year it is more complex. We unite with those Democrats who have proven to be reliable defenders of people's basic needs, either by joining the Squad or by resisting the Biden deficit deal. At the same time, we utilize the independent, openly abolitionist campaign of Dr. Cornel West to further expose and repudiate the pro-corporate wing of the Democrats.

He has so far masterfully avoided manipulation by elements attempting to exploit his campaign to benefit fascist Republicans.

Revolutionaries continue along the course of uniting scattered struggles into a united, multi-racial, multi-generational political struggle for a better world. We discern and advocate the right alliances and compromises necessary to defeat fascism, while always continuing to elevate the needs of the revolutionary class that is forced to fight the private property system just to be able to survive. At every step of the struggle, we point out the extraordinary wealth that exists in our world, and the fact that nothing but our own shortsightedness and lack of social vision prevent us from restructuring our society to enable all of our people to share in the abundance that is everywhere around us. **R**

## EDITORIAL POLICY

**Rally!** to bring back together and put in a state of order, as retreating troops [to return to attack].

**Rally!** is a vehicle to reach out to and communicate with revolutionaries both within and outside of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. The Editorial Board is responsible for preparing the printed and website versions of **Rally!** to represent the League's political positions and policies, the Board's editorial and formatting guidelines, and the political points agreed on with article writers.

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**Photo Editor:** Kimberly King

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## League of Revolutionaries for a New America

Today, whether through words or deeds, vast numbers of socially conscious people declare themselves revolutionaries in opposition to the degenerating social and economic conditions. The League's mission is to unite with other revolutionaries around the demands of the working class, especially the class of displaced workers, and show how the solution is a cooperative, communist society, where social wealth is owned in common and distributed according to need.

The demands of this new impoverished class for food, housing, education, healthcare and an opportunity to contribute to society are summed up as the demand for a cooperative society. Such a society must be based on the public ownership of the socially necessary means of production and the distribution of the social product according to need.

LRNA, P.O. Box 477113, Chicago, IL 60647  
[info@lrna.org](mailto:info@lrna.org) | 1(773)486-0028 | [lrna.org](http://lrna.org)

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The *Rally!* bilingual website provides online access to all issues of *Rally!* It is a political resource for our readers, and provides up-to-date articles, statements and analysis of key questions of importance to revolutionaries.



# Classes fight over Puerto Rico's public beaches

Puerto Ricans have gone from protests and lawsuits to physical action armed with hammers and mallets. The Planning Board had given one developer until March 1st to demolish what it had illegally built on public beach land, but failed to enforce its order, so on March 4th hundreds of protesters began smashing it themselves. On beaches around the island, similar struggles are underway.

What does this struggle over the “commons”, or public lands, have to do with working people's response to the assault on their living conditions and the degradation of the quality of their lives? And how does this relate to the class struggle at present? We need to answer these questions for the continental United States and its imperialist territorial extensions.

The leading edge of the class struggle in Puerto Rico today is people's fight for the public beaches and coastlines, a crucial part of the commons. It pits the people, overwhelmingly workers, against private property interests. This public space is threatened by outside and local investors—lawyers, doctors, engineers, other professionals, RB&B entrepreneurs—looking to buy and speculate with property and real estate. In the process, they assault nature and the homes and livelihoods of the local people, who have been the stewards of the waters, coastlines, and land since the time of the indigenous Taíno people, before Columbus.

## POISONING THE COMMONS

In Rincón, on the Northwest coast, private interests have already damaged coastal terrains, cut down vegetation vital to the ecosystem, and poured toxic cement on beaches and mangroves sea turtles depend on to lay their eggs. All this to put up a condominium and now, illegally, add a pool carved out of the Rincón public beach. This threat has ignited fierce local resistance. They attack the commons in league with corrupt politicians, banks, businesses, the courts, and so-called law enforcement—the usual cabal of capitalist predators and enforcers. The new structures, built with toxic materials, are damaged and washed or blown away by hurricanes, while traditional dwellings, built with ancestral knowledge to withstand storms, remain standing.

The same scenario is being played out in other coastal, fishing communities. Well-off outsiders, whether Puerto Rican or rapacious Mainlanders, are illegally constructing modern cement houses, susceptible to hurricanes, on public lands and claiming the land as their own. People living in Aguadilla, Salinas, Escambrón, Isla Verde, Luquillo, La Parguera, and Bahía de Jobos (on the West, North, and South coasts) are facing the same menace. But they've had enough and, as in Rincón, are fighting the usurpation of their commons. Dozens of more fights are brewing. All of Puerto Rico's 300 plus beaches are public domain threatened by private takeover.

The battle for the beaches is today's manifestation of an old fight between the masses of laborers and the tiny clique of owners and their bought-off cronies. Its historical roots go back to the seeds of capitalist relations in Puerto Rico, starting with the tearing away



The leading edge of the class struggle in Puerto Rico is the fight for the public beaches and coastlines, a crucial part of the commons.

PHOTO / CAMPAMENTO CAMEY

of the land, the laborer's means of life, from the peasant. This process began in the last quarter of the 1700s, consolidated with the incorporation of the island into world commerce (under Spanish and, later, U.S. rule) beginning in the 1840's, and was accelerated by U.S. capital at the end of the 19th century.

For three centuries, the land and waters had been in the hands of laboring people. The Spanish authorities had basically confined themselves to fortified San Juan. Run-away African and African-descended slaves, Taínos, and Spanish and other European sailors, soldiers, and common folk escaping authority, took refuge in the difficult-to-access mountainous interior. There, they lived independent lives off the rich soil, engaging in contraband trade with foreign ships on the coast, bartering sugar, rum, ginger, cattle, meat, hides, tobacco, and cocoa for wine, clothes, salt, spirits, and fabrics. The Spanish saw the fabulous riches being made by the French with the sugar trade in neighboring Haiti (today Haiti and the Dominican Republic)—off the backs of slaves. In the 19th century, they decided to turn Puerto Rico, then primarily of strategic value as gateway to the Caribbean and the hemisphere, into a profitable, commodity-producing colony for primarily sugar, but also coffee and tobacco.

The process of expropriating the *jibaro* (peasant) had two immediate goals: seizure of the land and control of a much-needed labor force. The fight for the land, first waged between Spaniard and Taíno, was again taken up. The expropriation took decades and also involved development of the productive forces and the rise of a *creole* bourgeoisie of mixed European and African descent. They would eventually come into conflict with the Spanish colonial regime hindering their rise. By the late 1840's, conditions were set to steal the land from the people in earnest, beginning with a work pass law (1849) obliging those without property deeds (most people in the country) to work for the creole landowners.

## DISPOSSESSION AND RESISTANCE

The process was put on overdrive with the takeover of the island by U.S. imperialism in 1898 (here called “the Spanish-American War”, but for Cuba and the Philippines called Wars of Independence). Under the new power, the peasants lost their final, tenuous hold on the land and old way of life—eroding for decades—and came fully under the crass, oppressive, exploitative regime of wage labor. They became colonized proletarians and, almost immediately, migrant laborer and immigrant in the Mainland.

Throughout these turbulent, nearly two centuries of dispossession and loss of freedom, there has been resistance. It took many forms, from individual acts of escape, sabotage, or “vandalism” to collective action, including slave revolts, conspiracies against the Spanish regime, and the armed uprisings of the Grito de Lares (the Cry of Lares) in 1868 and the Cuban wars of independence from Spain in the latter 19th century, with some 2,000 Puerto Rican patriots taking up arms alongside the Cuban rebels.

The patriotic struggle eventually surged

again against the new American imperialists, with ebbs and flows reflecting advances and setbacks in the people's ability to meet their needs and to organize. Meanwhile, as in the Mainland which controls the Puerto Rican economy, recent history has been shaped by technological advances and the replacement of workers by the new technologies. There, even more so than here, the “safety net”, social services, and the vital infrastructure of schools, hospitals, etc. have been largely dismantled.

The Puerto Rican people's struggle against the theft of their beaches is the current flashpoint in the broader fight against the privatization of services and the sources of life, a confrontation of almighty private property pitting the “haves” against the “have-nots”. It is a fight of the people we must support, which can help raise class consciousness, making the people's fight for the commons even more significant. Seeing this battle as part of the struggle of a class being dispossessed of its public property on both the island and the mainland helps clarify the need to end the rule of private property in both places. **R**

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# Wood Street Commons: Lessons and next steps

Over the last several years, the Wood Street Commons in Oakland, California has been on the frontlines of people fighting for decent humane housing against the repression from federal, state, and local authorities. “The Commons,” as it is affectionately called, originally referred to the plot of city and state-owned land that people were directed onto by the Oakland Police Department for over ten years. Now residents have been forced off that land by repeated evictions and into other areas of Oakland. The Commons has become more fluid and has transformed into the embodiment of the people, friendships, and family bonds that were built there. The folks that built the Wood Street Commons and continue to sustain it have done so out of a deep human need for stability. The Commons community helped people heal from the traumas that pushed them into homelessness, or the traumas caused when the state uses force and punishment to “reeducate” people when they become unhoused. Despite all its trials and tribulations, internal fights, and external challenges, The Commons has become a collective space of stability in an unstable world. Its strategy is to embody radical love, self-help, compassion, and humanity in contrast to the dehumanization people face every day. Birthdays are celebrated, block parties are enjoyed, community healing is created.

## CAPITALIST STRATEGY ...

The root cause of homelessness today is the shift by capitalist class investors from industrial production to speculation as a means of accumulating capital. The three main ways this shift is implemented is through; the introduction of digital production, decimating stable full-time employment with benefits in Oakland (and elsewhere) as well as the offshoring of jobs to exploit artificially low wages internationally. A disproportionate number of jobs previously held by Black and Latinx folks have been replaced or automated, and more and more people of all racialized groups have been left unable to afford the rent to keep a roof over their heads. Speculation has also led to the financialization of land and housing, creating the foreclosure crisis of 2008, which disproportionately impacted BIPOC communities, and higher rents for everyone. Today, roughly 60% of Oaklanders rent from landlords and 90% of the rental housing available is owned by corporate landlords. Lastly, the prison industrial complex has pushed many people into homelessness, by discharging them into the streets with nothing but the stigma of their prison record. Prisons serve as a placeholder for people being displaced by the capitalist system, including maintaining a “legal” form of slavery. Many unhoused people point out that “temporary shelters” for people experiencing homelessness operate under similar conditions as “re-entry services” or community corrections programs operated by for-profit prison corporations.

## ... CAPITALIST PROPAGANDA

The Wood Street evictions are part of a significant push by the capitalist class to criminalize poverty and homelessness. People



Today, roughly 60% of Oaklanders rent from landlords and 90% of the rental housing available is owned by corporate landlords. PHOTO: iStock / ELLISONPHOTO

experiencing poverty, alongside social movements, abolitionists, allies, and more are rising in an equally significant pushback against it.

Capitalists create policies and laws that favor their class, a legal system to legitimize their interests, the criminal justice system to punish people, police to protect their interests, and the corporate-owned media to misinform and manufacture consent from the public. For example, Oakland created an “Encampment Management Policy” after businesses and corporations started complaining about the “problem” of unhoused people that they themselves created. Then the Oakland City attorney helped form encampment “closure” flyers that are posted before evictions. Eviction day comes and of course the cops are at the site in full force in order to “protect” city workers and arrest anyone failing to comply with police orders. Many not only get evicted, but they also lose all their possessions and end up in jail. The corporate media highlights how people displaced are “criminals,” “drug addicts,” or “mentally ill,” oftentimes outright lying or certainly not telling the whole truth.

However, the Wood Street Commons and many other folks in the housing movement in Oakland have seen first-hand the immense disconnect between people’s experiences on the ground, and what is being portrayed in corporate news reports, public perception, and policy. They have been working diligently, through writing op-eds and other articles, to counter the ruling class narratives about poverty and homelessness. Their success has forced corporate media to double down on its aggressive tactics to blame poor people for their own poverty and misinform the public about the causes of homelessness. One recent Fox News article argued that people experiencing homelessness are “drug tourists” and steal to support their habits, because there is no rule of law in Oakland due to “neo-progressive” elected officials. The reality is that Wood Street residents have no money and nowhere else to go. Oakland has only 313 temporary housing units and 598 shelter beds for an unhoused population of over 5,000.

## REVOLUTIONARY LESSONS

Through reflection on the past few years and evictions, The Commons community has been able to summarize some of the lessons learned:

- People have a fundamental human right to land and housing. The land that Oakland sits on was stolen from the original indigenous peoples, so no government has the right to evict human beings who are only seeking a place to lay their heads. The real solution is real community land acquisition in cooperation with indigenous peoples – rematriation.
- Take pride in the accomplishments of Wood Street Commons. We not only resisted the state and city for months, but we created a new model and new solution for the system’s disgraceful homelessness problem. We created a self-sustaining community without government assistance. Think what we could do if the government were used for supporting us, instead of attacking and trying to destroy us.
- Accept assistance from mutual aid groups, but don’t let them take over or tell the community what to do, or treat people as anything less than equal partners.
- Fight to build class unity with outside groups, but don’t let them interfere or divert the community from its path toward self-organization and autonomy.
- Accept legal assistance, use legal observers, accept help with bail money, and organize know-your-rights training for encampment evictions. Develop an unhoused bill of rights guide to use during encampment sweeps.
- But at the same time, always remember that in the end – unless and until people themselves can take over the government - laws and the legal system serve the corporations and developers, not the people fighting for their human rights. Sometimes people can and should get temporary injunctions to delay evictions, but don’t get complacent and think we can rely on restraining orders to help for very long.

## NEXT STEPS

The fight for basic needs has become the frontline battle where revolutionary consciousness is being built. Nothing exposes the bankruptcy of the capitalist system more clearly than when the drive for profit tramples on the most basic human rights, like life, food, water, housing, education, work, health, and security. Revolutionaries will always fight for human needs, but we must use formal and informal political education to uplift and elevate the struggle.

In the Commons, formal political education takes the shape of weekly meetings, where anyone can attend and discuss revolutionary ideas, making people aware of their objective status as a revolutionary class, and informing and elevating the strategies of the collective. These meetings often proceed from the revolutionary vision of an abundant cooperative society, where there is common ownership of the means for meeting all basic human needs. This is the vision that provides the hope and fuel for people to continue in the struggle. Informal education fills in the gaps, by keeping people and the movement on track through daily interactions. This type of education is sometimes the most impactful in the long term since it is also where revolutionary love is built and expressed.

The role of revolutionaries is to popularize the vision of a cooperative future, at the same time that we elevate the revolutionary class demands of displaced workers through various forms of media. We build the loving respect and community necessary to create a home for revolutionaries and the revolutionary movement. We mentor each other as we grow. As the saying goes, WE are the leaders we have been looking for. We need to study our history and summarize our experiences, and learn to maneuver with progressives and other political players to advance our demands. We fight by any means necessary, both inside and outside the system, and at the same time strive to build a movement strong enough to overturn the system altogether, and replace it with a new one that actually meets our human needs and respects the planet. **R**

## Join the Discussion!

Rally! articles offer revolutionaries a fresh perspective! They offer analysis and vision, and outline a strategy to achieve that vision. Share them with your friends and other revolutionaries, get together and talk about the ideas. Spread the vision of a new world and the possibility of achieving it. Join us!



# Los Angeles officials criminalize poor and homeless

By the Los Angeles Housing and Homeless Committee

California has a sordid history of criminalizing poor and homeless people with laws against sitting, lying, or sleeping/camping that date back to the 1870s. Just after the abolition of slavery in 1865, Penal Code 647e declared that “No person shall sit, lie, camp on public or private property without the owner’s permission.” PC 647e took effect in 1872 and is still on the books. Counties and municipalities use it as a yardstick for local laws against sitting, sleeping and camping.

Los Angeles municipal code 41.18 was born out of PC 647e in the early 1930s, during the Great Depression. The Los Angeles Police Department used it as a social control tool in communities of color, regulating who and what can be upon public property. Shortly after the Civil Rights Movement won the abolition of Jim Crow segregation, Section D was added to give LAPD even more power to regulate who and what can and cannot be in public spaces.

In 2005, a federal court found the city of Los Angeles guilty of violating the U.S. Constitution’s Eighth Amendment prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment in the case *Jones vs. the City of Los Angeles*. Because the city lacked enough housing for people to go to, it was forced to let people sleep on the streets between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. until the city built 1,200 units of permanent housing. With fewer than 180 tents on Skid

Row, this was the perfect time for the city to start investing in housing for the homeless. Instead, city officials did the worst thing ever. They decided to attempt to police themselves out of homelessness.

Police chief Bill Bratton, with his broken windows theory of policing, was given the green light to launch the “safer cities initiative.” It soon made Skid Row the most policed community in the world. Cops averaged 1,300 citations and 750 arrests per month. In the first three years of the initiative, they wrote 36,000 citations and made 27,000 arrests – all within a 15-block area of only 13,000 residents, at an annual cost of more than \$100 million. Over the next 10 years, 85% of the city’s homeless budget would also go to LAPD as well as 54% of the city’s general fund budget.

The most arrested person on Skid Row is Ann Moody, a middle-aged Black woman who has been arrested 108 times for violating 41.18d. For policing Skid Row’s homeless with such an iron fist, activists said Los Angeles deserved “the meanest city award.” The National Law Center conducted its own report on how many people were arrested; the Central Division became known as “the worst police station in America” with the most arrests, the worst record of arrests, the highest number of tickets and the highest number of incidents of brutality.

Even after the Jones case, Los Angeles would be found guilty five more times in fed-

eral court for violating First, Fourth, Fifth, Eighth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth amendments in these five cases: *Fitzgerald vs. the city*; *Tony Laven vs. the city*; *Carl Mitchell vs. the city*; *Garcia vs. the city and the L.A. Alliance for Human Rights vs. the city*.

In every case, Los Angeles would be found guilty. City officials would “bounce tactics,” that is targeting homeless individuals, then targeting homeless people’s property and then attacking homeless encampments.

## CAPITALISM’S SAME OLD SOUP

At a time when housing is not being built fairly for everyone; when five homeless people in Los Angeles die daily, we see the “same old soup” being warmed up all over again! Just as racist and selective laws were used to divide and socially control our ancestors, the same kinds of laws attack the poor and homeless today. The city raids homeless people, their property and their encampments, issuing “stay away” orders that banish residents. This often displaces them from the community they grew up in, where their neighbors and relatives live. Stay-away orders also banish them from parks, schools, libraries, shelters, freeways, ramps, tunnels, bridges, subways, and railroads. They involve a total of 2,000 sites and more than 88 square miles in the city.

Meanwhile, developers attack and erase cultures and communities; police harass and displace the youth; street vendors are cited

and their food carts taken away. It’s all one fight, with homeless people being third- and fourth-class citizens. It is like a whole new different class of citizenship, when you look at the language the city uses, what they say and how they treat people. When the homeless go into their hotels they want to take the television out – people say, “shit is removed from where we live!”

They bring in the police. We’re the untrusted class. We’re triple-policed. We’re not treated like we’re regular citizens. Economically, they treat us like we have no investments. You are more a liability rather than someone who supports and builds the community and economy, not like someone who is putting in. How do we unite all this with other fights across the city?

One of the ideas we introduce is new ideas about land and property. For example, they always say, “go here, go there,” but there is no place to go. The capitalists have taken all the land. How do we get back? We need to start demanding land rights. Mother Nature left land for everybody to live on.

It started with private property; it started with colonization. We need to cancel that. We cannot allow capitalization and colonization to destroy and divide up everything and hand it over to people who have money. And they say, “Oh, you’re homeless.” Yes, because you stole everything. That’s the reason I’m homeless. You give back the land and then I won’t be homeless. **R**

## Defend democracy nationwide and reclaim our humanity

By the League Community College Committee (LCCC)

The fascist monsters in Texas have carried out the recent torture and murder of migrant workers, women, children, even babies. They are killing in our name! In the web of lies they and haters like them spin, they are trying to frighten us into giving up our human rights. In a steadfast effort to break electoral democracy, we see the national Trump-Bannon fascists and the DeSantis-Abbott fascists redouble their attacks to break our current representative government. The rulers are working to impose anti-democratic measures using legal and extra-legal means. The Alabama state legislature further dilutes Black voter representation by defying U.S. Supreme Court orders to correct white supremacist gerrymandered maps.

The voter suppression tactics perfected against Blacks and other people of color are now being trained on young voters of all colors. In 2024 at least 30 congressional races could be impacted by the Supreme Court decision the Alabama Legislature continues to defy.

All of these measures ensure wealth and power keep flowing up to the top in the era of labor-replacing digital production and artifi-

cial intelligence (AI). Tyrannical minority rule from Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Texas and Florida into Arkansas, Tennessee, Ohio, Iowa, Idaho and Arizona seeks to subjugate, once again, historically oppressed groups. In Florida, the latest outrage tries to protect global capital by borrowing from the evil Apartheid tactics of imposing Afrikaner mis-education. After all, in order to subjugate people, you must always deny their class history and reimpose the lies of their ruling class tormentors. The constant war against the rights of women enlists new warriors from Nebraska to the military. In the most recent slap down to freedom, a young teenager and her mom were arrested for the crime of securing health care for a young woman needing abortion, and one U.S. Senator, Alabama’s Tommy Tuberville, is expanding restrictions on the reproductive freedom of military women and their families until he is satisfied that abortion bans on women are in place nationwide.

Herein lies their Achilles heel. In order to protect the current economic empire that is failing the world and its people, corporate Democrats, the fascist neo-GOP, the No Labels cabal of billionaires and all the dark money behind them must pursue divide-and-conquer measures to try to subjugate

the whole abolitionist class: a class that is us, the class that has to abolish the private-corporate-ownership of things everybody needs. The war on women and other marginalized groups is not about protecting life. It is a battle for political power to replace our current democracy with a violent corporate dictatorship that believes people and the planet must be sacrificed in the name of wealth accumulation. But we know digital production has turned this barbaric old idea on its head. We who have seen this fight in our history before know that WE CAN WIN!

All across the country, the war on us ordinary people is being waged on two fronts. The first, the social fascist front is violent and illegal actions promoting white supremacy, police and military authoritarianism and denial of democracy. The second, the economic fascist front uses legal means to privatize public services and resources, starving public resources that should be available to everyone and forcing governments at all levels to become indebted to the biggest banks and financial corporations.

They can and will crush individuals. But if we stay united in our demands and our cause, strategic in our movement’s pursuits, and clear on the better future that AI can secure

for all, each of their blows will unleash new visions of liberation and freedom in an abolitionist class dedicated to securing the power needed to first stop fascism and then pivot and establish a transformed American hemisphere dedicated to securing the resources necessary to thrive and heal the people and the planet. Can we follow the example of the Texas women fighting the system’s war on women by suing the state? Can we broaden our movement by building unity between our respective causes?

We need more people busy protecting and expanding voting rights, including the right to protest. We need more people working to overturn abortion bans as they fight for the health care we all deserve. We need to demonstrate more how the lives of Immigrants, Trans and LGBTQ persons and other sections of the abolitionist class work to elevate political forces dedicated to uplifting the demands of the poor, to get more of the poor engaged in fighting for their lives in our neighborhoods, at city hall, and at the polls. We must work to defeat social and economic fascism by building broader unity between our various movements at the same time we work to do everything in our power to stop the attacks on we the people. **R**



# Is generative artificial intelligence a promise or a curse?

The famous scientist, Stephen Hawking once warned that artificial intelligence (AI) would be “either the best, or the worst thing, ever to happen to humanity.” The issue is which human social force – which economic class of people – controls it.

ChatGPT® is a new artificial intelligence program that can compose in seconds intriguing new music, new art and new essays. It is not a search engine like Google. It gets creative and makes things up. These programs are a new form of AI – generative AI – based on large language machine-learning models and expansive digital neural networks inspired by the billions of neurons connected in the human brain.

McKinsey & Company, one of the top management corporations of global capitalism, discusses the current explosion of generative AI:

“[T]hanks to their broad utility – almost anyone can use them to communicate and create ... their ability to write text, compose music, and create digital art that has garnered headlines and persuaded consumers and households to experiment on their own.”

<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/the-economic-potential-of-generative-ai-the-next-productivity-frontier>

As with every technology, AI presents humanity with wondrous new possibilities to understand and change the world, heal the human rift with nature and unleash everyone’s human potential. Or .... It will remain under the domination of parasitic, extractive capitalism and will be twisted to produce private profit. We have seen this before. In the 1990s with the corporate seizure and privatization of the Internet. Capitalism dominated its structure, limited our access and increased surveillance. As capitalism lurches

into the AI gold rush, the questions are what *can* it do, and then ... what *should* it do? All this depends on who controls AI.

## PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE CONTROL ISSUES

Many people were stunned when all the big tech companies released their AI software to the public in the 2010s. Doesn’t big tech benefit from selling AI to the rest of us? The reality is that corporations find it much cheaper to share the software and let the public debug and perfect the software. Corporations can then work out how to perfect and privatize the tools needed to explore oceans of Big Data, rather than trying to own the ocean itself.

A fundamental law of software is that it is not sufficient to create it. It must be applied and tried out – multiple iterations must be tested – before the bugs are worked out, including addressing built-in social biases. Early on, before programs and code was legalized as digital private property, experts released the programs to other experts so many people could debug the software. This is still a common practice with open-source products. The Linux operating system was released as open-source in 1991. Since so many people were tweaking Linux, it developed into a faster, stronger and more flexible system than was employed in many tech companies. Corporations learn quickly.

ChatGPT is a quantum leap in the scale of information commonly available to all. The program was “trained” on our various internet inputs, so the only way to test and/or optimize it is to allow us to engage with it more, since “it” effectively is a mirror of human behaviors in the first place. Information is fundamentally a human social relation between people since people must agree on its significance. ChatGPT was trained on Reddit,

an ocean of human relations.

This explains why ChatGPT was released to the public. Whether capitalism will succeed in limiting public access to AI is as yet unresolved. Is it even possible that capitalism can still sustain itself by privatizing and controlling knowledge?

## THE HUMAN POTENTIAL OF NEW SOCIAL RELATIONS

ChatGPT might “create” 10,000 new pictures in 15 seconds, but to the software these pictures are all the same, even when human values are programmed in. Generative AI can generate a library of tools. But these tools are meaningless until they are wielded by people with a purpose. That’s a human social relation. The social revolution that society is now going through demands new social relations. LGBTQ+ people, minorities and all marginalized people demand to be fully human, while fascism tells us to hate each other for our differences, rather than cooperating to secure what we all need to thrive.

Capitalism preaches that AI will make people more productive, but that is not the issue. The real deal is that human social relations are still twisted by capitalism. Our fundamental problems are social in nature, not technological. The social institutions of capitalism and private property impose rigid human relations of exploitation and oppression. Many of these are foundering today since they were never designed to operate in the digital era. The question for revolutionaries is how can AI be used to challenge and change how capitalism blocks all of us from being fully human.

Ultimately, AI cannot be suppressed, any more than uploading photos could be suppressed after phones included cameras. Information is now so vast that no one can own it. No matter how hard you try, you

can’t build a fence around the ocean. Fences leak and firewalls get tunneled through.

The goal of optimizing human consciousness and collectivity is the only thing that can sustainably survive and manage this technology, the only thing that can harness this potentiality. We can expand on how this technology augments interactions between human beings. Communication proliferates, stimulating cooperation, and then empowering collaboration to produce common endeavors. This direction is objective and will not stop before the rise of new synergies, human networks beginning to work together in unison for specific goals.

From the Egyptian Spring in 2011 to George Floyd to Cop City, many digitally augmented political forms of collaboration have already been developed by the peoples of the world, seizing information technology (IT) as they attempt to build their own political power. Collaboration between individual human beings is passing to collaboration between human networks, increasingly taking on a political character. Human collaboration can and will seize the offensive against a desperate geriatric capitalism that produces the destruction of lives, of the environment and the climate.

AI and IT in all its forms can be used to create a cooperative society or to hinder its development. The future of humanity and nature will be guaranteed by abolishing the private ownership of tools, technologies and nature and replacing it with complete open, broad public inclusive ownership as a public resource, a public utility, a public good. Public property is the guarantee that each of us has the broadest open access to the world. It guarantees everything to everybody. Artificial intelligence just to make a private profit? Elementary school children today recognize that this is not sustainable. **R**

## From the editors of Rally!

On the [rally-theleague.org](http://rally-theleague.org) website, you can access useful analyses such as:

### ABOLITION AND CULTURAL WORK: MAKING THE REVOLUTION LEGIBLE

People are gathering to form sustainable communities with hopeful and fearless hearts: to work together, to organize, and to resist the increasing destruction and subjugation. At the center of this resistance are the revolutionary writers, artists and other cultural workers who articulate the moral and practical vision of a sustainable, cooperative human society...

### IN DEFENSE OF DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS TO PROTEST AND FREE SPEECH

Special statement by the

League of Revolutionaries for a New America

The intensifying repression and violence of the government’s response to protests are a warning to the American people. The Stop Cop City movement in Atlanta has been the most recent example, and recent legislation has been passed to limit peoples’ access to public sidewalks and lands, city halls, and the courts. The attack serves private and corporate entities,

not for the public good or the well-being of nature itself. The motivation is clear: It is to demoralize, to normalize the inability of individuals and grassroots organizations to fight back. Democracy cannot exist without the freedom of speech and assembly.

### NEW VIDEO FROM PUERTO RICO

A Planning Board had given one developer until March 1 to demolish what it had illegally built on public beach land, but failed to enforce its order, so on March 4 hundreds of protesters began smashing it themselves. On beaches around the island, similar struggles are under way.

### BECAUSE WE CAN WIN

This image is part of a video which was contributed to Rally! by a revolutionary who used artificial intelligence to accompany his poem with photos and music. For a political analysis of AI, see the article **Capitalism cannot withstand AI**. **VIDEO SCREEN SHOT**

