

# RALLY, COMRADES!

THE VOICE OF THE LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARIES FOR A NEW AMERICA

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## From Illusions to Possibilities in 2022

After nine months of a pandemic that saw more than 70 million Americans go without work, and after mass unrest over the police murder of George Floyd, 2021 began as a year that promised change. Although a new president took office, worldwide distribution of newly produced vaccines was uneven, almost non-existent, and a deadly Delta variant of the coronavirus was sweeping the United States by late summer and early fall. From the ending of eviction moratoriums to the brutal treatment of Haitian migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, it was hard to see much change for the better in 2021. In fact, the year might be summed up as a time of bitter disappointment.

In retrospect, the inability to move forward makes sense. The 2020 election revealed a deeply divided working class with a third of it voting for Biden, a third voting for Trump and a third not voting at all. Like all the problems we face, the partisan election split continued into 2021 with a special election in Georgia on January 5 and a raid on the Capitol the next day. After four years of Trump's divisive agitation, the dog-whistle appeal of Biden's presidency was a return to some measure of political "normalcy." Of course, we know such normalcy means little in a world where a collapsing capitalist system is no longer providing for its workers while threatening the destruction of the Earth. The working class has no choice but to continue to fight.

We have been doing just that. In April, an Alabama Amazon worker fight to build a union met defeat, but support from various unions suggests a new vote may be coming. Meanwhile, thousands of other Amazon workers on New York's Staten Island have petitioned to build a union. Hollywood prevented an October strike by the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, but Hollywood labor's dissatisfaction continues and future actions are being planned. Thousands of Kaiser Permanente workers went on strike in November. In October, the Washington Post reported that workers struck 178 employers this year. Millions of American workers have quit their jobs, a dramatic trend dubbed "the great resignation" by the news media.

Meanwhile, workers fought for eviction moratoriums and housing for all. Our class halted the Keystone XL pipeline in June and in the autumn began to fight the Biden-supported Oil Sands pipeline's production. Noting the thousand people, including 230 African Americans, killed by police in the intervening year, workers organized for police reform in



Climate Strike participants in Lower Manhattan, New York City to demand climate justice in the world in September 2021.

Photo: Ryan Rahman/Shutterstock

Minneapolis, Chicago, Dallas, Atlanta and elsewhere on the first anniversary of George Floyd's death, which also was publicly commemorated in Germany, Greece and Spain.

And it is important to recognize this global dimension. The unrest in America reflected unrest around the world. In July, Foreign Policy columnist Elise Labott wrote: "To call 2021 the summer of discontent would be a severe understatement." The article referred to worker unrest in Colombia, Cuba, Ethiopia, Haiti, South Africa and at least 37 other countries due to malnourishment, supply-chain breakdowns, lack of vaccines, climate change and rising prices for necessities. Labott pointed out that this global disruption made its greatest leap in the United States "because COVID-19 exposed America's fault lines."

The United States was founded by capitalists who propagandized that business competition guaranteed political freedom, an idea that made some sense at the start of the industrial era when what people saw was the potential to break from the Old-World system of monarchy. But even in 1776, the "Father of Capitalism" Adam Smith warned that the workers must organize because the ruling class would always be organizing "to lower the price of work," in other words, to lower the wages they pay workers to the absolute minimum.

The entire history of working-class struggle has revolved around this conflict, but we saw vividly how little the ruling class cares about American workers when

the pandemic hit. The U.S. government developed private-public partnerships to guarantee that America's billionaires get 62 percent richer from the pandemic, according to the Institute for Policy Studies. To get his infrastructure and other bills passed, Biden slashed trillions of dollars in aid to appease the ruling class which runs both parties. Meanwhile, America's and the world's workers face inflation rates for basic necessities rising faster than they have in 30 years.

Today, everyone can see that the system is broken. To provide for one another, workers everywhere are already working around and outside of the system. However, if we consider the global causes of the system's breakdown, we

can also see global causes for hope. If we grasp that automation has eliminated the value of a worker's labor from the equation that once suggested capitalism could liberate us, then we grasp that the system cannot be fixed. Our liberation begins with a letting go of the past.

Our ruling class deeply understands the Machiavellian idea of divide and conquer, and it wants to keep us divided as we have been divided in the past. Since an increasingly automated economy will provide for less and less of the population as it grows more efficient, the ruling class wants us to cling to the past for our answers. It controls its two political par-

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# Speculation Promotes Inequality in Housing, Society

## **Inside Rally, Comrades!**

In November, The Guardian ran a feature on Fresno, California — a portrait relevant to what's happening all across America. "How One of California's Cheapest Cities Became Unaffordable" detailed the plight of the half of Fresno's population that is struggling to stay in their homes, in one of the most diverse communities in America. In December, the Fresno ABC news affiliate reported on "multiple complaints" against the Wedgewood real estate investment company for wrongfully evicting people from their homes. A Business Journal headline referred to "Fresno's Red-Hot Housing Market." The connection be-

tween all these stories is obvious and familiar. The real estate market is making the most of the demand for housing outside of the larger cities by spiking rents and driving people from their homes.

Meanwhile the global news service The Conversation — which attempts to increase the communication between academic studies and journalistic reporting—broke down what it calls the "pervasive problem" of housing in America. The article particularly focuses on the quarter of all households "that pay at least half their income on rent," emphasizing "there is not a single state, metropolitan area or county in which a full-time minimum wage worker can afford the 'fair market rent' for a two-bedroom home." The article points out that proposed Congressional solutions would still leave millions of Americans unable to afford housing.

In the face of almost fully automated production, real estate speculation has become an aggressive battle front in the effort to maintain the private property system. Alongside red-lining and block-busting practices, such land speculation has long been used in concert with segregation practices to drive down the value of homes in one area and drive up their prices in others. Creating such inequity in property values then promotes unequal tax bases, inequality in public education and the strategic use of police to protect certain areas and occupy others.

As "Black History Month: Disarming the Rulers with Our Unity" notes, slavery and genocidal land theft were part of the economic base of this country from the start. Because of this history of dehumanizing practices regarding indigent Americans and Black people sold through chattel slavery, the fight for racial justice and class justice are not in opposition to one another but are part of the same process.

This overlap is vivid in Benton Harbor, Michigan. "State of Michigan Sows Another Water Disaster in Benton Harbor" illustrates how the poisoning of Black residents in impoverished cities for profit has become the state of Michigan's way of doing business. At the same time, the article illustrates the international dimensions of this struggle and how the people of Benton Harbor are showing all of us the way to fight forward.

"Water. Agua. Tó.," links the international water struggle to the struggle against water scarcity in the American southwest. It shows how all areas of revolutionary struggle boil down to the issue

of water. As a class, we are simultaneously fighting for housing for all, healthcare for all, education, employment, and economic security for all. None of these are possible if we do not focus our revolutionary fervor on this, our most public resource, our most fundamental resource, second only to oxygen.

Anticipating the greatest political and constitutional crisis since the Civil War, "2022 Elections Pit Corporate Profit vs People's Needs" shows that people who believe in democracy and oppose corporate control of politicians are on the move, protesting in the streets, striking for their basic needs, and pushing back against attempts to dismantle democracy. They want a government that supports their needs.

"Meaning of Arbery and Rittenhouse Verdicts" anticipates just how tough that fight will be. As the discarded millions organize to demand their government assist them, this ruling class has to prepare more aggressive, fascist methods to control those who must fight to survive. That repression will increasingly spill out to greater sections of society.

With these growing numbers, and with a growing understanding of the causes of our struggle as well as the potential of today's automated production, we can stop the inhumanity caused by speculative capitalism. "Replacing Illusion with Possibility in 2022" states that our class's future depends upon a shared vision of what sort of world is possible. Together, we will not only ensure housing for all; we can turn the world into a home that nourishes all our collective hopes and dreams. **RC**

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## **EDITORIAL POLICY**

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

**Comrade:** a person with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause

*Rally, Comrades!* is the political paper of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. In this period of growing motion and developing polarization, *Rally, Comrades!* provides a strategic outlook for the revolutionaries by indicating and illuminating the line of march of the revolutionary process. It presents a pole of scientific clarity, examines and analyzes the real problems of the revolutionary movement, and draws political conclusions for the tasks of revolutionaries at each stage of development in order to prepare for future stages. It is a vehicle to reach out and communicate with revolutionaries both within the League and outside of the League, to engage them in debate and discussion, and to provide a forum for these discussions. Articles represent the position and policies of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

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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 these scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the demands of the new class, to educate and win them over to the cooperative, communist resolution of the problem.

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.

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

# Black History Month: Disarming the Rulers with Our Unity

The conscious political unity of our diverse working class is necessary for building the power to create a new society, one where our collective social wealth is used to ensure that all of humanity and the earth will thrive. Understanding the historic role of African Americans in the working class is essential for building the unity needed to win.

Slavery and genocidal land theft were part of the economic base of this country from the start. Capitalist productive relations required the dehumanization of the Indigenous People to legitimize land theft, and the dehumanization of African people justified the brutal system of chattel slavery in a nation making a name for itself as a (bourgeois) democracy. The ideas of society as well as the political structure, institutions, laws, and law enforcement—the superstructure—arose to support, protect, and promote that base.

Race is a social and political construction not a biological or scientific reality. It has been used by the ruling class to justify brutal exploitation and create divisions between laborers to prevent their unity around class interests.

After the bloody Civil War ended legal slavery, the enslavement, brutal control, dehumanization and killing of Black and Indigenous people were still historically ingrained and integral to the political and ideological superstructure of our country.

The continued need for cotton ensured that a new system of semi-forced labor—sharecropping—would be implemented to exploit the formerly enslaved. This system ensnared poor white workers as well (about 2/3 of the sharecroppers). Jim Crow segregation—including laws limiting meaningful interracial relations—was brutally enforced both by law and extra-legal terrorist groups such as the KKK. Segregation kept workers tied to the land and, despite some efforts, generally unable to unite.

The invention of the mechanical cotton picker was the basis for freeing the sharecroppers to migrate for better paying industrial jobs. By pushing sharecroppers off the land and into the cities, the new technology also laid the basis for the Second Reconstruction, the Civil Rights movement, a courageous struggle to fulfill the freedom dreams that were not delivered with emancipation. The eventual defeat of legal segregation meant that African Americans would individually enter their respective classes. Necessarily, each social class benefitted unequally from desegregation.

Still today, police violence, COVID-19, and other health problems disproportionately affect Black people. At the same time, the impact on Black people is disproportionate by economic status, and it is the poorest people of all colors who are most impacted. The legacy of slavery means that Black people are more likely to be poor. Ruling class media, defending

capitalism and the inequality it requires, conceals this complicated relationship.

When the former sharecroppers migrated to the cities of the north and south, the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow ensured that African Americans were offered the lowest paying and most dangerous industrial jobs. Therefore, when automation began replacing factory jobs in the 1970s, African Americans had the least seniority and the most easily automated jobs. In this way, history put the descendants of African American slaves at the core of a new class of workers of all colors being created by labor-replacing technology. This new class is being pushed out of the new economy that cannot meet its basic needs. It is an abolitionist class because it must abolish the private property system to survive. It is a communist class because it needs an economic system based on the public ownership of the things we need to survive, and distribution of these things according to need.

Because of this history of slavery and genocide, an ideology of white supremacy is part of how the ruling class still rules. This historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression continues to work for the ruling class in at least two ways. One, it is carved into the economy. The resulting

oppression, subordination, and brutalization of workers of color expands profit for the small ruling class and misery for the entire working class. Two, the ideology of white supremacy is used to divide the masses of people, hide our common class interests, and prevent the political unity to fight forward.

Slavery's stamp on capitalism and society is strong to this day. Workers in the South, the site of the most thriving slave economy and where the largest population of African Americans still lives, continues to experience disproportionate economic and social deprivation that affects workers of all colors.

The southern strategy that has kept wages and rights suppressed in the South has also been used by the rulers to attack workers across the country. When the ruling class no longer needed the mass of workers, they began withdrawing the social safety net since there was no need for a reserve army of labor. Most Americans accepted what appeared to be the government abandoning and blaming the Black poor—cutting aid to families, children, the elderly, ill and unemployed. Of course, once legalized, these policies applied to everyone.

The unity demonstrated by the rebellion in response to the police murder of George Floyd disarmed the rulers. The

sustained actions of an estimated 26 million people of all colors was recorded as the largest protest movement in American history. The broad and united response to police violence and systemic racism threatens the ruling class reliance on racial division and raises demands on the State to divest from policing and invest in human services and needs.

By attacking the legacy of slavery and brutality, the rebellion was aimed at the political superstructure that protects capitalism and private property. It is part of revolutionary struggle. Amid a pandemic, climate devastation, a President who publicly supported white supremacist groups, and the abdication of our rulers of any responsibility for people's lives, the rebellion was a response to changes at society's economic foundation.

Police in America kill about 1000 people each year. Awareness that Black people are disproportionately killed by police, at more than twice the rate of whites, has grown, but the media often fails to note what the people of all colors killed by police have in common—they are almost all poor. Police violence targeting the new class, with African Americans at its core, is a tactical offensive by the ruling class central to their fight to impose fascism on society. Uniting behind the demand

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## Meaning of Arbery and Rittenhouse Verdicts

### **From the Editors**

Police and vigilante murders of innocent people recently produced clashing verdicts, leading some to conclude that we don't face a bad legal system, only bad individual judges, and jurors. The three vigilantes who killed Ahmaud Arbery for "suspicious jogging" in their Georgia neighborhood and the two Oklahoma cops who tortured Jared Lakey to death with a taser were found guilty of murder. On the other hand, a jury freed Wisconsin vigilante Kyle Rittenhouse despite killing two and gravely wounding another during a protest against police violence.

A national struggle is underway. Some forces are promoting ever more fascist methods of control, and others are using their remaining rights to mobilize resistance to that in the courts and the streets.

Though each side has won some individual cases, the fascist drive rolls on because it is serving the class that rules the country. These elites understand a growing mass of people are unnecessary to the electronic, digital economy

their class owns and controls. As those discarded millions raise demands for their government to assist them, the ruling class must foster more aggressive methods of control to prevent any threat to their monopolization of society's wealth.

Such fascist repression increasingly spills out to broader sections of society. As police continue to kill the innocent, some white supremacist and vigilante groupings are increasingly taking up the violence and killings they modeled. The hunt for and murder of Ahmaud Arbery reflect that development, and Kyle Rittenhouse's shooting of three protestors took it to a higher level. His acquittal coming on the heels of the George Floyd Rebellion reveals its counter-revolutionary political essence: encouragement to the developing fascist mass base.

Better verdicts, or regulations banning chokeholds and other abusive police practices, will not end the ongoing development of fascism. The ruling class needs its State to prepare the police for the inevitable coming challenges to its system of private property. New regulations can help them develop more disciplined, militarized police forces for the developing class war.

Police violence interconnects class and color. Police generally kill working-class people, especially those being displaced from any stable place in the economy. Those sectors comprise an exceptionally high proportion of African Americans, so when police violence targets Blacks, it is also a central part of their class violence. When Oklahoma cops tortured a white man to death by taser him over 50 times, and Rittenhouse shot three whites fighting brutal police, those were also acts of class war. In the Rittenhouse acquittal, the State openly played a partisan role.

The small class atop American society is guilty of hoarding obscene amounts of wealth and property while millions go sick, hungry, and unhoused. It is guilty of using cops, courts, and vigilantes to maintain such a system. The developing new class whose struggle constitutes a program to provide for all the people's needs cannot co-exist with that ruling class or its system. As the growing numbers of this new class gain that understanding, they will empower themselves to pass judgment on their abusers and create a system using social wealth for the needs of the many. **RC**

# Water. Agua. Tó.

A small farmer in western Colorado dusts off his cap after climbing out from beneath a 1937 Massey Ferguson tractor. It is broken down in the middle of the field where he is sowing winter wheat. He looks up to the mountain, now in early October, and he sees that the peaks are bald where the snowfields should be. Even in the shadow of the mountain, there are only the grey scree fields falling into dry runoff streams and tributaries to the reservoir that supplies the valley farms and ranches with water. He remembers his 98-year-old father saying, "Son, there'll be brawls and tussles over whiskey, but there'll be a war over water."

The war has already been waged. Water is the essence of life, the most basic resource second only to the air we breathe. And as of November 2020, it is now a registered commodity of "world trade." Brokers on the New York Stock Exchange sell shares of water to the highest bidder. The ruling class has grasped the new frontier of private property. In New York and throughout the eastern United States, water roars up from subway tunnels and floods city streets. It rushes in from the sea and from rivers. It bubbles up from the many underground aquifers. In the west, meanwhile, the rivers are gagged in canals, dammed up and piped to the cities of the southwestern states.

The cities' appetites are insatiable. In the suburbs of Los Angeles, working-class women haul water in any container they can find. They are rationed to the point of reusing dishwater three times over, and once more to launder rags and clothes. In Navajo country, the grandmothers stand under the blazing desert sun by a hand well pump and fill sheepskin bladders, five-gallon buckets, clay pots and galvanized water troughs with mineralized tó for their flocks of sheep and goats. A migrant mother and her three children emerge from the palo verde thicket in Nogales, Arizona with their pallid lips muttering "agua, por favor."

The Nestlé conglomerate owns the rights to southern California's watershed. Halliburton and the Koch Brothers control the runoff of the Colorado River basin to its northwestern tributaries. The state of California pipes water from the north

to the arid south. China is building aqueducts to supply the zinc mines of Africa. Everywhere we see the globalization of capital, water and its manufactured scarcity bow down to supply-and-demand economics. Our class thirsts in aridity. There is not any extra \$30,000 in our pockets to spend on drilling a well another hundred feet deeper into the water table. Big agriculture is creating the world's largest sinkhole in the Central Valley of California as well as throughout the Midwest where 80 percent of the Oglala aquifer is being pumped out.

Privatization of water by the ruling class affects housing, food, healthcare, jobs and education. They bottle it up and sell it to us at a 300 percent markup. What can be done to bring the capitalist class to a halt? The struggle continues on this frontier where our class must demand water as a human right.

But not only recognizing our obvious need for it to survive, it is useful to think of the water itself as many indigenous people long have, as a spiritual being, having its own rights. It is not only our source of life, it is a life-giving source throughout the ecosystem and it can neither be owned, bought, nor sold like chattel. For these reasons and more, lakes, rivers, and aquifers must be granted their own rights. When the fascists claim that "corporations are people too," they are making an argument for the rights of the ruling class benefited by corporate power. We cannot concede that point. But our class should certainly align with the indigenous perspective that rights be granted to our entire ecosystem's fundamental life source, extending it to the trillions of life forms included in the ecological web.

This is not just a good idea; it has proven a useful strategy. In 2019, voters in Toledo, Ohio, approved the Lake Erie Bill of Rights (LEBOR), a citizen initiative to amend that city's charter to stop the constant pollution of marshlands and tributaries in northern Ohio. It was the first law of its kind in the United States.

The use of Big Agriculture's high-phosphate fertilizers, combined with the misuses of single-crop mega-farms, lack of crop rotation, and the high concentration of cattle waste caused an overly nu-

trient-rich seepage into the water cycle. It caused toxic algae blooms, which suffocated bodies of water. The result was a domino effect, a chain reaction of environmental havoc. The irreparable damage was bridled by declaring that Lake Erie and its subsequent ecosystems have rights too!

(In 2020, a federal judge in Toledo sided with an agribusiness which sued the city after LEBOR's approval and struck it down as unconstitutional.)

We need to examine the areas of tremendous water waste from the tourism industries (luxury hotels and golf courses) and mining/drilling operations down to landscapers, small farmers and gardeners. Investing in water desalination technology, in reducing carbon footprints that affect weather patterns all over the world, in a complete and total overhaul of water usage for the survival of our class in these areas where the water now barely trickles. The west depends on the Colorado River as its primary source of fresh water. Before the river can even reach the ocean deltas, it is piped up and sent through aqueducts to supply unsus-

tainably growing cities in the deserts of southern California and the southwest. The same is true for the Sacramento River Valley watershed, the San Joaquin River and their tributaries.

It cannot be understated that all areas of revolutionary struggle boil down to the issue of water. As a class, we are simultaneously fighting for housing for all, healthcare for all, education, employment, and economic security for all. None of these things is possible if we do not focus our revolutionary fervor on this, our most public and fundamental resource after oxygen. Water rights – that is, rights of bodies of water – versus its commodification, is the final and most serious battle to dismantle ruling class control of private property.

Our class's fighters from the western states to Standing Rock to Flint, Michigan have learned through hard-won experience that we cannot wait for capitalism to collapse underneath its own weight. Demand water as a human right, deprivatize water as a commodity of the rich and powerful. It belongs to us all. **RC**

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## From Illusions to Possibilities

*Continued from page 1*

ties and guarantees that we are offered different versions of our varied pasts to keep us divided. The ruling class uses conservatism to assure a fraction of the voters that it need not change and that the key to the future is either abundant caution or a return to a frontier mentality that upholds ideas like individualism and competition over social concerns. The ruling class uses liberalism to appeal to the desire for change in a way that can be controlled. It repeatedly compares Joe Biden's Build Back Better plan to Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, and, in this way, they can appeal to virtually all the workers who do not see themselves in conservative America but hope to see a way forward. The ruling class knows the American worker is smart and discontented, so it offers a variety of frameworks that strive to keep us from seeing what we really are, a great class of people who are being systematically cheated, attacked and abandoned by our leaders.

But if we truly grasp the potential of our exponentially developing digital technologies, we can see that we have an ability to win the war against ruling-class control which was inconceivable in the past. Freed from the dictatorship of the private-property system, a wealth accumulation machine that keeps the rich in constant competition with each other at the cost of the planet itself, we could use our technologies to provide for every-

one on the planet efficiently and sustainably. This smart use of our technology for something other than profits would allow us to stop the destruction of the world's environment, leaving a healthier planet for the generations that follow us. With the people in charge of the technology, we could isolate new diseases the moment they surface, offering all the world's people the best health care imaginable.

We have the technological ability to build this new world right now. What we do not have is a working class united by a vision beyond the boundaries of capitalism. Whether people call themselves liberals, conservatives, or progressives, what the working class shared in 2021 was a sense of disillusionment. If we could replace those failed illusions with a real world understanding of the conditions we face, we would see our need for one another despite individual differences about old ideas. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has given us a deadline of 2030 to avoid "climate catastrophe." Now, whether that is precisely true or not, it makes plain the urgent necessity of the class not driven by wealth and profits to wrest control from the ruling class and take charge. To do so, we need to build unity among the workers in our class. Here's to 2022 as the year we gain the class consciousness necessary to give us a fighting chance. **RC**

### **Join the Discussion!**

*Rally, Comrades!* 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!

# State of Michigan Sows Another Water Disaster in Benton Harbor

In 2018, Benton Harbor resident Emma Kennard's daughter came to visit from Texas. She wanted to take a bath, only to discover a tub full of discolored and particle-filled water. Alarmed, the family took it to the Mayor and city commissioners to have it tested. The city wouldn't even look at the tainted water, much less send it away to be tested. Hurt and upset, before even leaving city hall, Mrs. Kennard called community organizer Reverend Edward Pinkney. Pinkney ensured the contaminated water was sent for testing at a lab at the University of Michigan.

The test registered lead content at almost 300 parts per billion. Under the Lead and Copper rule 15 parts per billion is deemed acceptable, although no amount of lead is safe. This sparked a community response that formed the Benton Harbor Community Water Council. One of the few almost all Black cities in the nation, with a population of 10,000, Benton Harbor faced a life-threatening situation.

The ghost of the State of Michigan imposed Emergency Manager Law hovers over the tragic water disaster in Benton Harbor. From 2011 to 2017, the city was under state control through a state appointed Emergency Manager, an unelected official empowered to void or modify local contracts (outsource union work), hire or fire local employees, set aside local charters, initiate bankruptcy, dissolve or merge local municipalities, and most famously, sell assets. During this time, neither the mayor, the city commission, nor the city manager, could make decisions on behalf of residents.

Not satisfied with the theft of the community's beloved lakefront Jean Klock public park, which had been turned into a golf course in an effort led by the Whirlpool Corporation and its allies, the Emergency Manager attempted to sell and/or lease the water plant. That effort was unsuccessful. The emergency manager did however, cut water treatment staff in half and fire the water plants' supervisor.

The emergency manager finally left in 2017, but that was simply a change in tactics. In 2018, the state's environmental quality agency, Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), dispatched their team to the city. By 2019, they'd force the city into an Administrative Consent Agreement. These consent agreements are a part of the Emergency Manager Law and are designed to coerce impoverished communities to enter into "partnerships" with the state to resolve issues. The consent order raises water rates, in part, supposedly to pay for oversight of the water plant. In other words, the new partnerships make the very same people who have already been hurt by the very same emergency manager law pay even more in order to clean up the mess caused by the law in the first place.

EGLE ordered the city to hire an outside private firm to staff the plant. Meanwhile, the specter of lead in the water continued to grow. The state agency toyed with the situation as the crisis persisted. Lead test results continued to be off the charts. All of this happened while the water plant is still publicly owned by the people of Benton Harbor and stands as Benton Harbor's richest asset.

The Benton Harbor Community Water Council did everything humanly possible to secure clean water for its residents. They sounded the alarm about the need to drink and cook with bottled water. They distributed thousands of gallons of water and continue to do so today. They even assisted the local supervisor and collected samples for testing.

Still, lead levels have continued to rise in testing conducted over the past three years. Individual homes have shown extremely high levels this year, including results from 107 to 605, and as high as 889-ppb, according to state data. While EGLE had oversight of Benton Harbor water, the lead kept showing up. Finally, enough was enough. The residents had had it.

On September 9, 2021, the Benton Harbor Water Council teamed up with twenty Michigan-based and national organizations to file a petition with the US Environmental Protection Agency. Prominent groups included Flint Rising, the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Freshwater Futures, and the Great Lakes Environmental Law Center. The petition outlined the dire situation and presented the history of challenges faced by African

Americans in Benton Harbor in obtaining housing and education. Its opening sentence stated, "For at least the past three years, Benton Harbor residents have been subjected to levels of lead contamination from their public water system that presents an imminent and substantial danger to their health." Among other things, the petition called for the water to be declared unsafe and that all residents be notified immediately. It also made clear the need to provide free alternative sources of drinking water and to replace all service lines by September 2022.

When Governor Whitmer got wind of the September 9th release of the petition ahead of time, she headed down to Benton Harbor on September 8th to do damage control. She announced promises of a "whole-of-government" approach to provide lead line replacement money and speed up the response to the problem. Despite Governor Whitmer's attempts to head off criticism, this response showed the power of the people. The filing of the petition finally allowed the long-suffering residents of Benton Harbor to be heard. The EPA has responded to the petition condemning both the city and the state, while outlining steps going forward.

How could there be a Benton Harbor in 2018, when we had a Flint in 2014 in the same state? Because Michigan's market driven agenda has not changed. As *Rally, Comrades!* wrote in the 2016 article "What Happens in Michigan Won't Stay in Michigan," corporate private property has secured a fascist political model to carry out its aims. Democracy as we know it has become a liability. The emergen-

cy manager laws sidestep any concerns politicians may have about campaign contributions or any need to negotiate with voters. As illustrated in Flint, poisoning poor and particularly Black residents in impoverished cities for profit is the state of Michigan's way of doing business. Markets are using the state and its Emergency Manager Law to push privatization, no matter the human cost, no matter the loss of lives, and no matter the permanent damage this push is inflicting on the people's (especially the children's) brains, nervous systems and kidneys.

In December 2020, Business Insider published a stunning headline, "Water Futures Set to Join Likes of Gold and Oil and Trade on Wall Street for First Time Ever." This signifies a giant step in the privatization drive that is well underway here in Michigan. These financial maneuvers led to the tragic Flint water disaster, and are facilitated by the fact that Michigan is the home of the Great Lakes, the largest basin of fresh water in the world. Use of the dictatorial Emergency Manager law remains the state's primary tool.

That Business Insider article explains the global dimensions of this ruling class move to speculate on water futures as a strategy based on the fact that "nearly two-thirds of the world's population [is] expected to face water shortages by 2025." This reality shows what is happening to the poor of Michigan as the frontline of a global class war. Safe, clean, affordable, and publicly owned water is not too much to fight for in water-rich Michigan. The people of Benton Harbor are showing all of us the way. **RC**

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## Black History Month: Disarming the Rulers with Our Unity

*Continued from page 3*

that Black lives matter is part of going on the strategic offensive to fight for a new world. The rulers understand this and are mounting their backlash, stoking fear of crime and promoting more police as the only solution.

Class equality cannot be accomplished without eliminating racial inequality, and racial equality cannot be accomplished without the victory of the class struggle. The fight for racial justice and class justice are not in opposition to one another but are part of the same process. Understanding and opposing white supremacy is part of class consciousness, just as is understanding that white workers are also suffering from the new economy and that we are all being displaced and abandoned by the government's collaboration with corporations.

Unity is key to any victory. The unity of the revolutionary force, the new communist class being created today, depends upon a growing class conscious-

ness. The rulers' goal is to stop the revolution from proceeding on a class basis. Changes in the economy present the problem to the ruling class of maintaining working class disunity. Social privileges granted to white workers over Black workers have always kept the workers apart. Today, the growing poverty and displacement of more and more workers of all colors is creating the basis for class unity.

As digital technology replaces human labor, the value of labor decreases, and the rulers are having to abandon the social bribery that was once systematically given to more privileged workers (e.g., early immigrants over recent immigrants, white over Black). For the first time in our country, the formula that has been used to control and exploit all workers for centuries is beginning to crumble. Real class unity of the American working class is objectively possible.

Nothing can be done without this uni-

ty and consciousness. Unity of the new class around distribution based on need is the only ideology that reflects the reality of material conditions and the potential of the new technology. It is the only ideology that truly expresses the interests and aspirations of most of the world as they struggle for their immediate needs.

Fully conscious of the legacy of slavery and genocide and how the ruling class attempts to use race politically, our strategic focus is on the political unity of the new class. We unite with the movements against police violence, oil pipelines, and systemic racism as well as the movements for voting rights, public education, and the rights of migrants. All are part of class struggle and the struggle for a new society. Our approach is to unite based on the demands of the new class that our government ensure equal access to the resources that humanity and the nature we are a part of need to thrive. **RC**

# 2022 Elections Pit Corporate Profit vs People's Needs

America stands on the precipice of fascism, and whether it falls is up to us. The “slow-moving coup” unfolding since the failed insurrection of January 6 is intensifying the political motion to destroy democracy, install minority rule, white supremacy, and decimate women’s freedom and the planet for years to come. The United States is heading into its greatest political and constitutional crisis since the Civil War. Donald Trump’s false charges of fraud in the 2020 election are now aimed at making sure future elections that do not support the ruling class’ corporate priorities over the needs of the people are administratively overturned, overruling democracy.

Trump and his supporters aim to have the control over state and local election officials that they lacked in 2020. Future elections could see weeks of competing mass protests across multiple states as both parties claim victory and charge each other with unconstitutional efforts to take power. Elections could be rendered null and void under intense pressure from corporate speculative capital.

But the final outcome is not yet determined. People who believe in democracy and oppose corporate control of politicians are on the move, protesting in the streets, striking for their basic needs, and pushing back against attempts to dismantle democracy. They want a government that supports their needs. At the national level, the outcome rests in large part on what happens inside the Democratic Party, how it responds to the escalating social motion. A victory by those fighting for some version of the now scaled-down Build Back Better bill could signal their progress in slowing the the push toward fascism. Defeat will likely bring increasing poverty, violence, racial and gender oppression, and dictatorship.

The corporate push for fascism is an expression of the deep antagonism between advanced digital technology and the worker-intensive capitalist system it is steadily destabilizing. Privately owned corporations like Facebook would like to see all our lives corralled into their pay-to-play products. Their goal is the substitution of representative democracy by State power openly controlled by corporations, to remove all restrictions from the global operations of private-corporate-property interests.

On a federal level, the corporate strategy was to push through the proposed President Biden infrastructure bill, since it privatizes more public resources, while at the same time delaying the Build Back Better bill in order to whittle it down or kill it altogether. The battle in the Democratic Party between those tied to corporate predators and those striving to meet the basic demands of the masses is approaching a turning point. If the latter can force passage of some version of the Build Back Better bill, restoration of the Voting Rights Act, and passage of the Freedom to Vote Act, it would mark

a major step forward in building a movement to battle for people’s needs. It would signal a new era of political engagement and political independence

To install a fascist political system, the rulers need a political motion to clear away the obstacles — the old bourgeois laws and old ideas of the promise of democracy, such as the economic rights of the workers — and move the new speculative economy forward at the expense of the people’s basic needs. Wall Street, the international banking and financial system, the transnational corporations, the military-industrial complex, the technology corporations, fossil fuels, big pharma and the medical industry are some of the engines driving the corporate property pursuits. To achieve their goals, they have been laying the foundation for a new political movement to merge corporate power with the State. The ruling class is feeling its way towards a more fully formed fascist political ideology that will facilitate dictatorship, including concerted social media attacks on “democracy” through algorithm-driven promotion of disinformation about the election being stolen. It has launched a campaign against teaching the truth about the role of race and class in American history, and has fostered an anti-science, anti-vaccine, and anti-mask culture to support the false narrative of individual “liberty” versus the public good.

Another part of the fascist offensive is the multipronged attack on voting, waged as part of a movement to transform the old GOP into a new fascist party. Recently former Trump chief strategist Steve Bannon endorsed a “precinct strategy” to seize control of the GOP from the bottom up, starting with election precinct workers. Precinct officers are typically the worker bees of political parties, responsible for routine tasks, but collectively, they can influence how elections are run. Bannon’s promotion of the “precinct strategy” has rocketed across far-right media. And it provides protection and encouragement to insurgent groups like the Proud Boys, the One Percenters, the Oath Keepers, and other groups whose members have been charged in the Jan. 6 insurrection.

We also see the creation of a fascist narrative in which the lives of a growing section of the American people are considered worthless. This includes more Q’Anon candidates, promoting conspiracy theories claiming that doctors are preventing miracle cures for unvaccinated patients, or are even killing them on purpose. Some people in anti-vaccine and pro-ivermectin Facebook groups are telling those with Covid-19 to stay away from hospitals and instead try increasingly dangerous at-home treatments. They are attacking women and their reproductive freedoms to culturally advance the political goal of corporations.

The social movement for basic needs— led by groups like the Poor People’s

Campaign and the Sunrise Movement — has doubled down on street heat around economic issues, environmental justice, and voting rights. Workers striking John Deere, Kellogg, and others — including those refusing to work in unsustainable low paying jobs — are also part of this movement. Employers are struggling to fill jobs because they refuse to pay wages that people can afford to live on.

While the social face of fascism threatens all of humanity, it is also an admission by the ruling class that the dying system of capitalism cannot meet the needs of the people when workers are steadily being replaced by digital devices. The fascist offensive is a desperate push for permanent minority rule, not evidence of ruling class strength. It shows us the ruling class is so weak that it must turn to naked and open lies and violence to enforce some element of social cohesion.

Although the outcome is still not decided, larger and larger sectors of the ruling class are gravitating toward this fascist solution. Meanwhile, the social movement for basic needs is continuing to clarify its demands, including a \$15 minimum wage, universal health care, reproductive freedom, housing for all, quality public education, and an end to police violence and the use of fossil fuels.

Corporations cannot and will not allow the people to utilize the vote to meet these demands and are prepared to end the legal forms and structures of democracy altogether. More and more, they see the Trump movement as the shortest route to accomplishing this objective. Liz Cheney Republican and corporate Democrat opposition to Trump is mainly because they fear the disruption and chaos his supporters will unleash. But as the digital economy threatens maximum corporate profit, their support for democracy will not be sustained.

The cultural war against democracy and the development of today’s fascist social movement both require stepped-up

assault on science and on science-based social policy, and the devaluation of human life. The war on working class voting and reproductive freedom for women is accompanied by a war on vaccine and mask mandates and on teachers and school boards. Resisting fascism with appeals to America’s historic democratic ideals is important, but by itself will not sustain the struggle. Fascism cannot be defeated until the meaning of democracy includes people’s right to basic needs. We need a class plan to defeat American fascism and, in the course of the battle, to introduce the ideas necessary to keep the movement on course to remove the root of the problem — the private property system and the corporations that dominate it. The elections of 2022 and 2024 will be watersheds in the battle to demand a government that stops serving corporate profit and starts providing for peoples’ basic needs.

How do we achieve these goals? Build a broad movement to meet people’s needs by diverting national resources to feed, house, and clothe our people, and guarantee health care and education for all. The time has come to bail out the working class. The battle for these demands will challenge corporate domination of both major parties and ultimately lead to splitting and the emergence of new parties.

Revolutionaries are all those who help guide their class through the twists and turns of these political transformations, working with and helping to create the means to best fight for basic needs. This positions them for the next stage in the march toward their ultimate aim, which is to take over the corporations completely and organize a cooperative economy designed to meet human needs. Attacks on voting rights cannot stop this process. When the government fails to meet basic needs, it is time to take power into the people’s hands and rebuild the system from the ground up. **RC**

## *Join the League of Revolutionaries for a New America*

The goal of all revolutionaries’ work today is to give the American people a vision of what is possible. It is a vision of a world where no one has to fight another for the daily bread of existence. It is a vision where cooperation and fulfilling the needs of humanity are the guiding principles. It is a vision that satisfies the deepest yearnings of the people for peace. Society can now create the abundance the new technology promises, and so a new world: a cooperative society, with this abundance distributed according to need.

In spite of worsening economic conditions, nothing can be accomplished until the American people hold a vision of where they want to go and what they want to be. Creating such vision with them is the overriding task of revolutionaries and the foundation of our organization.

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