

Stop Cop City: Forest defense and abolition

Cop City is the name people have given to the proposed largest police training facility/mock city in the United States, in Atlanta, Georgia. To build it, the police foundation and their corporate donors will have to destroy 85 acres of the largest urban green space in the country, in a Black working-class neighborhood. The police foundation is on record saying the project's impetus was the boosting officer morale in the wake of the George Floyd Rebellion and heightened calls for the abolition of police, prisons, and private property. Its purpose is to teach and train police in Atlanta – and from as far away as occupied Palestine – in urban warfare tactics such as bomb and tear gas deployment, high-speed car chases, helicopter landings, etc.

Every city is cop city. For the past two years local abolitionists have mobilized, and invited supporters from around the world to join in the fight, to experience and live in the forest in a continual occupation, and to resist wherever they are by confronting corporate donors and politicians. More and more people are realizing that this is not just a local struggle. And because violence is the only logic this system knows, there's a seemingly endless budget that the ruling class has to keep throwing at these kinds of efforts anywhere they want.

Through a diversity of tactics, from multiple forms of direct action to lawsuits, to community organizing, the movement has so far disrupted and stalled much of the forest from being destroyed, even as the project is held up in court. In December 2022, six forest defenders were arrested in a raid on the forest and accused of domestic terrorism – an extremely serious charge – a new tactic used by the ruling class's courts since the repression of the uprising against the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2015 and 2016.

Then, on January 18, 2023, during another raid on the forest occupation, Georgia police murdered 26-year-old queer, Afro-Venezuelan revolutionary Manuel Esteban Páez Terán, also known as Tortuguita, and arrested several more on the same terrorism charges. Tortuguita were loved by their community as a deeply thoughtful and sensitive person dedicated to mutual aid, protecting the forest and overthrowing systems of oppression. Brown Cat Mutual Aid, a social media account which Tortuguita facilitated, fundraised supplies for forest defenders as well as other Black and Brown Trans community members in need.

No body camera footage has been released, but police audio from after the shooting strongly indicates that an injured officer was hit by friendly-fire from another officer – not Tortuguita, as their narrative attempting to justify the shooting claims. An independent autopsy eventually confirmed that



Cop City is a proposed facility in Atlanta to train police in urban warfare tactics.

Photo: iStock, author: KDill

Tortuguita were in a cross-legged position, with their hands raised and without gunpowder residue, when they were killed by 57 bullets from the Georgia State Patrol.

Whether risking one's life in a tree-sit as police fire pepper spray at you, or organizing distribution of native food trees for community food sovereignty, or building bridges across movements, revolutionaries in Atlanta are a part of a mass movement across the world where people envision and work towards a world beyond private property. A central base of community and resistance in the forest is known as Weelaunee People's Park, named for what the original people there, the Muskegee, called the river that connects much of South Atlanta. The Muskegee were forced out in 1821 by the U.S. government, but not before many years of militant resistance to settler colonialist genocide.

From the early stages of this struggle through to today, Muskegee people have been traveling back to their original homelands to become deeply involved in the movement to stop Cop City. They are teaching us all how resistance to police terrorism is rooted in a vision of a new society we can build, where police aren't necessary, where land is stewarded in common, and non-human relatives are respected.

DECENTRALIZED, AUTONOMOUS MOVEMENTS

Cop City is a clear reaction by the corporate-fascist state to the abolitionist class's movement towards this new society. Our class's response is shaping up to be one of the broadest seen in a long time. Its funders come, through the Atlanta Police Foundation, from the ranks of some of the largest and

most sinister corporations: Coca-Cola, Verizon, Target, Norfolk Southern, Truist Bank, Wells Fargo, Bank of America and others. Forty-three percent of the police who would be trained at Cop City will be coming from outside Georgia. This is why the consciousness about Cop City among the abolitionist class is so advanced, becoming the largest urban warfare training facility in the country. Corporations fear what will happen to their hoarded assets after the next act of police terrorism and want their lackeys to be ready. This is going to affect everyone.

#StopCopCity and #DefendtheAtlForest can help shape our analysis on what unity in the abolitionist class can look like. The revolutionaries engaged in the Stop Cop City movement have numerous times acknowledged the strength that comes from, paradoxically, starting from a place of unknowing. We do not actually know what tactics will be the right ones, what it will ultimately take, to stop Cop City. What follows from this understanding is the ability to be flexible in profound ways, to have a broad, "decentralized, autonomous movement," as Stop Cop City organizers say it. It is a type of movement building that, beautifully, models itself off of the thing they are defending: forests.

Forests are intelligent. More than simply stands of trees, forests are ecosystems of profound complexity. Ecologists have recently proved what many cultures have known for millennia that plants can communicate. Dr. Suzanne Simard is a Canadian researcher studying the ways in which trees share information and nutrients, organizing their ecosystem in a decentralized partnership with the other central character in forests: fungi. Her book "Finding the Mother Tree" is an exami-

nation of how this partnership works, as well as how destructive capitalist forest management practices are. The central takeaway for revolutionaries from this work is the importance of networks.

In the soil, and even inside the trees themselves, are infinite biological pathways made up of fungi. Fungal mycelium (the "roots" of mushrooms) are the "Internet" that trees partner with to interact with each other. Trees of the same species are able to recognize and nurture their offspring and communicate about threats, and trees of different species are even able to trade nutrients. This is happening all through mycelium and all while the fungi themselves are trading nutrients for water with the trees, acting like an extended root system.

Revolutionaries are like fungi. Whether connecting different movements or connecting the diversity of tactics within a movement, revolutionaries in Atlanta are enhancing the resiliency of our struggles by acting like a network. Revolutionaries model themselves as decentralized not because they are disparate parts that aren't connected. Decentralized here means a kind of unity that functions to protect the movement from repression and co-optation by refusing to hold up one central leader or organization. This would leave that "center" to be an easy target for the ruling class.

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Fascists operate on social, economic fronts

During July 2023, millions celebrate Independence Day, honoring the American Revolution that broke this country out of the British Empire. Openly social fascist forces across the nation will manipulate its symbolism to dig deeper into sections of the population which are dissatisfied with the growing problems surrounding their lives and communities, yet which lack a vision of the path toward solutions. The national flag, the so-called Founding Fathers and the American Revolution itself will be used by social fascists to promote their ideas and build forces for the dangerous conflicts they can be relied on to promote.

Today's fascists operate on two fronts. One of them involves violent and illegal actions promoting white supremacy, or hetero-patriarchy, while supporting police and military forces. This can be summed up as social fascism.

The other front involves using legal means to promote privatization of public services and resources and budget cuts that push federal and local governments to become

From the Editors

indebted to the biggest banks and financial corporations. This agenda can be summed up as economic fascism.

The social fascists have not won over everyone, nor will they. Millions of people in 2020 were part of the George Floyd Rebellion to stop police killings, especially of African Americans. Some also helped resist attacks on the rights of LGBTQ+ folks, women, immigrants and other targeted sections of society. Others stood up in defiance out of awareness of the suffering that resulted when fascists took power in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa.

However, unlike the forces leading the social fascist agenda, the economic fascist ranks include forces within both major parties, of all colors and ethnicities. They don't all openly espouse social fascism's hatreds, so most Americans don't see them as fascists at all.

Nor do many people see that the term

"fascists" describes the military leaders who send Americans to die in wars fought in defense of the oil companies and the openly fascist dictators who serve them. That term usually only refers to the type of social fascism that grew during the Depression, led by today's Nazis, Proud Boys and Ku Klux Klan.

So, the commonly held vision of fascist cops is that of white racist killers with a badge, more than of Black killers such as those members of the Memphis police department's SCORPION Unit who murdered Tyre Nichols.

Few people use "fascist" to describe politicians of all colors who hand public monies to corporations for surveillance technology and weapons deployed against the populace. Nor do some see lurking fascism when a public forest in Atlanta is turned into an urban warfare training facility now known as Cop City.

In fact, the Atlanta Police Foundation helps fund Cop City through a board that includes executives from giant corporations like

The Home Depot, Delta Air Lines, Georgia-Pacific, Equifax®, Wells Fargo & Company and UPS®.

It is just one example of the growing menace of economic fascism and it also reveals how social fascists serve the economic fascist agenda when they unleash illegal violence against activists protesting killer cops, or toxic oil pipelines.

How can both fronts of social and economic fascism be defeated? The answer is already before us in the streets. Thousands upon thousands have fought in battles like those that forced the prosecution of killer cops, won the freedom of caged undocumented children and forced local governments to provide services to the homeless.

The core of each of these struggles is the sector of Americans which is losing any stable connection to the capitalist economy and which composes a new social class of the dispossessed. Expanding their unity, while developing their consciousness of themselves as a class, will produce the potential for revolutionary social change. ■

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There are environmental groups, working through the courts, petitions, and through monitoring the harmful effects of construction on the waterways to build a case to stop Cop City. An arm of this branch can be found at movement gatherings, where collectives of eco-minded revolutionaries distribute free native fruit and nut trees and teach about local food production.

Present in full force is the legendary Civil Rights movement in the city which, like many

other cities in the South, is experiencing a reignition of Black radicalism and struggles for self-determination in the face of co-optation from the Black elite, voter suppression, and outright violence and austerity from neo-Confederate forces. Additionally, young and a little more white middle-class and anarchist elements are present in the struggle as well. They are radicals who have been working full-time to occupy the forest and, through direct action, to sabotage the means of destruction. These are not listed so as to draw clear lines

between groups of people, but rather to represent the infrastructure and ideas of different movements, all fusing into a kind of functional unity. All are united in vision and purpose to stop Cop City while lacking a singular face, organization or tactic. Present as well, in true abolitionist fashion, is a recognition of how movements for housing, education and health care are also deeply connected with this struggle. Revolutionaries on the ground are working to share information and resources between all of these movements and

tactics, like fungal mycelium facilitating the resiliency of a forest ecosystem.

To become whole as an ecosystem, to become whole as a revolutionary movement, requires balance, intention and communication. The need for both unity of consciousness between ecological and abolitionist struggles and, at the same time, for decentralized tactics in accomplishing our strategy, is among the lessons the whole world is watching unfold in Atlanta. ■

EDITORIAL POLICY

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

Rally! is the political paper of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. In this period of growing motion and developing polarization, *Rally!* 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 to 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.

Editorial Board: Allen Harris, Kimberly King, Joyce Mills, Steve Teixeira

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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.

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Migration faces winds of change with resistance

The militarization of the U.S.-México border zone has expanded during the administrations of Bush, Obama, Trump and now Biden. The Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) are organizations under the Department of Homeland Security, for which DHS Chief Information Officer Eric Hysen commented that his agency had the “largest budget ever enacted,” jumping to \$29.8 billion, a \$3 billion increase from 2022. Todd Miller, an author and journalist, stated in the Border Chronicle newsletter that all the funding for drones, artificial intelligence (AI) and biometrics has created a “border bonanza as the Biden Administration becomes the largest border contractor in U.S. history.”

The U.S.-México border has undergone a buildup of military surveillance to keep migrants, who are leaving their homelands, out of the United States. Why is this happening? Migration of people has happened throughout humanity’s history. Some enslaved people were forcefully brought from other countries. Today, most are fleeing violence, devastating climate change and seeking opportunities to survive and provide for their families. This is not a crime. The United States has a long history of destabilizing other governments and meddling to control outside its own borders. Thus, the main capitalist country, the United States, became known as a nation of immigrants.

MILITARIZATION VS. BASIC NEEDS

Today, we face the reality that governments are making it more difficult to migrate. Technology is reducing the need for human labor, plus, the rulers of the United States have determined that by charging fees for applications like DACA renewals every two years, money can be made by making these quasi-laws. Another is paying into social security but not being eligible to receive it. Humankind revolves around family and caring for beloved members, providing for their basic needs despite changes in economies or laws. We cannot afford to allow our governments to dictate the future for the movement of people in search of a safe place to make a living and secure the future of their lives and families.

A relatively new wave of migrants from Haiti, Venezuela, Colombia and Cuba, many of them nonwhite, have joined the Mexicans and Central Americans at the U.S.-México border seeking asylum in the United States. Many were led to believe that “just get to the border and they will let you in,” because the Title 42 restrictions imposed during the height of the pandemic were going to expire. Instead, days turned into months for those who made the treacherous journey from their homelands, surviving assault, extortion, kidnapping, rape, thirst, hunger, medical needs and the death of family members to get this far. The U.S. government knows all this but is not taking measures to help. This is the face of fascism where government is not for the people, but for the corporations. In fact, not too long ago, it separated children from the migrant families and put them in cages, then



Today, we face the reality that governments are making it more difficult to migrate.

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lost them to detention centers and nightmarish experiences. Unaccompanied minors were put to work instead of enrolled in school.

This time around, the show of force at the border was to prepare for an expected “migrant invasion” after the lifting of the Title 42 policy, which had harmed millions of asylum seekers with the lie that Title 42 was to protect American residents from illness. That surge at the border did not happen and now government leaders are re-grouping to decide which policies to continue or change. That includes what they must do to distract the public from discovering the dangers of rising fascism if they keep their control and power over migration.

Ports of entry are located near the more populated sections of the border. Delays in entering have forced migrants to seek other sections, whose greater danger is shown by the number of deaths due to walking through deserts and other dangerous terrain, facing kidnappings and violence. Corporations run the U.S. government through their campaign contributions and lobbying and they don’t want to “waste” financial resources on assisting desperate migrants. In fact, it is the overwhelmed charities and nonprofit community groups that are providing the food, blankets, water, etc., but FEMA often will not reimburse them.

RESISTING STATE AND FEDERAL ATTACKS

The limits on what charity can do led the director of El Paso’s Centro de los Trabajadores Agrícolas Fronterizos (Center for Border Farm Workers) to tell Rally! in 2020: “Relieving suffering is very important, but that vision limits migrants to being seen as ‘the poor’ and such limited actions as ‘helping victims.’ ... We see immigration as an act of anti-capitalist resistance, a resistance founded by the destiny that the system has imposed on them. So, we have to recognize their leading role, and advance it.”

(See <https://rally-theleague.org/immigration-struggle-in-texas/>)

Now, state governments are getting in-

involved, but for the worse. Starting last year, Texas governor Greg Abbott and Florida governor Ron DeSantis have coordinated a new tactic of using their funds to have private companies bus or fly thousands of captured migrants out of the South to cities like New York, Washington, Chicago and Sacramento. These migrants were given false pretexts of job offers, but ended up being dropped off near public and private agencies. California attorney general Rob Bonta has threatened to charge Florida officials with kidnapping and other crimes. And amidst prodding by immigration rights activists, the sheriff’s office in Bexar County, Texas announced it has recommended criminal charges over two flights last year to Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration is spreading a more orchestrated immigration system worldwide. The newly announced processing centers that asylum seekers will have to apply through in México and Guatemala are soon to be joined by the first-ever processing centers in either Ecuador or Costa Rica. Homeland Security secretary Alejandro Mayorkas claims the goal is “to reach people where they are – to cut the smugglers out and to have them avoid the perilous journey that too many make.” But the new asylum application process requires using the CBP ONE app with a smartphone, which leaves the poorest

seekers out.

As we enter the 2024 election season, a number of bills is being proposed that would adjust the status of migrants living in the United States, some of whom have patiently waited 20 to 30 years for the opportunity to adjust their undocumented status. Each proposal has included the issue of increasing border security. Only the Citizenship for Essential Workers Act introduced by Reps. Joaquín Castro of Texas and Ted Lieu of California focuses on extending a path to citizenship for up to 5.2 million undocumented immigrants who worked in jobs designated essential during the Covid-19 pandemic, noting that they have contributed to the economy and provide up to \$79.7 billion in federal taxes and \$41 billion in state and local taxes annually. The actions and words of thousands of fighters have certainly influenced these politicians and though this bill doesn’t provide rights for all immigrants needing them, it verifies what the most dedicated fighters have consistently said: providing for the basic needs of migrants helps provide for the needs of others.

In the face of escalating fascism by federal and state governments, that is an objectively revolutionary position. The basis for unity is here: Unite for human needs regardless of immigration status. The borders are fading. **R**

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World forces must unite to end private property

2030. That is the year by which climate scientists have warned us that unless 50% of annual carbon emissions are erased an irreversible tipping point will be crossed. At that point, all of the mechanisms that have kept Earth's climate balanced are at risk of becoming fundamentally destabilized. How did we get here?

The long history of private property shows that, with each crisis in the system, the tactics of the ruling class to remain in power also result in new destabilizations to both human and non-human ecologies. For the past several centuries, we have been entering an era of increasingly asymmetric impact by private property on the planet. The scientists of the ruling class have covered up the truth by calling it the Anthropocene, (the Age of Humans) portraying the ecological impact of private property as being fundamental to all of humanity. But others have devised a better term. It is the Capitalocene (the Age of Capital), the new geological age characterized by the interconnected climate, social and ecological crises indicative of private property in the age white supremacy, colonialism and industrial capitalism.

With carbon emissions currently at an all-time high, what is truly needed to reduce carbon emissions by 50% by 2030 and then by 100% by 2050? With seven years left to prevent irreparable global climate meltdown, tactics toward political revolution as a strategy for ending private property need to be shared, studied and tested.

A SINGULAR CRISIS

This society is becoming more and more hostile to people who have less and less. The accelerating disruption of the industrial and now service economy workers by digital technology is at the core of the increasingly repressive tactics of the ruling class. The result is a class of workers permanently pushed out of a society predicated on free markets as the method of distribution – left jobless, they are left penniless and left penniless they are left without any of their basic needs met. As revolutionaries have done throughout the history of class society when the system of production contradicts the system of distribution, we fight back. But with reform no longer possible within capitalism, the ruling class's only tool left is to scale up repression.

Potentiating this process are the “unnatural” disasters caused by a warming and destabilizing climate, and by the broader extinction process of a majority of species of life. But these aren't two unconnected processes. To place society in philosophical terms outside of the rest of the Web of Life reproduces the violent notion of human supremacy, the worldview that brought us to the crisis in the first place. Rather, we need to think in terms of the historical continuity between human and non-human systems being both producers and products of Earth's ecology.

The main objective of the ruling class has always been to break the unity of the working class in order to remain in a position of power to accumulate wealth. They accomplished this through an initial splintering of people and the land, both literally and conceptually.



Through direct action against the means of destruction and against those who sponsor it, diverse movements are taking on the ruling class for climate justice and for the future of the planet.

Photo: iStock, author: DisobeyArt

Through colonial conquest and the rise of industrial capital, systems of private property have attempted to strip Indigenous peoples the world over from their connection with the ecologies they were co-producing, stripping the land of its stewards and protectors.

Today's climate crisis is simply a byproduct of the strategy of capitalism's centuries-long quest for cheap nature. Cheap nature strategies are all the ways in which the ruling class has used violence against all forms of life to create systems of value that reward them and their means of production they control. Through slavery and genocide; through the exploitation of land, water and air; through colonialism and industry; through the sixth mass extinction and climate crisis we're experiencing now, private property is fundamentally rooted in the ongoing attacks against ecological reproduction.

FIGHTING TO WIN

Placed in the line of fire in this ongoing process of the corporate ruling class's drive for cheap nature and the resulting ecological destabilization, our class is fighting these attacks. Through direct action against the means of destruction and against those who sponsor it, cross-racial/gender/generational movements are rising, reclaiming their solidarity with the rest of the Web of Life and fighting through word and deed for an end to private property.

This movement's tactical targets, the fossil fuel executives, the paid-off politicians, the banks and insurance companies funding the extraction, are important notable and formidable. But the strategic target for the climate justice movement is the ruling class itself. Only by removing the corporate ruling class from power can the planetary crisis be transformed into a revolutionary project of ecological regeneration.

Thus, a needed reinvigoration of the movement's strategy must be brought into its tactics. If class victory over the rulers is the intended outcome, the climate justice movement must unite with its class allies – those struggling for liberation against housing, environmental, healthcare, education injustice and more – forming a unity of ultimately billions of people fighting to replace private property with common property.

The idea of a united nature and society, both philosophically and practically, is crucial to this revolutionary struggle. As those of us with nothing to gain in this parasitic system, which is spreading the disease of fascism, white supremacy, patriarchy, queer-phobia and ecological destruction to more places than ever before, our strategy is to create a new world based on distribution according to need.

Our tactics are the ways in which we accomplish our strategy, and are based on how our enemy is maneuvering. The enemy's strategy is to maintain private property by consolidating their power and disposing of any and all opposition to it. If they can keep us as a class fighting each other, we won't be able to fight them. This oldest trick in the book of divide and conquer can be countered through the intentional building of networks of solidarity. The movement against Cop City and to defend the Atlanta Forest is extremely instructive in this regard.

While tech-billionaires warn of a takeover by artificial intelligence that could “destroy civilization,” we can see that the decades-long replacement of humans by automation and digital technology and the subsequent growth of unemployment and underemployment in other sectors, has been long under way. By 2010, about 40% of the workforce was made up of contingent workers – that is, part-time, on-call or temp, gig and contract workers. In

the early stages of the pandemic, involuntary part-time workers totaled 11.9 million. As shown in the 2020 Rebellions against the murder of George Floyd and many others, millions of displaced workers are not sitting idly by as their disposability in the eyes of the ruling class translates to more lynchings, cop cities, mass incarceration, forced relocation and political repression of them and their communities. The movement is uniting as the consciousness of revolutionaries is developing.

There are enough resources to meet the basic needs of all of life on Earth. That abundance can only be realized through the process of revolutionary transformation. Time is running short, yet we cannot rush. Unifying around a movement to end private property is the only thing that will truly bring the planetary crisis to an end. **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!

'Death by a thousand cuts' for public education

The old school year ended this spring, centered once again on school shootings. In response to public demands to control assault rifles, many state governments have turned instead to controlling the free speech of teachers, LGBTQ people, African Americans and all marginalized groups.

Rising to oppose this fascism is the power of the youth, who are pushing forward for a different vision of America. It's a vision that is multiracial, multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural, multireligious. It's everything for everybody. This is a battle for democracy and to compel government to meet the interests of people, not corporations.

An unprecedented movement in defense of public schools is rising as a political force, one that is principally led by new generations of young people who are not shy about attacking the status quo. In Chicago, a teacher, Brandon Johnson, was elected mayor on a program of inclusion that openly challenged the supremacy of money over people in elections.

After the Nashville school shooting in late March, 7,000 students walked out of school in the March for Our Lives. One slogan: "You ban books; dead kids can't read." Another: "You ban books. You ban drag. Kids are still in body bags." This protest led to large-scale student rebellions in the South and across the country in open defiance of these bans.

As a new school year begins, public education in the United States is under a massive, coordinated attack from many directions. School issues – from student loans to public safety and more – are becoming central to both the Democratic and Republican parties' ability to address people whose lives are politically and economically marginalized. These issues will be critical in the 2024 election.

"Death by a thousand cuts" for public schools is well organized, involving: banning books, censoring teachers, restricting free speech, attacks on LGBTQ+ and gender issues, banning Black History, attacking science, and prohibiting social-emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching. By eliminating the right to share ideas and think critically and by using the politics of fear and anger to demand conformity instead of inquiry, students are rendered less able to participate in struggles over school shootings, abortion and mental health.

These attacks are used as a cover for the real agenda: abolishing the control of the public over every part of the government. Public schools are one of the few branches of government that the people can claim as their own. We claim them because we own them together as the public. Schools are public goods. Public goods are the foundation for democracy. Public schools are an important front in this national campaign to systematically attack and discredit every form of government.

Some of the major organizers of this onslaught are the Bradley Foundation, the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation and the Koch Foundation. These groups actively work to control public opinion and pass what must be recognized as fascist laws. Through them,

capitalism and billionaires try to control politics. Their open goal is to destroy what fascists call "the administrative state." That means every form of government that spends money on people, rather than exclusively for the benefit of corporations, billionaires and finance.

These are precisely same groups that spend dark money to organize voter suppression, election denial, anti-abortion legislation and attacks on public schools. They demonstrate their true concern for children by loudly supporting the repeal of child labor laws across the country. After all, the United States is the only country that has not signed the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

VOUCHERS

School vouchers are a major weapon today. So far this year voucher bills have been considered by at least 24 states. Iowa, Utah, Arkansas, and Florida passed them. Voucher expansion bills have failed in at least six states: Georgia, Texas, Idaho, Virginia, Kentucky, and South Dakota.

The right-wing groups that organize such attacks like to portray themselves as a rising movement, but in reality far more people rose to oppose them.

The public has long been opposed to vouchers, so these laws are re-christened "back-pack funding" and "money that follows the student." Vouchers give parents a check that they can use to spend on their children's education in private, religious or public schools. Vouchers divert massive amounts of money from already fragile public schools. Vouchers typically drain money from underfunded rural schools and redistribute it to wealthy counties.

The Cato Institute wrote in 1997, "Vouchers Are the Way to Separate School and State: "Like most other conservatives and libertarians, we see vouchers as a major step toward the complete privatization of schooling. In fact, after careful study, we have come to the conclusion that they are the only way to dismantle the current socialist regime." (<http://web.archive.org/web/20100701094902/http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-269.html>)

Vouchers were first used in Virginia to fund private segregated schools after the Supreme Court required school desegregation in the 1950s. Today, most voucher funds go to students who are already in private and religious schools, students who have never been in public schools at all. Vouchers are subsidies to the 1%.

Research shows that students who use vouchers to leave public schools have some of the largest achievement drops ever measured. In Louisiana and Ohio, the achievement loss after they established voucher programs was almost twice the loss these states suffered under the impact of the pandemic.

Forty percent of schools funded by vouchers close their doors within a couple of years. Kids in those schools flee them at about a rate of 20 percent per year. Why? The value of a government voucher for high school in Washington, D.C. in 2016-2017 was



As a new school year begins, public education is under a massive, coordinated attack from many directions.

Photo: iStock, author: mapo

\$12,679, while tuition at Washington's elite private schools exceeded \$40,000 a year. Vouchers for the poor do not mean a quality education.

The typical school that is funded by vouchers is a pop-up with uncredentialed teachers. It is often located in a mall where a few students are forced to study a canned online curriculum on Chromebook™ devices. These schools often just take the money and run.

Unlike public schools, voucher-funded private schools are allowed to teach a religious curriculum. Likewise, the private schools are allowed to discriminate and ban gay and trans students and teachers—and many of them do. Public funding, private management – that's American-style privatization whether it is applied to water, prisons or schools.

THE BATTLE FOR DEMOCRACY

The majority of Americans supports the right to abortion. It opposes banning books that discuss race and critique U.S. history and it opposes vouchers.

The Tennessee student rebellion triggered a series of massive student walkouts and protests, especially in Florida. Its governor forced bills through the Legislature designed to remove a woman's right to bodily autonomy and the right of LGBTQ students – and the general public – to its own history.

One week after the Nashville walkout, Florida students walked out of 300 schools in protest. Their walkout2learn.org site includes many links. It states that "This is an education, an activation, and a revolution."

In teach-ins, students presented 5-to-10 minute "banned history lessons" including that of Marsha P. Johnson, a pioneering Black LGBTQ activist, and that of the Black national anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing." Protesters pledged online never to vote for people who don't support student rights.

On May 3, the following week, students

and educators across the country participated in the Freedom to Learn National Day of Action (<https://freedomtolearn.net/event/national-day-of-action/>). They called for a national resistance:

"Join us for a National Day of Action to defend the truth and to protect the freedom to learn. Now is the time to work to build a broad coalition of people to strengthen our democracy and our values of equity, inclusion, and social justice. Through collective actions across the country, we will resist restrictions on the freedom to learn, fight the right's antiwoke disinformation campaigns, and demonstrate majoritarian support for equity in our schools, campuses, and workplace."

Thousands of people from around the world signed the Freedom to Learn Open Letter:

"Punishing literacy, criminalizing "divisive concepts," and discrediting those who are regarded as dangerous have all been tools of racial domination in the United States and elsewhere."

"We call for global resistance to all efforts to destroy the vital tools that help us to imagine and create more equitable and inclusive futures for us all."

History shows that the battle for democracy is essential and central in every revolution. This coming school year that battle will become ever more critical for public education. Tennessee state Rep. Justin Jones of Nashville described the larger context:

"We come here to say that the South will rise anew. We represent a new South, a new South that is rising, and that if we can transform the South, we can transform this nation. If we can get commonsense gun laws passed in the South, we can get them passed in this nation. ... And so we hope that the national media will lift up what's happening in the South, because our people are pushing forward a new vision." **R**

Cultural workers making the revolution legible

A new form of abolition is arising today. First it aimed ending America's systems of prisons and police; today it goes to the heart of the matter: "Abolition requires that you change one thing: everything." (Ruth Wilson Gilmore, revolutionary scholar). In that spirit, last year the League convened a conference or revolutionary writers, artists and other cultural workers to explore the central, historical question of the abolition of slaveholding private property then; and now, the abolition of all private property. What role can cultural workers play in preparing the ground for the necessary shift in thinking?

THE 2022 CULTURAL CONFERENCE

Christopher Mahin, independent scholar and writer, explained the relation of yesterday's revolutionary abolition struggle to today's. The U.S. Civil War was fought for the principle of equality outlined in the Declaration of Independence, but then denied by the Constitution's endorsement of slavery.

The struggle to abolish slavery grew within rapidly changing economic conditions. The steam-powered loom and cotton gin greatly expanded production and built the foundation for 19th century global capitalist expansion. Mahin also recounted how steam power, applied to the printing press, also spurred the explosion of cultural production, such as newspapers and books. "For thirty years before the Civil War there's a cultural civil war, and there's a cultural phenomenon called abolitionism. They produced novelists, they produced musicians, they produced poets and performance art."

Steven Newcomb, Shawnee-Lenape scholar and director of the Indigenous Law Institute allowed the conference to use a video of his presentation on the Doctrine of Discovery. That Doctrine emanates from 15th century decrees by the Pope. It authorized the European monarchs to seize land occupied by non-Christian peoples. These

original forms of property theft – land and chattel slavery – built modern world capitalism. The U.S. courts continue to use the Doctrine to rule against tribal interests even in this century. Newcombe emphasized: "We need decolonization, not reconciliation."

Mahin was asked about cultural work in the abolitionist movement. Periodicals published by Elijah Lovejoy, William Lloyd Garrison, and Frederick Douglass spread the word widely. Quilting communicated about safe houses and directions along the paths to freedom. The transcendentalist poets of New England raised money for abolitionist martyr John Brown's defense. The 1852 novel Uncle Tom's Cabin, often vilified by readers of today's awareness, nevertheless had the most profound effect on developing sympathy for the enslaved and preparing the ground for the American people to support the Northern cause in the Civil War.

MODERN ABOLITIONISM: ENVISIONING A NEW SOCIETY

Maureen Taylor of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization began the closing session of the conference with a parable about how the various sections of the working class have been isolated in different silos fighting for their basic needs, but are beginning to recognize the necessity of fighting together rather than fighting amongst themselves for crumbs. The cultural worker of today has a responsibility to enter today's cultural war to illuminate what is possible today (and wasn't possible when earlier abolitionist cultural workers were active). The modern abolitionist movement envisions "changing everything," and the "Land Back" movement envisions other ways of relating to other humans and to the land itself (and other creatures who live on it).

Today's ruling class must rely on the historical-cultural forms of division to maintain its rule, while it deploys more and more concentrated forms of force and violence. Ron

DeSantis, governor of Florida, declares that "Florida is where 'woke' comes to die." His office launches a war against teachers who attempt to teach accurate history. Books that relate stories about LBGTQIA and African-American people are banned in Florida libraries and schools. Curricula are encouraged that teach the lies of the "benefits of slavery to the enslaved." Texas governor Greg Abbot ships busloads of immigrants/asylum seekers from the border with Mexico to major cities in the United States, where they are dumped without resources to sleep on the floors of airports or police stations.

What makes the abolition of private property possible today is the rapid influx of digital technology. Peer-to-peer networking and file sharing has undermined intellectual property rights throughout cultural production – from music to video to the written word. The same information technology has eliminated whole divisions of industrial labor. This kind of disruption of labor's role in production creates a whole new class of people condemned to the margin of society. They are not just victims in the economic/culture war. They are the core of the new abolitionists.

Now the introduction of new forms of pattern recognition – called artificial intelligence, or AI – is replacing all forms of "creatives" in cultural industries, from newspapers to screenwriting. The 2023 Writers Guild and Screen Actors Guild strikes identify AI as the enemy. Yet these technologies also pose a challenge to systems of property and exploitation in the entertainment industry. Never before have the choices been so stark because the possibilities have never been so vast.

CULTURAL WORKERS: MAKING THE REVOLUTION LEGIBLE

When these new abolitionists have no place to turn to procure the means of survival – money – their demand to be provided

the necessities of life undercuts the existence of capitalism itself. Cultural workers can build on that to help the class understand: When abundance is possible, distribution according to need is the way the world can and should work. We don't have to live enslaved by the market! We have rights!

Damon Williams, from Chicago, closed off the presentations of the final session challenging cultural workers to begin the process of making the revolution irresistible. What precedes that, he said, is that "the job of the artist, or the cultural worker, is to make the revolution legible," to focus on our accomplishments and possibilities, not just describe the "counterrevolution." We make it legible by talking about what we are doing now to achieve immediate needs, but also for maintaining our sense of humanity.

"Abolition is the creative undoing of harmful systems," Williams noted. Abolition demands today that revolutionaries think about becoming new people. In that spirit, 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 cultural workers who articulate the moral and practical vision of a sustainable, cooperative human society that is free from class domination and violence, from war paid for in the coin of hunger and homelessness. In the spirit of this resistance rising everywhere, and its vision of a better way of being, and in the wake of an enhanced global war and war on the poor, the League of Revolutionaries for a New America is calling for a Third Cultural Conference: Culture and R/evolution.

To find out more and/or to help plan this conference, e-mail: culturalcommittee@lrna.org **R**

In defense of democratic rights to protest and free speech

Statement by the National Council of 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. Twenty-six-year-old Manuel Esteban Páez Terán "Tortuguita," an unarmed activist who were gunned down by police as they sat in protest, brought deadly violence to the repression. A raid was conducted on the Atlanta Solidarity Bail Fund which gave legal assistance to protestors. Fifteen hours of citizen testimony before the Atlanta City Council opposing Cop City was all but ignored: The Council passed the \$67 million funding anyway.

Freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and even opinion, is also under attack. Months after a SWAT-style midnight FBI raid on the African People's Socialist Party a few of the members were indicted, without any basis, as co-conspirators of Russia for their opposition to their own U.S. government's role in the war in Ukraine.

Recent legislation has been passed to limit peoples' access to public sidewalks and lands, city halls, and the courts. The latest assault included attempts to pursue domestic terrorism charges against some of the Cop City protestors. That set a tone for even more draconian measures to shut down and punish protestors in protection of its most valuable resource: corporate private property.

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. When the ruling class is unwilling and unable to meet the peoples' basic needs silencing dissent serves to make acts of protest more profound and the measures to quash them more extreme and violent. Criminalizing public kitchens that feed homeless people and destroying tent cities as attempts to remove signs of poverty from public view is the reaction of a failing nation at all levels.

Democracy cannot exist without the freedom of speech and assembly. Our country is ruled by a powerful class of capitalists that

sees as its enemies those who threaten its interests – both abroad and domestically. The ruling class begins its attack by targeting marginalized people – immigrants, political radicals, homeless – with limited or no resources.

Anyone can be the next target. Defense of one is defense of all. Use every avenue available. Let's call on our representatives to fight for the democracy they were elected to uphold, to assure the people's voices are heard. This could mean spending sleepless nights at city hall. It could mean what people in Atlanta are now doing through a referendum to put Cop City on the ballot in the upcoming election. This is everyone's fight. **R**