

## Reproductive freedom, health care and the fight for democracy

A Trump-appointed judge in Texas is now poised to outlaw medication abortions in all 50 states, a nationwide ban that will impact some 40 million people and block their access to reproductive health care and bodily autonomy. This latest assault makes it a practical necessity to accelerate the development of a politically unified convergence, movement or party to secure and defend reproductive justice, which includes LGBTQ liberation, as a primary basic need.

Abortion care is health care. Building this national movement will bring together local groups, and provide a structure for talking about the kind of transformation we need. This is a matter of survival in the context of a society characterized by extreme wealth and poverty and an economy driven by automation, robotics, and A.I. – technologies that are being wielded to make everyday people into a “surplus population” that has no right to live and thrive.

The reproductive justice movement is fiercely mobilizing to take the offensive against the attacks on reproductive freedom that have intensified following the Supreme Court’s decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson’s Women’s Health Organization* to strip protection of the right to abortion from the U.S. Constitution.

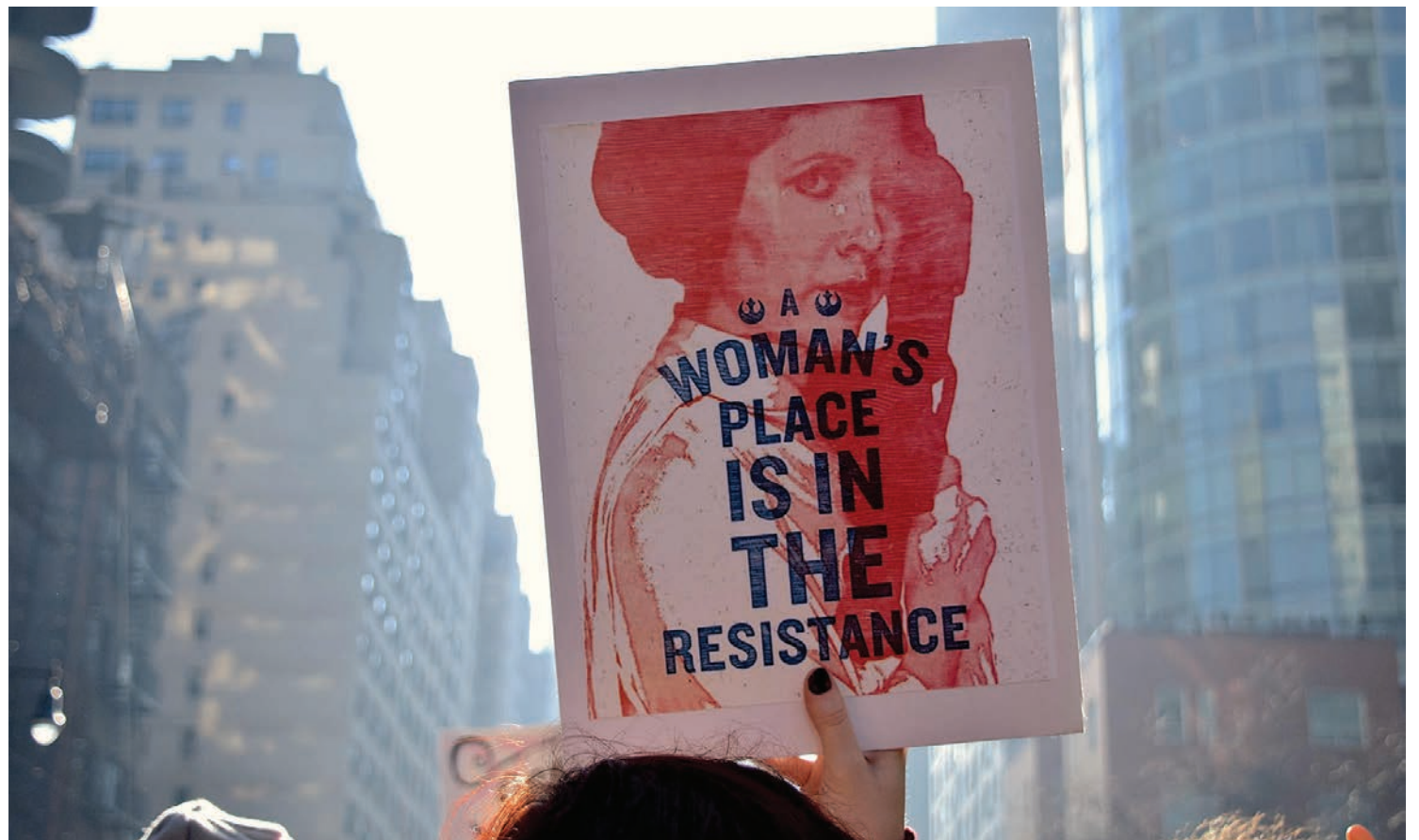
Led by youth claiming power in their own right as a social force, the movement is exposing and confronting the narrative that white supremacist/hetero-patriarchal rule – “white nationalist” rule that claims to be “moral” or “Christian” – is all Americans can expect. While the movement is intensely practical – defending clinics and setting up hotlines – it is also deeply visionary, seeing reproductive justice as integral to a world worth fighting for – a world in which reproductive freedom, and LGBTQ liberation, is woven into the very fabric of a just society.

The non-profit advocacy organization “Gen Z For Change” describes this new world as one of “people-first politics”: “Uplifting everyone is how we create a long-term, sustainable economy in which all people can thrive.” Maxwell Frost, the first Gen Z member elected to Congress and who was previously the national organizing director for March for Our Lives, has framed this revolutionary vision with stark simplicity: “We want everything for everybody.”

### THE MEANING AND IMPACT OF DOBBS

What is *Dobbs* really about? What is the impact of this raw and total reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, this judicial repudiation of a societal vision of equality and mutual respect?

It is widely recognized that this attack on



The reproductive justice movement is fiercely resisting the attacks on reproductive freedom that have intensified since the Supreme Court’s 2022 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson’s Women’s Health Organization* which ended the Constitutional right to abortion.

Image by StockSnap from Pixabay

reproductive rights, and the attack on transgender, non-conforming and gender expansive people, is a “useful tool” of the religious right, funded and driven by the 1 percent – the class of mega donors and corporations that control both major political parties. The goal of these ruling corporate interests is to create a bloc of single-issue voters, weaponizing religion in service to the corporate, fascist state, making programs like Social Security as well as civil rights and democratic participation, relics of the past. The vanquishing of electoral democracy is an essential step in this process.

In this war, the ruling class relies on and cultivates the ideology of white supremacy and hetero-patriarchy – the ideology of dominance, violence, and exploitation that underlies *Dobbs*’ attack on bodily autonomy and gender liberation. In a recent program, the author Robyn Maynard explains that this is an ideology in which land and people are “only to be extracted in the creation of profit from slavery through to capitalism ... that is exactly what has gotten us into the throes of this present moment in which most human beings are disposable. And of course, the logics of racism are what have made that palatable, and what has made that normal and possible...”

The *Dobbs* decision legitimizes forced pregnancy and obedience to the corporate masters of the religious state. It disempowers and victimizes women and pregnant people, in particular, by banning and criminalizing abortion, but of course its logic also underlies the current attacks on transgender, non-binary, and gender-expansive people. In state after state, fighters see this as an attack on people of all colors and diverse genders.

Control of the body is at stake as fascism advances. These issues were recently explored by Cheryl Rivera, writer and abolitionist activist from Brooklyn, linking reproductive rights, the coercion involved in low wage work, and mass incarceration: “You really do need control of the body everywhere you can to extract the most amount of wealth out of it.” She points out the flip side of this attack – while the *Dobbs* decision “puts us in vulnerable positions [it] also makes it much clearer to many of us that we have some common stake together. We all are at risk of criminalization, we are at risk but we don’t feel it most of the time – some of us more than others due to racial and class lines that already exist – but right now more people are going to feel that

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# The lessons of American history

The shadow of fascism's attack on American democracy is as old as it is long (*Reconstruction era lessons for fighting fascism*). The shadow goes back more than 150 years to the time after the Civil War, when an alliance of Northern and Southern capital used electoral campaigns, court rulings and violence to destroy Reconstruction governments. The promotion of white supremacy in the 21st century strongly resembles that of the 1870s as today's fascists concentrate their fire on elected officials and on the voting system itself. But capitalism in the 19th century, despite its economic depressions, had vast opportunities for expansion that simply no longer exist today. Today, the capitalist system is dying and the aims of modern fascism are broader than they were during Reconstruction. But an ever-growing emerging class is building its strength to overturn and replace the old system with a new, cooperative one.

## REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM AND A JUST SOCIETY

The reproductive justice movement is fiercely resisting the attacks on reproductive freedom following the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson's Women's Health Organization* to strip protection of the right to abortion from the U.S. Constitution. Abortion care is health care. Control of the body is at stake as fascism advances. The *Dobbs* decision legitimizes forced pregnancy and obedience to the corporate masters of the government. The goal of these ruling corporate interests is to create a bloc of single-issue voters, weaponizing religion in service to the corporate, fascist state, making programs like Social Security as well as civil rights and democratic participation, relics of the past. In state

## Inside Rally!

after state, fighters see this as an attack on people of all colors and diverse genders. Led by youth claiming power in their own right as a social force, the movement is exposing and confronting the narrative that white supremacist/hetero-patriarchal rule – “white nationalist” rule that claims to be “moral” or “Christian” – is all Americans can expect. As the movement defends clinics and sets up hotlines, it also sees reproductive justice as part of a world in which reproductive freedom, and LGBTQ liberation, is woven into the very fabric of a just society.

## PUERTO RICO ENERGY CRISIS

An obsolete public utility is privatized and its power generators are left to fail. Blackouts follow and utility bills increase seven times. The island has the resources for renewable energy, which the public favors, but the capitalists deliberately neglect. Now the utility adding a 15-year surcharge to the bill to make customers pay the utility's debt! Capitalists have profited from all of Puerto Rico's recent disasters! In *Puerto Rico energy crisis fuels class action*, the all-round fight for life is opening up working people's eyes to the need for public control of the island's land, air and water – what is called the commons. When the corporate elite seizes the commons, everybody is affected. This forces people to work and fight collectively to keep them public, opening a front in the broader class struggle for power. The fight for free access to the commons, requiring collaborating, organizing and strategizing, forges class consciousness and

unity. Revolutionaries can support the fight in Puerto Rico by showing how the continued exploitation of workers over on the island enriches the rulers on the mainland; how oppression and repression on the island is like the same things suffered on the mainland, how the growing fight against exploitation – and racism, sexism, and all forms of oppression – is fundamentally no different on the island than the one waged on the mainland.

## NEW WAVE OF LABOR MILITANCY

(“From the Editors: *Spreading strikes signal rise of new social force*”). The huge toxic derailment in East Palestine, Ohio vindicated the nation's railroad workers who in 2022 had demanded paid sick days off and the end of one-man train crews for safety reasons. President Biden and Democratic Party leaders in Washington shamefully joined the corporations in sidetracking a possible strike. In the United States the number of strikes practically doubled from 2021 to 2022, the sharpest escalation in 30 years. Militant young workers show what combining as a class can mean for winning a world that is sustainable economically, socially, politically and morally. That means a new, cooperative economy. The workers' right to organize and to vote has to be fought for on the job and in the streets.

## THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA STRIKE

In the same vein (*The UC Strike – A New Generation Rising in the Labor Movement*), the six-week movement of 48,000 academic workers against the University of California system was the largest higher education strike in U.S. history. It broke with traditional conservative trade union norms by linking with

the broader political demand for affordable housing. It exposes the creeping privatization of the UC system to become California's biggest landlord, where graduate students and post-doctorates cannot afford to live in UC housing on UC salaries. Some grads in UC housing pay 80 percent of their salary back to the University as rent. There is plenty of money in the UC system and it could pay its workers a living wage. People under age 40, both millennials and Generation Z, are increasingly anti-capitalist and increasingly demand that the United States guarantee the basic needs of life to everyone.

## TYRE NICHOLS AND POLICE TERROR

The brutal murder of Tyre Nichols, a young Black man, at the hands of a Memphis police gang brought the movement for police reform back to the spotlight and deepens the debate, says the article “*To end police terror, we need to end capitalism*.” The job of the police is to be an instrument of control by the capitalist class. Police terror is a key tactic against all poor, displaced and working people. The traffic stop of Tyre Nichols and the following vicious brutality was not a random act by rogue cops. It is part of a systematic suppression of all poor, displaced and working people regardless of the color of their skins, their gender identity or their ethnic origin. Our entire legal system, all our institutions, are set up to grow and protect private wealth that grows from robbery and corruption. If the main function of the police were to stop crime, they would arrest the capitalists, the true criminals. We do not need to reform the police; we need to end the capitalist rule of our country and create a new society organized to meet the needs of the people and the planet. **R**

## 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.

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

# The UC strike – A new generation rising in the labor movement

*By the National Public Education Committee of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America*

In November, 48,000 academic workers – graduate students and post-docs – went on strike for six weeks against the University of California, part of a new strike wave across the United States and Europe. The UC strike was the largest higher education strike in U.S. history.

Breaking with conservative trade union norms, the graduate students made housing a central demand. Traditional “union issues” pertain to conditions in a single workplace, but the housing crisis is a political imperative that affects the entire working class. Almost everyone in the United States is being victimized by predatory corporations which have turned housing into a financial commodity.

The UC academic workers struck not as students, but as a contingent workforce with little job security. They are part of a new generation that is entering the labor movement, including workers at Amazon, Starbucks, Uber, and other gig workers. Many in this rising movement understand that the tactics of labor/management cooperation can no longer work.

Graduate students do most of the teaching, grading and research throughout the 10 UC campuses. For more than a century, the UC has relied on the exploitation of academic labor to become a central institution in not only public research, but also the capitalist production process. The UC system was established in the industrial era, a time when public education was necessary to make the United States a manufacturing giant and expand capitalism. At its inception, the UC was designed to be a free public institution developed to educate huge numbers of new workers.

However, since deindustrialization, the university has become increasingly privatized. In our digital era, dominated by financial speculation, jobs are increasingly temporary and precarious. These new conditions require new modes of struggle. The strike reveals the desperate need to build a new political force in this country to counter the corporate power that drives politics today.

## LARGEST LANDLORD IN CALIFORNIA

UC graduate students are almost all rent-burdened, meaning they spend more than a third of their income on housing. Some grads in UC housing pay 80 percent of their salary back to the University as rent. Graduate students are paid around \$23,000, but they need to make roughly \$54,000 for the majority to escape rent burden in California. The UC is capable of paying its workers a living wage. Meeting all the strikers’ demands, including a \$54,000 wage for graduate students would cost only 2 to 5 percent of the UC operating budget of some \$44 billion. The university also has a \$100 billion endowment. There is plenty of money.

Rent-burdened strikers demonstrated

in front of the mansions of UC chancellors who recently received six-figure raises! As the strike reached finals week, grads occupied buildings across their campuses. In Riverside, they seized the administration building and declared it to be Graduate Student Housing!

For decades, California has steadily cut funding to the university while expecting that it would admit more students and charge them more along the way. The cuts are designed to be replaced with corporate grants that give industry control of the system’s lucrative research. The scale of the state’s disinvestment has been breathtaking. In 1980-81, 87 percent of the university’s core budget came from Sacramento. Four decades later, state funding had plummeted to no more than 39 percent of the core budget. Making matters worse, much of the lost revenue has been replaced by income from student tuition, student fees, and ... charging students rent.

UC is not only the largest landlord in California, but it has actively contributed to a housing crisis. University housing controls nearly 150,000 beds. UC also manages \$5 billion dollars in real estate investments, including properties they own directly and rent out for profit in UC communities.

Before it became heavily privatized, UC housing was inexpensive, but this is no longer the case. In July, the UC regents increased rents by up to 60 percent at the UC Santa Cruz campus, after flipping a 100-plus unit apartment building less than two miles away. The building was purchased through a shell company called Regency Properties Broadway, a strategy used by large landlords like UC to conceal their identities and evade liability. Tenants figured out on their own that this shell company was registered to the same address as the Oakland headquarters of the UC Regents.

This investment strategy has proven so lucrative that UC’s long-term goal is to increase its real estate positions by nearly 50 percent. The UC Regents have even proposed establishing their own property management company. One of its objectives would be to manage *for-profit* housing adjacent to their own campuses. According to notes from a UC regents meeting, UC is always “looking for opportunities to invest near UC campuses.” Just after the strike ended the UC invested \$4 billion into Blackstone’s (world’s largest landlord) Real Estate Investment Trust (BREIT), which owns four corporate student housing

companies.

## BUSINESS-UNION SABOTAGE

The strikers were organized under the United Auto Workers (UAW). For generations, the top leadership of this union has adopted the business-friendly policies of corporate unionism that dominate the trade union movement today. They run the unions with top-down corporate policies and constrain workers’ demands to the narrowest limits that suit corporate profits.

As the strike reached finals week, when the grads had the most power by withholding grades and threatening UC’s accreditation, the UAW leadership caved. It reduced its demand for a wage increase to \$34,000 by October 2024, and then stampeded the membership to accept the offer.

The UAW also accepted a two-tier contract, where grads in the elite schools get paid more than others! Every trade unionist knows that two-tier contracts split the union and paralyze the membership. Many union members will not even see the wage increase because it will be spread over two

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## Spreading strikes signal rise of new social force

### From the Editors

U.S. strikes increased 91 percent from 2021 to 2022, the largest one-year escalation in 30 years according to Bloomberg. The global pandemic is exacerbating the ongoing crisis of electronic production, producing a wave of world-wide labor activism. Young fighters in particular reflect a new consciousness of what “combining” as a class can mean for a world where extreme poverty, oppression, war and climate change threaten world stability.

As the George Floyd rebellions were beginning a new era of uniting the world, U.S. wages in so-called “good jobs” continued to stagnate, as they have since the crisis of 2008. Job conditions also deteriorated, indeed become life-threatening. Railroad workers proposed launching an enormous national strike in 2022, after years of fighting against the dangers of one-man crews, and no paid sick days. For the first time in over 100 years, Railroad Workers United also demanded public ownership of railroads in the United States, Canada and Mexico. After a large number of union members rejected a tentative agreement

with the railroads, Congress intervened, overriding the rejected agreement into a bill that President Biden signed into law, in effect negating the workers’ right to strike.

On February 3, a Norfolk Southern train derailed in East Palestine, Ohio, leaving not only workers, but an entire community in a firebomb of toxic smoke. Clearly, the fight for life and limb in the workplace also affects the health and welfare of everyone, as the strikes and struggles of nurses and other workers during the pandemic also proved. Living under COVID may have created a new consciousness of “essential workers,” but also the recognition that too many “essential” working-class lives are being lost.

Literally fighting for their lives, nurses, taxi drivers, teachers and students have joined warehouse and other workers organizing to fight the most powerful corporate employers the world has ever seen. Some fights result in significant gains. But often contracts result in two-tier pay systems, providing wage gains for older workers but not for new hires, leaving younger workers to face a world of increasing temporary precariat jobs.

As the capitalist system was expanding, many of our grandparents and great-grandparents of all genders, ethnicities, colors

and immigration statuses, fought for the right to strike. Millions won better living conditions as a result. Those fights were founded not in privilege, but survival in a system antagonistic to the working class. As capitalism enters the stage of its crisis and death, it is increasingly revealing this nature.

Global financial capitalists at this year’s World Economic Forum in Davos warned of a new “polycrisis” in 2023, causing “inflation, cost-of-living crises, trade wars, capital outflows from emerging markets, widespread social unrest, geopolitical confrontation and the specter of nuclear war.” Yet, in a world where 1 billion people go hungry and the richest 1 percent own nearly two-thirds of all new wealth created since 2020, Oxfam reports that most of the world’s governments plan public sector spending cuts, including to health care and education.

It’s time for a new, cooperative economy. The rights to organize and to vote are key to working-people’s struggles, whether in the workplace or the streets. Our class wins strength both through combination and consciousness. Younger workers demand a world that is sustainable economically, socially, politically and morally! **R**

# Reconstruction era lessons for fighting fascism

This is not the time to become complacent about our democratic rights to protest and to vote. Although some fascist politicians were defeated in the 2022 midterm elections, others are rising in their places. The subjective expressions may change, but the danger of fascism in America is systemic. The Supreme Court is still busy stripping the American people of their rights, and armed militia groups continue to recruit and show up to intimidate peaceful protestors.

## PARALLELS WITH RECONSTRUCTION

Many people are not aware that today's attempts to undermine and subvert democracy bear a striking resemblance to those used to overthrow the Reconstruction governments of the South in the 1870s. An alliance of Northern and Southern capital at that time organized a sustained series of electoral campaigns, court rulings, and acts of political violence to destroy the limited but unprecedented democracy practiced by Reconstruction governments.

The violence began even before Reconstruction governments were firmly established. Historian Eric Foner described in *A Short History of Reconstruction* how the Ku Klux Klan was founded in 1866 as a social club in Tennessee and soon spread across the South as an instrument of terror used against Republican leaders both black and white. Foner's description of the Klan sounds eerily similar to the modern militia movement:

The Klan, even in its heyday, did not possess a well-organized structure or clearly defined regional leadership. In effect, the Klan was a military force serving the interests of the Democratic party, the planter class and all those who desired the restoration of white supremacy. It aimed to destroy the Republican Party's infrastructure, undermine the Reconstruction state, reestablish control of the Black labor force, and restore racial subordination in every aspect of Southern life.

One of the ironies of history was that in the 1870s, it was the radical wing of the **Republican Party** that was fighting for multi-racial democracy, while the **Democrats** were struggling to suppress it by any means necessary, including violence.

Klan violence was specifically organized to target local Republican leaders all across the South with kidnappings, torture, rape, and murder. It attacked mainly African Americans, but white Republicans as well: three white "scalawag" Georgia legislators were murdered and ten others driven from their homes. Newspaper offices were burned down. When Republicans won office in Laurens County, South Carolina, white mobs killed 13 African Americans and drove 150 mainly African American residents out of their homes, including an elected judge and a Black legislator. In Meridian, Mississippi when three African American leaders were arrested for "incendiary" speeches, pro-Klan militants broke into the courtroom, killed the Republican judge and two of the defendants, and proceeded to lead rioting that murdered almost every black leader in the town. When Republicans won narrow victories in key South Carolina counties in 1870, organized mobs beat hundreds of African Americans, murdered eleven, and forced thousands to flee from their homes.

The level of violence today does not match the scale, impunity, and sheer horror of 19th and 20th century Southern violence, but the similarity of its forms should serve as a warning to stop them now before they get worse. Klan activities in the 1870s were condoned and excused by the Democratic leadership:

Prominent Democrats either minimized the Klan's activities or offered thinly disguised rationalizations for them. Some denied the organization's existence altogether, dismissing reports of violence as electoral propaganda from a Republican "slander mill." Others characterized the victims as thieves, adulterers, or men of 'bad character' who deserved their fate.

Elections were frequently disputed, and disputes were often resolved by armed conflict, as happened in 1873 at the Colfax Massacre in Louisiana. On the eve of Mississippi's 1875 election, night riders drove freedmen's families from their homes and threatened to kill them if they tried to vote. Democrats won by seizing ballot boxes and destroying them, or replacing Republican ballots with their own. Republicans who still held office were forced to resign under threat of assassination. The Democratic-dominated legislature then impeached black Lieutenant Governor Alexander Davis and forced Governor Adelbert Ames to resign and flee the state.

Most of all, violence raised in its starkest form the question of the legitimacy that haunted the Reconstruction state. Indeed, as a former Confederate officer observed, it was precisely the Klan's objective "to defy the reconstructed State Governments, to treat them with contempt, and show that they have no real existence."

## BANNON-TRUMP FASCISTS

This is in fact a similar playbook to that being followed by the Bannon-Trump section of the fascists today. Like the Klan of the 1870s, they are concentrating their fire on elected officials and on the voting system itself. Their recent electoral setbacks have not deterred them from their plans, and in any case, new fascists are arising every day to take up where others may leave off. By delegitimizing democratic elections, they intend to open the door for political decision-making by terroristic dictatorship.

Political science professor Barbara F. Walter points out how political violence works. "They want people to be confused when violence starts happening," she said. "They want people to not understand what's going on, to think that nobody's in charge. Because then they can send their goons into the streets and convince people that they're the ones in charge." In fact, this was the aim of the

January 6 insurrectionists, and they have every intention of trying it again whenever the occasion arises.

But militias are only the cutting edge of the fascist offensive. They cannot operate without a social base. The ruling class has launched a war of ideas to build that base, spending a record \$16.7 billion on the 2022 state and federal elections alone, not including the covert fascist narratives in mainstream media, or the overt ones in social media platforms.

## FASCISM WON'T WORK IN THE U.S.

The role of revolutionaries is not only to warn the working class about the dangers it faces, but also to deeply assess the entire economic and political situation and point out the path to victory. Fascists in the United States may initiate a period of great turmoil and violence, but they cannot hold power for long. The role of social media and use of telephone video cameras makes the gruesome violence of Klan-like organizations impossible to conceal or minimize today. One video of the George Floyd murder moved 26 million people into the streets.

Demographic trends in the United States make extended fascist control impossible. The coming transition to a majority-minority population complicates the ability to use the historic pillar of white supremacy to divide and conquer the working class as effectively as was done in the nineteenth century. More important than mere population change, however, is the economic transformation. The emergence of a new class of workers separated from the formal economy is removing some of the white privileges that made unity impossible in earlier eras. The trend toward an equality of poverty of large sections of white, Latino, and Asian workers with their African American counterparts makes it increasingly difficult to isolate and attack them, the way nineteenth century fascists were able to do. As

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# To end police terror, we need to end capitalism

Tyre Nichols is another victim of the relentless assault of the police on human dignity and life.

Nichols' brutal murder in January brought the movement for police reform and accountability back into public view and also widens and deepens the debate. A key issue is that Black police officers viciously beat a Black man to death. This act cannot be attributed solely to racist cops, although white supremacy and racism are endemic to policing, but also to the role of police in society, regardless of the color of the cops' skin, their gender or ethnic origins.

In order to end police terror and violence in our communities, we must understand what the police are and what they are designed to do. The police are bodies of armed people and are part of the State, the instrument of class control, force and violence in

our government. The main role of the State is to defend capitalist private property.

Whoever controls the State, controls the police.

In the United States, the primary job of the police is to protect the capitalists' exploitation and continued accumulation of wealth and to prevent the American people from achieving the goals of the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Let's be clear. Our entire legal system, all our institutions, are set up to grow and protect *private* wealth that grows from robbery and corruption. If the main function of the police were to stop crime, they would arrest

the capitalists, the true criminals. Instead:

- if starving people are in front of a grocery store, police will protect the food, not distribute it.
- If unhoused people are demanding access to empty homes, police will protect the owners
- If we are protesting environmental destruction, police will protect the polluters
- If ...

Terror is a key tactic that the police use to do their job. Thus, the traffic stop of Tyre Nichols and the following vicious brutality was not a random act by rogue cops. It is part of a systematic suppression of all poor, displaced and working people regardless of the color of their skins, their gender identity or their ethnic origin. The history of our country puts African American people at the heart of

the growing displaced class that must abolish private property to survive.

As the founders of the United States wrote in the Declaration of Independence:

"That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed – That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

We do not need to reform the police; we need to end the capitalist rule of our country and create a new society organized to meet the needs of the people and the planet. **R**

# Puerto Rico energy crisis fuels class action

Since the industrial revolution, the world has run on fossil fuel: oil, coal, gas and hydroelectrical energy. Capital depends on it, wages war over it, bloodily oppresses and exploits humanity for it, and profits by it. Fossil fuels come from deep underground. Capitalism is born from stripping the people of land, air, and water – the commons, exploiting them and charging workers for their use. But there has always been resistance (not coincidentally, “commons” is the root word of “communism”). Puerto Rico’s so-called energy crisis today has its deepest roots in this dynamic, still shaping the present. Its people are living through the privatization not only of public goods, like the energy grid, but also of their beaches, parks, rivers, mountains, coastal waters, and skies.

And they are fighting back. The struggle over the public domain is a class struggle, also being waged over here and globally. But a key frontline for us right now is in that small, combative island, yielding lessons, setting an example and giving us inspiration. One such lesson is that the nature of the “energy crisis” is inseparable from that of the “debt crisis,” and that both are, essentially, fabricated tools of capital in its voracious pursuit of profit. Puerto Rico has the resources for renewable energy, which its people favor, but it only accounts for 3 percent of electricity production.

## ENERGY AND DEBT IN PUERTO RICO: CAPITALISM AT WORK, PEOPLE PAY

The heart of the local economy in Puerto Rico is the energy industry, for the profit of capital and the working class’s misfortune. Over the last few years, it went from being a public utility to one that is owned by LUMA Energy, a private consortium based in Canada and Texas which runs the island’s power transmission and distribution system. Now the 45-to-60-year-old obsolete and failing power generation units are going private, while clean, renewable energy remains neglected. Governments, big business, corrupt bureaucrats and politicians, financial speculators, and venture capitalists have all colluded in this process. The militant energy workers union UTIER put up a heroic battle against this steal, but could not win alone. For people, it has meant blackouts and ever-higher electrical bills, with seven increases recently. Now, adding insult to injury, the government has added a “temporary” (15 years!) surcharge of \$19 to the monthly utility bill to service the debt enriching the exploiters – reduced from \$23 when people protested.

All this comes on the heels of a 16-year assault on the class, a period of economic devastation and job loss, crumbling infrastructure, dismantling of social services, rising costs, natural disasters without protection, and the onslaught of Covid. Capitalists have profited from it all. The latest irrational linkage of a utility bill to governmental debt in a warped way reflects a real truth: Both the “energy crisis” and “debt crisis” are capitalist fabrications to suck more profit out of the beleaguered class. Workers have suffered these

blows, but they have also proven to be resilient – and fighting mad.

## A BATTLE FRONT: AGUADILLA RESIDENTS’ FIGHT FOR THEIR BEACHES IS A CLASS RESPONSE

Through mass action and organization, the people have ousted two governors (Luis Fortuño, in 2013, and Ricardo Roselló Nieves in 2019) and put the overlord Financial Control Board, or *Junta*, on notice. Abandoned by the government, by the corporate elite and by the entire ruling system, they have mobilized in networks of mutual help, formed co-operatives and rallied around flash points of struggles for services or community rights. The fight for the commons is not new, as successful campaigns in the past halted plans for exploiting copper deposits and, twice, for building gas pipelines. Now, the resistance has intensified and grown.

One flash point is the public beaches, with confrontations occurring on all four of the island’s coasts. A spearhead is the fight in Aguadilla, on Puerto Rico’s breathtaking northwest coast. Its land, waters and skies along the beautiful coast have provided residents livelihood, nourishment, and a space for recreation. Real estate interests, venture and financial speculators, and the usual cabal of bureaucrats and politicians have coveted it for years, looking to privatize and build luxury high-rise buildings and resorts for the wealthy. But “the locals” (the exploiters’ term) have defended their beaches and impeded development, at times clashing with hired security forces. On January 29, a security guard shot a protester in the leg with live ammunition.

## THE FIGHT FOR THE COMMONS IS A FIGHT FOR THE CLASS

What makes the fight for public beaches an expression of class struggle? In the era of industrialization, fighting for communism often centered on fighting for a party of the working class. In our age of powerful computers and robotics, the Puerto Ricans’ struggle to control the fruits of their labor is centering on defense of the commons. It is a battle for the commons against privatization and the corporate elite. When they seize the commons, everybody is affected. This forces people to work and fight collectively to keep them public, opening a front in the broader class struggle for power.

The fight for public beaches is one against capitalism, and the fight against capitalism is a fight for life. When corporations poison the land, air and water, people cannot safely eat the food, breathe the air, drink the water. Their lives, then, depend on safeguarding the commons. Hence, the fight for free access to the commons, requiring collaborating, organizing and strategizing, forges class consciousness and unity. Environmental crisis, “energy crisis,” “debt crisis” – all are part of one fundamental calamity: the ripping away of the commons from the people for the sake of corporate profit. It is opening up working people’s eyes, riling them up and setting them in motion. It left people with no other choice in

the face of governmental collusion and repression. In the process, they are learning that the battle for control of the commons can only be waged as a class. They will discover it can only be won by taking control of the means of production.

## THE LEAGUE’S ROLE

Aristotle saw four basic elements: air, land, water, and fire. For us, fire is the class struggle. We can support the fight in Puerto Rico by showing our class here how the continued exploitation of workers over there enriches our own mainland rulers, how their oppres-

sion and repression are like those suffered here, how the growing fight against exploitation – and racism, sexism, and all forms of oppression – is fundamentally no different over there than the one waged over here. At this moment, a frontline of our mutual struggle is on that small island fighting to protect the commons against corporate greed and fascism and for life, dignity, fundamental rights and the measure of joy we all deserve. The very word implies it, from “commons” (natural resources belonging to all) to “communism” (social wealth is owned in common and distributed according to need). ■

## Reconstruction era lessons for fighting fascism

*Continued from page 4*

the Floyd rebellion showed, even the degree of isolation imposed on African Americans when mass incarceration was ramped up in the 1980s and ’90s is no longer as possible.

Above all, the growth in the sheer numbers of workers displaced from production – or never allowed to enter production – is making the American working class impossible for the system to contain or control. Today’s movement for basic needs will ultimately experience betrayal by corporate Democrats, just as Reconstruction was betrayed by corporate Republicans. The difference is that capitalism in the nineteenth century – despite temporary depressions – had vast opportunities for expansion that simply no longer exist today. When today’s automation reduces labor, it also reduces the overall rate of profit and therefore restricts the system’s ability to attract investment in new production, causing the prolonged economic stagnation and de-

cline we have experienced since 2008.

The revolutionary movement today lives at the intersection of the fight for democracy and the fight for basic needs. The millions being cast aside by the corporate economy are step by step beginning to organize and understand that they are a social force. They have the power to overturn this dying system and to build a new one.

The next steps are to work with newly elected progressive Congressmembers and state and local officials to amplify the movement for basic needs. The time has come to create new policy doors, like the various versions of social housing and Medicare for All, for the movement to drive through and make and consolidate gains. The 2024 election will be decided not just in the ballot box, but all around it – in the streets, in lawsuits, in civil disobedience, and possibly in pitched battles at polling places. The responsibility of revolutionaries is to prepare the people to win. ■

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# Reproductive freedom, health care and the fight for democracy

Continued from page 1

you are actually under capitalism, some more than others, but more than ever before.”

## MOBILIZATION AND VICTORY

“I want to tell anybody that’s younger than me – stop listening to some of the grownups – and the advice that we’ve been given: ‘don’t hold rallies, don’t protest, don’t counterprotest, don’t make demands for the things that you really want.’ Where has that led us? Into a slide of Christo-fascism, not just here in Kansas but across the nation. I’m all done with that advice. There is no reason we are not outside of abortion clinics yelling, ‘We love you, we are proud of you, go get what you need, your community loves you and we will be here for you.’”

With these words, Melinda Lavon, mom,

midwife, DSA leader, and chair of Vote No Kansas, describes the fight to defeat the referendum in August of 2022 that would have stripped abortion rights out of the Kansas state constitution. This victory was followed in 2022 by parallel victories in other states. Youth turned out overwhelmingly in these campaigns.

In the words of Rija Nazir, a recent graduate of Wichita State College and lead organizer of the Vote Neigh Campaign in Kansas that was instrumental in bringing out the youth vote: “If there is anything that the primary taught us, it is that the Democrats will not save us – we will save us. Not just voting for the lesser of two evils, but voting for who we think will save us.” Fighters like Rija Nazir are using the power of vote as one form of protest and a demonstration of political

independence.

## THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY

Park Cannon serves as a member of the board of SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, “a multiracial movement rooted in Black Liberation and Indigenous Resistance, which centers on Black women and recognizes that only when Black women, transgender, and gender-expansive people are safe, free, and thriving, is liberation possible.” The term “reproductive justice” was first coined by this movement in 1994.

Young, Black, and queer, Park Cannon is also a member of the Georgia legislature, elected from Atlanta. In March, 2022, she was arrested and jailed because she insisted upon knocking on the door and on demanding to be admitted to Governor Brian Kemp’s office

as he signed Senate Bill 202, a comprehensive attack on voting rights.

After she was released from jail, Park Cannon tweeted, “I am not the first Georgian to be arrested for fighting voter suppression. I’d love to say I’m the last, but we know that isn’t true. ... But someday soon that last person will step out of jail for the last time and breathe a first breath knowing that no one will be jailed again for fighting for the right to vote.”

Park Cannon’s courageous response to the attempt to criminalize resistance to voter suppression is a powerful example of the way that the reproductive justice movement – a movement in which she is herself a leader – has taken on the fight for political power that we must have as we look toward building a unified national movement. **R**

## The UC strike – A new generation rising in the labor movement

Continued from page 3

years and since grad students are an itinerant labor force that regularly moves on. The union also dumped demands for regular cost of living adjustments, disability access, cops off campus, smaller class sizes and the right to strike in solidarity with other workers.

This conciliation raises the bigger question: Why did UC go so hard and why did the UAW cave? The issue is one of political power and corporate profits. People under 40, both millennials and Generation Z are increasingly anti-capitalist and increasingly demand that the United States guarantee the basic needs of life to everyone. In the eyes of the corpo-

rate world, the demand for doubling their salaries was unprecedented and could not be allowed to stand.

Grad students were the backbone of the strike and envisioned a radically different university system. They demanded that the UAW address the needs of students who are being pushed out. Many grad students and UC students recognize the gravity of the multiple crises that threaten humanity. Higher education, and public education in general, creates people and builds the next generation, one that has no choice but to transform the world. A public education system which is accessible, vibrant and democratic is an immense threat

to an economic system which cannot resolve the crises it creates.

The same financiers who are profiting off commodified housing are buying out and slowly destroying public education, from pre-K to K-12 to higher ed. They are making life ever more precarious for hundreds of millions in this country. This is symptomatic of a system that intends to support private profit and have government get out of the business of supporting people. That is what is behind voter suppression, killer cops, a country flooded with guns and drugs, denial of health care and public education, denial of abortion rights and of personal control over one’s own body,

war, environmental destruction, the privatization of water, gutting of Social Security and shrinking of the government.

The result then is a rising surge of millions of people today who are in fact an unprecedented social force that has no choice but to become aware of its political power. During the strike, the UC grad students represented this rising political consciousness. Win or lose, each battle, each step forward drives home the lessons that humanity will have to fight politically to make public everything that corporations deny us.

In the words of the recent Declaration of Santiago, Chile, the future *will be public!* **R**



The police behave like an army at war with the people. – Read story on page 4

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