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# **Socialist Worker**

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**Capitalism is killing us  
AND THEY WANT TO  
MAKE US PAY FOR IT**



# Conservative coalition: cracks and cranks

**C**anadians are used to thinking that the Conservative Party of Canada we see today is one of the founding parties of the nation. In fact it has only been around a relatively short time, since 2004.

The old Tory party of the Orange Order staggered out of the 50's and finally exploded with the historic defeat of the Lyin' Brian Mulroney government in the 1993 election. Those Tories went from an unshakable majority of 156 seats to just 2 seats – a rump if ever there was one.

The next election led to the debut of detestable Preston Manning, and his Reform Party. Essentially the western and more reactionary half of the old Tory coalition, the Reform Party was a hotbed of racism and bigotry. Manning inherited his influence from his father, Ernest, a conservative evangelist who had been quick to harness the power of a new media – radio – to build a mass following. That Manning was Premier of Alberta for over 20 years, winning 7 straight elections, as head of the Social Credit party.

In a nutshell, elder Manning's politics were a stew of theocracy and corporatism, a proto-fascist coalition ruled over by a leader wily enough to know that political survival required keeping the bigotry down to dog-whistle volume. Enough to know that Manning junior may have been Stephen Harper's boss, but Manning senior was always his role model.

## The stinky Winds of Change

Following Mulroney's spectacular demise, it became clear that unless a new right-wing coalition could be cobbled together, yoking the anti-francophone, anti-abortion bigots from Alberta with the more pragmatic fiscal conservatives of the east, the Liberal Party would continue to be re-elected until the crack of doom. So in 1996 two young, up-and-coming right wingers organized the first of a series of Unite the Right conferences, "The Winds of Change". Their names: David Frum and Ezra Levant.

After a few false starts (the Canadian Alliance years and that brief, shining moment when they decided to call themselves the Canadian Reform Alliance Party, aka CRAP) they finally found the right political figurehead for their project: Stephen Harper. Harper was canny enough to ditch the Reform Party name, and led the creation of the Conservative Party of Canada we know and loathe today.

Harper adopted Ernest Manning's method: build an unassailable base in Alberta founded on a mixture of free-market economics of union busting, privatization and eroding public services, and anti-abortion, anti-immigration, anti-LGBTQ bigotry known as "social conservatism". And like Manning, Harper knew that achieving his economic ends required keeping a tight lid on the zealots among his followers.

With his grim-set visage, soulless dead fish eyes and mannequin style helmet haircut, Harper was the polar opposite of a Donald Trump. But he was ruthless, clever, and ruled his new creation with an iron fist. He appealed to the far-right yahoos of

the Reform Party, but warned them that winning their aims (recriminalizing abortion, rolling back same-sex rights, etc.) would take time, and need to be done in tiny incremental steps. His backbenches were populated by the evangelical far-right, but only rarely did he allow them off the leash to propose some private

that ousted him: Harper went from the austere autocrat who disdained wild cards like Rob and Doug Ford, to a desperate figure begging for their support.)

And after those 10 years the "social conservative" bigots looked at their score sheets and felt like they have been manipulated and used

tured by Trump style activists.

Did they or did they not recognize same-sex marriage? Was climate change real or not? Were they going to reopen the abortion debate? Andrew Scheer couldn't give a straight answer to any of these questions, came out looking like a two-faced faker. How could it be



member's bill aimed at restricting freedom of choice. These often came to naught, but the trial balloons were meant to slowly win over Canadian voters who in their majority support those freedoms, and to keep the bigots in line.

In a chilling interview to faithful after he stepped down as Party leader and "retired", Harper was candid about how he went about being boss tory:

"I could have wielded a lot more power. I think I still easily could be leader of my party if I wanted to. I mean I'm de facto the founder of my party. And I could have turned the party into essentially a personal political vehicle if I had wanted. But that was not my goal. My goal in life – I'm driven by my political conservatism – my goal in life was not just to win an election and govern, my goal was to establish a long term conservative institutional force that would be a long term contender for power in government. So I was determined to establish an institutional organization that would outlive me, and would not need me down the road."

It is interesting that he emphasized his own lack of demagoguery – but all that took place in a time before Trump.

Harper had managed to rule for a decade through his Machiavellian plan, but as with any government too long in the saddle he began to sink beneath the weight of his own party's corruption and a popular demand for change. (I remember the final days of the election campaign

– which was accurate. No new restrictions on abortion. Conservatives (some of them) marching in Pride parades. Indigenous people asserting their rights and obstructing the boom-town exploitation of natural resources. They were tired of loyally sitting in the back row, biting their tongues.

## Torn between Harper and Trump

And along came Trump. He espoused most of their economic goals, touting business, slashing regulations with reckless disregard for science or social need, delivering massive tax cuts for the corporate elite. And he wasn't afraid to marshal racism and bigotry to fuel support. He embraced the flag like a spaniel dry-humping its master's leg. He lied brazenly, but he said what the social conservatives wanted to hear so they didn't mind.

North of the border, the put-upon fringe dwellers of the Tory party – Derek Sloan, Brad Trost, Michelle Rempel, Michael Cooper, et al – looked at Trump's success with envy. Maybe now was the time for them to rise.

Brad Trost ran for CPC leadership in 2017, and finished 4th. Most of the social conservatives supported Maxime Bernier, who lost by a whisker to Andrew Scheer in a scandal-plagued contest. But in the subsequent election the Tories were sunk, in part because of Scheer's obvious inadequacy, but also because they fielded too many out-and-out bigots as candidates. More and more local riding associations were cap-

otherwise; he was leader of a two-faced fake party.

Following their election loss they did the easy thing – blamed Scheer and tossed him overboard and then held another leadership contest, this one won by Elmer Fudd impersonator Erin O'Toole. The social conservative torch bearer this time was Derek Sloan. Sloan had no use for dog whistle politics; he openly opposed abortion rights, backed conversion therapy for LGBTQ youth, and denied climate change was real.

Moreover, in the midst of the pandemic, Sloan ridiculed public health measures and opposed masking. He took the opportunity to whip up some anti-Asian hatred, playing the Trumpian "China flu" card and insinuating that Canada's Chief Medical Officer Theresa Tam was a traitor. This came amid an effort to brand the Tories as the "tough on China" party, and it is worth remembering that Erin O'Toole defended his comments.

Although many delegates stated their admiration for his politics, they rightly questioned his electability and backed other candidates. Sloan won just less than 15% support on the first ballot and dropped out of the race. After the race was over Sloan continued to push the boundary of acceptable bigotry in the Tory party. The discovery that he had accepted a financial donation from Canada's best-known Nazi, Paul Fromm gave Erin O'Toole the excuse to kick the potential rival out of caucus. Sloan currently sits as an independent MP.

## Whither O'Toole

O'Toole was chosen Tory leader with the support of many social conservatives, anxious to keep the hated Peter MacKay – the last vestige of the old progressive conservatives – out. Once in the saddle O'Toole began a PR campaign to convince voters that he and the Tory party were different. He tried to reproduce Stephen Harper's trick of keeping the social conservatives muzzled.

How's that going? The climate change issue is a bellwether. Polls showed that their lack of a clear policy on climate change lost the Tories many votes outside of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Entering its recent policy convention, O'Toole made a speech aimed at both Tory delegates and voters at large, in which he pledged to come up with an action plan for climate change.

Tory delegates rewarded him by voting 54% to 46% against recognizing that climate change was real. O'Toole issued a statement to the effect that he didn't care what his own party thought, they were going to campaign as being "willing to act" on climate change. His braintrust released a video clip of O'Toole pacing the stage like a caged tiger, talking about how he takes environmental stewardship most seriously because he is "a conservative". None of them noticed it was released on April Fool's Day to a fresh round of ridicule.

How will that sit with potential voters? Is this a party of backward bigots, or one which has to suppress the ideas of its own majority for cynical, pragmatic purposes? Either way, they lose.

O'Toole has already proven he is no Stephen Harper when it comes to papering over the cracks and cranks in his unite-the-right coalition. He needed the support of the far-right for his leadership bid, but was quick to veer toward the middle once elected. But he didn't command the fearsome presence of Harper, required to drag his party with him.

So April finds O'Toole rubbing elbows with a vivid assortment of bigots, haters and conspiracy theorists at the "Canada Strong and Free" conference (this is the same old Manning Centre conference to empower and mis-educate the Canadian far-right, rebranded to appeal to the anti-vax, anti-mask crowd). There he shares the spotlight with the creepy like of Tony "Dick Pic" Clement, former UK Tory PM David "Pig Fucker" Cameron, Islamophobic author Douglas Murray, and noted anti-LGBTQ crusader Tanya Granic Allen. Oh yes, Brian Lilley will be there too, although it isn't clear whether he represents The Sun or the Doug Ford conservatives. Here, away from prying eyes, O'Toole can work at shoring up his support from the "Make Canada Great Again" crowd.

Readers who know me know I detest the Trudeau Liberals. But if I were them, I would be rubbing my hands with glee at the prospect of an election campaign against this creaky, foundering coalition. The cracks are widening, the cranks are feeling frisky, and the leader is revealing himself to be a hapless nebbish. Stephen Harper's life goal is in serious jeopardy.



# Biden, Trudeau and lesser evilism

by: **Brian Champ**

**T**here is an aura of euphoria for many people in the US, echoed around the world, since Joe Biden took office. The feeling of relief at being rid of Trump's toxicity; the far right dog whistle politics; his demonizing of Black Lives Matter and antifa; the Muslim ban; his climate change denial and pushing of pipeline and drilling projects; his Covid denial, then obstruction of effective measures; his countless misogynistic & racist remarks; his banning of transgendered people from the military; his dismantling environmental protections; etc. There is justified excitement that this has ended.

And there is reason for some optimism. The Biden White House has changed course on the Covid response, taking public health measures seriously. He has pledged to Take Action to Advance Racial Equity and Support Underserved Communities, and offered relief to those suffering under the pandemic by expanding some programs and relaxing qualifying requirements like allowing unemployment insurance for those refusing unsafe work. He has re-joined the Paris Climate Accord and canceled Keystone XL, signaling a sea change on the climate. He is touting a \$2 trillion infrastructure project as the "new" new deal and it will likely create jobs for working people.

In addition, the change of tone from racism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia to one that is more respectful of all people is to be welcomed, as is the election of Kamala Harris as vice-president, the first time a woman or a Black person has held that office, and the expansion of the democratic socialists bloc in Congress.

For some in the media this represents a seachange, such as Will Hutton of the Guardian extolling Biden's "radical centrism" as leading the US (along with Britain and the rest of the world) to a Covid-free, climate-friendly future of pros-

perity for all. But the expectations will not be matched by reality.

While canceling Keystone XL is a good step on the climate, it should only be the first to be followed quickly by canceling all other pipelines and oil and gas subsidies to fund investment in a transition to renewable energy. Massive funding for public transit, energy retrofits and the greening of cities as outlined in the infrastructure plan are helpful but in pursuit of cross partisan support, Biden will very likely water down the plans because they run counter to the powerful oil and gas interests that remain influential, and will be resisted by industries that rely on burning fossil fuels to produce their profits.

In addition, the failure of Biden to put forward a "Medicare for All" platform means that many in the US will still no longer have access to affordable healthcare.

As for the economic woes of the US, like much of the world, 2020 has been an horrific year for the economy in general. Rich corporations and individuals, particularly those whose services have been made more valuable by the social distancing measures (e.g. Amazon) have gotten richer, while many in the US working class have been driven to the wall. While some of the measures Biden has introduced will have some effect this year, they will do nothing to halt the ongoing instability in the economy.

And while Biden has appointed an Indigenous woman, Deb Haaland of the Pueblo of Laguna in New Mexico, as secretary of the interior in an attempt to represent the diversity of the nation in stark

contrast to the Trump cabinet, these changes at the top don't necessarily make for meaningful changes in policies. The cabinet as a whole is contradictory, including left and right and Biden has talked about ruling by reaching across the aisle.

## **Biden and Trudeau**

For Canadians, this situation is reminiscent of the election of Trudeau in 2015, after the hard politics of the Harper years. Trudeau's photo ops while he met with Syrian

plan. Last February, Wet'suwet'en land defenders and their allies Shut Down Canada by blocking rails, ports and roadways, declaring that "Reconciliation is Dead" in the face of the continuing colonialism on which the settler state of Canada is founded.

And on the question of foreign policy and the refugee crisis, Trudeau's government is spending billions on new warships and fighter jets which caused the wars that led to the crisis in the first place.

The epitome of the Liberal hypocrisy can be seen in their budgets which are giving paltry amounts to, for example, programs to address systemic racism in Canada while simultaneously spending billions on new border protections and the RCMP - two of the main drivers of that racism.



refugees at the border are a stark contrast to the, "barbaric cultural practices hotline" that was being proposed by the Conservatives.

Trudeau, like Biden also made a point of making his cabinet more representative. He talked of Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, called for an inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women that had been the rallying cry for Idle No More under Harper. He brought Canada into the Paris Agreement on climate change after Harper's denial.

But on all of these issues, the Liberals have failed to confront the real issues.

Instead of heeding expert advice from climate scientists that for a livable future the oil needs to stay in the ground, Trudeau bought TMX as the backbone of his climate

## **Capitalist political parties**

This is not surprising. The reality is that under capitalism, governments act as the, "executive committee of the bourgeoisie" and their policies always reflect the interests of the rich. There are examples of radical governments gaining power but they are forever under the thumb of global capitalism and are under perpetual threat by forces that would return to the old order. Without a real rupture and an overturning of the capitalist system, political parties within the existing system will only be able to offer reforms.

Neither Biden or Trudeau represent a break with that system. They simply represent a different strategy for maintaining the capitalist order.

In the US, Trump had worn out his welcome among certain

powerful sections of the rich. For example, the National Association of Manufacturers called for him to be impeached after the capitol insurrection of January 6th. For US business, Trump had become dangerous. He was now attacking the underpinnings of the political system that had allowed the creation of massive wealth for the 1%. They were happy to take his tax cuts but not at all willing to kill the goose that laid the golden egg.

And so Biden represented a return to a neo-liberal status quo that the US ruling class could accept. His left leaning policies are designed not to challenge capital but to save it and, they hope, return to profitability. There are real concerns in the halls of congress and wall street that the economic crisis, exacerbated by Covid but building for decades will cause further political crises.

And they are right. The polarization that is blamed on Trump - and he certainly used it for his own advantage - is not going to be fixed by simple reforms. The centre may have won in the US but the larger problems will persist and the far right forces emboldened by Trump's rhetoric and policies will also grow due to ongoing, overlapping crises and a political polarization in society. These global crises - Climate, Covid and the economy - will only become deeper.

The forces on the ground calling for an end to racism, for real action for climate justice and for economic and social justice have to keep building for the changes we need but we also need to be conscious that neither Biden, nor any US President, is capable of delivering the change we need.

Let's take a moment to cheer the wins. But we have to remember that only mass pressure from below can force concessions and that, ultimately we need an independent political party and a revolutionary overthrow of the system to bring about the changes we desperately need for a livable future.

# Abolish! - Racist policing is no accident

by **Sid Lacombe**

**T**he killing of Daunte Wright in a suburb of Minneapolis was not accidental.

The police chief in Brooklyn Centre released the body cam footage of officer Kim Potter shooting Wright during a traffic stop and explained that it was obvious to him that she simply grabbed the wrong weapon. It is just a tragic "accident" he says.

Media pundits immediately began dissecting the video in granular detail. Was it a failure of training and misunderstanding of procedure that had her grab the wrong weapon? Is there a way to make it easier to find the right implement when under duress? These are not the questions they should be asking.

The focus on the video will be used to try and divert attention from the racism that led to the entire incident in the first place. Wright, the police say, was stopped for

having an expired tag on his car and subsequent investigation found that he had a warrant for arrest.

The reality is that Wright was stopped because he was, "driving while black". Three heavily armed cops were sent to stop him for a traffic violation. That was not an anomaly.

In the wake of the Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the US last summer, NYU released a study of thousands of traffic stops in the US and found that black people are twice as likely to be stopped by police. They are also twice as likely

to be searched. "Black drivers were searched about 1.5 to 2 times as often as white drivers, while they

were less likely to be carrying drugs, guns, or other illegal contraband compared to their white peers."

The "blue lives matter" crowd



is arguing that Wright should have complied and the fact that he decided to run was sufficient

for the police to use force. The same arguments are made anytime someone runs from the police. But could you really fault black people in the US for running from the

cops? There are far too many examples, from Sandra Bland to Caron Nazario, of police killing and using violence against black drivers for no reason.

Is it now the case that people should be executed for a traffic violation and a misdemeanour? Anywhere else in the

world, a group of heavily armed, state supported individuals who require complete obedience upon

punishment of summary execution is called a death squad. The US has invaded other countries for less.

The racists will argue that the outstanding warrant required the police to intervene. But the over-policing of black people is the reason why so many end up with warrants in the first place. It is racism that pushes black people into the criminal "justice" system at higher rates than white people.

The murder of Daunte Wright is not an accident. It is a direct result of a policing system that targets black people and considers violence as the only method of policing their lives.

In wake of the murder, thousands have joined demonstrations across the US calling for justice for Wright and for an end to the racist police. This movement is building a strong argument for the complete abolition of the police and should be supported.

Defund, disarm disband - Abolish the racist police!



# The fight against anti-Asian racism

*The Atlanta murders have shone the spotlight on anti-Asian hate in the US but discrimination of Asians has a long history that is entwined with the needs of US capitalism and imperialism. Virginia Rodino, an activist with Marx21 in the US outlines the history and the struggle and points to the road to liberation.*

by: Virginia Rodino

One was a former elementary school teacher, another a former dancer.

One was a single mom at least two were grandmothers.

At least four were U.S. citizens.

Several had limited English ability, making it difficult to find jobs, and a couple of the victims were divorced, leaving them in a precarious financial situation.

These are the victims of the Atlanta spa shootings, the majority of whom were members of vulnerable Asian immigrant communities.

Although since the late 1980s the median household income of Asian Americans has matched or exceeded that of their White counterparts, some of the most vulnerable members of AAPI communities (Asian American and Pacific Islander) are working-class and single mothers who face limited job prospects and meagre safety nets.

The surge in racist violence against Asian Americans during the pandemic, under Trump, is something well-documented and well-publicized these last couple of weeks: in the past year, there have been 3,800 reported incidents of anti-Asian violence, roughly 503 of which took place during 2021 alone, according to the group Stop AAPI Hate. Women make up the vast majority of those attacked. In Atlanta, the exact nature of the slain women's work is still unknown. But it is clear that they were working in an industry that made them vulnerable to abuse, violence and stigmatization even within their own communities — an industry that often employs mothers and grandmothers, well into their later years of life.

Because they are limited by language barriers, age, and gender, these middle-aged women usually take low-paying jobs in the service sector shunned by Westerners, a lot of these women — they've already tried to do more formal work. There is a lower barrier to entry into illicit massage business work, in comparison to other jobs available to undocumented workers. Employers often do not require documentation or work authorization or previous experience. Many of the women have young children and minimal

child care support, so they search for work in the evenings or after hours, when the children are asleep.

And all of these pressures have been exacerbated by the pandemic, which has caused the layoffs of many restaurant and nail salon workers, eliminated child-care safety nets, and forced even more people into underground economies — again disproportionately negatively impacting women of color.

Therefore we cannot omit anti-sex-work from the analysis about these most recent attacks on the Asian community. Removing the anti-sex-work component really removes the crux of what this specific kind of racism is about: the fetishization of Asian women's bodies, the objectification of their bodies and the assumption that Asian women are obviously going to be providing sexual services at massage parlors. The conflation of massage parlors and sex workers without any nuance is very specific to anti-Asian racism against Asian women.

The Atlanta killer told police that the spas he opened fire on represented a "temptation he wanted to eliminate", suggesting that he at least believed that they did. This is the way racism, sexism and anti-sex-work sentiment work together to produce anti-Asian violence: no matter what — this crime was ultimately one against sex workers,

Even if they were providing non-sexual massages, this ends up being a sex work issue since the women are de facto being seen as sex workers and being scapegoated as such.

Because even if not victims of human and sex trafficking, the Atlanta victims worked for an exploitative industry. And when the state comes in to regulate and police the industry, this often takes the form of raids which only further victimized and

traumatized the women. One advocate described witnessing women all being pushed into the street first thing in the morning, shivering in their nightclothes. Another time, two Asian women at a parlor raid were held in the back of a police car, handcuffed, while one sobbed and began to have problems breathing. Treatment of this kind and then subsequent arrests of women were common despite the fact that these women more often than not experience some form of violence herself, almost exclusively at the hands of a White man at a massage business. And the women do not report the violence to the police as most interactions they had directly with police — or interactions they knew of — resulted in their arrest, and sometimes permanent confiscation of their IDs, cellphone and electronics, credit cards and cash. They are told lies by



a trafficker or exploitative employer. They think reporting it would cost them deportation or loss of legal status; they didn't speak English, and they didn't know whom to trust, or where to go.

The solution is not to have more funding for the police to protect massage parlor workers or to start an anti-Asian taskforce to guard Chinatown. The solution is to divest from policing altogether and to really reinvest in these labor issues, to help women pay their rent, and to get them the Covid support they need right now that they're not getting.

What we have to lift up is that this is an example of violence in the

workplace — and we need to make the connections of the barriers to entry that immigrant workers face do actually lead to vulnerabilities in unprotected, unregulated and secreted work. The systems that maintain this industry also make it nearly impossible for women to escape it.

As we know from past discussions about systemic racism, we know that its oppressive grip did not just start with the murder of George Floyd, nor did AAPI hate start with the murders in Atlanta.

## Anti-Asian racism in US history

In the 19th century, European nations, desperate to exploit the riches of Asia, forced open Japan and China. They began a trade of opium for silk, tea and silver, and when China attempted to end it by making the narcotic illegal, foreign powers

began two successive Opium Wars. China's loss of both those wars opened it further to European and American business interests — which revived a centuries-old trope that the Chinese are weak and afflicted.

War caused massive waves of migration, and stereotypes of impurity and contamination followed the

migrants to America, where they were forced into racially segregated settlements that sometimes grew into Chinatowns, Japantowns and Filipino Towns. As the number of migrants grew, the backlash did as well.

The impetus was often economic, but it was driven by a sense of racial entitlement. Whites claimed that Chinese were getting the best veins in the coal mines, staking the best gold panning spots, tilling fertile land that was meant for them. At rallies, demonstrators denounced "the Chinese plague," conflating disease with displacement. Years of brutality ensued. In 1886 alone, mobs burned down at least a dozen Chinatowns in

California to the ground.

The Central Pacific railroad started its construction in Sacramento, CA on the backs of up to 20,000 Chinese immigrants — almost 90% of the railroad's entire labor force. Chinese laborers were not the first choice of the railroad financiers, but after failed attempts to attract white laborers (many of whom would stay for short periods of time due to the high-risk nature of the work), they turned to Chinese immigrants to do the deadly work required.

Anti-Chinese sentiment was overwhelming during this time. Chinese immigrants, who had largely come to California around the Gold Rush, were viewed as outsiders, foreigners who were desperate for work, and physically and emotionally weak. This racism was so pervasive that the State of California and local governments passed anti-Chinese laws to deny Chinese workers their civil rights.

Without any other viable option, Chinese immigrants joined the transcontinental railroad construction effort. Their accomplishments while working on the railroad are nothing short of impressive. Chinese laborers performed work by hand that is typically performed by big machinery in the present day. They dug tunnels and constructed retaining walls, and even planted explosives when necessary, risking their lives in hopes that they were pulled up in time.

Despite the fact they performed the most dangerous tasks, they were paid 30% less than their white co-laborers without board. In considering Chinese laborers' life-threatening tasks alongside grueling weather, it is no wonder that there are estimates of over 1,000 Chinese laborers dying while working on the railroad. In the face of all these challenges and risks, the laborers pressed on and delivered.

However, there was only so much abuse that the laborers could withstand. In June 1867, the Chinese laborers showed their strength by organizing and protesting for their rights. They stopped working, demanding better pay and better working conditions. For eight days, they held their ground. It was one of the largest workers' rights strikes of the era.



In response to this show of worker power, among the battery of laws passed to restrict Asian Americans' civil rights, including access to education, cultural practices and business activities, were laws meant to enforce White male purity. California passed an anti-miscegenation law banning marriage between Whites and a "negro, mulatto, or Mongolian." Such laws culminated in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the first time any U.S. federal law sought to exclude an ethnic group.

After the completion of the transcontinental railroad, some Chinese laborers continued to work on railroads across the country while many tried to find other jobs. But in the decades after the completion of the railroad, racism and racial hostility heightened across the country. The Chinese were targets of violence and blamed for stealing jobs from white Americans. This hostility culminated to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which barred all immigration from China into the U.S. and prevented Chinese workers from working on government projects. The ban effectively lasted until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 when all quotas on immigration were lifted.

The most direct predecessor of the Exclusion Act was the 1875 Page Act. It had been written narrowly to ban sex workers from "China, Japan or any Oriental country." Still, President Ulysses S. Grant made clear how he and many others saw Asian women: "But few of whom," he said, "are brought to our shores to pursue honorable or useful occupations."

As states moved in the late 1800s to protect the entitlements of White men and Grant demonized the actual bodies of Asian women, mob attacks on Asian Americans increased. Jean Pfaelzer's book "Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans" documents hundreds of forgotten riots, purges and lynchings in the 1880s that left thousands dead, wounded or displaced.

If they weren't being driven out, they were being quarantined. On March 6, 1900, a report of a possible bubonic plague-caused death of a Chinese American surfaced in San Francisco. The next day, city officials shut down Chinatown. Police roped off the neighborhood and escorted out all the remaining Whites. Health officials voted to encircle the area with barbed wire. At one point, leaders seriously discussed burning down these same 16 square blocks to which they had long confined the Chinese. Neither came to pass, but authorities did build a high wall around Chinatown's radius.

As successive waves of Asian immigrants and refugees arrived, often fleeing American wars, they too faced violence. In 1930, Whites rioted against Filipino American bachelors who frequented taxi-dance halls to dance with White women in Watsonville, Calif. In 1941, with war again as the backdrop, President Franklin D. Roosevelt rounded Japanese Americans up into concentration camps.

After the Korean war, the slur "gook" was merely recycled to use on the Vietnamese. The quick

succession of World War II, Korea, Vietnam also meant that many top brass served in multiple wars in Asia. The need for anti-Asian xenophobia to train US soldiers going to Vietnam and Cambodia and Laos. U.S. soldiers were taught that the Vietnamese were not people but "only gooks."

While decrying the sex slavery WWII Japan instituted on its Korean subjects — kidnapping and forcing young girls to serve in military brothels euphemistically known as "comfort stations" — the U.S. military ended up repurposing this system and even some of the same women for U.S. soldiers during the Korean war.

Korea's war ended in an armistice agreement in 1953, and yet in 1965, 85% of GIs surveyed reported having "been with" or "been out with" a prostitute.

These cultural attitudes and stereotypes about Asian women don't end when a soldier returns home. They become incorporated into American culture such that, like with the nexus of military life and prostitution, and while the origins of these stereotypes become forgotten and obscured, the stereotypes of hypsersexualized Asian women are unforgettable. Rapes and sexual violence of Asian women by U.S. soldiers was so typical and unpunished, It took a kidnapping and gang rape of a 12-year-old by three U.S. Marines in Okinawa in 1994 to finally stir any interest from the U.S. media.

Asian women and girls were seen as sexual objects, and Asian men were emasculated and blamed for capitalism's busts.

In 1982 in Detroit, a young

police spokesperson who said sympathetically of the Atlanta killer, "He was pretty much fed up and kind of at the end of his rope. Yesterday was a really bad day for him and this is what he did."

The massacres against Asian Americans has never ended. In 1989, a gunman opened fire on a Stockton, Calif., elementary schoolyard full of Cambodian and Vietnamese American children. He killed five and wounded 32 more. In 2012, another gunman murdered six Sikh Americans at a temple in Oak Creek, Wis.

So when Asian Americans objected to Trump and others' use of "the Chinese virus," it was because many of us feared these words would yield a body count. We were told that we were overreacting. But now a year of anti-Asian rage has come to this: children slashed in department stores, elderly set on fire, punched in the face or pushed to their deaths, and women, attacked at twice the rate of men, chased, beaten, spit upon, as if we are not people, but pollutants — infections, contagions, stains on whiteness.

The same twisted view of Asian Americans that Grant had echoes in Cherokee County, Ga., Sheriff Jay Baker's stunningly sympathetic read of Long's defense that he was trying to "eliminate" a "temptation." What stands out in Baker's news conference is who his sympathies went to — not the then-unnamed victims, most of whom were working-class Asian American women, but to Long, who had had "a bad day."

### Divide and conquer

Unsurprisingly it benefits capitalism to pit communities of color against one another and not highlight the multi-racial solidarity that is present in people's movements. The model minority myth—based on the stereotype that Asian Americans are hard working, law-abiding individuals and the false perception that such qualities have led to their success over other racial groups—has played a significant role in creating a wedge between Asian Americans and other communities of color, particularly African Americans. However, because of the brilliant multi-racial, multi-ethnic solidarity and class consciousness produced by the phenomenally powerful movement for black lives in the summer of 2020, anti-racists, progressives, youth and other social justice movements more quickly and seamlessly

met at rallies, demonstrations, vigils and online events to stand together against AAPI hate after the Atlanta murders in March 2021.

It is this type of solidarity work that we in Marx 21 are doing, along with growing an anti-fascist and anti-racist network in "United Against Hate." This is the necessary response to the waves of violence against women, against Asians, against immigrants and against workers. As socialists we continue to knock down false narratives of division and difference, and build class consciousness among workers across race, ethnicity, gender and immigrant status.

# Fighting Anti-Asian Racism and Sexism globally



by: Carolyn Egan

The police murder of George Floyd brought the eyes of the world on anti-Black racism which has been going on for centuries. It also sparked millions of people of every race going into the streets in mass mobilizations. The racist, misogynist murders in Atlanta highlighted the anti-Asian racism and violence that has been stoked by Donald Trump and other leaders blaming China for the global Covid pandemic.

The combination of sexism and racism that led to the Atlanta murders put the spotlight on the deadly effects of the oppressions that are the day to day reality for so many. These oppressions are maintained by capitalism and are used to scapegoat and divide us one from another. Videos of vicious attacks on Asian people, many of them women, began appearing on both main stream and social media. Racists and the far right have been emboldened and violence has been growing.

### Taking the streets against the bigots

Mass rallies took place across North America led by the Asian communities fighting back against these attacks. Hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets standing up to the anti-Asian hate that led to the deaths of these low waged and vulnerable women in Atlanta. In Toronto groups such as the Chinese Canadian National Council (Toronto Chapter), the Asian Canadian Labour Alliance and Butterfly, an organization of Asian sex trade workers, organized a rally of 4,500 on short notice in the pouring rain, denouncing the murders, the racism and sexism.

It was quickly pulled together and the organizers reached out to unions such as Unifor, the Elementary Teachers, the United Steelworkers and women's organizations such

as the International Women's Day Committee to mobilize their members and provide security. There had been reports that the rally would be targeted by racists.

Speakers from the Indigenous and Black communities spoke about the need for unity and solidarity to build a united response to these attacks. The majority of the speakers were women showing their strength and their courage vowing to fight racism and sexism where ever they occur.

### Fighting sexism

Violence against women has also been growing throughout the pandemic, the rates of domestic violence have skyrocketed. In London huge demonstrations took place following the murder of a woman allegedly by a police officer. There was a vigil at Clapham Common, to commemorate the woman who lost her life. It was met by a vicious police attack. There was a huge response to the violence used against the angry and grieving women.

In an interview with Socialist Worker UK during a march against the police, Leah and Jenny said the police actions on Clapham Common were "unacceptable". "The police tell us not to go home alone or go out at night but that's giving into the problem. It normalizes the fear that women live with." Furious marchers continued in the streets yelling "how do you sleep" at the cops and chanting "Black Lives Matter". Another young woman marcher said, "And the police handling of any movement whether it's against racism, sexism, or the climate emergency needs challenging and can't be defended."

These demonstrations against racism and sexism are mobilizing people who are standing up against both the oppressions they are facing, as well as the police service and the system that it defends. It is militant actions and solidarity such as this that are so necessary today.



Chinese American draftsman named Vincent Chin was beaten to death by two White autoworkers outside of a strip club where he had gone to celebrate his bachelor party. Before they set upon him with a baseball bat, they had baited him by calling him ethnic slurs for both Japanese and Chinese — demonstrating the same confusion of pandemic-era attackers who have lashed out at Asian Americans of all ethnicities while thinking them Chinese — and told him he was the reason they were out of work. A judge sentenced them to probation, saying, "These aren't the kind of men you send to jail." This is reminiscent of the Georgia sheriff



# Celebrating Ireland's revolutionary history

From the Easter rising to the 40 year anniversary of the hunger strikes by Bobby Sands and his comrades, we look back at the struggles for Irish independence and what they can teach us today

by: **Kim McAuley**

**T**he rich have worked hard for over a hundred years to control the narrative around the people's rising that took place during Easter week in Ireland in 1916, and more recently to diminish the importance of the fight by the hunger strikers forty years ago near Belfast, led by Bobby Sands who died May 5, 1981. Just as they've tried to control the news, history, etc. in every country they've colonised around the world.

It is important look back at these two moments in time and to see what working class people accomplished in those periods. We challenge the narrative that the rising and the hunger strikes were led by martyrs, who knew they were going to sacrifice themselves for the cause. The people who led these fight backs didn't plan to die as a tactic – that storyline oversimplifies their years of hard work and well-thought strategies.

The leaders of these struggles were killed or left to die quite consciously by the wealthy, capitalist, imperialist classes they were fighting against to make a better, socialist world. Their deaths are best honoured by acknowledging what they did - not enshrined in sanctimony.

The Easter Rising in Ireland in 1916, in the words of Kieran Allen, "may be better understood as giving birth to... a revolutionary tradition that has passed like a thread through subsequent decades". What happened then shows us a rough outline of the path ahead for our work to bring about a socialist world.

## The Easter Rising

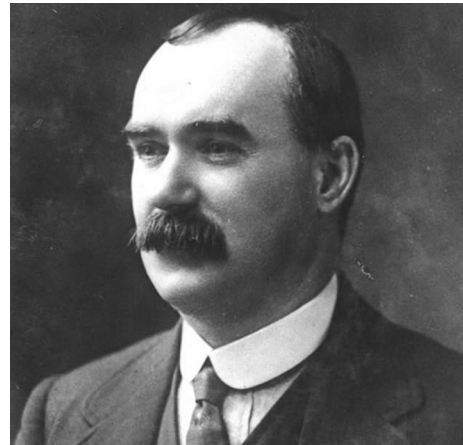
In Ireland, in 1916, during Easter week, Irish Republican people led a rising and rebellion against British Rule in Ireland. Organized by seven leaders of the Military Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood - joined by members of the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Citizen Army and hundreds of women of Cumann na mBan - 1,250 people seized important buildings in Dublin and installed the Irish Republic, strategically, with two to three thousand additional volunteers stationed elsewhere.

Many challenges to the establishment were underway already in the lead up to the Rising. The country was largely controlled by the Irish Parliamentary Party and its leader, John Redmond, who favoured land owners and wanted constitutional nationalism and Home Rule. They pushed Irish involvement in the first World War (1914 to 1918) to gain favour and win Home Rule for Ireland from the British Parliament. This set of politics sent 3,500 Irishmen to their deaths in the war, and alienated the working and 'lower' classes living in cities. Jim Larkin's paper - the Irish Worker, had a circulation of 20,000 a week around 1913 and repeatedly condemned the party for ignoring the material welfare of workers. There were strikes and civil unrest and people were largely unemployed, hungry and discontent.

The Rising, being organized while the British Empire was at war, drew people to republicanism. The threat of conscription of the people of Ireland into the British Army was a major catalyst. "Choosing" to be a soldier meant wages and

food on the table for families who could subsist on a "Separation Allowance" and an escape from poverty and boredom, to the excitement of going to the frontlines and defending Belgium, which was largely Catholic. But the threat of conscription was a removal of choice and it created further division.

The wealthy and the land owners - their rights protected by parliament and police - supported the war effort, and denounced the rebels during the rising. The people themselves were struggling to eke out a living, grappling with new political realities and deeply wanting



bigger change and better conditions. Many of them were being won to the politics of Séamas Ó Conghaile (James Connolly) - the leader of the Irish Citizen Army and a Socialist - including Pádraig (Patrick) Pearse, a nationalist republican and leader of the Military Council. Connolly understood that religion was being used to create division, by capitalist and imperialist forces. He appealed to both Catholic and Protestant workers and worked to show how religious sectarianism divided workers. He made a bold appeal for a Socialist Ireland.

The leaders had planned ahead. They had worked to further socialist ideas and politics and had grown their numbers and their own military. They assessed circumstances evolving around them and knew the variables were many and that they could lose. But they saw a chance at freedom and determined they had a chance at winning.

The British state were taken by surprise but responded with force, sending over 16,000 troops, plus artillery and a gunboat. The Irish people kept them at bay for a week. In the end 116 British soldiers, 16 policemen and 318 rebels and civilians died and 3,500 people taken prisoner - 1,800 of those were sent to internment camps or prisons in Britain. Most leaders of the uprising were then executed.

Despite this, the struggle for freedom continued in Ireland - from 1918 to 1923 Ireland was in the throes of revolution and it shook the establishment. Five years after the Easter Rising - 100 years ago, on May 3rd, 1921 - the British partitioned Ireland, against the democratically voiced opposition of the people, leaving Dublin

and Southern Ireland alone as its own Republic of 26 counties; and keeping six counties in the North as part of the UK. Parliament couldn't afford to lose face by giving it all up, and they couldn't politically afford to keep it all and provoke another uprising.

At this 100 year mark, the British state has set aside \$3 million pounds to "celebrate" the anniversary of the partitioning. They tried to do the same thing in 2016 about the Rising, but had to pull their propaganda off the airways due to mass public outcry. Their arrogance knows no bounds.



## Hunger Strikes

"I REFUSE to change to suit the people who oppress, torture and imprison me. I have the spirit of freedom which cannot be quenched by even the most horrendous treatment."

*Roibeárd Ó Seachnasaigh (Bobby Sands)*

We are marking 40 years since the hunger strikes against continued British oppression of the Irish people. In 1971, an internment camp - Long Kesh - was set up 14 kms south of Belfast, to detain people suspected of having paramilitary connections. They were accurately considered political prisoners and granted "special category status" with certain rights. In 1975 the Labour government removed special status, effectively criminalizing the prisoners. By 1980, after many varying protests, the men organized a hunger strike and then ended it once the Tory government promised to return the status and rights. Three months later the Tories reneged and in 1981 the men began a new hunger strike, demanding the same five rights, to: not wear a prison uniform or do prison work; free association with other prisoners; organize educational and recreational pursuits; one visit, one letter and one parcel per week; and full restoration of remission lost through the protest.

The second hunger strike ended only after the British parliament, under Thatcher, allowed ten men to die. The first to die was leader and socialist revolutionary, Bobby Sands. Bobby was a working class Catholic with many Protestant friends in his very young years. Religious sectarianism whipped up by the Orange Order created the divide it was meant

to; Bobby and his family witnessed and were subjected to near constant Protestant bullying and oppression. On two separate occasions his family - as many Catholic families experienced - were terrorized out of their homes in a majority Protestant neighbourhood. Like Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, he recognized the struggle, inequality and lack that defines working class life under capitalist and imperialist conditions and became a socialist because of it.

Many strategies and tactics were used to fight back against criminalization first, with the hunger strike used as a last resort in effort to maintain their spirit and not give in to British rule. During the strike to keep spirits up at night, the prisoners sang songs and told stories to their comrades - one of which ran for eight nights while Bobby re-told Leon Uris' Trinity, from memory. He read Marx and other revolutionary socialists writings, like James Connolly. Bobby was elected an MP before his death, embarrassing the Tories. Over 100,000 people attended his funeral.

The successes of this particular fight were the multiple, mass mobilizations and Union-led strikes that took place in solidarity, extensively in Ireland but some as far away as the dock of the Longshoremen's Union in New York, who boycotted British ships, as well as protests outside British embassies around the world. They had showed that the IRA had popular support, they had undermined and rattled the Tories, who were forced to concede the strikers' demands.

## Today

Our governments actively, forcibly use 'our' courts and police to suppress Union activity; First Nations fight backs to protect their land or livelihoods from theft, development, pipelines, pollution; Black Lives Matter activists. They allow attacks on Muslim people and wilfully ignore hate speech and actions from neo-Nazis. While people suffer and die waiting for vaccines, and go jobless, hungry and homeless, the Federal government plans to spend \$60 to 80 Billion dollars on war ships. Things are not so different from the times leading up to the Rising.

But, we know how to organize and strategize and we can read Irish history written by people like Hazel Croft, Kieran Allen, Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, Bobby Sands, Eamonn McCann and James Connolly. This article was informed by their work.

## Territorial Acknowledgement

*As settlers, we acknowledge our occupation of lands that are the Indigenous territories of Turtle Island. Furthermore, we support all struggles for Indigenous sovereignty in whatever forms they take by the hundreds of First Nations and Inuit communities that have resided here for many thousands of years, and by Métis communities that have developed in the last hundreds of years.*

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Any alternative to capitalism must involve replacing the system from the bottom up through radical collective action. Central to that struggle is the workplace, where capitalism reaps its profits off our backs. Capitalist monopolies control the earth's resources, but workers everywhere actually create the wealth. A new socialist society can only be constructed when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution to satisfy human needs, not corporate profits—to respect the environment, not pollute and destroy it.

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# Black Panthers Judas and the Black Messiah Review

by: **Faline Bobier**

**S**haka King's new movie *Judas and the Black Messiah* comes at a critical political moment in the US. It's a kind of companion piece to recent Black-directed movies that also look at important moments in Black history, real or imagined, such as Regina King's *One Night in Miami*, a fictional account of one incredible night where icons Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Sam Cooke, and Jim Brown gather, discussing their roles in the Civil Rights Movement and cultural upheaval of the 60s.

King's movie, unlike *One Night in Miami*, is based in historical reality. It tells the story of Fred Hampton, chairperson of the Chicago chapter of the Black Panthers, who was murdered by the FBI on the night of December 4, 1969. Police and FBI agents fired 99 shots that night, the Panthers only shot once. Mark Clark, another Black Panther leader, was killed at Hampton's apartment at the same time.

As the title implies, the Judas character, Bill O'Neal (strikingly played by American actor Lakeith Stanfield), who infiltrates the Chicago Black Panther chapter to eventually become their head of security, is tasked by the FBI with helping them to bring down the Black 'messiah', so feared at that time by FBI head J Edgar Hoover.

Hoover saw in the rising Civil Rights movement, figures like Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X and the militant Black Panther movement the possibility of a new Black messiah (Hoover's phrase, not an epithet Hampton would ever have claimed for himself), with the potential to bring the status quo of racism and inequality crashing down.

Hoover is chillingly and effectively incarnated in the movie by Martin Sheen. His icy-eyed glare is enough to cow his subordinates into submission, whatever underhanded tactics he puts forward as a way to stop the Panthers.

The Panthers posed a threat to the whole edifice of white supremacy that Hoover defended as the 'American' way of life. Firstly, the Panthers claimed the right of Black people to arm themselves in self-defence (primarily against the racist police who were murdering Blacks in the streets) and acted on that right by bearing arms. Secondly, and perhaps even

more of a threat to Hoover and the white power structure, the Panthers consciously attempted to organize not only Blacks, but also Latinos and poor whites against their own oppression and exploitation, in what Hampton refers to in the film as a 'rainbow coalition'.

It's made clear in the movie, and this is true to the politics of the Panthers and of Hampton himself, their politics had little in common

organizing.

In the scenes where he's addressing crowds who are chanting 'Chairman Fred' and hanging on his every word it's hard to believe he could have such a presence at a young age, but then revolutions are often led by the young, as we are witnessing with the climate change movement today.

But the movie does the opposite of what the



with the politics of Black nationalism, as in this quote from one of Hampton's speeches:

"We got to face some facts. That the masses are poor. That the masses belong to what you call the lower class, and when I talk about the masses, I'm talking about the white masses, I'm talking about the black masses, and the brown masses, and the yellow masses, too."

"We say you don't fight racism with racism. We're gonna fight racism with solidarity. We say you don't fight capitalism with no black capitalism—you fight capitalism with socialism."

Daniel Kaluuya, the British actor who has appeared to great effect in other American movies, such as Jordan Peele's *Get Out*, is convincing and grounded here in the role of Fred Hampton. He gained some weight to do the part, since he thought it was important to physically embody the power of personality and conviction that Hampton carried in his

title might suggest – Hampton at every turn rejects the notion of himself as the centre of the struggle – as when the Panther headquarters in Chicago is firebombed and destroyed by the police while Hampton is in prison on trumped-up charges.

It's the people in the community – the kids, the grandmothers, the gang members – who offer to rebuild the centre. Which is why, when Hampton is released, in his first speech to followers, he says 'You can kill a revolutionary, but you can't kill the revolution' and 'Power to the people', as the antidote to hero-worship.

The caricature of the Panthers is often as purveyors of senseless violence, rather than the disciplined and dedicated activists they really were. In addition to arguing for the right to carry guns in self-defence (which is obviously still something necessary today when we look at the recent murders of unarmed

Black men like George Floyd), the Panthers also organised a social programme. They set up centres that provided breakfasts for up to 250,000 children a week. They launched medical clinics and community-controlled schools.

Hoover and the FBI eventually broke the back of the Panthers through murder and the use of paid and/or coerced Black informants, like Bill O'Neal in this film. The film ends with footage of the real William O'Neal, who was interviewed shortly before his suicide in early 1990.

O'Neal survived as a teenager by being a petty criminal in Chicago. In 1966, when he was about 17 years old, he was caught by FBI agent Roy Martin Mitchell, who tracked O'Neal down for stealing a car and driving it across state lines to Michigan. In exchange for having his felony charges dropped, O'Neal agreed to infiltrate the Panthers as a counterintelligence operative.

His story is a sad one and the interview segment where he claims, "I was in the struggle," seems like an attempt to justify his actions. O'Neal himself seems like an indictment of the extremely limited choices for survival for Black people in the US at that time.

However, *Judas and the Black Messiah* can be seen, I think, as the revenge of history.

The reality of ugly racism and injustice which has continued since the time of the Panthers has been challenged recently by the eruptions of Black Lives Matter protests across the US among Black, Latinx, white protestors.

A nationwide poll conducted for Time magazine in 1970 revealed that 9 percent of the black population—about two million people—considered themselves to be "revolutionaries". This is the real reason Hoover and the establishment feared the Panthers so much – not because of their relatively small numbers – but because of the wide-spread sentiment of rage against racism and injustice that existed among millions.

The way that the Black Lives Matter protests spread last year from urban to rural settings and from the US to countries around the world gives hope that more revolutionaries will be following the inspiration of people like Fred Hampton. It makes *Judas and the Black Messiah* required viewing.

*Capitalist pharma - continued from page 8*

People Before Profit and the People's Vaccine Alliance proposed a resolution, brought forward by the World Trade Organization by the governments of India and South Africa - to suspend the trade related aspects of the Intellectual Property protocols of the WTO. This proposal immediately secured support of over 100 countries but was met almost as quickly with a block from the governments of the UK, the US, Canada and the EU, who claimed that Intellectual Property protection was essential to the development of the vaccines – that it was essential to incentivize the production of vaccines through profit. That argument is untrue even pre-pandemic. All pharmaceutical innovation is built on a bedrock of publicly funded research. Almost everything that's produced from the pharmaceutical sector is built on a foundation of basic research that takes place in public institutions and this is where the most risky and costly research takes place too. Unfortunately for various reasons there's no public capacity around the world where public researchers can translate their innovations into things that can actually help people and improve global

health.

The research that takes place in the private sector is qualitatively different. A lot of it's around production and scaling production, but more shockingly, 50% of all R&D spending in the pharmaceutical sector is on what's called evergreening - a very cynical approach where functionally insignificant modifications are made to different drugs to extend the life span of patent protections on those drugs that allow you to extend your monopoly patent rights to produce that drug and sell it to the market. This presents an existential threat to human health.

Further, far more Research and Development (R&D) money is spent on non-life saving drugs than is spent on antibiotics, antivirals or vaccines. There still aren't effective vaccines for some of the world's biggest killers like malaria and TB, despite TB infecting 1 to 2 billion people globally and malaria being a growing problem globally.

Between 2000 and 2011, just 4% of all spending on R&D in the pharmaceutical sector was on neglected diseases. This has been the reality with capitalist pharma for a very long time. The latest generation of HIV and Aids drugs have made it to market in the global South where need is greatest, ten years later than in the global

North. Even in the global North, treatment of Hepatitis C or availability of insulin or drugs for cystic fibrosis are restricted by capitalist pharma. As ever, capital and the need for capitalist accumulation gets in the way of human need, even when that's something as basic as human health.



The argument is even clearer in the case of Covid. The vaccines are made possible by unprecedented amounts of public funding and that bedrock of public research underneath it all. The Moderna vaccine was developed in the U.S. in conjunction with the National Institute of Health. It got 2.5 billion dollars of public money, in addition to several billion dollars

in advance purchase agreements from governments around the world before any vaccine was even produced. There's almost no private funding in that vaccine at all, except for a donation from Dolly Parton. This is the socialization of development costs and privatization of profit - completely the opposite of what the pharmaceutical lobbyists and global governments are suggesting – that incentives need to be provided to get drugs made.

We need science for the people and a people's vaccine. John Salk - who developed the first polio vaccine - was asked 'who owns the rights to the polio vaccine'; he responded 'could you patent the sun?' He saw it as a global public goal - not to be privately controlled or subject to artificial scarcity - something that everyone should have access to regardless of where you live or your income, race, religion or ethnicity. That's something the global left has to live up to and seems to be being brought forward.

Different trade unions around the world are starting to take this seriously. Here in Ireland we have a massive pharmaceutical sector, and we had a motion before Parliament to basically void patents and produce drugs off patent. That question has to be taken seriously by socialists around the world.



## Doug Ford's covid chaos

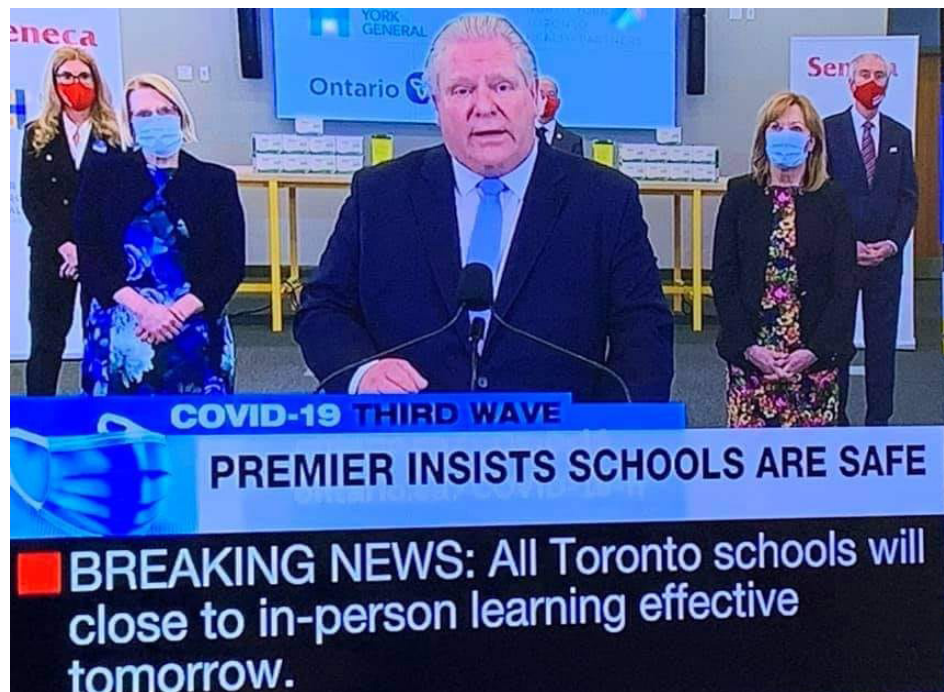
**D**oug Ford's incompetence is killing people. His attempt to slow the covid spread has come to naught. So the emergency break he pulled in early April has been followed up by yet another emergency order a week later.

And although he has expanded the lockdown it is unlikely that this new order will actually halt the spread. It will slow it down but not to the extent needed for the vaccine programs to outpace the new variants of the disease.

He was finally forced to shut down schools - which he insists are safe - but which the data suggests is a major driver of the disease. In the last week of March there were more than 1300 cases of covid in schools. While his closure is good for public health it left parents furious because he only gave them 24 hours to find a replacement for in-class learning.

But the main sources of the virus in this third wave are among workers in essential businesses and those remain open. There are more than 900 cases of covid reported at the Mississauga Amazon sorting facility yet he hasn't closed these workplaces or, crucially, offered paid sick days for the workers.

The numbers are clear. According to Toronto public health, 48 percent of Toronto's cases have been people on low incomes, 77 percent of cases are among racialized people and 67 percent of workplace outbreaks have been in frontline settings like food processing & warehouses.



Sick days would allow for people to take time off if they feel symptoms but without them people are still forced to go to work. A recent survey by SEIU found that 64 percent of their members are worried about having to take time

off to get vaccinated because of a loss of pay.

All Ford could say is, "if you are sick - stay home" but then accused anyone who suggested that this was impossible for low income workers was just, "playing politics".

And although Ford reinstated a moratorium on evictions, this will provide only partial temporary relief for those who lost jobs and are having trouble paying the rent. The last time he instituted an eviction freeze the Landlord and Tenant tribunals continued to operate. They just didn't have government enforcement of the evictions. All that did was result in a huge wave of evictions when the ban was lifted. It is estimated that more than 200,000 households in Ontario are currently behind in rent because of a loss of income from covid.

And the corporate landlords are making a killing during the pandemic. A high eviction rate is good for their business because it allows them to evict tenants and jack up rents at a higher rate than if the tenants stay in their units. Ford, a good friend of developers has done all he can to make sure they rake in the profits. He has allowed for above guideline rent increases for any landlord who can argue that they have invested capital in their buildings. This loophole will put more people on the streets.

Once again Ford is proving that he is more concerned about keeping the economy going than protecting people. He is sitting on billions in covid relief funds given by the federal government but refuses to use that cash to help people stay home or avoid homelessness.

The worst impacts of his callousness will be felt by racialized, low income people - mainly women. Their deaths are on Ford's hands.

## Covid Vaccine scarcity - courtesy of capitalist pharma

*The following is extracted from a talk given by Conor Reddy - PhD candidate in immunology; member of the Irish Socialist Workers Network, and People before Profit\*, Ireland*

**V**accine development and the way science has reacted to the pandemic has broken a lot of old certainties. Vaccines that would usually take 8 to 10 years to develop have come to us in one year. The two leading vaccine candidates - Pfizer Biontech and Moderna - are building brand new RNA vaccine technology that's never been used before and it looks incredibly effective - some at 95% effective which is far more than anything we've seen before. This speaks to the tremendous potential of science - but potential unrealized under capitalism.

Likely the biggest question raised is around global access to vaccines and justice.

The restriction on the global supply is unnecessary - the consequence of artificial scarcity, imposed by pharmaceutical companies, capitalism and the present imperialist world order. Of the eight leading vaccine candidates, 14% of the global population in the richest countries in the world have 53% of all of the global supply of vaccines likely to be available in 2021 - the EU, the U.S. and ten other countries.

Looking at just one manufacturer - Pfizer - almost all of their supply is going to the U.S., the UK, EU, Canada and Japan. In America there are four vaccines for every single person in the population, whereas in places in the global south people have almost no vaccine at all.



The People's Vaccine Alliance and groups like Oxfam suggest it will possibly be the end of 2023 or even 2024 before vaccines are administered in the world's poorest countries. This is a moral outrage and it's dangerous - creating what Mike Davis calls a two-tiered humanity - and risks the virus becoming endemic in parts of the world, enabling new variants to emerge, which are more transmissible and might evade vaccines altogether, undoing the work that's been done so far in rolling out the vaccine. We're not safe until everyone around the world is safe.

This has been commented on extensively by public health experts around the world, but their plan is completely toothless. The official approach of the WHO to ensure access to

vaccines in the global South - the co-vaccination or Covax - is particularly worth looking at. It's funded by governments in the global North, wealthier countries around the world, and it's supposed to provide access to vaccines at a lower cost but it's weak on a number of levels.

For a start, the vaccine manufacturers are not playing ball - not offering cheaper doses to Covax - Pfizer have refused to provide as many vaccines as they initially committed to. Covax reduced the price and other manufacturers have followed suit. Also, vaccine suppliers have been affected by the control that pharma companies have. There's some prioritization in companies that have paid more for their vaccines, so if you look at Israel - they

basically have a vaccine apartheid in denying Palestinians access to the vaccine, but they've also gotten quicker access to the vaccine than everybody else in the world because they're more able to pay double what most other countries in the developing world have been willing to pay for each dose. So the likes of Pfizer and Moderna have prioritized the countries that are willing and able to pay more for vaccines over those who were to benefit through the Covax system.

The Astra-Zeneca vaccine - the universities have completely publicly funded this from the outset - their goal was to provide a universally accessible vaccine. But they needed a partner with production capacity and they partnered with Astra Zeneca and then that goal was diluted to 62% of all their supply going to so-called developing countries around the world. But even with that, their total productive capacity would only account for 18% of the world population having access in 2021 and that includes the orders that were given to Britain and the EU and other wealthy countries around the world.

They have a special agreement with the Indian Serologic Institute - a public vaccine manufacturer - to produce a billion doses of vaccine off-patent but it hasn't been replicated elsewhere and there's a reason for that. The deal with Astra Zeneca was at the behest of the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation - they lobbied Oxford extensively to sign an exclusive production agreement that would limit the capability of the teams in Oxford to rollout the vaccines off-patent ordered beyond the Serologic Institute.