

URBAN CORE

The Heart of the City | July-October 2022



Cut Strings by Tia Wheeler

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ON CUT STRINGS

By Tia Wheeler, UFAD Boston Member

This cover is based on the editorial board's discussion of article ideas for this issue of *Urban Core*. We discussed quite a few stories that involved exploitation and oppression of working class people in countries by their own ruling elite, who act at the behest of foreign imperialists and corporations for personal gain and political power. This ultimately led to my decision to draw something that addresses the necessity to break free of and fight against the system which keeps the working class surrendering their lives to a system that benefits the ruling elite, who are not only unaffected by the working class and poor struggles but suppress and keep them down in order to maintain their own power.

After drafting three different images, I decided on the one that is featured on the front cover of this issue: a disrupted puppet show in which the puppets (representing the working class, domestic and international) have managed to cut the strings controlling and influencing them and are now confronting the horrified puppeteers (representing the politicians and government officials) and audience (representing the rest of the elite).

While there are a few things within this picture that could be discussed, I actually would like to focus on three major elements: the strings tied around the puppet's arms and legs, the scissors that can be found on and off the stage, and the armbands each character wears. In regards to the strings that control the puppets on- and off-stage, it is important to explain that within the wealthy "first-world" countries such as the United States of America, there is a system put into place that ensures that the ruling elite of the country are constantly able to obtain and maintain their power, wealth, and influence. From an international stage, this



comes in the form of imperialism, in which a country extends its might through diplomacy, economic control/manipulation, and military actions. This, unfortunately, is always to the detriment of the weaker countries as their working classes and resources are heavily exploited without interference by those leaders who act on behalf of the imperialist elite.

But this is not to say that this doesn't happen domestically in these imperialist-ruled countries as their own working classes are also oppressed, divided, and pitted against each other. These divisions are often sustained through stigmatizing, gas lighting and scapegoating exploited groups while installing and idealizing those who have power. Some examples of this can include implying that those struggling in the poor and working classes are in those situations because of a personal failing, that



all wealthy people accumulated their fortunes through hard work, and that the systems set in place work the same for everyone. As a result, a distorted narrative is created in which the world is fine... all of the suffering and oppression is just an unfortunate result of the working class failing to reach the level of the elite.

In the beginning, I intended to have the armbands colored based on the country in which each of the characters was a “citizen” of: the puppet characters would have the colors of their flags on the armbands while the audience and puppeteers would have the colors of their country’s currency. In the end, I decided to replace the currency/flag images with the image of a jester or harlequin. This was meant to further reinforce the fact that the powerful elite constantly manipulate and exploit the working class/common people into acting in ways that provide the most benefit for themselves.

However, the use of the harlequin is also meant to be a reference to the Fool’s Journey from the Tarot. Similar to how the Fool becomes wiser and more connected to the world throughout their journey, we as a people are slowly becoming more aware of the distorted and oppressive state that the world is in, how much suffering it has caused, and desire change. While the things that bring us closer to this realization are represented by scissors in this picture, they can take the form of anything (such as an event, information, personal

experience, etc) that exposes or is a remnant of the elites’ abuses.

As our readers may have noticed, the cover for this issue follows the trend of its predecessor by taking place in the midst of a conflict rather than at the very end. It would look nice to depict the working class triumphantly creating a new system that truly benefits everyone equally while the deeply penitent elite apologize to the world for their greed and vow to make amends for the exploitation and pain that they caused to others. However a storybook ending such as that, in my opinion, would be as equally dishonest to the viewers as an extremely pessimistic finale in which everyone simply trudges through their lives, accepting of the awful conditions that have been imposed on them in order to satiate the greed of a few.

True change, as we have seen throughout history, does not happen that neatly or quickly. In spite of the contributions of those who participated in the Black Liberation Movement, various forms of racism are still experienced from a personal and institutional perspective. Even with this, people are not only still becoming increasingly aware of these issues through the struggles of those affected, but are actively banding together to deal with the injustices caused by racism and weaken its influence.

Despite the difficulties that will inevitably arise in trying to bring about a society that is truly free of exploitation and oppressive divisions, it is still necessary to not blindly follow and protect a system that contributes to and profits off of the suffering of other people but to confront it. This is not something that can be achieved through the work of a sole activist/organization or by waiting for those exploiters to magically see the error of their ways. This can only happen if people are to see through the distortion of the system being completely fair and join together to start on the road to much needed change.

UPDATE FROM THE STRUGGLE IN NEW YORK CITY



Protest against Columbia University's gentrification of Harlem, September 22nd.

In New York City, the struggle against the privatization of public housing has intensified in the past few months. We have had a series of protests, made new links with the student movement, confronted a series of two-faced politicians, and seen a major scandal in NYCHA. Overall, things continue to advance at a “slow-and-steady” pace. This is important to see, as when we get started in a new development or project, people often think that “everything will happen at once, or it won’t happen at all.” So, when inevitably, we don’t have hundreds or thousands of people protesting right away, these people feel hopeless. But the truth is that Rome wasn’t built in a day, as they say. It takes patient work to lay the foundation for a bigger movement. So we continue to build up our movement day by day.

In June, we disrupted a NYCHA RAD/PACT privatization-propaganda meeting at Manhattanville Houses. Prior to the meeting, we met up and planned out our disruptions. Our basic assessment was that, despite our outreach over the past few months, many of the project’s 3000+ residents still did not know the truth about privatization. But we figured that

through exposing NYCHA at the meeting, we would be able to show people what was really going on. And this was exactly what happened. Around 90 people showed up to hear what NYCHA had to say. As soon as NYCHA finished their presentation, UFAD members who are tenants at Manhattanville began asking questions and making speeches to expose NYCHA. They were met with lots of applause and cheers as people saw through NYCHA’s lies.

Tyra, one such tenant at Manhattanville, was the first to get to ask a question. Her remarks set the tone for the rest of the meeting. “What I’m actually hearing is that you guys [NYCHA] are presenting another corporate takeover. My question to you [NYCHA] is, if the residents do not want PACT, is PACT [privatization] already a done deal? Are we just sitting here listening to you, but it’s already cleared, and the takeover already underway? [...] Because what I’m hearing in this presentation is that PACT is just another corporate takeover.” Her remarks were met with cheers and applause from tenants throughout the room, and when NYCHA tried to interrupt her mid-sentence, it



Protest against Eric Adams' privatization of NYCHA at City Hall, July 14th

only further exposed their arrogance and dishonesty.

After Tyra spoke, the floodgates were opened. Tenants (both who were part of UFAD and those who were just learning about privatization for the first time) pressed NYCHA with a series of hard-hitting questions. And the NYCHA representatives were totally unprepared for this. They hemmed and hawed, stammered, and talked out of both sides of their mouths. This was because they could not provide clear and honest answers, namely that PACT privatization IS another corporate takeover, that tenants have no real say in it, and that many people will be displaced because of it. After successfully exposing NYCHA in this meeting we saw an influx of tenants from Manhattanville into our organizing efforts. A week or so later, tenants from Manhattanville travelled across-town to join a NYCHA PACT meeting at the Jackie Robinson projects in East Harlem. Working in solidarity with tenants there, we once again exposed NYCHA's lies.

All of this helped lay the foundations for our July protest against NYC Mayor Eric Adams and his support for the privatization of

NYCHA. Tenants from a number of developments around the city joined the protest downtown at City Hall. Students and activists also joined in large numbers. Around 75 people were in attendance, with some reporters from various alternative media outlets and publications there as well. The protest highlighted the overall corruption of the Adams Mayoral administration, exposed how this is no accident (but is really how the government normally functions), and focused on how the entire political system is not in the interests of working-class tenants and poor people.

Paul, a tenant from the Manhattanville Projects, spoke about how the media and education system claim that we live in a democracy, a "civilized society," and that we live "in the best country in the world." He said, "well guess what, we've all been brainwashed, and hypnotized, and indoctrinated, and programmed to believe a lot of BS in the guise of education [...]" But when does a country like this do this to its citizens? So in other words, this is a country of fraud, of illusions, deceptions. It's supposed to be a democratic system, but when stuff like [the privatization of public housing] is going on, we have to realize that this is a scam, a lie,



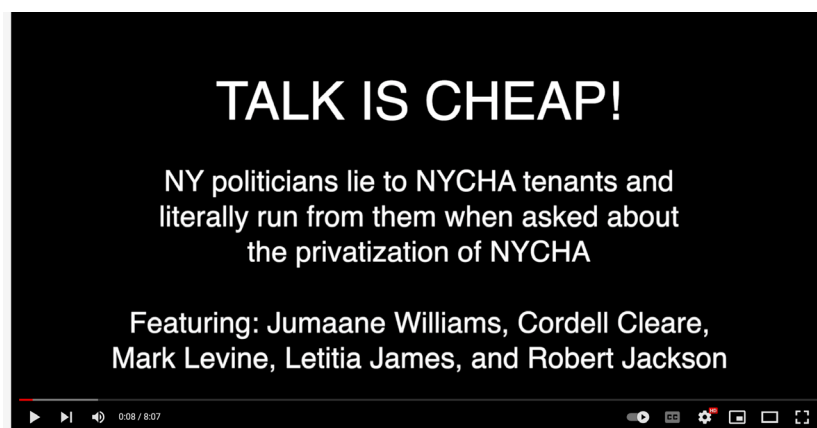
Paul (above) and Matthew (below) speaking at the City Hall protest

bullshit. So, what we need to do now is have some strategies to counteract this. That's what we have to do. It's inevitable that, if you don't do something, there's going to be too much homelessness spread across—not just New York City—but across the country and across the world.”

Paul's speech crystallized many of the main points of the protest. It put the push for privatizing public housing in the larger context needed to understand it. This drive to eliminate public housing is not an isolated incident. It is part of a larger-scale effort by the ruling elite and the government of this country to

gentrify cities and drive people out of their homes and neighborhoods. It is supported by both the Democrats and Republicans, from one administration to the next. Only if we cast aside illusions about these crooks in office, and stop looking to them for help, can we really see a path forward.

Speaking of which, we followed this protest up with a petition effort against privatization at Manhattanville and Jackie Robinson. At Manhattanville, over 200 tenants signed onto the petition (far more than the 63 who voted in the recent Tenant Association election there), and at Jackie Robinson, over half the tenants



Watch our video: “TALK IS CHEAP! New York Politicians Lie to NYCHA Tenants When Asked About the Privatization of NYCHA”. Scan QR code or go to bit.ly/talkischeapufad

signed as well. These petitions were sent to every single NYC city councillor and New York State politician “representing” Harlem, and not a single one of them responded, at all. This total silence was what some of us expected, but for others who had hoped that we could find an ally among these elected officials, this made it clear that these politicians are not our friends. They may talk about supporting the people, but when an actual struggle to stop gentrification is going on, they cannot so much as lift a finger to help.

To expose this to the world, we went as a group to the African American Day Parade in Harlem in September. All the politicians show up there and march in the parade. It’s part of their PR campaign to make it seem like they are “close to the community” when, in fact, they are close to the rich and powerful. We confronted a bunch of them, including NYC’s official “Public Advocate” Jumaane Williams, State Senators Cordell Cleare and Robert Jackson, Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine, and New York State Attorney General Letitia James. We had already emailed Cordell Cleare and Mark Levine the petition a month prior and heard nothing back. In person they mostly ran away from us, although Cordell Cleare did promise to make a statement in support of tenants (she never did even after we followed up again),

and Robert Jackson argued with us, lying and saying that PACT “isn’t privatization,” when NYCHA’s PACT FAQs say that it is!

Brenda, a tenant from Manhattanville explained how confronting Mark Levine went, “We was trying to talk to Mark Levine, and he just shrugged us off. He said he doesn’t support this privatization mess that’s going on, but for us to talk to another young lady. And that was the end of that, for us. He didn’t want to speak to us, really [...] We haven’t heard anything from him [in response to our email].” So while the politicians ignore us, and have remained silent in response to our subsequent followup emails, the joke is on them, as we made a video of these confrontations to expose their hypocrisy and two-faced nature.

In the next few weeks we organized a rally with Columbia students on campus against the University’s role in gentrifying Harlem. Our ties with the students go back to last Fall when we came out to support the student workers in their strike. Many students were excited to work together to oppose Columbia’s nefarious schemes in the community, especially when it came to light that Columbia has a course this semester which aims to “Redesign Harlem” according to the University’s agenda. Our protest drew several hundred people, including

Brenda

Manhattanville tenant
of over 60 years



tenants from Grant Houses, Manhattanville, and Fredrick Douglass Houses, as well numerous students and community activists.

Matthew from Manhattanville spoke at the protest. He tied it all together, offering some striking analysis of what's really going on in this country: "The system is intentionally making houses and apartment scarce, so that the ones they let on the market have consumers competing for them with foreign investors, the wealthy, and property acquiring companies like Blackrock. There are 17 million vacant homes in this country, and hundreds of thousands of empty apartments nationally. Many universities are agents of gentrification

in major cities in the United States. While at the same time Columbia University is raising tuition on its students and not raising wages for its staffers amid rising inflation."

In the next few months we hope to redouble our efforts at Manhattanville, tie organizing together there with other NYCHA developments, and get a number of student activists involved in UFAD efforts across Harlem. While the situation is difficult and we have a long road ahead of us, the path forward is clear and there are big opportunities to build the movement and stop the privatization of NYCHA.



UPDATE FROM THE STRUGGLE IN BOSTON

Summer protests against Mayor Michelle Wu

Over the summer in Boston we went as a group to protest several of the new Mayor Michelle Wu's "coffee hours", which are basically photo ops for city government officials in different neighborhoods around the city. We had previously gone to one held by former mayor Kim Janey last fall, and one of Wu's by the Bromley Heath development this May with independent video journalist Sabby Sabs.

After the May confrontation, we decided to take a more direct approach and try to disrupt the events and speeches entirely, instead of just asking questions. We tried a variety of different tactics: silently holding up signs, chanting over the speakers things like "liar, liar, gentrifier", and speaking about the struggle against gentrification with a megaphone (which the police threatened to arrest us for).

These tactics were effective in causing a stink and cracked the mayor's progressive facade. How progressive is it to send the police after people who are critical of her?

One of the most important things from this effort, aside from exposing the mayor, was that we met local activist groups fighting other ongoing outrages across different neighborhoods. For example, at the coffee hour in Roxbury, we met a group protesting efforts by billionaire Robert Kraft to chop down trees and redevelop Malcolm X Park. When organizing at particular developments it can be easy to lose a sense of the larger picture, even just of a city. Keeping up to date on different struggles and working with other groups is key to counter tendencies of localism and tunnel vision.



Top to bottom: protests in Roxbury, Readville, and East Boston. Police threatened to arrest a UFAD organizer for using a megaphone at the protest in Roxbury.

The struggle to defend the Anna Mae Cole Center / Bromley Hall

The Panthers used the wall of the Anna Cole Center building to screen movies for the neighborhood. This was another important step in bringing people together through political education.

Residents learned from the Panthers that if we engage in collective action, we can shift the balance of power in our favor. Greedy businesses like Stop & Shop, which leech off the people through high prices and low wages, refused to give food for the breakfast program. But the Panthers called a boycott and were able to force them to make donations.

PIGS ATTEMPT TO SABOTAGE FREE BREAKFAST PROGRAM

The Free Breakfast Program in Bromley Heath is only 3 weeks old and has already served close to 700 school children! In order to run the program, the businesses in the area, along Centre Street, were asked to donate either money or supplies to the Free Breakfast Program on a weekly basis. Historically, white-owned businesses have made profits hand over hand from the Black community and these profits have left the area, draining the community of its moles. We feel that the time has come for these stores and store owners to re-invest some money back into the community, so that the community can grow and prosper, and the Free Breakfast Program for School Children is one of the best and most concrete ways to do this. Also, we feel justified in asking for a donation on a weekly basis for the simple reason that the people in Bromley - Heath Projects shop and spend their money along Centre Street on a daily basis, let alone, weekly. Besides, the Free Breakfast Program is run daily, Monday-Friday, 7:00 A.M. to 8:15 A.M.) A \$5.00 weekly donation wouldn't break any of those stores and the money or supplies is greatly needed in the community. There is not one white owned business along Centre Street (which was asked) who will contribute to the free Breakfast Program.

Power is the ability to define a certain thing, (figure out where its coming from) and then make that thing act in a desired manner.

We understand that this power to change things, to fit our human needs and desires, can never be lost and always rests in the people. We must be able to tell our friends from our enemies, to draw lines of distinction, for we know we have the power to inflict upon our enemies a political consequence to deal with them accordingly.

While all the stores along Centre Street have proved by their actions to be more interested in profit and money making than in the interests and well being of the community, certain stores have proved by their arrogance to be outright, dead up, enemies of the people--Pigs. Three in particular, Meatland, Stop and Shop and Kozy Korner. And there should be no hesitation as to our response, our political consequence. These three capitalistic greed-hungry stores should be boycotted until such time as they donate an adequate amount of supplies, or they should be put out of business.

We have the power, we've always had the power, and the time has come to use our power.

BOYCOTT MEATLAND!
BOYCOTT STOP & SHOP!
BOYCOTT KOZY KORNER!
ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

Michael Fultz
Black Panther Party
Boston Chapter
23 Winthrop Street
Roxbury, Mass.

In the coming months, the City of Boston and the Boston Housing Authority (BHA), along with a group of developers (Urban Edge, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation, and The Community Builders), are planning to demolish the Anna Mae Cole Center at the Mildred C. Hailey/Bromley-Heath public housing development in Jamaica Plain. The Cole Center is not just an ordinary community center. In addition to serving as a vital resource for residents, it has been a beating heart of working class struggle and Black resistance, including as a focal point of the Black Panther Party's organizing in Boston. At the Center, the Panthers ran their Free Breakfast Program, and mobilized the community to boycott overpriced grocery stores in the area who refused to donate food for the program—this boycott was successful and allowed the program to continue feeding people of the neighborhood while bringing them into struggle against this oppressive system.

The demolition plans will erase this proud legacy and privatize a vital community resource. Moreover, they will pave the way for an enormous project of gentrification in Jamaica Plain, with the removal of public housing and the construction of hundreds of expensive apartments.

We held a protest at the hall on September 21st, and have gathered around 250 signatures on a petition demanding that the Center be preserved and designated a historic landmark by the City of Boston. A longer statement explaining the history was also signed by numerous organizations as well as by

A page of the pamphlet we made explaining why we have to fight to save the Anna Cole Center, and the history of struggle there.



Pastor John Wheeler speaking at the protest to save the hall, September 21st. Ms. Anna Mae Cole is sitting in the center.

Ms. Anna Mae Cole herself, and by Cornel West, who helped with the Panthers at the Anna Mae Cole center. Other signatories included The Revolutionary Blackout Network; Black Lives Matter, Boston; I am Harriet Boston; The Grant Manor Organizers; Revolution Bicycle Repair, Jamaica Plain; Not For SALEm; Housing = Health; We Got Us; and White Coats for Black Lives, MA.

24 and 34 Heath Street

On October 6th and 7th, BHA tried to speed up their demolition efforts at Bromley Heath and told the remaining residents of 24 and 34 Heath Street that they had one week to pack and move out of their apartments. For months, the residents of the buildings were given hints that they would have to move, but never with a clear date.

Some of these families in the elderly/disabled buildings were offered replacement units that were too small or didn't have accommodations for their disabilities. Others were told they had to move across the city. When they complained they didn't have enough time to pack, the Boston Housing Authority told them they'd send movers to pack up their personal belongings for them and throw them in a truck.

This is just the next step of BHA's plans to sell off Bromley Heath to real estate developers. They've been promising for years that all these plans to remake the neighborhood are for tenants. Now we can see that this was always a lie. Boston Housing and the developers in the area see tenants as some trash to sweep out the door, and that's how they treat us.

Immediately after this came to light, tenants and activists came together to protest this illegal and unethical treatment of the people in the building. We alerted the media and held protests and marches around the development to expose this mistreatment. The Boston Housing Authority responded to the immediate backlash by giving the residents more time to pack and better apartment options.

No matter what building tenants are living in now, they will end up in the same situation as the 24/34 Heath Street residents once BHA has set their sights on them. But if we engage in sustained struggle against the people screwing us over, we can change the situation for the better.



Protest outside 24 and 34 Heath Street buildings on October 14th.

Politicians and nonprofits hold event to dupe tenants

While they were in the middle of pushing people out of 24 and 34 Heath Street, BHA, Mayor Michelle Wu, and a bunch of sellout nonprofits including City Life held a phony “Resident Empowerment Conference” on October 15th at The Possible Zone, directly across from 24 and 34 Heath, to train the next generation of tenant “leaders” to help privatize their developments. We showed up to protest this hypocrisy and wake up some of the tenants so they couldn’t be bought off. When some residents attending the conference joined our protest and then invited us to come in and share some information with the attendees, the facilitators shoved our members and called the cops. Then when Mayor Wu came out she ignored our questions about her support for privatization and ran into her expensive car. Boston Housing is totally uninterested in any sort of “dialogue” as they continue selling out tenants’ homes. But if we keep boldly exposing the truth, more people will wake up and join the fight.



In the background, members of UFAD are being told they cannot enter the event by the facilitators, who then called the police.

UFAD Boston meets with Not For SALEM

On September 10th at the Lee Fort Terrace public housing projects in Salem, Massachusetts, we met with Not for SALEM (above) and shared stories about the fight against the privatization of public housing & Beacon Communities.

Not for SALEM is fighting against the privatization and demolition of Lee Fort Terrace, and the Salem Housing Authority (SHA) has chosen Beacon Communities to carry out this scheme. This is the same slumlord company that took over the first Black project in Boston, the Lenox Street Projects, and pushed out most of the tenants. As we met, the Salem Housing Authority truck circled our group taking pictures of us gathering, but they failed to intimidate us.



Lee Fort Terrace has 50 one-bedroom units. SHA and Beacon plan to demolish the buildings to build 124 Section 8 and so-called “affordable” units.

Corrupt Mayor of Salem Kim Driscoll is running mate to Maura Healey in the Massachusetts Governor/Lieutenant Governor race, and is a darling of real estate. This ticket plans to turbo charge privatization of public housing as well as of the public transit system.

THE “INFLATION REDUCTION” ACT: ONE BIG SCAM

By Ryan



Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act into law on August 16, 2022. Contrary to what corporate media says, this Act won't make things better.

Over the past month there has been a lot of media coverage about the Democrats passing the Inflation Reduction Act. Given the red-hot inflation (which seems likely to only get worse in the coming months), with the cost of food, housing, energy, and basically everything else going up faster than it has in nearly 50 years, many people are holding their breath, hoping that there will be some kind of relief. And so, despite Biden now being the least popular president in US history, some people have been clinging to the hope that this bill will help.

Media reports have reinforced this idea. CNN called this a “huge legislative victory” for Biden, arguing that the Act will substantially reduce inflation, among other things. MSNBC called it a “big win for young people,” claiming that the Act will cut medical costs across the board. And perhaps most bold (and delusional) of all was NYT columnist and establishment economist Paul Krugman who went

so far as to declare that the “Democrats just saved civilization” with the Inflation Reduction Act because the law will supposedly have some impact on climate change.

And yet, when you tune out the noise from these talking heads and focus on the details of the bill, it's hard to see what there is to get excited about. In fact, the more you read about the Inflation Reduction Act, the clearer it becomes that this piece of legislation is actually something to be angry about and even something to oppose. On every issue the bill supposedly will address, from inflation to climate change, the reality does not match the hype. On the contrary, the media frenzy around the bill seems more of a marketing campaign to convince a disillusioned electoral base that they should “keep on believing” in Biden and the Democrats, despite decades of broken promises and an acute economic downturn. A recent study from the University of Pennsylvania found the act's “impact on inflation



Most of the provisions to reduce costs of prescription drugs for seniors won't even kick in for a few years, and by then the Act could easily be revised or repealed.

is statistically indistinguishable from zero,” meaning that the Inflation Reduction Act, will not in fact reduce inflation at all.

This raises some red flags. When politicians market a \$260 billion spending bill as “reducing inflation” only to have a major study say that it will not reduce inflation, we should ask, “Where is this money really going?”

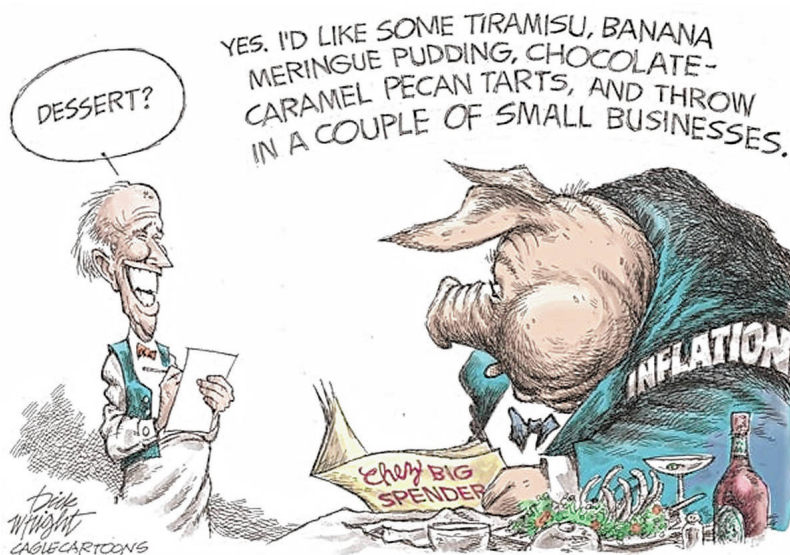
Once you look behind all this fanfare from the politicians and their associated media outlets, it's easy to see that the Inflation Reduction Act is little more than one massive handout to Corporate America and the Big Banks, with working Americans and small businesses left to foot the bill.

For example, Bloomberg news service noted that “the wealthy” and “Private Equity Fund managers” (basically investment gurus for rich people) are two of the big winners from this bill, as the Democrats broke their promises to fund this bill via increasing taxes on the extremely rich. Instead, part of the way this will be paid for is through providing the IRS with \$80 billion in increased funding (coincidentally the exact amount of money that they said was needed to fix public housing across

the country) to aggressively audit Americans' tax returns and try to catch any little mistake people have made when filing their taxes.

What's more, the Inflation Reduction Act provides huge subsidies to big energy corporations. It provides them with tens of billions of dollars in subsidies and tax credits. No wonder big oil corporations like Exxon Mobil and Occidental Petroleum praised the new legislation. Democrat politicians have claimed that this bill will increase taxes on these companies, but actually the so-called tax hike will have no impact on most oil corporations. It will not cause them to pay one cent more in taxes. This piece of legislation however does open the door to massive new oil drilling in the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska. In opening these areas up for drilling and providing huge new tax breaks to Big Oil corporations, the Inflation Reduction Act will help to make the rich richer and further accelerate the destruction of the planet via climate change.

And with medical costs, the situation is similar. Claims that the legislation will substantially reduce prescription drug costs have been greatly exaggerated. Americans already pay 256% more on average for medication than



people in other countries. This is in part because the Big Pharmaceutical companies already price gouge people, especially seniors, forcing many to choose between food and prescription medication on a regular basis. These corporations are aided by massive government subsidies, which pad the pockets of the corporate elite with tens of billions of dollars each year. The Inflation Reduction Act includes some minor provisions to limit costs of prescription drugs for those on Medicare; however, most of these provisions don't kick in for a few years, at least. People are suffering from inflation right now, and high prices aren't going away any time soon. Inflation is projected by many to remain high for the coming years, possibly even getting worse. And yet, the basic changes to reduce expenses for seniors on Medicare don't kick in until 2025, and the act could easily be repealed before then.

So, overall when evaluating the Inflation Reduction Act we can see that despite its name, it will not reduce inflation; instead, it's primarily a handout to the big corporations that run this country and the government. Some people will get a few crumbs, but the lion's share of the \$260 billion in spending will go into the pockets of those who are already very rich. This legislation is really not unique in this regard.

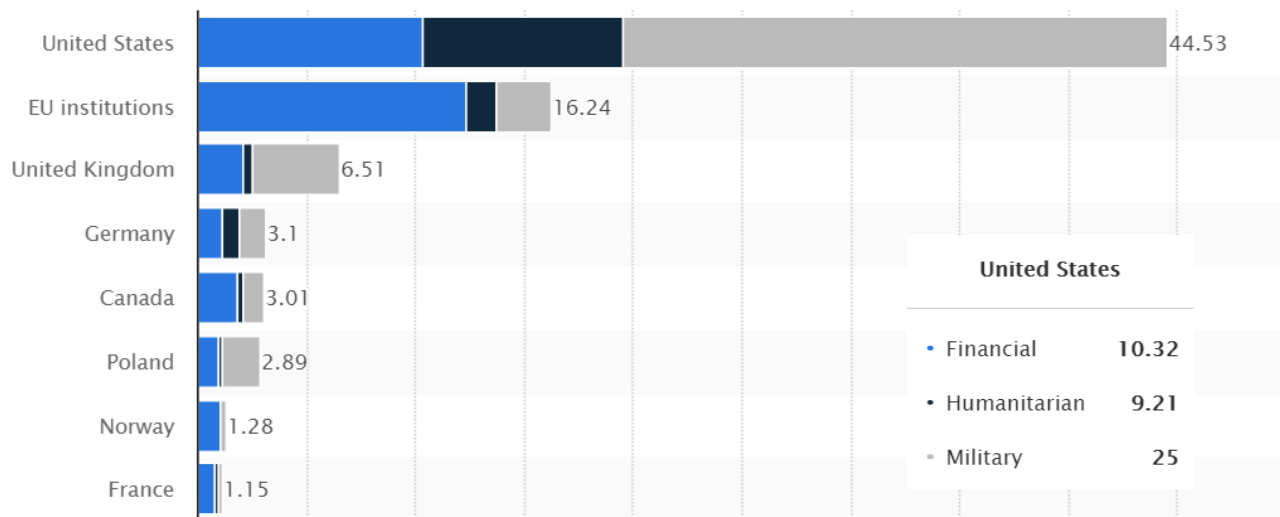
It's actually typical of how the government operates overall. Both the Democrats and Republicans have passed many similar Acts in the past. They are largely funded by taxing the working class and small business owners, and they subsidize the rich people and their big corporations.

In short, the Inflation Reduction Act is a typical example of the system of corporate and financial rule that we live under. Both parties are part of this system; both the Democrats and Republicans (despite employing different marketing strategies) fundamentally betray the people over and over again. The history of these two parties is one long, unbroken chain of lies and deception of the people of this country.

And so those who are hurting from inflation, who are suffering one injustice or another under this system (whether it be gentrification, inflation, racial discrimination, or anything else) need to see that there is no hope in trusting these political parties. People sometimes say that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Well, let's stop acting crazy and stop getting duped by these politicians; instead let's start thinking about ways to solve the problems that we, the people, face.

WHY THE U.S. IS FUNDING THE UKRAINE WAR

By Chantelle



Aid committed to Ukraine (in billions of euros), by country and type, between January 24 and August 3. What's counted as financial and humanitarian aid is often for military purposes.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, the US government has agreed to send nearly \$60 billion to Ukraine.

In the struggle against the privatization of public housing, the politicians tell us over and over again that there's no money for public housing, so the only solution is to hand it over to private corporations. Whenever it's the people that need something, like housing, jobs, and medical care, the politicians say the same refrain: they're doing the best they can, there's just unfortunately no money. The Democrats blame the Republicans and the Republicans blame the Democrats. Occasionally, they toss us a few crumbs, but that's about it.

The truth is though, these politicians are talking out of both sides of their mouths. They tell us that there's no money for things we need like repairs to public housing, and then turn around and spend billions on other things. Case in point: in the last six months, the US government has sent tens of billions of dollars to Ukraine. Before that, the government

printed trillions of dollars to bail out the banks in 2008 and the corporations in 2020. So the problem isn't that there's no money. It's just that those in power use it to serve their own interests, not ours.

The US government tries to justify spending like a drunken sailor on Ukraine by saying it is helping the Ukrainian people. But that's not the true priority; actually, they are using the Ukrainian people as a sacrificial pawn. The politicians have said clearly that they want to drag this war out to weaken Russia, in a deadly game of geopolitical chess that could culminate in World War 3. Biden has said that the US will support Ukraine "as long as it takes" to win the war. He and others among the elite and the government hope to use this war to secure US corporate domination of Eastern Europe and Russia. They want to use this war to gain a leg up on Russia corporate competition.

To do this, they hope to win over Americans to see our interests as fundamentally aligned with the US government and corporate

empire. But while the Russian government and corporations are certainly not our friends, neither are the US government and Big Banks and other corporations in this country. They all work hand in glove in a million different ways to keep us down. From privatizing public housing and pushing gentrification, to taking one third (or more) of every paycheck in taxes, to gouging us with rising prices, it's "our" government and the big corporations who are the main sources of poverty, oppression, and suffering in this country. They bleed us dry with taxes, they've moved most of the better paying working class jobs overseas, and they've locked up millions of poor people across the country.

Now, they're trying to use this Ukraine War to whip us up into a patriotic fervor, to distract from all the issues around us in various ways. Everything from the economic recession to inflation has been blamed on Russia lately, but all these were going on before the war started. As we wrote about in the last issue of Urban Core, the Biden administration takes every chance it gets to blame problems like inflation on Putin. As the situation for the people in this country is getting worse and worse, those in power want us to line up to support this war, no matter what, and to ignore all the problems here at home. And when people have spoken out against this war, the government has cracked down with more censorship, saying that everyone criticizing Biden must be a Putin supporter.

So long as this war serves the interests of the US elite, they will drag it out, maybe for years. They don't care how many people die, how many tens of billions of dollars it takes, and how much people in the US are suffering with skyrocketing costs of housing, food, and gas.

Of course, Russia's invasion of Ukraine should be opposed, just like the US's invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan should be. But that doesn't mean we should support the US government



White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on September 1st that anyone who disagrees with the majority is an extremist. This will lead to more censorship of those who dissent and criticize the government.

pouring money and weapons into this war and censoring those who dissent. They say, if you want to win a struggle, you need to know who are your friends and who are your enemies. Most people in this country are clear that the Russian government is not our friend, but it's important that we're also clear that the US government isn't our friend either, regardless of whether it's a Democratic or Republican administration.

The government in this country isn't "by the people, for the people," it's an entity that serves the interests of the rich and powerful, from one administration to the next. And now that handful of rich people and big corporations that run this country have decided to play a game of nuclear brinksmanship with Russia, the country with the most nuclear weapons in the world. This is quite a scary situation, and if that wasn't bad enough things are going from bad to worse on the home front as the economy tanks and inflation skyrockets. However, with this economic downturn and related global instability, people will also increasingly see the fact that this system is not for them, that there is no real American Dream possible for the vast majority, and that something different is needed if we are to get out of this mess.

HEROIC RESISTANCE AGAINST BRUTAL PLUNDER IN MEXICO: PART 1

By Alonso Espinosa Domínguez

I took a trip in May to El Salto, Jalisco, located in the Santiago River basin on the outskirts of Guadalajara in Mexico, in order to learn about longstanding struggles that people are waging there.

For some context, the Santiago River basin is one of many regions in Mexico where hundreds of the world's largest multinational corporations (many of them from the United States) have swooped in to exploit cheap labor. With the help of a pliant government that writes and bends the laws to serve them, these corporations have basically destroyed the Santiago River, replacing it with sewage and industrial waste water containing thousands of toxic chemicals. Meanwhile, the population of El Salto and surrounding towns has been ravaged by cancer, kidney failure, and poisoning by lead, arsenic, and more.

In response, the people have gotten organized and fought back. I got to meet members of Un Salto de Vida, a grassroots organization of residents from the towns of El Salto and Juanaatlán. For 17 years they have been a leading force in the struggles against the government, the polluting corporations, and the real estate interests operating round the Santiago River basin.

This situation may seem far away, but it is



Before and after the destruction of the Santiago River by multinational corporations (many of which are US corporations) and the Mexican government.

important to see how our struggles in the US, including the struggle against gentrification, are connected with the struggles of oppressed peoples everywhere. In the case of El Salto, the connections run deep. Many of the big corporations who moved industrial production to El Salto and other places in Mexico and around the world did so while moving production out of the US, especially out of the big cities. For decades, they have been taking both the jobs and also the pollution and health hazards they cause in the US, and dumped them in places



Protests led by Un Salto De Vida.

like El Salto where they can pay the people much less and poison the population much more.

This outsourcing of jobs and de-industrialization has been a major force behind the real estate speculation driving gentrification in the cities. In other words, many of the forces behind the devastation in El Salto are also behind the gentrification we are fighting against here in the US. Ultimately, we have both the same system and some of the same people as our enemies.

For this reason, in this article and subsequent ones, I want to highlight a few key lessons from the struggle in El Salto that I think will inform and inspire us as we wage our own struggles. In this first article, I will talk about some of the victories won by Un Salto de Vida and also the repression and defeats they have faced, and what both teach us about organizing. In the next article, I will talk about the experience of Un Salto de Vida with supposedly progressive government officials and politicians, as well as the role of NGOs/non-profit corporations.

There is strength in getting organized and fighting back

In the face of brutal oppression, we can be made to feel hopeless, thinking that the enemy is too powerful and that there is nothing

we can do against them. But this is not true, and Un Salto de Vida's experience shows this. By repeatedly mobilizing hundreds and sometimes thousands of people in protests and mass meetings, carefully documenting and exposing the many outrages going on through written materials, videos, and other media, and complementing this with legal action, they have managed to win some notable victories.

For example, in 2019 they stopped (for now) a proposed thermoelectric plant financed by the US Blackstone Group (one of the world's largest investment corporations) that would have further deforested and contaminated the area. They also forced the Jalisco state government to close Jalisco's largest trash dump, located on 178 acres of land right where Guadalajara ends and El Salto begins. And when Un Salto de Vida found out that the company running the trash dump was making plans to relocate a little further away to the town of Tala, they alerted the people of Tala who then organized themselves and successfully fought to stop that from happening.

Repression, setbacks and defeats can be overcome, no matter how serious

However, getting organized and fighting back comes with many risks and difficulties. The oppressors don't back down easily, and inevitably launch attacks against those attempting

to organize. In Un Salto de Vida's case, their members have survived attempted kidnappings, been threatened with assassination and torture, had their bedroom windows shot out, had the organization's van burned down, and more.

Furthermore, the repression and attacks have not limited themselves to overt physical violence. The corporations and government have attempted to discredit them by spreading slanderous rumors, for example covering the streets of El Salto with posters of activists' faces and lies about their pasts.

In combination with this repression, the government and corporations have also sought to buy off sections of the population and create divisions amongst them in order to make it harder to organize. For example, they promised millions of pesos to the peasants in Juanacatlán in order to give up their lands for the thermoelectric plant. These attacks against the movement have at times led to serious setbacks. The violent repression has forced leading members into temporary exile while instilling fear amongst the population, leading to significant drop offs in participation and momentum. Sometimes, the elite's divide and rule tactics have worked at turning some of the population against the movement.

But at each setback, the members of Un Salto de Vida and much of the population across the Santiago River basin have not given up. After each period of exile, they have come back knowing full well the risks. That is because they know that a long, brutal future of plunder, illness, and death is absolutely guaranteed if they do not continue the struggle, with all the dangers and risks that may imply. And



so, instead of losing hope, they have regrouped and come up with new ideas to advance their movement after each setback. And indeed, some of the previously mentioned victories have been won after experiencing defeats and regrouping.

In our own fight against gentrification and against the landlords' assault on our basic rights and living conditions, we too have faced some defeats. And we have also come up against both retaliation and divide and rule tactics which have at times hampered our work. But as the courage and tenacity of the people of El Salto in the face of far greater repression and setbacks shows, there is a need and a basis for us to continue our struggles despite these defeats.

As chairman of the Chicago Black Panther Party Fred Hampton said, "If you dare to struggle, you dare to win. If you dare not struggle, then damn it, you don't deserve to win."



URBAN CORE: A NEWSLETTER FOR THE PEOPLE

Urban Core is the national newsletter of the United Front Against Displacement, featuring news, analysis, opinions, art, and more about the struggle against gentrification all across the country. *Urban Core* was specifically created to keep residents informed about developments in their neighborhoods and to connect ongoing struggles against gentrification.

The purpose of this newsletter is to serve the people. In order for it to be a success we need your feedback, contributions, and criticisms.

The United Front Against Displacement is a tenant organization fighting against gentrification, with chapters in Boston, New York City, and the San Francisco Bay Area.



**HAVE YOU RECEIVED AN
EVICTED NOTICE?**

**ARE YOU FACING A RENT
INCREASE?**

**IS YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD BEING
GENTRIFIED?**

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