

June 7, 2025

South Africa rejects the racist Trump and Musk attack

By Emile Schepers

On May 21, a bizarre meeting took place in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington D.C.

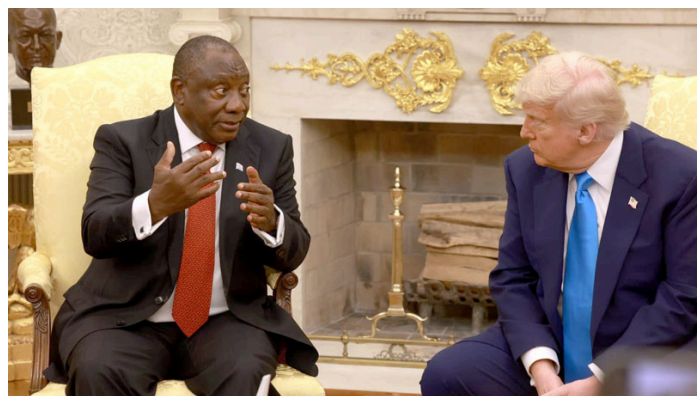
President Trump, hosting a visiting South African delegation headed by South Africa's president, Cyril Ramaphosa, and including several members of Ramaphosa's cabinet as well as other South African dignitaries, suddenly went into attack mode and began to berate his guests with utterly false information about a supposed "genocide" being perpetrated against white Afrikaner farmers in South Africa. Trump's evidence for this long discredited accusation included an audiovisual show of a massive number of white crosses along a South African highway, which Trump claimed represented thousands of murdered white farmers. He also handed Ramaphosa a thick sheaf of internet printouts which supposedly documented the "genocide," and a video clip of Julius Malema and other members of the out-of-government opposition party, the Economic Freedom Fighters, singing the militant anti-apartheid chant "**Dubul ibhuno**," i.e. "Kill the Boer."

The evidence Trump presented was nonsense, and easily refuted by the South Africans, including Agriculture Minister Mr. J.H. Steenhuisen, himself an Afrikaner from the conservative Democratic Alliance party. The white crosses were a memorial for two farmers who had been murdered, and not "thousands," as Trump implied. A printout of an article showing corpses being buried was not from South Africa, but rather depicted the aftermath of a massacre which took place in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, after Rwanda-supported insurgents took control of that city. And Malema and the Economic Freedom Fighters are strident opponents of Mr. Ramaphosa's government, not part of the country's ruling coalition.

So Trump was just being the Trump we know.

But immediately after that dumpster fire of a meeting, there was another, closed meeting between the two presidents. The theme of that second meeting was serious stuff, negotiations about trade, tariffs, and the like.

Serious stuff indeed. South Africa has vast mineral riches including gold, diamonds, platinum, and other things. It is sub-Saharan Africa's most developed country. And with 64 million inhabitants, it is a good sized market. On the negative side, it has problems maintaining its infrastructure. One of the major reasons that President Ramaphosa's African National Congress, which had ruled South Africa since liberation from apartheid in 1994, lost its parliamentary majority in the 2024 general elections and felt forced into a very ungainly coalition, was that there were major electrical blackouts all over the country that year.



Prior to that election, the South African government was based on the Tripartite Alliance of the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP), and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Now Ramaphosa has to deal with coalition partners in his cabinet and in parliament who are anti-communist and anti-labor. Not only agriculture minister Steenhuisen, but also the Minister for Communications and Digital Technologies, Solomon Malatsi, belong to the Democratic Alliance Party, which favors neoliberal policies.

Enter South Africa-born Elon Musk, who attended the White House extravaganza.

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Musk attack

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Musk has a company called SpaceX, which includes a branch called **Starlink**. Starlink is a huge operation which provides online access via thousands of small, low orbit satellites. As of 2024, 130 countries are hooked up to Starlink — but not the Republic of South Africa. Musk would like to get into the potentially lucrative South African market, but he regards South Africa's affirmative action policy called Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment, or BBBEE, to be an obstacle to be overcome. BBBEE requires that foreign companies which wish to be licensed to operate in South Africa commit to including 30% of their shares in the country to members of previously excluded groups, with some room to negotiate other solutions to the country's development needs. That would certainly require that Starlink and Musk to negotiate with the South African government on the matter. But Musk claims that the whites, not the Blacks, are now the excluded or oppressed group in South Africa. This is one of the reasons he has promoted the idea of an anti-white genocide existing in South Africa, as well as the exaggerated accusations that the government wishes to seize white people's land without compensation.

This situation has left many people in South Africa wondering what, exactly, was agreed to in the closed, second meeting at the White House. Voices have been raised within the Tripartite Alliance, within the ANC and in the wider society, asking whether perhaps the government made undesirable concessions under U.S. pressure, precisely on the issue of BBBEE.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has issued a sharply worded **statement** on the subject. COSATU, says the statement, favors foreign investment that will create much needed job opportunities in South Africa, where the level of unemployment among Black workers is around 43%. But such investment must adhere to the stipulations of South African law, and not be based on “social media incitement by right wing cranks and race baiting hustlers” such as **AfriForum**.

It looks, from a statement made by Communications and Technologies Minister Solomon Malatsi, as if the government might be under pressure to make concessions to Starlink that are in the interests of the company and Musk, but not of the South African people, at least in the eyes of COSATU and other people in the ANC and beyond.

This is indeed how transnational monopoly capitalism and imperialism work, all over the world.

Workers and people of good conscience in the United States need to be aware of this situation. We know firsthand what acceding to the demands of people like Trump and Musk is doing to us. We need to be ready to fight against what they are trying to do to the people of South Africa, and other countries as well.

Bitcoin 2025 conference goers were suckered if they paid full price

By Taryn Fivek

LAS VEGAS—Though the nightmare lines the promoters said would materialize here as thousands would try to get into the Bitcoin 2025 Conference never happened, they just barely managed to fill the place on Day 2, even with a speech by Vice President Vance as the lure.

Unlike the previous day, the auditorium did fill, but it seems, largely responsible for that were signs on the Las Vegas strip promising free Bitcoin Conference tickets with purchase of other entertainment. As with the cryptocurrency itself, people ended up being suckered if they paid the original price to get in.

Yet, much of the assembled crowd that was there on Day 2 was genuinely thrilled to be there. Vice President J.D. Vance is by far the most powerful speaker who has ever appeared at the annual conference.

Though both the now-President Donald Trump and his then-future Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. spoke at the Bitcoin conference in Nashville last year, neither held elected office at the time.

Now, attendees were told to arrive as early as 5:00 in the morning to move through Secret Service security, though *People's World* arrived at 7:30 and encountered no lines. Agents milled around, and finally, the Vice President arrived on stage, waving to the cheering crowd. People were out of their seats, straining to take photos.

When Vance finally spoke, he was clearly in his element. He is, after all, the product of the Silicon Valley financial technology industry, mentored by Peter Thiel, who himself is invested in Bitcoin.



Vance's vocabulary, tone, and posture framed his name-dropping of the Winklevoss Twins, Cameron and Tyler, whom he credited with introducing him to Bitcoin. He shouted out Coinbase, which just went public on Wall Street.

Vance revealed to the crowd that he himself owns a “fair amount of Bitcoin.” He called it a hedge not just against the dollar—a shocking thing for the Vice President of the United States to say—but also against a private sector that he said threatens to de-bank individuals for their MAGA or Second Amendment beliefs.

He referenced the so-called Trucker Movement of 2022, which took place in Canada, saying that once the organizers of that were de-banked, the truckers were forced to go home. He called the audience assembled “digital pioneers” who will be forging the future.

His remarks were brief, only 15 minutes, but the fact that he was willing to travel more than 2,000 miles to address a trade conference whose spiritual leader was, until this year, serving a 240-year prison sentence, underscored the political power of the money assembled at the conference.

And it is not just Vance who appeared at the conference to express gratitude to the Bitcoin community. A later panel titled “Bitcoin as a Public Asset” featured not one, but two Trump children. Eric and Don Jr. appeared with two of their employees—the Trump family is now in the Bitcoin mining business. In fact, they had just announced earlier that month that their company, called American Bitcoin, would be going public.

While the two Trump sons have plenty to dredge up in terms of personal grievance, identifying themselves as members of the de-banked community that Vance alluded to in his earlier remarks, the conversation was bereft of anything regarding public assets, much less how Bitcoin might be included.

They played to the crowd even more than Vance did, drawing far more excitement, applause, and engagement. They skillfully weaved their own grievances in with the audience —“This happened to you too, right?”—as if everyone assembled were also extremely wealthy and powerful individuals who had survived legal siege by the Biden administration.

The Trumps were more than grateful to their audience. They were humble. “We would have never found crypto if it weren’t [that the] same scumbags coming after us are coming after you,” says Eric Trump. “I’m not sure we would have won in the same way if not for this incredible community by our side the entire time.”

From the Vice President to the Trump children, it seems like much of the Trump Administration literally has a vested interest in Bitcoin. The line between state and personal interest has totally evaporated. It’s hard to see who is leading whom in this dance.

The day wraps with a modest panel at one of the side stages, where the chairs are far less comfortable and the light less forgiving. It’s titled “Are Bitcoiners Becoming Sycophants of the State?” and staffed by old-school libertarian types.

Their answer to the question was “yes,” but they seem stumped by their own inability to do anything about it. According to their own libertarian principles, they are unable to force change in the Bitcoin space.

One panelist, a former Senate candidate from New Hampshire, said that “we should ignore [elected officials] and refuse to meet with them.” He seemed upset that people like J.D. Vance, Eric, and Donald Trump Jr. were invited to speak at the conference.

On his website, however, he has posted a photo of himself posing with Donald Trump from last year’s Bitcoin conference.

D.C. Council session over Mayor Bowser’s plan to end sanctuary city status draws strong pushback

By Mark Gruenberg and Carol Rosenblatt

WASHINGTON—A mass protest by D.C. residents jammed the City Council’s chambers on June 2 over Democratic Mayor Muriel Bowser’s plan to end the “sanctuary city” status of the Nation’s Capital.

Bowser’s plan is in her proposed city budget for the next fiscal year. It “shamefully includes a repeal of the Sanctuary Cities Act,” which protects migrants to D.C., a fact sheet says. The law bans local police from cooperating with President Donald Trump’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

That Bowser plan produced the May 2 protest, from members of the coalition formed to protect Black and brown people from ICE. After gathering and speaking outside the John Wilson Building, D.C.’s city hall, they trooped inside to make legislators hear their voices. It followed other protests weeks before.

“There’s a lot of abuse by law enforcement,” explained Kaya Chatterjee, executive director of [Free DC](#), a coalition formed to lobby to make the capital the nation’s 51st state.

“They try to divide us and they try to dominate us,” Chatterjee said of Trump and others like him. “They try to use these threats to make us obey in advance,” and not resist. “We’ll stick together across our communities so they can’t” achieve that goal, Chatterjee told the multiracial crowd.

ICE agents raid D.C. restaurants and other businesses and have grabbed an estimated 189 people—all people of color—out of cars, houses, workplaces, and off city streets, the coalition’s fact sheet says. It reports ICE raids at more than 100 restaurants and adds that families have been separated.

But “Mayor Bowser and council members have remained silent and idle.”



Now the mayor wants to “capitulate” to Trump and “further criminalize Brown and Black families,” the coalition asserts.

“I came to this country to work. I left my family behind like so many others, hoping for a better life, but instead, I found a harsh reality, low wages, labor abuse, harassment, and fear. Under this political climate, it is worse than before, much, much worse than before,” said Antonia Pena, co-executive director of the D.C.-Maryland-Virginia chapter of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, one of two unions listed as protest sponsors. The Restaurant Opportunities Center is the other.

“In recent months, we have learned that workers have been sexually harassed, but they are too afraid to report it because of the immigration threat. A domestic worker has still not received her pay, but her employer is threatening to call ICE if she dares to demand what she is owed...Abusive employers take advantage in this political climate.

“This is not just something that we want,” Pena said of D.C. being a sanctuary city. “It is something that we need. D.C. has the opportunity to be a brave city that doesn’t cower and that protects its people regardless of the color of their skin,” against what Pena called “this fascist government” of Trump.

“Over and over again, Bowser has done everything she can to restrict immigrants’ access to safety and support,” said Amy Fisher, a migrant rights organizer from Ward 7 east of the Anacostia River.

“And since January, we’ve seen our immigrants, their families, their friends, and their neighbors—hundreds of them—snatched out of their homes and thrust into the Trump administration’s immigration gulag.”

The Trump regime has backed the ICE raids, in D.C. and nationwide, with a threat to pull federal funds from cities and states that set themselves up as sanctuaries and don’t cooperate with ICE. That hasn’t stopped D.C., and most of its suburbs, plus Baltimore, from becoming sanctuaries.

Other cities that are sanctuaries include Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Boston, and the entire state of California. “Don’t take the bait,” of keeping federal cash, Fisher warned D.C. “Fight efforts to throw our neighbors into the jaws of Trump’s deportation machine.”

But New York Mayor Eric Adams has turned against that metropolis’s “sanctuary city” ordinance and ordered city prison guards to cooperate with ICE. In return, Trump ordered his Justice Department to drop multiple fraud charges against Adams in a case so solid that the Republican Acting U.S. Attorney for that area resigned in protest.

And in Boston, Rep. Ayanna Pressley, D-Mass., convened a roundtable on June 2 with local advocates and elected to discuss further measures to battle ICE in the Bay State. Their message: “Hands off our immigrant neighbors.”

Pressley cited “an uptick in ICE activity across the Massachusetts 7th Congressional District and the Commonwealth, including a series of harrowing incidents in East Boston, Chelsea, Everett, and other predominantly immigrant communities.”

Bowser’s plan to end D.C.’s sanctuary city status also caught the eye of Rep. Adriano Espaillat, D-N.Y., the Congressional Hispanic Caucus chair. “The D.C. Metropolitan Police Department is not the FBI or ICE,” he said in a statement. “They are trained differently, they respond differently, they have different relationships with the community. To deputize local police officers as federal agents is a huge mistake.

“I hope she’s not being intimidated by that guy at the White House, and that he’s threatening to withhold funding. Because that has a terminology—it’s called extortion.”

Both outside the Wilson Building and in the day-long budget hearing inside, the D.C. residents argued to keep the sanctuary city status—and challenged the council to stand up to Trump.

“We are going to go inside because we don’t have anyone brave enough [on the council] to stop Trump and protect our communities,” said rally moderator Antonia Salazar.

And they won’t stop with the council session, added Chatterjee of Free DC. “We the people are committed to solidarity and collective courage, through organizing and training so we have a massive pro-democracy movement that is rooted on our values,” Chatterjee said. “Nobody is free until everybody is free, so let’s get everybody free.”

Global war on labor: Report says workers’ rights in freefall as right-wing power grows

By C. J. Atkins

Around the world, workers’ rights are in “freefall,” with the Trump administration in the lead of a global far-right alliance that’s waging a “global war on labor rights.” That’s the conclusion of the latest [Global Rights Index](#) report published by the International Trade Union Confederation, the world’s largest trade union federation, representing 191 million workers in 169 countries.

“We are witnessing a coup against democracy, a concerted, sustained assault by state authorities and the corporate underminers of democracy on the rights and welfare of workers,” the 2025 Index says. “This attack is orchestrated by far-right demagogues backed by billionaires who are determined to reshape the world in their own interests at the expense of ordinary working people.”

The Global Rights Index is the only comprehensive international study of the state of workers’ rights and trade union freedoms. It has been produced annually since 2014. This year’s edition of the report warns of a “stark and worsening global crisis for workers and unions.”

While similar trends are being observed in multiple countries, the Trump administration is clearly seen as leading the charge, followed by politicians elsewhere. Trump, the ITUC points out, “has taken a wrecking ball to the collective labor rights of workers and brought anti-union billionaires into the heart of policymaking.”

Mass layoffs of federal workers, the stripping of union protections for TSA workers, the firing of a member of the National Labor Relations Board, and other offenses by Trump all come in for heavy criticism.



Bosses in command

The report takes an assertive class struggle approach to analyzing the erosion of democracy internationally, pinpointing the fact that attacks on unions and workers’ organizations are being spearheaded by the most extreme elements of big capital, which have lodged themselves [directly in the highest positions of the state](#).

“Whether it’s Donald Trump and Elon Musk in the U.S. or Javier Milei and Eduardo Eurnekian in Argentina, we see the same playbook,” ITUC General Secretary Luc Triangle said at the report’s release.

“The concentration of economic power” is allowing “a small group of billionaires to exert outsized influence over global decision-making,” Triangle said. He argued that “the global trade union movement is the largest democratic social force in the world” and that the stronger workers’ organizations are, the stronger will be the struggle to preserve the rights of all.

Global war on labor: Report says workers' rights in freefall as right-wing power grows

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Though they don't use words like fascism or capitalism, the ITUC authors emphasize that there is no way to save democracy without workers being front and center. The class orientation of their investigation comes as a welcome intervention in debates taking place in progressive circles lately, which treat topics like "authoritarianism" and "democracy" in a class-neutral manner.

"Our democratic freedoms are under attack by an ever-smaller number of people in control of an increasingly disproportionate slice of the pie...a tiny fraction of the global population—less than 1%—controls nearly half the world's wealth," the report says. And it is that tiny fraction which is leading the "coup on democracy."

Global war on labor

Trends observed globally include a sharp escalation in the violation of basic rights, including restricting access to impartial justice, limits on free speech and assembly, banning the rights to strike and organize workplaces, and sharp curtailments of collective bargaining.

Across the board, average workers' rights ratings declined in most countries over the past year. Only seven out of 151 nations studied received a top-tier rating, down from 18 a decade ago. Average scores in Europe and the Americas clocked in at their lowest level since the Global Rights Index was started.

Some 87% of the world's governments violated the right to strike last year; 80% violated the right to collective bargaining, and almost three-quarters—72%—restricted workers' access to fair courts when facing problems with employers or public officials.

Alongside the U.S., Argentina was another prime example showcasing the correlation between the decline of civil liberties and coordinated attacks on trade unions and workers. In barely more than a year, the Milei government has tried to pass 366 different laws to deregulate working conditions and wages, destroy union protections, and privatize public companies.

Several of these attempts have succeeded, with the most dangerous being the so-called "Omnibus Law," which grants the president the power to rule by decree without congressional approval in cases where a declaration of emergency is made. It's akin to the "Enabling Act" used in fascist Germany to grant Adolf Hitler unrestrained power in 1933.

Some governments that have been regulars on the list of labor rights violators make appearances again this year.

In the Philippines, workers who tried to provide humanitarian aid to displaced Indigenous communities face criminal charges. In Benin, workers were attacked and arrested during May Day demonstrations. Women workers in Egypt who dared to strike over the minimum wage lost their jobs and ended up in jail. In the Russian Federation, pandemic-era restrictions on the size of public gatherings have been held over and used to stop union meetings and demonstrations under the guise of protecting public health.

In Palestine, war was singled out as a key factor affecting not only workers' economic situation but their very ability to physically survive. More than 200,000 Palestinian workers have been denied wages as the Israeli government cut them out of the labor market. That comes on top, of course, of the tens of thousands of workers killed by bombs and bullets and the millions displaced from jobs and homes.

Inside Israel, too, workers are under attack. Trade unions have called general strikes over the past year to protest government policies, including limits on the rights to strike and collective bargaining.

The murders of workers in at least five countries last year were traced directly to their participation in the labor movement: Cameroon, Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, and South Africa. The true numbers and countries involved are almost certainly higher.

Even in countries where legislation is thought to be more labor-friendly, workers are seeing drastic reductions of their rights. In France, almost 40% of collective agreements last year were imposed unilaterally by bosses, without union representation. In Sweden, Musk's Tesla EV corporation completely bypassed negotiations with its workers, replacing striking workers with scabs rather than negotiating.

Only three countries on the entire planet—Australia, Mexico, and Oman—saw their ratings improve in 2025.

The ITUC's Triangle warned that the billionaires who financially support and politically influence the most anti-labor governments have become bolder in exercising their power. The politicians fronting for them, meanwhile, rely on worsening economic conditions to increase their vote share and consolidate power.

"In the last four or five years, with COVID and increased inflation, people lost purchasing power, and that's the breeding ground to get voters to support extremist parties, which actually don't offer any solution for the working people," he said.

Massive tax cuts for the wealthy combined with out-of-control arms spending and cuts to public services—the main features of Trump's "[big beautiful bill](#)" currently working its way through the U.S. Senate—are the essence of the current policymaking consensus in many countries.

"The five richest people in the world more than doubled their wealth over the last five years, while 60% of the population of the world got poorer," Triangle pointed out. "We are investing nearly \$3 trillion USD as a world into arms and into weapons, and there is unfair taxation. So, if we want to find the money for delivering to working people what they really need—good wages, more jobs, rights, social protections—it's a matter of political choice."

Fighting back

To shape those choices, the ITUC launched a campaign earlier this year called "[For Democracy That Delivers](#)." It is urging unions, workers' organizations, social movement allies, international institutions, and a broad range of coalition partners to join the effort.

Centered on demands for peace and collective power, social justice and prosperity for all, and a just transition and worker-centered digital transformation, the campaign lays out a calendar of activities for the rest of 2025, focused on what the federation calls five key "moments."

In April and May, webinars and physical mobilizations focused on preparing recommendations and petitions to strengthen the power of the International Labour Organization ahead of that group's conference in June.

The month of June is dedicated to injecting greater democracy into the structures and systems of global finance by supporting the Trade Union Commission at the United Nations Financing for Development conference.

Goals in late summer will be aligned with the fight for peace and against the arms trade as part of commemorations of the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The fall months of September and October will see major physical demonstrations in the countries where governments are playing a role in the World Social Summit, which convenes in November, and digital demonstrations elsewhere. ITUC hopes to put trade union demands at the forefront of the summit's agenda.

And in November, attention shifts to advancing union and workers' priorities around climate change and a just transition during the COP30 climate summit in Brazil.

The best solution to save democracy isn't a new one, according to the ITUC; It's a time-tested answer to the problems the world now faces.

"One of the most powerful tools we have to resist the erosion of democracy and deepening of inequality is our collective power," Triangle said in the Global Rights Index. "Joining a union offers protection against exploitation and creates a united front against the well-connected global elite—those intent on reshaping the world to their benefit while forcing workers to bear the cost."

Building collective power and a united front may not be novel, but the ways workers will have to go about achieving those goals will be. Illuminating the direct connection between the political assaults on democracy and the economic assaults on workers, as ITUC's Global Rights Index does, is a good start, though. It makes clear the breadth of the coalition that's needed in the period ahead.

'Teleology' review: Folk singer Peggy Seeger's final album

By Anthony Mangos

For over seventy years, Peggy Seeger has been a pillar of folk music and political activism. Now, entering her 90th year (born June 17, 1935), the musician and progressive stalwart has announced she will officially retire from solo recordings and concerts. The younger half-sister of Pete Seeger has lived an extraordinary life writing songs, making records, confronting social issues, and speaking out. Her newly released album, *Teleology*, is a wonderfully touching and whimsical finale to her solo recording career. Confronting both the world and the personal, these songs flow from today's charged politics to the inevitable acceptance of slowing down and growing old.

Let's begin with the meaning of the album title (and also its title track), *Teleology*. Peggy Seeger explains within her liner notes, "Teleology: the belief that everything that has happened has done so with a specific purpose or use in mind, the arrow called Time heading for a predetermined bullseye called Now." Seeger adds she always wondered if her career would end with a "bang or a whimper." This album confirms her vocals and enthusiasm are as stirring and engaging as ever.

Things definitely start off with a bang on the first track in support of struggling workers. "Sing About These Hard Times" hits the nail on the head, proving Peggy Seeger has her heart with the working class. The lyrics, biting and honest, stand against capitalism, and are infectiously easy for listeners to sing along with, the key to a great folk song.

*Life gets harder every year.
Those with the least have the most to fear.
Those with the most, they just don't care.
The big corporations got no home.
The men on the Hill got hearts of stone.
They worry my life like a dog with a bone.
When will the good times roll?
Solidarity with everyday folks continues with the protest song, "Sit Down"* (co-written with Maurice Sugar).
*When the rich get richer and the poor stay poor, sit down, sit down.
When there's always cash for another war, sit down, sit down.
When public services get the axe, sit down, sit down.
And corporations pay no tax, sit down, sit down.*

Seeger compassionately explores the heartbreak of leaving or losing one's home. "Driftwood" deals with immigrants arriving at a foreign shore, leaving the only home they ever knew behind.

*Home, homeland, a place where we belonged.
We had a life there, now it's gone.
We were born there, we lived and died.
Now we are driftwood, caught in the tide.
Strangers in a strange land.*



*Hoping for a helping hand.
Is that hard to understand?*

"No Place Like Home" describes homelessness, losing a job, living on the streets, and trying to catch the eyes of passersby.

*My job went east, my life went west.
Every day another test.
To find another place to rest.
There is no place like home.
Can you spare some change for this broken place.
This aching body, weathered face.
A word, a smile from anyone.
Compassion is a mother tongue.*

Peggy Seeger's longtime partner and eventual husband was British left-wing activist, singer-songwriter, and actor, Ewan MacColl. MacColl penned "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" as a love song to his future wife. Here, Seeger sings a heartfelt, tender rendition of this timeless classic in loving remembrance. MacColl died in 1989.

Seeger, who is bisexual, took encouraging advice from her second life-partner, singer-songwriter Irene Pypers-Scott, and began co-writing new songs with others. Seeger plays piano on the dreamy "Through the Clouds," co-written with her daughter-in-law, Kate St. John. Both her sons, Calum and Neill MacColl, contribute profusely to the new album, not only in composing but also playing keyboards, guitar, mandolin, autoharp, and adding background vocals. This truly was a Seeger family collaboration.

There are playful songs offered as well. "I Want to Meet Paul Simon" will bring a lighthearted smile to many a music lover's face. An inspiring little tale of "Hope" showcases Seeger's mature voice, which has aged like a fine wine.

As Peggy Seeger approaches her 90th year, the theme of aging and accepting change is just as inspirational here as her political songs. 6

The album contains selections that will have listeners ponder the constant flow of time. “Slow” praises the joy of small, slower pleasures in our fast-paced, busy world.

*The world speeds up as I slow down.
Everything moves so fast.
Cardboard cities (built on sand).
Nothing is made to last (that long).
Life so precious, blink and it's gone.
Father Time still singing his song.*

“Apple Tree” is the touching finale to this emotionally packed collection. The song confronts the peaceful acceptance of aging within the natural world surrounding us. Encouraged by Seeger’s gentle, sincere voice, it may induce tears of poignant reflection in some listeners.

*The old apple tree is dying.
Barren branches beg the sky for rain.
A climbing rose embraces her now.*

*Sweet perfume, flowers and thorns.
Life moves on. Life moves on.*

In Peggy Seeger’s own words, “Bringing a song out of nowhere together with gifted musicians is a thrilling experience, a journey coaxing a song from a subject, a distant thought, an emotional moment.”

Peggy Seeger describes this as her final ‘solo’ album, so let us hope this incredibly talented and socially conscious musician will remain an inspiration in other forms going forth. Born in New York City, Seeger has made the United Kingdom her home for many years and has U.K. citizenship. Along with her half-brother, Pete Seeger, she experienced various forms of blacklisting in the United States during the 1950s in response to her left-wing social activism.

Peggy Seeger’s 2025 Final Farewell and 90th Birthday Tour of the United Kingdom and Ireland is currently scheduled through June. The album, *Teleology*, made in the U.K., is released through Red Grape Music Ltd.

Southern Labor Conference in North Carolina: ‘Solidarity is our superpower’

By John Oliver

DURHAM—“Who’s got your back? We got your back!” chanted Union of Southern Service Workers (USSW) worker-organizer and Communist Party USA labor organizer Erica Meade to a gathering of dozens of trade unionists and labor activists at the Peoples’ Solidarity Hub in North Carolina this past weekend.

This year, workers have been traumatized by the rapid decay of not only their rights in the workplace but in almost all areas of life—from health care and education to retirement. For immigrant workers, even the ability to work in this country is under threat.

The CPUSA’s Southern Labor Conference faced these threats head on, bringing together trade unionists and activists for a two-day session in Durham, May 31-June 1, to strategize for the struggles ahead.

As has been the case in the past, the South is a primary battleground for the billionaire-backed assaults on jobs, communities, living conditions, and workers’ hard-won, albeit limited, democratic gains.

“The South has a proud and unrecognized history of fighting for democracy under the most difficult conditions,” Roberta Wood of the CPUSA Labor Commission said in opening the conference.

Wood declared, “We workers, actually all of humanity, are living in a political moment when anyone paying attention is scared to death.” She pointed to the growing danger of fascism in the U.S. and said attacks on the labor movement should be seen in that context.

She emphasized that the threat of fascism “is not an expression of capitalism’s power and success,” but rather a “dangerous manifestation of its failure.” Whereas the economic system may have been seen free market competition in the past, today capitalism relies on “monopolizing markets, price-fixing, squeezing out competitors and extracting profit through government contracts and market manipulation.”

All these things are combining to put a tighter squeeze on workers’ living standards and pushing corporations and government to restrict the labor movement, Wood said. “Fascism,” she pointed out, “is the solution capital turns to when its old ways aren’t working anymore.”

“This is not a new fight, but a continuation of the working-class and broad peoples’ movement for political and economic democracy,” said Cameron Harrison, a CPUSA Labor Commission member who also addressed the meeting.



“Trump’s re-election marks a qualitative shift: The most extreme sections of the capitalist class now wield state power and are determined to smash our unions and gut our social safety nets. All this is to pay for permanent tax cuts for the billionaires and secure permanent control over all levels of power.”

“Getting back to basics—worker to worker organizing—in order to build our unions and build our movement is the main task before us,” Harrison said. “We must set our focus where the working class is most concentrated (factories, schools, logistics, hospitals) to build strong points of resistance—not just defensive but also offensive.

“This doesn’t mean we only focus on already-unionized workplaces,” he said. “Keep in mind 90% of our class is unorganized.”

Even before large industrial unions were built in the 1930s, the tactics and methods used by workers organizing other workers won incredible gains: the end of child labor, the establishment of the 8-hour workday, the right to sick leave, and the right to organize a union.

However, “the South was not always as lucky” during those earlier periods of labor victories, said Mama Cookie, a USSW worker-leader, grandmother, and community leader from Durham. “There is fear in the South,” she said. “Racism was front and center, and it still is to this day. They try to create fear and a feeling of powerlessness.”

The Southern states modified their economies in the 20th century to take advantage of this fear, appealing to big business by offering an easily exploitable cheap, unprotected, and racially-divided labor force. “The fight for workers’ rights in the South is a fight not just for justice, but for emancipation from racism,” said one attendee.

Even now, with the lowest union density in the U.S., the Southern economic model is reinforced by racist and anti-union features that net massive profits from workers fear, disorganization, and rampant exploitation.

"There hasn't been a year...that farm workers haven't been sent home in a coffin," said Felicia, an organizer with the immigrant workers organization, [El Futuro Es Nuestro](#) (The Future is Ours). "From the fields to the factories, workers in the South are seen as expendable and replaceable. And that fear, despite labor laws and union presence, rules their lives."

Magaly Licolli, a union organizer from Venceremos, had everyone shaking their heads when she detailed the highly oppressive and exploitative conditions at poultry and meatpacking plants in the South.

"We are not allowed breaks, and we're only allowed to have water on site—not shade, not rest, not lunch. Workers have had to wear diapers because there was nowhere to go and no time either," she said to shouts of "SHAME!" from the attendees.

"What world do we live in where a worker cannot even go to the bathroom? Cannot even sit down to have lunch, or even find a minute to catch their breath. Do we not deserve decency? Do we not deserve rest?" she said.

"The ground is not the end, however, it is where we find our roots," Stewart Acuff, former AFL-CIO National Organizing Director, encouraged attendees. "There is no better place in the world than labor unions for workers to learn about their class and class struggle," he said.

Even recently, the labor movement in the South has made the kind of gains not seen in 20 years, according to Chris Townsend, former United Electrical Workers (UE) Washington representative and the Amalgamated Transit Union's (ATU) international organizing director.

"In the last four to five years, 75,000 people have joined a union in Virginia," Townsend said. He pointed out that, while significant, more must be done in terms of organizing the unorganized members of the working class. "Building the trade union movement and organizing new workers into our ranks is the main task before us today," he said.

Conference attendees spent several sessions discussing how they would take the lessons from past struggles and connect them to the fights ahead.

They talked about strategies for building broad unity to combat the MAGA right, how to get involved in Central Labor Councils, and how to build rank-and-file worker organization, regardless of whether the workplace is union or not.

The conference concluded with approval of a resolution outline that trade unionists could bring back to their locals to strengthen the struggle for immigrant workers' rights on the job, their right to due process, and to defend them against ICE raids at work or at home.

"Many like to differentiate between supporting immigrants and supporting workers," Licolli said. "But I'm here to say that we are both immigrants and workers and you cannot separate those from one another," she said to cheers.

"Our movement is awakening," Harrison said. "We see it during the national days of action against the attacks on our public services like Social Security and Medicaid, the national movement for May Day, the movement to defend Brother Kilmar Abrego Garcia of the Sheetmetal Workers, and the efforts of organizations like the Union of Southern Service Workers, the Southern Workers Assembly, CAUSE, and all the other unions we are proud members of."

Wood sounded a similar note, telling the conference that fascism can be defeated. "Our job is to build resistance, and our superpower is solidarity." She asked, "How do we disarm fascism?" Her answer: "Bring people into struggle, not just as individuals but as communities, families, neighborhoods, campuses, and especially workplaces."

And the time is right for resistance, she declared. "The working class is in, and people use that term. More people are pro-union than ever."

"People are hungry. They are hungry for a better life...a life where people can grow and create value for themselves," said Steve Noffke, chair of the CPUSA Labor Commission. "All unions across America should take a note from the United Southern Service Workers core values: anti-racism, militancy, solidarity, and soul."

Mama Cookie agreed. "The soul is our Southern power," she said, "and that is how we win."

Steelworkers unhappy with Trump OK of Nippon takeover of U.S. Steel

By Press Associates

PITTSBURGH—Despite Donald Trump's promises that the deal would save jobs, the Steelworkers are at best very skeptical of Nippon Steel's \$14 billion purchase of U.S. Steel, and of Trump, too, who has gone back on his word and now supports the deal.

"Trust nothing until you see it in writing," union President David McCall declared when he learned of the sale—and of Trump's reversal to approve it—late on May 30.

Trump announced the sale to reporters while flying back from a speech in West Mifflin, Pa., at a U.S. Steel plant there. He admitted he hadn't seen the details yet.

On the campaign trail last year, both Republican nominee Trump and his Democratic foe, Vice President Kamala Harris, opposed the sale. Harris's boss, President Joe Biden, had vetoed it on national security grounds.

The Steelworkers consistently opposed the sale of the iconic steelmaker, which is now only #5 in now-shrunken U.S. steel production, to Nippon. They even lined up a competing U.S.-based bidder, #4 Cleveland Cliffs. But the USS board gave the union and that firm the cold shoulder.

The union didn't trust Nippon's past promises to increase investment in U.S. steel plants, keep the name, and keep the workers. Its track record on keeping such promises and its treatment of its workers is bad, the union noted then, and reiterated now.



Will enrich "insiders"

USW also previously pointed out the Nippon Steel purchase would greatly enrich insiders, specifically U.S. Steel's chairman, CEO, and other capitalists who sit on its board—with no added dollars or job security for the workers.

After he re-entered the Oval Office in January, Trump ordered a Cabinet panel, the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S., to re-review the sale. Though their specific recommendation is unknown, Trump announced in a speech that he's accepting it.

USW, speaking for the workers, having been shut out of the deliberations, isn't.

"We have not participated in the discussions involving U.S. Steel, Nippon Steel, and the Trump administration, nor were we consulted, so we cannot speculate about the meaning of the 'planned partnership' between USS and Nippon or the 'golden share' that some politicians have claimed will be issued to the federal government," McCall said.

"Whatever the deal structure, our primary concern remains with the impact this merger of U.S. Steel into a foreign competitor will have on national security, our members, and the communities where we live and work.

"When the second CFIUS review was announced, we communicated to the Trump administration our concerns and objections.

"Nippon has a long history of committing unfair trade practices. The International Trade Commission determined the company violated U.S. trade laws in 13 different trade cases. Just last month, the Department of Commerce imposed duties of more than 200% on Nippon for the illegal dumping of steel. Yet, despite ongoing injury and continuing penalties, Nippon is being rewarded.

"The USW's only concern has been and continues to be the long-term viability and sustainability of the current USS facilities, so as to safeguard the current and future economic, employment, and retirement security of our members and their communities.

"There is a vast difference between public relations and putting commitments in writing, just as there is a vast difference between allowing shareholders and executives to cash out and putting workers' interests first.

"Any final deal that may emerge from discussions between the merger parties and the federal government must be viewed through that lens, and not the lens of wishful thinking that has been adopted by far too many politicians and others.

"Issuing press releases and making political speeches is easy. Binding commitments are hard. The devil is always in the details, and that is especially true with a bad actor like Nippon Steel that has again and again violated our trade laws, devastating steel communities in Pennsylvania and elsewhere."

The *Wall Street Journal* reported Nippon didn't change its promised price for U.S. Steel, but that it's now buying a partial share of the company, not all of it.

"There's never been a \$14 billion investment in the history of the steel industry in the United States," Trump said Friday evening. "Most importantly, U.S. Steel will continue to be controlled by the U.S.A.," he claimed, without offering evidence of that. The CEOs of both U.S. Steel and Nippon Steel were with Trump on the steel plant stage, with hard-hatted workers in back of them.

Trump also announced his tariffs on imported steel and aluminum would double, to 50%, on June 4. With steel prices declining per ton, the *Journal* noted, it's easier for steelmakers—including Nippon and U.S. Steel—to swallow the tariffs. The tariffs will also let US Steel, like other manufacturers that Trump's tariffs threaten, raise prices to customers and consumers even higher, it said.

Supreme Court curbs ability to clean up environmental disasters

By Mark Gruenberg

WASHINGTON—In a blow to the green movement—and to workers affected by downstream air and water pollution from big-ticket projects—the Supreme Court limited the reach of environmental impact statements only to the project involved, and not to its upstream or downstream impacts.

The 8-0 decision came in the case involving a planned 88-mile-long railroad from Utah's Uinta oil field to major freight rail lines. The railroad would carry tank cars from the field to those lines, where they could be hitched onto freight trains headed for big oil refineries, notably in Texas and Louisiana.

Seven Utah counties pushed the federal government to issue an environmental impact statement (EIS) covering only the local Utah rail line. Foes, including green groups and a Colorado county, pushed the federal government to say the EIS must also cover not just drilling for oil and its transport on freight cars from Uinta but the impact all the way down the line to the oil's ultimate destinations, the refineries.

The U.S. Surface Transportation Board, which handled the paperwork to approve or deny the rail line, agreed to consider the down-the-line impact, too. It produced a 3600-page EIS. Then the board approved the local freight line, anyway.

Challenge by Green Groups

Green groups and a Colorado county challenged that and won in the D.C. appeals court, but lost in the Supreme Court. The justices ruled for the rail line, the board, the Utah counties, and for agencies' continued power to make such decisions without constantly looking over their shoulders for courts.

"Simply stated, the National Environmental Policy Act is a procedural cross-check, not a substantive roadblock. The goal of the law is to inform agency decision making, not to paralyze it," Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote. EISs should only be "an adequate report" on a specific project's local impact.

The ruling gives another big break to the nation's corporate class. It has long hated EISs and especially hated green groups, which used the 1970 National Environmental Protection Act's EIS requirement to slow or stop projects. The rail line is one example.

Though the Surface Transportation Board OKed it in late 2020, the lawsuit over the EIS has delayed its groundbreaking since then.

Courts "slowed down or blocked many projects and, in turn, caused litigation-averse agencies to take ever more time and to prepare even longer EISs for future projects," Kavanaugh wrote.

"NEPA has transformed from a modest procedural requirement into a blunt and haphazard tool employed by project opponents—who may not always be entirely motivated by concern for the environment—to try to stop or at least slow down new infrastructure and construction projects."

The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, which heard the complaint from the rail line's environmental and downstream foes, had ruled for them.

Though Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Ketanji Brown Jackson, and Elena Kagan agreed with the ruling, they said the five GOP-named justices, led by Kavanaugh, did not have to ground their decision in the policy impact of an EIS. They also pointed out the Surface Transportation Board could not reject railroad construction applications based on what products the railroads would carry—the oil—and how it would carry the oil, in the tank cars.

Justice Sotomayor said the appeals court went too far when it mandated the board "to consider in further detail the harms caused by the oil industry" in the EIS for the rail line.

But the High Court was actually following Congress, which in turn was influenced by corporate lobbying, clout, and campaign contributions.

During the Biden administration, lawmakers mandated that environmental impact statements not become an absolute block to projects. Kavanaugh said in a footnote that a 2023 law mandated that the statements be no more than 150 pages long, and that the EPA take no more than two years to evaluate a specific project and its alternatives.

"That strongly reinforces the basic principles that the National Environmental Policy Act, correctly interpreted, already embodied but that have been too often overlooked," the justice wrote. Green groups contacted had no immediate comment on the ruling.

'Death follows you as long as you're in Gaza'

By Roger McKenzie

Israeli forces opened fire on thousands of starving Palestinians near a United States and Israeli-controlled aid site in western Rafah tSunday, killing at least 40 and injuring over 150.

Palestinians accused the Israelis of targeting and blocking ambulances, which delayed medical help reaching those who needed it.

Thousands of Palestinians were heading toward the distribution site hours before dawn. As they headed toward the site, Israeli forces ordered them to disperse and come back later, witnesses said.

When the crowds reached the Flag Roundabout, around 1,000 yards (914 meters) away, Israeli forces opened fire, the witnesses said.

"There was fire from all directions, from naval warships, from tanks and drones," said Amr Abu Teiba, who was in the crowd.

Killed his cousin and another woman

Mohammed Abu Teima said he saw Israeli forces open fire and kill his cousin and another woman as they were heading toward the distribution site. He said his cousin was shot in the chest and died at the scene.

Abdullah Barbakh described a scene of "overcrowding, chaos, and screaming."

Barbakh said he witnessed many people injured from Israeli fire, including his brother-in-law.

Eyewitnesses also reported seeing crowds of people returning from the distribution point. Some were carrying boxes of aid, but most appeared to be coming back empty-handed.

The Israelis released a brief statement saying it was "currently unaware of injuries caused by [Israeli military] fire within the humanitarian aid distribution site. The matter is still under review."

Not being taken seriously enough

Communist parties warn that the killing by Israeli troops is going unchallenged by too many governments around the world. The British Communist Party's international secretary, Kevan Nelson, said: "As negotiations continue on a hostage exchange, the Israeli killing machine continues unchallenged by its Western sponsors. The refusal of the U.S. and Israel to countenance a permanent end to the war reveals an agenda to ethnically cleanse Palestinians from the Gaza Strip."

A top Hamas official, Bassem Naim, accused Israel of disagreeing with agreed-upon provisions and alleged a "complete bias toward the other side" that he said violates the fairness of mediation.

Argentina: Jubilados, feministas y trabajadores marcharán contra el ajuste de Milei

By Telesur

El miércoles, 4 de junio, la Plaza del Congreso en Argentina será el epicentro de una jornada de protesta multisectorial, que incluye a jubilados, feminismos y trabajadores, contra las políticas implementadas por el Gobierno de Javier Milei.

Bajo la consigna «la resistencia crece», diversos colectivos y agrupaciones confluirán para expresar su rechazo unificado al ajuste y la crueldad que afecta a amplios sectores de la sociedad argentina.

A la habitual marcha semanal que los jubilados realizan al Congreso —una convocatoria que ya suma 15 ediciones en lo que va de 2025 y ha sido sistemáticamente reprimida por las fuerzas de seguridad—, se sumarán organizaciones feministas, en el marco de la semana en que se conmemora la jornada #NiUnaMenos.

También estarán presentes científicos del Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (Conicet), trabajadores del Hospital Garrahan, personas con discapacidad, usuarios y prestadores médicos, migrantes afectados por reformas en el régimen migratorio, y otros sectores que denuncian desfinanciamiento y falta de políticas públicas.

La convergencia de todas las convocatorias está prevista a partir de las 16.00 (hora local).

Esta movilización también coincidirá con una sesión en la Cámara de Diputados donde la oposición política buscará nuevamente tratar y aprobar proyectos de ley que apuntan a una nueva prórroga de la moratoria previsional y a otorgar un aumento por única vez para adultos mayores.

Las iniciativas, sin embargo, enfrentan el anticipo de veto por parte del Gobierno nacional, que argumenta la necesidad de «preservar el superávit fiscal».

La dura realidad de los jubilados en Argentina

La situación de los adultos mayores en Argentina es descrita como alarmante, con un número creciente de jubilados obligados a reincorporarse al mercado laboral.

En este sentido, la tasa de actividad de las personas de 66 años o más alcanzó un máximo histórico del 16,6 por ciento a fines de 2024, un pico no visto desde 2019.

De los 78.500 nuevos ocupados en el último año, unos 42.000 son jubilados. Esta tendencia se agudiza «cuando la jubilación mínima cae en términos reales».

El haber mínimo jubilatorio, apenas superior a los \$300.000 (ubicándose en 304.700 pesos más un bono congelado de \$70.000 desde marzo 2024), resulta insuficiente para cubrir la canasta básica para adultos mayores, que supera el millón de pesos (específicamente \$1.200.523 según la Defensoría de la Tercera Edad de CABA).

Esta brecha hace cada vez más difícil afrontar la suba de alimentos, medicamentos y vivienda, todos ellos con precios desregulados o con incrementos significativos. Se estima que siete de cada diez jubilados argentinos tienen ingresos insuficientes para subsistir.

La pérdida de poder adquisitivo desde que asumió el actual Gobierno es significativa, con una caída del 27 por ciento que implica una pérdida acumulada superior a los 3 millones de pesos (\$3.120.946 por jubilado).

A esto se suma el peso de los servicios esenciales (luz, gas, agua). Por la desregulación económica, su costo se cuadruplicó durante la gestión actual.

Los jubilados que perciben la mínima destinan hoy el 10,5 por ciento de sus ingresos a estos servicios, frente al 6,2 por ciento en diciembre de 2023.

Asimismo, los medicamentos, esenciales para este grupo etario, tuvieron un incremento interanual del 172 por ciento a marzo de 2025, 124 puntos porcentuales por encima de la suba general de medicamentos.

Además, más del 7,3 por ciento de los adultos mayores dependen de un alquiler, el doble que hace 20 años, en un contexto donde la derogación de la normativa previa ha generado subas trimestrales, contratos cortos y exigencia de pagos extraordinarios.

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