



# Speak Out Now

March 2020

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## Bezos on Climate Change – Covering Up the Truth

Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon and richest person on the planet, recently announced in an Instagram post that he is planning on donating \$10 billion to combat climate change. “Climate change is the biggest threat to our planet. I want to work alongside others both to amplify known ways and explore new ways of fighting the devastating impact of climate change on this planet we all share,” Bezos said in his post.

While it is true that climate change poses a real threat to human existence, highlighted by the fact that the current extinction rate is hundreds of times higher than it has averaged over the past 10 million years, throwing money at the problem is not a real solution. Especially when your company, online retail giant Amazon, emits greenhouse gases at a rate rivaling that of small nations. Even more, Amazon has sponsored climate-denial think tanks, sells services that help oil and gas companies locate new fossil fuel deposits, and is the largest shipper of plastic waste.

Bezos’s \$10 billion to fight climate change is a mockery, considering the huge contribution his own company has had in fueling the climate crisis. This is a PR ploy to give Amazon a greener

image, taking advantage of an increasing public consciousness of the threat of climate change. After all, spending less than 9 percent of your \$116 billion-dollar fortune is a small price to pay to convince the public that you are part of the solution, instead of the problem. Furthermore, Bezos’s funneling of this money through his own “Earth Fund,” means he is not about to fund research or solutions that would impact Amazon’s profitability.

But even if Bezos did switch all Amazon delivery vehicles to electric power, convert all warehouses to renewable energy, and donate another \$10 billion to climate change research, we would still be leaps behind the transformation necessary for combating climate change in any meaningful way. Amazon and every other corporation require constant expansion to remain competitive and maintain their existence. This means a constant increase of products sold and waste created. We live on a planet with finite resources, so never-ending expansion inevitably spells planetary destruction. Under capitalism, this ever increasing expansion cannot stop – or else the whole system of capitalism would fall – and Bezos is not about to fund his own demise.

## Climate Refugees, Made in the U.S.A.

Rain in the 2019-2020 season has been well below average in California, and the outlook for the rest of 2020 is for it to be drier than average, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. This would suggest that we’re headed for yet another dangerous fire season this coming summer and fall. Indeed, climate scientists expect that global warming will lead to more frequent, and more devastating wildfires, just as it will lead to more frequent, and more devastating hurricanes.

If we can expect more and worse wildfires and hurricanes, what can we expect in terms of how our society will deal with the fallout? Well, we can make a guess based on what we’ve seen so far.

When Hurricanes Maria and Irma hit Puerto Rico in 2017, we saw the same pattern of neglect and exploitation that we saw with Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans 15 years ago. Virtually the entire island lost power and thousands of homes were destroyed. It took a whole year before the local authorities could claim that power had been restored, and even then, many in fact still lacked power. Today, after a series of earthquakes hit the island, two-thirds of Puerto Rico’s population is without power and a quarter of the population has no running water.

And in the San Francisco Bay Area? Here too we find people struggling with the fallout from hurricanes and wildfires. The New York Times recently had a feature on homeless encampments in East Bay. The High Street Camp in East Oakland (one of the largest shantytowns in the country) is home to refugees from California wildfires as well as at least one refugee from Texas’s Hurricane Harvey. A UN representative who visits slums across the Third World compared the High Street Camp to the slums of Delhi, India, pointing out the lack of toilets or running water of any kind. People living in these camps are living in worse conditions than some of the most famous shantytowns on the outskirts of Mexico City.

There are over a hundred such encampments in Oakland alone. In California there are over 150,000 homeless people, more than a quarter of the entire country’s homeless population of half a million. How do our local and state governments respond to this crisis? Well, certainly, millions of public funds change hands in various government initiatives to “deal with” the problem. But somehow none of that money seems to find its way into solutions. Housing prices continue to skyrocket as financiers from Wall Street to Shanghai to speculate in California’s housing or park their money in empty luxury high-rises across LA and the Bay Area.

The fact is, there is no shortage of living space. There are more than a million vacant houses and apartments in California, in other words, more than six empty homes for every homeless person. If this is how capitalism deals with homelessness when there’s an abundance of housing, what can we expect when there’s a shortage?



## The Battle Against Pension Reform in France

On February 29, the French government used an executive order to pass a widely-hated reform of the pension system, which is their equivalent of social security. The government of President Macron had attempted to sell this reform as one leading to “more equality,” eliminating the so-called “privileges” that workers in the public sector have won through their fights. In reality, this complex reform will lead to lower pensions for all workers, in the public as well as in the private sector, and workers haven’t fallen for the “equalizing” propaganda. After years of attacks against their standard of living, they are fighting back.

The executive order, essentially shutting down debate in the National Assembly, provoked outrage. As of this writing, working people and students are demonstrating and attending meetings, with more strikes expected to oppose the reform.

The fight began in September of 2019, with a series of impressive strikes and demonstrations to force the government to withdraw the reform completely. The strike movement was begun by the transportation workers. Railway workers were followed immediately by the bus and metro workers, especially concentrated in Paris. A general strike of the public sector on December 5, 2019 had massive participation, with some organizing daily gatherings to vote on whether to continue their strike. Their banners read: “We Won’t Let up until Complete Withdrawal,” and “Macron, Out!”

Remarkably, this movement has engaged workers across professions, uniting employees of the train company, buses and subways, hospitals, the electric company, some nuclear power plants, refineries, and sanitation along with ballet dancers, opera singers, lawyers, teachers, students, and the list goes on. This is a departure from an old pattern of fighting separately for individual gains in each industry. There is a developing understanding that the fight is one of all employees

against the whole world of the rich: politicians, bankers, CEOs and their friends.

During the winter break, when the union leadership failed to organize, rank-and-file workers stepped up. In many cities unionized and non-unionized workers together elected their own strike committees which met daily to plan their actions and do public outreach. In some areas there were weekly general assemblies of workers in addition to daily strike committee meetings. There were also wonderfully creative gatherings, such as on December 24, when the ballet dancers of the Paris Opera performed Swan Lake in front of the Garnier Palace, for the public to enjoy for free, under banners reading: “Culture in Danger,” and “Opera on Strike.”



The fight against this reform is continuing. Whatever happens, one result of this movement will be that thousands of workers have gone through the extraordinary experience of leading their own struggle with some very long strikes, and solidarity across professions. They are coming to see themselves as a class, discovering the compromising behavior of untrustworthy union leaderships, and confronting the police who defend the policies and the property of the rich. They’ve had a priceless experience, and are looking for a new way forward.





## Celebrate the Baltimore Uprising of 2015! Keep fighting racism!

This April marks the fifth anniversary of the Baltimore Uprising of 2015. Thousands took to the streets to protest the murder in police custody of Freddie Gray. Cops murdering African-American Baltimoreans was nothing new. But this was eight months after the Ferguson Uprising against the police murder of Michael Brown and in the middle of the nationwide Black Lives Matter movement. People in Baltimore rose up in rage.

Baltimore cops harass, abuse, and even murder young black men on a regular basis. Why the mass action this time? Maybe because of the protests across the country against similar murders. Maybe because Gray was shackled and given a “rough ride” in the back of a police van without being safety-buckled, which caused the horrific injuries that led to his death. Maybe because the authorities shut down all public transportation near Frederick Douglas High School and replaced it with a formation of cops threatening students as they left school and couldn’t get home.

And maybe because of the daily abuse and violence by cops, the bad physical conditions of schools and housing, the lack of inexpensive healthy food in “food desert” neighborhoods where chain supermarkets refuse to locate, the absence of quality affordable health care, the lack of decent-paying jobs, and the pervasiveness of racism in people’s lives in so many other ways.

It all adds up to mass misery based on poverty and racism in the richest country in the history of the world. What could be more reasonable than for people to fight back?

As Langston Hughes wrote, “What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up Like a raisin in the sun?... Or does it explode?”



## International Women’s Day and the Harvey Weinstein Conviction

International Women’s Day, March 8th, was created over a 100 years ago through the demonstrations for women’s equality, particularly by the organized struggle of working women against their exploitation and oppression. Women have fought and won many battles since. But the struggle continues. Today, the Harvey Weinstein trial on sexual assault charges once again shows that women still have to fight for equality and respect. His conviction was possible only because dozens of women found the courage to step forward publicly, in turn inspiring millions of others to use the Twitter hashtag #metoo and other means to describe their own experiences of sexual harassment and assault.

The outcome of this case is worth celebrating in relation to International Women’s Day. For once the ugly truth about sexual harassment and assault, especially notorious in Hollywood, wasn’t swept under the rug. In fact, however, the struggle against sexual harassment has been building for some time. Other bosses, for example in the tech industry, have been called out over similar scandals, including Uber’s CEO, who was forced to resign. Hotel workers in both California and New York are demanding protection against

predatory hotel guests. Women are saying #time-sup for sexual harassment on the job.

100 years ago women won the right to vote, and it’s been 60 years since laws were passed supposedly protecting women from discrimination. Nevertheless, women still face day to day harassment and risk their jobs if they dare to protest. Women earn on average about 81% of the pay of men with the same qualifications. The fact that women are still compelled to struggle on the job and at home for respect and equality shows that these legal victories don’t mean much by themselves. What counts is the willingness to organize and fight back. And that’s true not only for women but for all of us.

Discrimination against women helps keep working people divided, especially since some men think they have the right to lord it over women co-workers. As long as we accept this, our bosses can more easily exploit both men and women to enrich themselves. The fight of women for equality is a challenge to the whole oppressive and exploitative capitalist system and the fight won’t be victorious until we do away with the capitalist system as a whole.

## Newark: Poisoned Water and Poisoned Politics

For many years, Newark NJ has had a big problem with lead in its drinking water. Lead is hazardous and most dangerous to children. It can cause brain damage and many other serious problems.

Two years ago, when Newark was about to be sued for exceeding federal standards for lead levels in the city water supply, Mayor Ras Baraka’s administration publicly made the following statements: “The quality of our water meets all federal and state standards;” and “the City’s water is NOT contaminated with lead.”

Then last year, the mayor and county executive, with their state governor’s support, rolled out a \$120 million bond issue for the replacement of lead service lines in Newark. All of these politicians are Democrats. Since then, thousands of lead pipes have been replaced, and the politicians are promoting themselves as progressive heroes, saying that their initiative “sets a precedent across the country about how New Jersey is stepping up to the plate to address water infrastructure challenges for its residents.”

How could the water have been fine one year, according to the politicians, and need \$120 million worth of fixing the next year? One thing

about this is certain: banks and other investors who buy the bonds will make lots of money at taxpayers’ expense. What is not so certain is what effect this will have on Newark’s drinking water.

And in fall 2019, despite replacing lead service lines in a neighborhood, the administration denied that that neighborhood had even been affected by the crisis and said residents there should not be granted access to free bottled water!

The Democratic Party machine rarely looks out for the needs of working-class people. In Newark, they initially lied outright, only to slowly admit there was a problem, and finally closed ranks to find a strategy that benefits the wealthy.

Working people can choose to build something different. But we can’t do it by relying on the same people who’ve played us time and time again.



### Where We Stand

The world we live in today is ruled by prejudice and fear, under a system of widespread violence and war, with the working majority dominated by the super-rich minority. The name of this system is capitalism.

### The Force for Change Exists Today

Everywhere, working people make society run. Only workers have the power to bring capitalism to a halt and create a new society. Like slavery, feudalism and other systems that enriched the minority at the expense of the majority, capitalism’s removal is long overdue.

### We Stand For Socialism

- A world based on peaceful collaboration and international cooperation of working class people – not the exploiters who rule today.
- The common ownership and sharing of the world’s resources and productive capacity.

- An egalitarian and democratic government, organized and controlled from the bottom up.
- Protection of the world’s ecological systems, putting science to work to sustain life, not destroy it.
- A society where human relations are based on respect, equality and dignity of all peoples, not racism, sexism or homophobia.

We believe the international working class is the social force that can transform society and create a new world. But to do so, revolutionary organizations must be built in the working class. Join us to work for a better future – one that is both necessary and possible.

### Contact Us

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