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Speak Out Now

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“We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For”

A little over a week ago people around the world witnessed the horrific execution of George Floyd by four Minneapolis cops in broad daylight. People watched in horror as the life was squeezed out of Floyd's body and that horror burst forth in anger and rage across the country. Since then hundreds of thousands of people, mostly young and racially diverse, have taken to the streets in cities and towns all over the country, in protest and demonstrations, day after day and into the night, saying – No More!

The murder of a Black man by the cops is not an unfamiliar event for many of us. Each year around 1000 people are killed by the police. About one out of every 1000 Black men die at the hands of the police! And of the thousands of people killed by the cops since 2005, only 98 cops were arrested and only three convicted of murder. Those four cops didn't hesitate in killing George Floyd. They expected to get away with murder. Three of them are still free.

But No More! Buildings were burned and looted and police cars set ablaze. But buildings can be rebuilt and more goods produced. But the lives taken cannot be replaced, they are gone forever.

The murder of George Floyd took place in the fourth month of a most usual time in our lives – a time which has exposed the true functioning of this society for all to see. The COVID-19 virus exposed the values that guide those who run this system.

In January, when the epidemic in China became apparent, a massive public health response wasn't activated. No, it was a measured response – dollars vs public safety. But the U.S. government waited, they didn't even take an inventory of masks and other PPE then quickly prepare to produce what might be needed. They didn't confer with public health agencies in other countries to coordinate a worldwide response, if one was needed.

The lives of more than 105,000 people have been sacrificed on the alter of profit; 26,000 of them

elderly and disabled people trapped in nursing homes, and healthcare workers who worked without the basic protective gear, and those in prisons across the country.

The number of people who are sick and dying are disproportionately African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans. The virus has been devastating because support for public healthcare and nutrition has been stripped away by the past decades of budget cuts, that transferred billions of dollars to the billionaire class and their corporations. The pandemic spread because they did nothing. We were told to shelter in place, to stop the virus from spreading. And we stayed home. But front-line workers were expected to risk their lives keeping basic services functioning.

Now more than 40 million are unemployed, facing an unknown future. Meaningless rent moratoriums were put in place but are about to expire and the where will rent or mortgage payments come from? Lines at food banks have reached epic proportions. Young people were told to leave schools and turn on a computer, if they had one. Is that their future? Meanwhile the so-called bailouts only meant trillions of dollars handed to the billionaires.

Despite the kind words of some politicians and gestures of solidarity by some police, tens of cities are under curfew patrolled by heavily armed police and National Guard. The future ahead is uncertain.

But one thing is certain, we - the working class, the 99% – are in this together. We have just begun to see our power. We can't afford to watch and wait. The time is now to organize ourselves in our workplaces, our neighborhoods – wherever we are. We need to connect with others who are ready to take the steps to defend our interests not the profits of the bosses. This is how we can secure our future.

As the saying goes, “We are the ones we have been waiting for.”