



Speak Out Now

August 14, 2023

mail@speakoutsocialists.org

speakoutsocialists.org

(510) 343-9105

The Deadly Fire in Hawaii – A Profit-Driven Disaster

The death toll continues to rise from the fire that has ravaged the island of Maui in Hawaii. More than 90 deaths have been recorded so far, but the number is almost certain to rise. The fire is the worst so-far in modern U.S. history, worse than the 2018 Camp fire in California which killed 85 people, and certainly the worst that Hawaii has ever seen.

What led to this horribly destructive fire? In the wake of the worst heat-wave in recorded history, it should come as no surprise that climate change is a major cause of the fire. Hawaii, like the rest of the U.S., is facing unprecedented high temperatures. And driven by this extreme heat, Hurricane Dora, hundreds of miles away from Hawaii, was still able to create winds of 70 miles per hour on Maui. And the strong winds worked with the dry heat to quickly spread the flames, increasing their destructive power.

If the forces unleashed by climate change weren't bad enough, Hawaii has been set up for disaster by the history of capitalist agriculture. Hawaii was annexed and turned into a state in 1898 in a violent takeover from the indigenous Hawaiian people. Since then, big agricultural companies cleared much of the land and diverted many of the natural streams in order to grow products for export, like sugar cane and pineapples. Billions upon billions of dollars were made off of the Hawaiian plantations throughout the 20th century. Since the 1990s, as these plantations became less profitable, companies moved on and the plantations were overrun by non-native grasses and other plants, highly susceptible to fire. The last sugar cane plantation closed down in 2016, which has been overrun with extremely flammable grass. The Hawaiian landscape became a tinderbox ready to explode.

The infrastructure of Hawaii was further degraded as the plantations were abandoned. For decades, the state of Hawaii has cut back on funding for land management that might have controlled the spread of flammable grass species. During the fire, the Hawaiian Electric Company refused to de-energize its power lines

when hurricane winds and high temperatures became an obvious risk, catering to the short-term interests of the expensive resorts and the wealthy neighborhoods. Recent droughts degraded the water supply, while massive resorts and expensive homes drained what little water was left. The result was that firefighters had no water available from fire-hydrants in neighborhoods such as Lahaina. In other words, the infrastructure of Maui was in no way prepared for the fires that erupted, and the destruction and death caused by this disaster are a direct consequence.

Residents of Maui are not only devastated by the loss of life, and the destruction of their homes, they fear that the fire will speed up a process that has already been underway for some time — the continued displacement of native Hawaiians. Hawaii faces a housing-shortage and the high prices of homes, rising rents, and low wages have led to a massive immigration of native Hawaiians to the mainland. Wealthy developers building resorts, condos and other high-priced real estate are eager to use the consequences of the fire as a means to clear people out even faster. How will Maui be rebuilt? Let's not forget how rich developers and real estate owners used Hurricane Katrina in 2005 to rebuild Louisiana the way they wanted, while a quarter of a million poor and working class people, mostly African Americans and other minorities, never returned.

The fire on Maui is an example of what is becoming more and more common — climate change causes disasters, while the capitalist system built on profit does nothing but make the problems worse. Then, the wealthy and big corporations take advantage of the aftermath to enrich themselves. This system cares nothing for peoples' lives, for historic communities and cultures, or for the planet. The profit-driven destruction of the ecosystem and the consequences for humanity are on naked display in this horrific disaster. The Maui fire is another horrific reminder of what is to come if we don't get rid of this system once and for all.

Riverboat Brawl: Strength in Numbers

Last week, social media erupted with footage of the Riverboat Brawl in Montgomery, Alabama. What happened? The Harriet II Riverboat, which gives cruises up the Alabama River, was trying to pull into the dock and let the 227 passengers off. But a small pontoon boat filled with a few white people refused to move their boat, preventing the riverboat from docking. After 45 minutes of requests over the loudspeaker for the pontoon boat to move, the Harriet sent a crew member to shore on a smaller boat to talk with the individuals on the pontoon. The crew member happened to be Black. Not only did the people on the pontoon continue to refuse to move their boat, but they tackled the crew member to the ground and started beating him.

What happened next was several people, all of whom were Black — some were other crew members and some were just on the dock — came to the workers' defense, and fought back. One worker even jumped off the riverboat and swam to the dock to help his coworker. The whole incident was caught on video by many different people and was all over social media.

Often racist attacks are perpetrated against people when they are alone, with no one around to come to their defense. But not this time. The Riverboat Brawl is a reminder of our strength in numbers and how we can defend ourselves when we stick together.

News Flash: Supreme Court is Corrupt

Reports keep coming out showing that Supreme Court Justice, Clarence Thomas, for years has been receiving expensive gifts from wealthy right-wing donors, who benefit from his court decisions. He has received trips on yachts, stays in luxury mansions, expensive box seats at events, over 38 expensive vacations, and more. These reports just confirm what has been obvious for a long time: the court is just another tool to defend the interests of the wealthy.

We live in the wealthiest country in the world and it is our labor that has created all of this wealth. But we aren't the ones who benefit from this. The super rich – the bosses of the big corporations and banks – keep the wealth and make all the decisions. But working people do the work that makes society run, and we can organize to unite our forces. And when we do, we have enormous power to change things and make a better world.

Get in touch with us if you want to fight for a better world!

speakoutsocialists.org



@sonsocialists



With or Without You

In many workplaces, management likes to squeeze as much out of us by running things bare bones, and by hiring the least amount of people possible. And then they turn around and try to police our time off and discourage us from taking sick days. They'll try to make us feel guilty anytime we don't come in.

Recent studies show that nearly 90% of workers in the U.S. went to work sick in the last year at least once. And about 50% of workers went to work sick multiple times. The most common reason was due to intimidation by management.

But when we do call out, it's not the end of the world. Maybe things run exactly the same, or maybe they run slower, or maybe management has to call someone else in. It's not our problem. It's management's problem, they are the ones who've decided to keep staffing so low in the first place.

So we don't need to feel guilty for using our sick days or time off if we are lucky enough to have any. The reality is, the work will go on — with or without you.

Oil Production Soars Under Biden

As a candidate, Biden promised to defend the environment and reduce the use of fossil fuels, but as president, oil production has actually soared to record levels. In 2023, oil production has risen by 850,000 barrels per day to a record 12.76 million bpd, beating the previous record in 2019 before the pandemic.

In general, governments serve the interests of the big corporations, and despite his dishonest promises, Biden is no different.

DISASTER CAPITALISM



**YOU SEE DISASTER,
DESTRUCTION, AND
DEATH ...**

**I SEE NEW
DEVELOPMENT, AND
MORE PROFITS!**