From the Editors

written by Editors | January 22, 2021

As we are putting together this issue of *New Politics*, the United States is experiencing one of the greatest crises in its history. The country has lost more than 300,000 people to the coronavirus pandemic, which continues to run rampant. Donald Trump's administration, criminally negligent and outright delusional, not only failed to provide a national plan to deal with the pandemic but produced a steady stream of lies and misinformation, disparaged medical expertise, organized events large and small without masks or social distancing, incited menacing armed protests, and encouraged conspiracy theories that the virus was a "hoax." Congress failed to pass adequate legislation to support the country's small businesses and millions of workers. Its failure and the state governors' erratic opening and closing of businesses and schools—as politicians proved unable to decide between profits and public health—have created a second Great Depression, with tens of millions unemployed, thirty million facing eviction, and fifty million experiencing hunger. Service workers—largely women, Blacks, and Latinx—have suffered more than most others, though Native Americans have been hit even harder. Yet, while poverty is growing, billionaires continue to enrich themselves. This is a national catastrophe.

In the November presidential election, Biden defeated Trump. Yet, while we are greatly relieved that Trump is gone, we recognize that Joseph Biden represents the status quo ante, the policies of the Democratic Party. Those policies, far from benefitting the country's working-class majority, also criminally neglected their deteriorating conditions, allowing Trump and the GOP to exploit their misery, intensifying racism, misogyny, and gross ignorance. Biden is a neoliberal with a long record of support for the capitalist ruling class at home and its imperial objectives abroad. He disdains the party's left wing as represented by Senator Bernie Sanders and Representative Alexandria Ocasio Cortez and their progressive program. He opposes Medicare for All, opposes free public higher education in all state schools, and eschews the use of the term "Green New Deal" because of his past support for the massive use of fossil fuels and fracking and his friendliness with the owners of energy corporations. We are convinced that any progress under Biden will be the result of militant pressure from mass social movements, including organized labor.

Last spring's anti-racist Black Lives Matter demonstrations of 20 million people, the teachers strikes the year before, and the many job actions and protests by health care and transport workers during the crisis show that we can fight for and win changes. In an extensive interview in this issue, "Race, Crisis, and Resistance in the United States," Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor discusses those developments and the prospects for the future.

Three articles focus on "The U.S. Elections and Beyond," evaluating the significance of recent

political developments. Thomas Harrison of our editorial board and Rohini Hensman offer two interpretations of Biden's victory over Trump, while Michael P. McCabe and Riad Azar carry out what they call an "audit" of U.S. democracy and find it failing. Two articles allow us to place U.S. events in the broader world context, one by Kim Moody on the "Global Working Class" and the other by Ana Garcia, Miguel Borba, and Patrick Bond on "Imperialism and the Global South." In addition, Mike Gonzalez gives us an overview of the Latin American situation, Bret Gustafson examines political developments in Bolivia, and José Laguarta analyzes the recent Puerto Rican elections.

NP Editorial Board member Lois Weiner examines debates in *New Politics* over the years on the question of union democracy and socialism, comparing the ideas of editors Julius and Phyllis Jacobson, who launched the magazine, and Herman Benson, founder of the Association for Union Democracy. And Kristian Williams looks at the issue of capital punishment in the writings of Albert Camus and George Orwell. Hanna Perekhoda analyzes the democratic movement in Belarus. And Dylan Craig and John Adam Klyczek debate the issue of community schools and threats of privatization. Au Loong Yu examines China's destruction of its own environment as well as its threats to the global environment in an essay review of Richard Smith's *China's Engine of Environmental Collapse*. Among our other reviews are Stephen Steinberg's consideration of Isabel Wilkerson's important recent book *Caste* and Keith Rosenthal's reflections on a documentary film on Hellen Keller's socialism.

The coronavirus has been hard on us. We have lost loved ones and friends, we have lost jobs; some have been evicted, many face hunger. We have been frustrated as activists by our inability to meet together, and some of us for reasons of age or underlying conditions have been unable to join the protests taking place. Combating the virus with masks, social distancing, and by avoiding gatherings is vital, and a vaccine must be made available to all, including people in developing countries, free of charge. But stamping out the virus cannot be the end of our struggle. We need to return to the streets to continue the fight for jobs with living wages for all, to stop evictions, to demand food for the hungry, to abolish ICE and defund the police, to protect reproductive rights and LGBTQ+ rights, to prevent environmental catastrophe, and to fight for democracy and socialism. We look forward to throwing off our masks and our inhibitions and marching with our comrades. See you in the streets!