

Abandoned by governments, Indigenous people create their own health post in Manaus



By Ariel Bentes

With the public health system collapsing and the oxygen crisis, Amazonas has had more than 290,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the second and worst wave of the pandemic. The crisis has dramatically affected the inhabitants of Park of Tribes, located in the urban zone of Manaus, and, without the support of public authorities, they decided to seek their own solution. And so the Health Support Unit for Indigenous Peoples (UASPI) was born, a health post staffed by and for neighborhood people.

Park of Tribes is the first Indigenous neighborhood in the capital city, consisting of 688 families representing 35 ethnicities who have never had access to basic sanitation or a Basic Health Unit (UBS), according to Miquéias Kokama, chief and one of the principal leaders of the city's traditional peoples. Unable to come to terms with the situation, Miquéias joined with other residents in the venture that resulted in the opening of the UASPI on the 8th of January.

"Something had to be done—only I know what my community has had to put up with." My people need health care and I could not wait for the Prefecture or for the State government. We do not have enough equipment or professional health workers but something had to be done, if not I was going to lose more Indigenous community members like

I lost my father," Miquéias said, summarizing the neighborhood situation. The chief took over the post after the death of his father, Messias Kokama, a victim of the coronavirus.

The UASPI functions in an old community church and counts on the collaboration of 50 volunteers, among them doctors, nurses, social workers, general service people, cooks, security people, and coordinators. According to Edcarla Portugal, a lawyer representing the Park of Tribes and one of

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the coordinators of the project, the unit attended to more than 180 people in January and February. More than 20 patients needed to be interned in the UASPI network, which replaced the hospital stretchers with traditional hammocks to create a more welcoming ambiance.

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For one of the UASPI coordinators, the nursing technician Vanda Ortega, the first person to be vaccinated against the coronavirus in the state of Amazonas, the creation of the unit reflects the State's negligence. "The creation of the UASPI is a product of the negligence of the State with the indigenous population in a city context, seeing as there are no policies for attending to these people. All this effort on the part of our community, and of the leaders as well, occurs because we cannot get help in the overcrowded hospitals which cannot receive more people."

The creation and maintenance of the unit have been possible because of the leaders' own resources or through the "Saving Indigenous lives" campaign which collects donations from the populace and from other social organizations. Both Miquéias and Ecarla confirm that the UASPI needs medicine, hygiene, and food supplies, but mainly repairs to the structure of the locale which has suffered in the heavy summer rainstorms. There is also a shortage

of professional staff and equipment that can furnish more specific health services.

With more than 10,000 deaths from coronavirus in Amazonas state and without the inclusion of Indigenous people who live in urban centers in the National COVID-19 Immunization Plan, the Health Support Unit for Indigenous peoples will most likely continue for an indeterminable time. Apart from this, according to Ecarla, the project's leaders are sending official letters asking that a permanent UASPI be installed in the Park of Tribes neighborhood.

Questioned about the Health Support Unit for Indigenous peoples, the Sempa confirms that people who test positive for COVID-19 in the neighborhood, after being identified by the secretary, are being directed to the mobile unit.

Hospital bosses still putting profits over patients after a year of pandemic

By PAI

One year after the coronavirus pandemic officially hit the U.S., hospital bosses still put profits over patients and staff safety, forcing nurses to cut corners, a new National Nurses United survey shows.

In its top finding, 81% of the 9,200 registered nurses NNU surveyed from Feb. 2-28 report they must re-use what are supposed to be single-use protective gear. That's virtually unchanged since the union's prior survey, in November.

In the ensuing year, the coronavirus has killed 529,193 people in the U.S. as of March 11—equivalent to the combined populations of Des Moines, Iowa, and Fontana, Calif.—and 29.154 million people in the country have tested positive.

That includes 1,391 dead health care workers, the federal Centers for Disease Control says, out of 336,344 who were tracked all the way to the conclusion of their cases, from last March 13 through this March 9. A total of 421,052 health care workers—RNs, doctors, nursing home workers, and others—had tested positive, CDC noted.

Castillo says the survey shows the industry is still responsible for exposing RNs, other health care workers, and patients to the virus.

Almost half of hospitals still aren't testing incoming patients for the virus, the RNs told their union, the largest for their profession. Only 2/3 of hospitals have separate COVID-19 units.

One improvement, the RNs told NNU, is that 54% of RNs, including 61% in hospitals, report their institutions test them for the virus. In the union's last survey, 1/3 of RNs reported positive testing. When a worker tests positive, only 1/3 of institutions warn the worker's colleagues, RNs said. Such warnings would give workers a chance to protect themselves through testing or isolation.

The hospitals are also continuing short-staffing, especially in California. There, NNU convinced lawmakers to enact mandatory nurse-to-patient ratios, especially in key areas such as intensive care units. Hospitals, egged on by insurers interested in profits, opposed such requirements.

And when the pandemic hit, the state Health Department, over NNU protests, started waiving short-staffing bans at individual hospitals.

The survey showed that nationwide, 53% of RNs are still concerned about short-staffing, and 47% report nurse-to-patient ratios have worsened since the pandemic hit.

81% of registered nurses surveyed report they are still re-using what are supposed to be single-use protective gear.

An appeal from radical veteran Paul Buhle: Save People's World



By Paul Buhle

Today's People's World bears the legacy of American socialist and communist newspapers going back to the 1880s. Around those papers, their editors, writers, cartoonists, and other staff centered communities of working-class supporters, making the publication possible.

It also bears the legacy of one specific and unique Communist newspaper published on the "Left Coast," the West Coast, during the 1940s and 1950s—the old People's World.

Today's People's World deserves and needs financial help. In that case, it is not only because it is useful and inspiring today, but because of this heritage.

The immigrant Germans, mostly working in craft-oriented trades, maintained a fragile socialist movement in the 19th century. Their daily papers in New York and Chicago offered journalism of reportage and commentary, with special literary-cultural supplements on the weekends. Their editors were famous for speech-making and writing short stories or poems, and their following in the "Turnvereins" and taverns gathered by the thousands on summer Sundays to drink Germanic, union-made beer and look forward to a socialist future.

By the 1890s, the Yiddish press emerged from the new Jewish immigration, eloquent poetry on the front page, and future playwrights or novelists supplying literary notes. The new century added dozens, then hundreds of socialist newspapers, not only

in English (including the Appeal to Reason, with a weekly circulation of a half million) and in a dozen languages of the newest immigrants. Hungarian, Slovenian, Polish, Greek, and other papers appeared in blue-collar neighborhoods around factories. Immigrants published them in fraternal halls where members of ethnic "sickness and death benefit societies" came to hear lectures, eat, drink, and dance.

The Communist press that emerged in the 1920s shared this legacy. For more than a decade, Communist papers appearing in Yiddish, Hungarian, Finnish, and other languages had as many readers or more than the Daily Worker.

In the middle 1930s, with the rise of the Popular Front, the Daily Worker came into its own, with talented cartoonists and even comic strips lightening the tone of the class struggle and the appeal for racial equality. The People's World out west was "something else." It felt like the Bay Area and Los Angeles, including Hollywood. It was stylish as no Communist paper had been. It had fine poetry and original art.

When I began reading People's World in 1968, it had successfully leaped the generation gap, with the likes of Angela Davis and Bettina Aptheker in the new generation.

Enough history!
Today's People's World needs to continue the excellent work!

Today's People's World bears the legacy of American socialist and communist newspapers going back to the 1880s.

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Kroger closes grocery stores to avoid COVID hazard pay for workers

By Special To People's World

One of the most profitable corporations in the United States is threatening grocery workers' jobs in response to a new coronavirus-era hazard pay requirement.

Reacting to a near-unanimous vote by the Los Angeles City Council requiring large grocery and drug chains to offer their front-line essential workers an additional \$5 per hour for the next 120 days, the corporate owner of Food 4 Less and Ralphs announced the closure of 3 stores in L.A., eliminating jobs of more than 250 workers.

The ordinance, finalized on March 3, affects over 35 companies in Los Angeles with more than 26,000 workers. Kroger, the largest corporation among them all (#23 on the Fortune 500 list) is the only company pleading poverty and closing stores. From Albertsons and Vons to Trader Joe's, Smart & Final, and Northgate Markets, other supermarkets affected are paying their workers and continuing operations.

Kroger, the corporate owner of Food 4 Less and Ralphs, more than doubled their profits during the pandemic to \$2.6 billion. They paid their CEO \$21 million in 2019, a 76% increase over 2018. The \$1.2 million the Hazard Pay increase would incur is less than .05% of Kroger's profit last year, and 5% of the CEO's annual pay.

At press time, according to Bertha Rodríguez, a spokesperson for UFCW, talks are currently proceeding with other union locals as to the actions they will take, whether a call for boycott, informational pickets, newspaper and Facebook ads, or other measures. The union will not remain silent as 250-plus workers lose their jobs for corporate greed.

Lula afirmó ser víctima de mayor mentira jurídica en Brasil

BY PRENSA LATINA

El ex presidente Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva afirmó hoy que resultó víctima de la mayor mentira jurídica en 500 años de historia de Brasil, en su primer pronunciamiento tras la anulación de sus condenas.

'Sé que fui víctima de la mayor mentira jurídica contada en 500 años de historia (de Brasil)', dijo el fundador del Partido de los Trabajadores en el Sindicato de Metalúrgico del ABC, em São Bernardo do Campo (São Paulo), sobre los procesos dirigidos por los fiscales de la operación Lava Jato y sentenciado por el exjuez Sérgio Moro.

Estaba seguro de que la verdad vencería y ese día llegó, aseveró el ex gobernante.

Relató que la tensión de pasar por el proceso de enjuiciamiento por corrupción afectó a su familia. 'Mi mujer Marisa murió a causa de la presión', lamentó.

Insistió en que el sufrimiento del pueblo brasileño soporta en estos momentos por la pandemia de la Covid-19, en particular los pobres, es mayor que lo cometido contra su persona. 'El dolor que siento no es nada con el dolor que sufren millones de personas y los familiares de casi 270 mil muertos por la Covid-19', refirió.

Manifestó su solidaridad con esas familias y con los profesionales de la salud que permanecen en la primera de combate contra el patógeno.

La cuestión de la vacuna no es sobre si tiene o no dinero. Es una cuestión de amar la vida o amar la muerte, apuntó.

'Y sobre el papel, recalco, de un presidente de la República frente a su pueblo', en alusión al mandatario ultraderechista Jair Bolsonaro.

Durante su extensa alocución, el ex-dirigente obrero agradeció la solidaridad del presidente argentino, Alberto Fernández; el papa Francisco, el Grupo de Puebla, el Foro de Sao Paulo, de los exjefes de Estado José (Pepe) Mujica (Uruguay), Evo Morales (Bolivia) y otros líderes políticos mundiales.

Agradeció asimismo al juez Edson Fachin, del Supremo Tribunal Federal (STF), quien esta semana anuló sus condenas por la justicia del estado de Paraná relacionadas con el Lava Jato.

Con tal decisión, Lula recupera sus derechos políticos y vuelve a ser elegible para una carrera presidencial.

El expresidente insistió en que, por primera vez y después de tantas mentiras, prevaleció la veracidad en el STF. 'Quedé feliz con la verdad', reconoció.

Lula tuvo palabras de elogio para su defensa, integrada por los abogados Cristiano Zanin y Valeska Teixeira, que por 'su coraje' brotó la decisión del Supremo y respetaron en que nunca 'cambiaría mi dignidad por libertad'.

En su intervención, el exlíder metalúrgico comunicó que la próxima semana se pondrá la vacuna anti covid-19 y exhortó al pueblo brasileño a inmunizarse y continuar cumpliendo con las medidas para frenar el avance de la pandemia.

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