

Summer 2023 U.S. Immigration Alert!

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Biden's Chinaphobia, Anti-Immigrant Violence, and Political Oppression Against People of Color Youth

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4/6: Chinatowns squeezed between capitalist development, new Cold War

Tina Ngo, Ningshun Chen, Wai Lee Chin Feman - Liberation

For decades, Chinatowns across the United States have been under attack by racist capitalist developments. Developers, banks and politicians are competing to construct the newest arenas, the tallest mega-jails and the grayest luxury apartment condos.

These seemingly upscale yet unsafe and unsound projects have effectively priced out long-time residents and small businesses. Capitalist developments have destroyed entire communities — places where people used to live, gather, and thrive — now sit as empty vessels and lifeless tourist destinations. For the few Chinatowns in which working-class immigrants and families still reside, rabid gentrifying forces are pushing the local residents to fight for their lives.

Profiteering developments are just one instance of the extensive social phenomena threatening our Chinatowns. Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with a right-wing propaganda campaign, ignited anti-Asian sentiments and hate crimes. Countless acts of violence, most of which targeted women and the elderly, took place within and around Chinatowns across the country. Victims of these hate crimes were shoved off subway platforms and sidewalks, beaten with objects, and dehumanized with racial slurs.

Mainstream media portray these assaults as supposedly senseless incidents and reduce them to individualized racial “hate.” They exalt that the solution to these problems is to increase crime reporting, expand police budgets, and to strengthen the system of mass incarceration. The news media is cynically manipulating the plight of Asian Americans to promote reactionary “tough on crime” policies.

Capitalists are opportunistically banking on the latest rise of anti-Asian violence to drive a wedge between oppressed communities, as a means to keep them divided and powerless. This strategy of racial division is part of the larger profit scheme to encroach on Chinatowns by dividing communities fighting for the same right to housing.

Chinatowns under existential threat

The growth of Chinatowns in the United States can be traced back to the mid-19th Century, when Chinese laborers began arriving in large numbers to work on the transcontinental railroad and other industries. This first wave of immigrants faced widespread discrimination and were forced to form ethnic enclaves. Overtime, these communities evolved into the Chinatowns that we know today, which are characterized by a rich cultural heritage.

However, in recent decades, the development of Chinatown has taken on a new character, one driven by capitalist greed and speculative development. Gentrification is the tool that the ruling class will use to try and wipe Chinatowns off of the map. This racist process erases cultural identity and reinforces patterns of segregation and exclusion.

In 2017, then NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio approved an \$8.3 billion construction plan to build the world's tallest jail. Standing at 300 feet above-ground with an ominous 40-story façade, the city's vibrant Chinatown will be engulfed in the shadows of the mega-jail. It is already vile that public funds are further used to fuel mass incarceration instead of being spent on taxpayers for education, health care, infrastructure, and other social service programs. Yet it is even more sinister to build this jail in Chinatown, a densely populated area home to low-income immigrants, workers, families, and others facing economic hardships.

Similarly in Philadelphia, the billionaire developers of 76DevCorp are attempting to build a basketball arena right on the border of the city's Chinatown. This \$1.3 billion plan that would involve ten years of construction is predicted to slowly wipe out the only remaining low-income neighborhood in Philadelphia's city center.

David Adelman, one of the key developers involved in the stadium proposal, is also the CEO of Campus Apartments, a notorious development company that is the main engine behind the University of Pennsylvania's efforts to displace West Philadelphia's mostly Black, working-class population. The privatization of student housing and perpetual university expansion across the city extends beyond Philadelphia. David Blitzer, one of the owners of 76ers, sits as a global executive at Blackstone Inc., the world's largest corporate residential landlord group. Blackstone has been exposed by the United Nations for contributing to the global housing crisis and for committing numerous human rights violations. The Wall Street private equity firm is also lobbying the Pentagon and State Department on issues related to military preparedness and training.

A similar situation happened in Washington D.C., where a once bustling Chinatown effectively disappeared when the Capital One Arena propped up in the middle of the neighborhood. San Francisco's Chinatown, the oldest Chinese community in the U.S., faces constant displacement threats as greedy landlords and management companies attempt to drive out low-income, immigrant tenants. Located in one of the most intensely gentrified cities, Boston Chinatown's row homes, which traditionally housed the community's most vulnerable members, continues to fight against evictions by private development. The list of profit-seeking developments in and around Chinatowns goes on and on, and they are all malignant symptoms of the same racist, capitalist system that dictates almost all aspects of our lives and disregards our communities.

U.S. empire feeds anti-Chinese sentiments and policies

While on one side working class Chinese and other Asian communities are being squeezed by the forces of capitalist development, on the other side a repressive and racist atmosphere in society is being fomented as part of U.S. imperialism's new Cold War. Red-baiting, anti-communist indoctrination, sinophobia, and terror attacks against Asian people are all deeply connected to the historical and contemporary contexts of U.S. imperialism in Asia. Time and again, when another country becomes the target of U.S. imperialism and aggression, we observe vicious attacks directed at immigrants.

The dehumanization of Chinese and other Asian people saturates corporate media, and consequently conditions the American consciousness and further ingrains racism and bigotry on a systemic level. The media's reprehensible endorsement of anti-Asian racism is clearly an attempt to manufacture consent for a new Cold War with China.

In recent years, U.S. foreign policy has ramped up its focus on the Asia-Pacific as the central feature of its imperialist agenda. China is no longer available to be extorted and exploited in a way desired by the U.S. ruling class, as it has established itself as a legitimate pole of autonomous development. China is led by a communist party and its government was established through a socialist revolution in 1949, giving an additional dimension to the conflict.

Learning lessons from the last Red Scare

During the era of McCarthyism, Chinese-Americans became victims of the anti-communist hysteria, a story that was classified as top secret by the U.S. government for over four decades.

In the early 1950's, months after Mao Zedong established the People's Republic of China, the U.S. State Department launched a campaign against Chinese-Americans. The following two decades were fraught with rampant racial persecution

and anti-China hysteria. The McCarthy anti-communist witch hunt rampaged through Chinatowns in search of Chinese communists and sympathizers. Working alongside campus police departments, the FBI raided universities and student clubs in search of Asian-American radicals.

Scholars and researchers were investigated by the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), blacklisted, and often stripped of their resident permits and citizenship. The Red Scare robbed people of their freedom to communicate with their relatives in Asia, speaking positively of their homeland, and expressing their ethnic and cultural identity. Economic sanctions against China forbid ordinary Chinese-Americans from sending money to support their family back home. It forced Chinatown businesses to shut down and communities to withdraw from society, out of fear of Cold War suspicion.

A new Cold War

U.S. aggression on China takes many forms, including trade wars, military posturing, and political pressure designed to prevent China from challenging U.S. dominance in the global economy. We are in a new Cold War and along with it a propaganda campaign prone to become more and more absurd, and which intentionally — and gradually — blurs the distinction between individuals and states.

This aggression has had a profound impact on Chinatowns, which have become key sites of economic and political competition. The Covid-19 pandemic was politicized to such an extreme degree that people experienced significant harm, especially in Chinatowns across the country. Individuals and businesses were violently attacked, and many businesses were forced to close when people stopped dining and shopping in Chinatowns. The downstream effects meant that workers lost their jobs, and the terrain was left more ripe for gentrification. It is not hard to see how, as the United States further escalates its attacks on China, these problems can escalate into more organized attacks, ones which operate with government and corporate support.

Our Chinatowns are home to tightly-knit networks of recent immigrants and workers who deeply support one another in a fight to survive. They provide places to work and to feel safe. Chinatowns are also home to dynamic and militant political organizing. The forces that want to destroy Chinatowns target our children, colleagues, mothers, and elders. They shut down schools, research centers, and cultural institutions. We need to simultaneously organize the working-class to resist predatory development, and fight back against the U.S. politicians and capitalist elites who are beating the drums of war and pushing for global destruction.

4/12: Man dies in Georgia detention center

Dianne Mathiowetz – Workers World

Salvador Vargas, a 61-year-old Mexican man and incarcerated migrant, died April 4 at a hospital in Columbus, Georgia. He had been detained at the Stewart Detention Center, some 40 miles away in Lumpkin, Georgia. The hospital declared that the cause of death was complications from a stroke.

Stewart has a capacity of more than 2,000 detainees. The center is owned and operated by CoreCivic, a private corporation that reaps enormous profits from incarcerating immigrants. And 11 people have died at Stewart, nine since 2017.

Georgia Detention Watch, in collaboration with several other immigrant rights groups, has demanded the closure of Stewart and all other ICE detention centers. The groups point to the more than 200 deaths of people while held in ICE custody in the last 20 years.

The list of documented abuses in the joint press release includes “inept mental health care, use of solitary confinement, unsanitary conditions, COVID-19 negligence, medical neglect, forced labor and sexual assault by staff at Stewart.”

April 15 and May 6 demonstrations planned

A continuing effort to shut down the Folkston ICE Processing Center is set for Saturday, April 15. Folkston is another very large, privately operated detention facility managed by the GEO Group. Located close to the Florida border, it is in a poor Georgia county with few job opportunities. A statewide coalition called Shut Down ICE in Georgia is coordinating this demonstration. (Shut Down ICE in Georgia)

5/8: Eight dead in Texas after car drives into crowd outside migrant center

Police say crash may have been intentional, and driver was arrested for reckless driving and could face other charges

Hannah traveled to Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, South Dakota and Virginia for this story and spoke to more than 100 migrant child workers in 20 states.

Maya Yang – The Guardian

Eight people have been killed and 10 others were injured after a car plowed into a crowd outside a shelter serving migrants and homeless people in Brownsville, Texas, on Sunday, and investigators believe it may have been intentional, according to authorities.

The car careened into the crowd of people who were sitting on the curb at a bus stop near the Ozanam Center at about 8.30am, the police department in Brownsville, which is near Texas's border with Mexico, said. That came four days before the scheduled expiration of Title 42, the Covid-19 era policy that allows border patrol agents to swiftly expel migrants at the US's southern border.

The shelter director, Victor Maldonado, told the Associated Press that upon reviewing the shelter's surveillance footage, he saw an SUV run a light and plow into the crowd of people who were at the bus stop. The majority of those who were injured or killed were Venezuelan men.

"What we see in the video is that this SUV, a Range Rover, just ran the light that was about a hundred feet away and just went through the people who were sitting there in the bus stop," Maldonado said.

Police lieutenant Martin Sandoval told the news outlet Valley Central that seven victims died at the scene, and several others were rushed to nearby hospitals. The toll was updated to eight after another victim died on Sunday night.

Video footage posted online showed crowds of people at the scene while clothes and other personal items were strewn all over the road. Several people appeared to be tending to an individual who was lying on a grassy area.

Sandoval said the driver was arrested and booked on a count of reckless driving. More charges are likely to be filed in what officers suspect may have been an intentional act, Sandoval added.

"It can be three factors," Sandoval told the Associated Press. "It could be intoxication; it could be an accident; or it could be intentional. In order for us to find out exactly what happened, we have to eliminate the other two."

He added that the driver was transported to a nearby hospital for injuries he sustained after the car rolled over and that no passengers were with him.

"He's being very uncooperative at the hospital, but he will be transported to our city jail as soon as he gets released," said Sandoval, adding that the detained driver had given officers several different names. "Then we'll fingerprint him and [take a] mug shot, and then we can find his true identity."

Police have also obtained a blood sample from the driver and have submitted it to be tested for possible intoxicants.

The Ozanam Center is the only overnight shelter in Brownsville and manages the release of thousands of migrants from federal custody, and it offers free transportation for migrants.

"In the last two months, we've been getting 250 to 380 a day," Maldonado told the Associated Press, adding that even though the shelter can hold up to 250 migrants, many who arrive also leave on the same day.

"Some of them were on the way to the bus station, because they were on their way to their destination," he said.

Two days earlier, the US homeland security secretary, Alejandro Mayorkas, said that immigration authorities faced "extremely challenging" circumstances along the border with Mexico days before the end of asylum restrictions implemented through Title 42 during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A surge of Venezuelan migrants through south Texas, particularly in and around the border community of Brownsville, has occurred over the last two weeks for reasons that Mayorkas said were unclear.

On Thursday, 4,000 of about 6,000 migrants in border patrol custody in Texas's Rio Grande Valley were Venezuelan.

5/4: Members of youth delegation to Cuba detained on return to US

150 young leaders from the United States took part in a 10-day delegation to Cuba to exchange and learn from the Cuban people. On their return, many of them were detained at US airports and their devices were searched

Peoples Dispatch

On Wednesday, May 3, several members of various organizations in the US, who had traveled to Cuba as part of an international youth delegation, were detained and harassed by US authorities during their return to the country. The People's Forum, one of the organizations that participated in the 10-day solidarity brigade organized by the International Peoples' Assembly, condemned the harassment faced by delegation members at US airports. "URGENT! Today multiple members of our youth delegation to Cuba were detained and held for hours by the US Customs & Border Patrol after returning. Despite having traveled legally, we've been harassed and held in Secondary Questioning on arrival at the Miami International Airport and the Newark Liberty International Airport," wrote the People's Forum.

It said that the mobile phones of several delegates were wrongfully searched and seized by the CBP officials. "This outrageous behavior seeks to intimidate us and criminalize our right to travel and exchange. We demand the release of our remaining comrades! We will not be moved! Our commitment to end the US Blockade of Cuba will only grow," the Forum emphasized.

Manolo De Los Santos, co-executive director of The People's Forum and an organizer of the delegation, also condemned these actions. "Over 150 youth travel to Cuba to learn and are welcomed back in the US with detention, political questioning and the seizing of phones. Which country is the police state?" questioned De Los Santos.

Upon learning about the harassment, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel expressed Cuba's solidarity with the members of the US delegation. "Cheer up guys, We're with you. Thank you for your courage, for supporting Cuba and for facing the hatred of those who cannot stand the fact that the Cuban Revolution has the support of the most progressive youth in the belly of the beast. We send you a big hug," wrote Díaz-Canel in a tweet.

Cuban organizations and media personalities also expressed outrage following the politically motivated detentions.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Center which participated in several of the brigade's activities wrote, "As CMLK, we denounce the harassment which the hundred young people, 'ambassadors of peace' are being subjected to and we reject the injustices suffered in this moment by those who embrace and sustain solidarity amongst the people as the only alternative to capitalism. We denounce these acts of abuse towards good people. Young people who desire and dream of a better future full of hope to transform what is imposed on us as 'impossible.'"

Cuban social media influencer, El Necio, highlighted the hypocritical nature of the detentions and wrote, "We only have one question: where is the freedom?"

The continental platform of social movements, ALBA Movimientos, joined in the condemnation stating, "They have shown once again that they cannot tolerate that there are people that from the belly of the beast [who] support the Cuban revolution."

On Thursday morning, De Los Santos reported that "all the comrades who traveled to Cuba are FREE," and once again condemned the US authorities for intimidating the young delegation.

"The aggressive attitude of the Customs & Border Patrol officials towards the members of our delegation during their return to the United States is reprehensible. The seizure of phones and the political nature of interrogation in secondary questioning imply a level of harassment not seen in years. It was a clear effort to intimidate young people who exercised their right to travel and learn. This attempt to deter us from being in solidarity with Cuba will fail," said Santos.

"We affirm our right to travel and exchange with the Cuban people, and now more than ever it is our duty to stand with them to break the US Blockade. These unfortunate incidents are further evidence of the wrong direction of a hostile US foreign policy towards Cuba. Their actions in fact demonstrate that the US is far from a bastion of democracy and human rights, and rather than intimidate us, they motivate us to strengthen our struggles for true, transformative change here in the United States," he added.

Over 150 young leaders from a variety of organizations in the US went to Cuba to participate in a meeting with different sectors of Cuban society and learn about the impact of the US blockade and experiences in building socialism. These meetings were held in Havana between April 24 and May 3.

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NISN is a coalition of community, immigrant, labor, human rights and student activist groups, founded in 2002 in response to the urgent needs for the national coalition to fight immigrant bashing, support immigrant rights, no to the sweatshops exploitation and end to the racism on the community. Please visit our website:
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