

Mexican strikers show working class answer to capitalist reaction at US-Mexico border

Eric London
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At the US-Mexico border, the two chief social classes under capitalism—the capitalist class and the working class—are demonstrating the two alternatives for the future of mankind.

The capitalist class has mobilized thousands of heavily armed US soldiers, who are stringing barbed wire across the desert and shooting tear gas at refugees asking for asylum. Immigrants who chanted “we are international workers” as they marched thousands of miles from Honduras as part of last year’s migrant caravan are now huddled in disease-ridden tent cities just yards short of the US border.

To protect the nation state and block the flow of workers seeking to escape poverty and violence, border agents are grabbing the children of immigrant workers from their parents’ arms and locking them up for months, with fatal consequences for some. The bodies of thousands of people lie scattered in the barren desert.

The US government shutdown centers on what the Republican and Democratic parties call “border security,” with both sides pledging to build barriers, fly drones and arm more agents to keep immigrants out.

Hundreds of thousands of federal workers are missing paychecks because the two parties say they have differences over how many billions to spend fortifying the borders and how many hundreds of miles of wall to build. Trump—the most degenerate representative of US finance capital—has threatened to shoot immigrants on sight, declare a “national emergency,” and eliminate due process and the right to asylum.

The working class, on the other hand, is beginning to advance its opposition to this repulsive reality. In the Mexican border city of Matamoros, 70,000 workers have gone on strike, shutting production at dozens of “maquiladora” sweatshops within miles of the US border.

Workers everywhere should study the blueprint the Matamoros workers have used to take their first steps.

When workers learned they were cheated of their promised bonus, the first action they took was to call a mass meeting and repudiate the union, which workers hate for its collaboration with the companies.

Having removed this straitjacket, the *Matamorenses* workers were finally free to talk to one another. They initiated discussions in the factories and on social media where workers democratically discussed their options. They discovered that the overwhelming sentiment was for a strike. Without being gagged by the union, they formulated their own demands: a massive wage increase, payment of stolen bonuses and the elimination of union dues.

Then, the maquiladora workers did what the union has prevented them from doing for years: they united with one another in other plants and sections of the working class. They marched through the industrial parks to call out their coworkers to join them, paralyzing the local economy.

Workers went around the official channels of the pro-industry media and the lying trade union officers by using social media, allowing news to flow freely through the city of 500,000. Workers’ chief news source is one another, since the major press in both the US and Canada has blacked out news coverage of the strike. Local papers in other border cities are publishing frightened editorials warning that the strikes may spread.

The two processes on display at the border are the solutions the two classes put forward to the crisis of the capitalist system. As the WSWS wrote in its January 3 statement, “The Strategy of International Class Struggle and the Political Fight Against Capitalist Reaction in 2019 :”

How the death agony of the capitalist system is resolved—whether by the capitalist methods of dictatorship, fascism, imperialist war and a collapse into barbarism, or through the revolutionary conquest of power by the international working class and the transition to a socialist society—will be determined by the outcome of the class struggle on a world scale.

All of the major struggles of 2019, including the Yellow Vest movement in France, the teachers strike in Los Angeles and the plantation workers' struggle in Sri Lanka, are part of one emerging world movement for social equality. Each struggle is itself international in character.

There is no longer any such thing as an “American made” or “Mexican made” vehicle. In the auto industry, 36 percent of US-produced auto parts are exported to Mexico, and 45 percent of auto parts imported *to* the US are from Mexico.

A vehicle that rolls off the assembly line in Mexico or the US is comprised of parts that have crossed national boundaries dozens or hundreds of times.

To produce the seat control button on a car seat, for example, a capacitor manufactured by workers in Asia is shipped to the US and is shipped again to Ciudad Juárez and inserted by Mexican workers into a circuit board. Then, it is shipped back to the US, where warehouse workers in Texas move and store the circuit board until it is shipped *back* to Mexico, to Matamoros, where the circuit board is inserted into a seat activator button. Then, the activator is shipped to either Texas or Canada, where auto parts workers install the activator into the seat itself. Finally, the seat is sent to an assembly plant and installed into the body of the car.

The appeal for the international unity of the working class is not a holiday phrase—it is a strategic necessity and the basis for unleashing the immense social strength of the working class.

This is why workers must reject the poison of nationalism, whether it comes from Donald Trump or trade union officials in the US and Canada who blame Mexican workers for “stealing jobs” and ask only that the auto companies keep production local. Nor are Mexican workers served by thinking they have an ally in Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO), who

promised the banks he would not expropriate the wealth of the rich and agreed to Donald Trump's demand that Mexico help the US block Central American workers from applying for asylum in the US.

The capitalist system and the division of the world into nation-states are barriers to the progressive development of the world's productive forces. They have produced the irrational and unjust paradox that a seat button has the right to cross a national boundary but a human being does not.

The working class is the only social force that can resolve this paradox by overthrowing the capitalist system, expropriating the wealth of the rich, and transforming the corporations into public, worker-run utilities that will harness the power of the global integrated economy to provide resources and goods according to human need.



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