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## *The coming decade of revolution*

In the last decade the working class — spurred into action by a destroyed economy, state violence, and national and gender oppression — rose up in a series of mass mobilizations, the scope of which had not been seen in two generations. From Occupy to Black Lives Matter to the Women's Marches, the oppressed and struggling sectors of the working class vented their anger and challenged the capitalist order.



Protestors occupy the street in front of cop's house, demanding justice. (WW photo: Henry Luna)

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These mobilizations were uneven in political development. Many were spontaneous and unplanned. The state often used unrestrained violence to strike back. But the contradictions that produced the tumult of the last 10 years have not gone away. Rather, conditions have worsened. This can only lead to greater conflict.

If the most politically advanced segments of the working class are up to the challenge, we are likely to see a tremendous push to organize the proletariat. Over the next 10 years, we may see the development of revolutionary class struggle against the bourgeoisie.

If the last decade was the decade of mass mobilization, of the enraged masses awakening and struggling to find their feet, this decade will be the decade of revolution.

### **Rent extraction and the gig economy**

The newest generation of adults lives on the knife edge of economic insecurity. They are crushed under gargantuan student loan debt. In every major city in the U.S., rents have risen to unsustainable levels, squeezing more and more people out of their homes.

From 2015 to 2018, median rent rose 7.6 percent, while the consumer price index showed a 14 percent increase in the cost of basic necessities like food, energy, transportation and medical care.

For millennials in the U.S. there is no margin of error. They average a net worth of less than \$8,000 — less than any previous generation — and down 34 percent for adults ages 18 to 35. More than half of all millennials have less than \$5,000 in savings. ([tinyurl.com/ueyommt](http://tinyurl.com/ueyommt))

The rising cost of living has created a traumatic economic wound; the job market offers no means to stop the bleeding. With computerized precision, Silicon Valley has accelerated the extraction of surplus value from the working class.

The so-called “gig-economy” is a thinly veiled assault on workers’ rights. Workers are hired as private contractors rather than full-time employees. This insulates business owners from costs like health insurance. The results are clear: Productivity has continued to rise, but wages have fallen. Inflation-adjusted salaries for millennials are 20 percent lower than they were for baby boomers at their age. ([tinyurl.com/yyn9tqzf](http://tinyurl.com/yyn9tqzf))

As Marx understood, the continued extraction of wealth creates a counterforce of popular resistance. The working class, under greater and greater stress, is forced to organize in order to survive. The resurgence of strikes, both in conventional sectors (West Virginia teachers) and in newer tech industries (Amazon and Google), is evidence of this. The extraction of surplus value from the working class is intensifying and becoming unsustainable. As contradictions sharpen, class consciousness and class struggle inevitably increase. In order to maintain control, the ruling class must increasingly rely on state violence.

### **The slow collapse of the state**

Mao Zedong called all reactionaries “paper tigers” — “unable to withstand the wind and rain.” Looking at the U.S. state apparatus in 2020: Has this description ever been more fitting? The U.S. continually pumps more money into the security and surveillance state, but the true strength of its police and military is weaker than ever. It relies on external technological advantage while internal morale and physical capacity are collapsing.

During the Obama administration, major military innovation was the expansion of drone warfare and special operations raids. The imperialists referred to this as the “light footprint strategy.” ([tinyurl.com/urpkcl7](http://tinyurl.com/urpkcl7))

In truth, it was war by assassination. The means were remote-piloted drones which hovered over a population — keeping it in constant terror of the next “hellfire” missile attack and gangs of specially trained armed forces smashing down doors in the middle of the night to kill or abduct hapless inhabitants.

Why did they resort to such high-tech terrorism? Why abandon conventional warfare? Because no other means were available. The U.S. military is struggling to recruit soldiers. The Pentagon lacks the masses of troops necessary to maintain control over the populations of the numerous countries that have been attacked and occupied.

The only option, then, is to keep targeted countries in a permanent state of chaos by murdering any political or military leaders who attempt to resist U.S. imperialism. Such a strategy can never defeat the broader anti-imperialist movements behind these leaders, and the U.S. knows this.

But the ruling class has settled on destabilization as a means of resource extraction. The goal is to keep resisters off balance long enough for private companies to drain the natural resources (from the land) and surplus value (from the labor of the working class) of the targeted country. As the climate crisis also demonstrates, the ruling class will accrue as much wealth as it can for as long as it can until the entire system collapses.

And the cracks have already appeared. The death squads referred to as U.S. Special Forces are exhausted by the endless attacks they have conducted in Africa and West Asia. Even pilots who bomb civilians via remote-controlled planes are experiencing high levels of burnout.

With declining troop numbers but an increasing number of battlefields, how can the empire hope to go on? At this writing, the U.S military is preparing to break itself against the impenetrable terrain and hardened soldiers of Iran. It seems that nothing can divert the state's self-destructive tendencies.

Domestic law enforcement is no better off. As with the Pentagon, exposure of racist tactics by both the police and the Border Patrol — and the resulting condemnation — has led to declining recruitment and plummeting morale. Numerous stories in recent years feature pigs (a term popularly used by the Black Panther Party to refer to killer cops) openly lamenting this “shocking” turn of events.

For any rational observer, this was an inevitable consequence of the public's newfound ability — driven by camera phones and the internet — to document and disseminate instances of racism and oppression by U.S. law enforcement.

This declining force will struggle, to greater and greater futility, to contain the growing mass mobilizations over the next 10 years.

Both at home and abroad, U.S. military and police are paper tigers. When faced with the winds of popular anger and the rain of organized resistance, they will wilt and crumble like wet pulp.

**Building the revolutionary machine**

The state is weak politically, economically and militarily. The people are getting stronger. Class consciousness is growing. A recent poll found that 70 percent of millennials planned on voting socialist, 36 percent viewed communism favorably, and 22 percent wanted to see the abolition of all private property! ([tinyurl.com/yy9pdxhk](http://tinyurl.com/yy9pdxhk)) This portends a great deal of change in the coming years.

The U.S. has experienced revolutionary upsurges before. But this can only be seen as a cause for apprehension rather than optimism if one incorrectly sees the struggles of the past as distinct events. In truth, all revolutionary movements are part of a continuum of struggle.

The actions of previous generations of revolutionaries created material changes in the governance and culture of the U.S. Those changes in turn have a material effect on successive generations.

The repressive state apparatus reacts to the periodic rise of social movements, and it will take sustained struggle to create change. Capitalism, in its imperial core, will not be slain in one night. To put it succinctly, a tree cannot be chopped down with the blow of one axe.

What then is our task today? It can only be one thing: to organize for working-class power. To unite the multinational working class in opposition to the bourgeoisie. To build durable, long-term organizations that are capable of withstanding the fearsome rigors of revolutionary struggle.

The last decade showed the sparkling brilliance of spontaneous mobilization, as well its flaws. A bright flame cannot light the way if it burns out too quickly. Only deep organizing — the creation of long-term political structures in the working class — can carry us through the challenges of the next 10 years. It is only through close ties to the masses that organs of dual power can be built to truly challenge and defeat the ruling class. If not, reactionary forces will dominate.

The contradictions our society faces are mounting. Events, reactions and counterreactions are unpredictable. We may have less time to prepare than we think. The time to organize for the decade of revolution is NOW!

*(WW Photo: Henry Luna)*