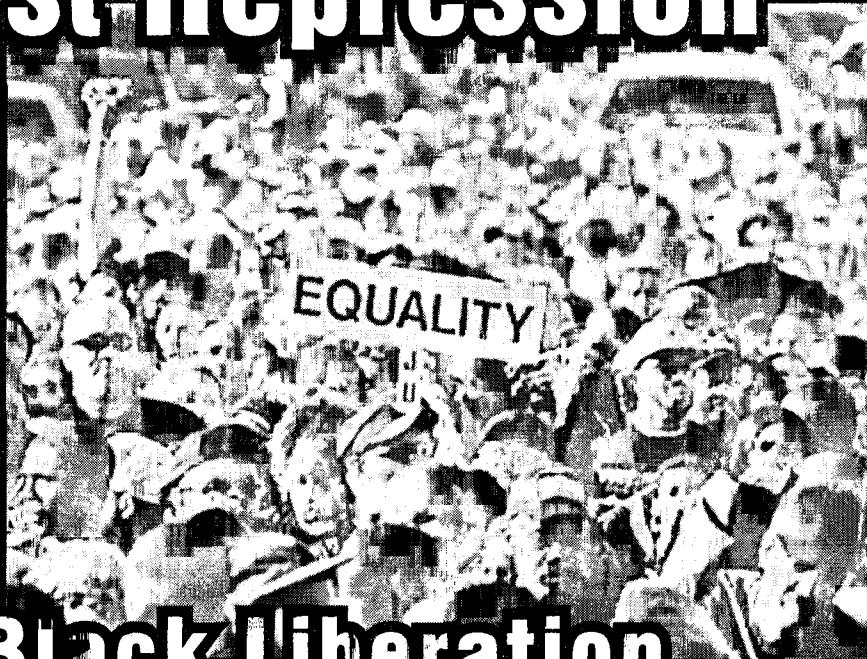


# Black History and the Class Struggle

No. 20

From Mumia Abu-Jamal to Jena Six  
**Capitalist "Justice" =  
Racist Repression**



**For Black Liberation  
Through Socialist Revolution!**



0 74470 81032 2

**South Africa: Permanent Revolution  
vs. "Two-Stage" Stalinist Betrayal**

SEE PAGE 28

## Table of Contents

Break with the Democrats! For a Class-Struggle Workers Party! Finish the Civil War—For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution! <b>Jena Six: Racist "Justice" U.S.A. . . .</b>	<b>3</b>
For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution! <b>Supreme Court: Segregation Forever . . . . .</b>	<b>7</b>
Speech at Berlin Rally <b>Mumia Abu-Jamal: The Frame-Up of an Innocent Man . . . . .</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>For Class-Struggle Defense . . . . .</b>	<b>9</b>
Labor Black League Speaker at Harlem Mumia Rally: <b>"Strike!" and "Free Mumia!" Should Ring Out In the Same Breath . . . . .</b>	<b>14</b>
From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal <b>Immigration Blues . . . . .</b>	<b>17</b>
The Legacy of Richard S. Fraser <b>Revolutionary Integrationism: The Road to Black Freedom . . . . .</b>	<b>18</b>
Break with the Bourgeois ANC— No Support to Mbeki, Zuma! Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist Party! <b>South Africa: Permanent Revolution vs. "Two-Stage" Stalinist Betrayal . . . . .</b>	<b>28</b>
For Labor Protest Against Racist Cop Terror! <b>50 Rounds: NYPD Killers . . . . .</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Immigrant Rights and the Fight for Black Liberation. . . . .</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>27 November 1982: "We Stopped the Klan!" . . . . .</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Join the Labor Black Leagues! . . . . .</b>	<b>44</b>
Pascagoula Strike <b>Key Battle for Labor in the Open Shop South "It's Most All About Katrina" . . . . .</b>	<b>45</b>
New Orleans Racist Atrocity—One Year After <b>Race, Class and the Fight for a Workers America Break with the Democrats! For a Revolutionary Workers Party! Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution! . . . . .</b>	<b>48</b>

## Introduction

Our pamphlet series, *Black History and the Class Struggle*, expresses our commitment to the fight for black freedom, strategic for the American revolution. The escalation of racist attacks in recent years has focused a spotlight on the oppression of black people that is a bedrock of American capitalism. The fight for black liberation needs a revolutionary outcome—the elimination of capitalist rule through a proletarian socialist revolution.

The preventable destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, in which thousands of poor, overwhelmingly black people, were left either dead or homeless exposed the callous disregard and racist contempt for black life held by the American bourgeoisie, Democrats and Republicans alike (see article page 48). In June, the U.S. Supreme Court threw out school desegregation plans in Seattle and Louisville, giving a green light to overturn some 1,000 similar plans across the country, ripping to shreds what remains of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that banned school segregation (see article page 7). The Jim Crow persecution of six black high school students in Jena, Louisiana, for sitting under a "white tree" and defending themselves against racist attack drew some 50,000 in protest—an expression, though misled by liberals and Democrats, of the widespread anger over the conditions of black life in this country (see article page 3).

The outrage over Jena was answered with a nationwide epidemic of racist provocations in which lynch rope nooses were hung at workplaces, schools and homes to terrorize black people. Make no mistake about it: the noose is a call to race-terror, invoking the lynch rope that was used to brutally kill thousands of black people in the century after the Civil War. "The hangman's rope has become so prolific, some say, it could replace the Nazi swastika and the Ku Klux Klan's fiery cross as the nation's reigning symbol of hate," wrote the *Washington Post* (20 October). Like the "N" word, the lynch rope embodies a program of white supremacy and violence against black people.

This threat of extralegal lynch rope terror supplements the daily terror of the capitalist state—consisting at its core of the cops, courts, prisons and military—at whose pinnacle stand the "legal" lynchings of the racist death penalty. The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal symbolizes what the death penalty is all about. A Black

Panther Party spokesman in his youth, a supporter of the MOVE organization and a renowned journalist known as the "voice of the voiceless," Mumia was framed up for the killing of a Philadelphia police officer in 1981. He remains on death row despite mountains of evidence of his innocence, including the confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot the cop (see article page 8).

Black people in the U.S. have long identified with the struggle of black Africans against the brutal apartheid system in South Africa. Following the elimination of legal apartheid in 1994, conditions for the working class, rural toilers and township masses have by many measures deteriorated. We have described South Africa under the "Tripartite Alliance" government—a nationalist popular front made up of the African National Congress, South African Communist Party and COSATU trade-union federation—as a neo-apartheid capitalist state (see article page 28).

Though the civil rights struggles of the 1950s-60s did away with Southern de jure segregation, for the mass of black people conditions of life are, if anything, worse—from unemployment and rotten schools to rampant cop terror, as seen in the execution-style killing of Sean Bell by the NYPD (see article page 34), and the imprisonment of over a million blacks and Latinos largely due to the racist "war on drugs." Under capitalism any reforms are reversible. The oppression of black people was built into the American republic from its inception, and the segregation of black people as a race-color caste at the bottom of society remains a cornerstone of American capitalism.

The Spartacist League fights for the program of *revolutionary integrationism*, which is counterposed to both the liberal integrationist program which preaches reliance on the bourgeois state and the capitalist Democratic Party, and to all expressions of black separatism which similarly opposes a militant working-class fight for black freedom (see article page 18). We seek to combat every manifestation of racist discrimination, fighting in particular to mobilize the social power of the multiracial labor movement. This is integral to our perspective that black liberation can be achieved only through the overthrow of the capitalist order and the integration of black people into an egalitarian socialist society. ■

**Front cover: Innocent death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal (left). Free him now! Tens of thousands from throughout U.S. rallied in Jena, Louisiana (right), against Jim Crow prosecution of six black youth, September 20.**

Photo credits: COC Productions, Winter/NY Times

reprinted from *Young Spartacus* pages, *Workers Vanguard* No. 899, 28 September 2007

# Jena Six: Racist "Justice" U.S.A.

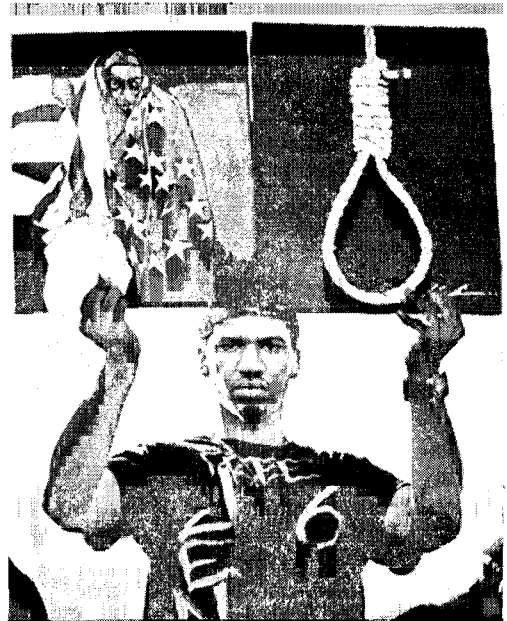


Winter/NY Times

On September 20, as many as 50,000 protesters—overwhelmingly black and comprising workers, students, retirees and church groups—poured into the small rural town of Jena, Louisiana. Alerted by black radio and Internet networks, they came on buses from all over the South, from Detroit and Harlem and as far away as Los Angeles, to express their outrage at the Jim Crow “justice” meted out to six black Jena high school students. After months of racist insults and threats prompted by black students sitting under the “white tree,” with racists putting hangman’s nooses on the tree, five of the youth were charged with attempted murder following a schoolyard scuffle with a white student, while the sixth was charged as a juvenile (see “Outrage Over Jim Crow Justice in Louisiana,” *WV* No. 896, 3 August). On campuses and workplaces across the country, the case of the Jena Six has touched a raw nerve among black people. One protester in Jena

held up a sign reading, “There Would Be More of Us Here But So Many of Us Are in Jail.”

The day after the protesters left, Jim Crow justice in Jena reasserted itself. Earlier, 17-year-old Mychal Bell, the only one of the six students who has been continuously imprisoned since the schoolyard fight, saw his aggravated assault and conspiracy charges thrown out because he had been tried as an adult. But outrageously, on September 21 he was denied bail. Bell remains incarcerated in a town in the central Louisiana pine woods that has been a stronghold for KKKer David Duke. The other five still await trial, although charges against four of them have been reduced. Hours after the Jena demonstration, two young whites, one an admitted Klansman, provocatively drove through the nearby city of Alexandria, threatening people who had returned from the protest by dragging two nooses from their pickup



Getty

**Above: Protester at September 20 demonstration in Jena, Louisiana, which drew up to 50,000 people.**

truck, which contained a rifle and brass knuckles. **Free Mychal Bell now! Drop all the charges against the Jena Six!**

“Jena justice” is not some aberration. In Georgia, black youth Genarlow Wilson is *still* in prison for having had consensual oral sex with a 15-year-old girl when he was 17. After a court reduced his sentence to time already served, prosecutors appealed the ruling, keeping him behind bars. In New York City, Sean Bell, a young black man celebrating his upcoming wedding, was cut down in a hail of 50 cop bullets last December, and six months later black and Latino high school students in Brooklyn’s Bushwick neighborhood were rounded up by cops as they tried to attend a friend’s wake. The prisons, and the barbaric death rows within the prisons, are overflowing with black men in a country with the highest incarceration rate in the world.

Many of the protesters who poured into Jena appreciated the connection made by Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Club comrades between the case of the

**Break with the Democrats! For a Class-Struggle Workers Party!  
Finish the Civil War—For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!**



Daniella Zalcmán/Columbia Spectator

**Spartacus Youth Club joins October 10 protest at Columbia University after noose was hung outside office of black professor.**

Jena Six and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, one of the worst racist atrocities in modern U.S. history. But Democratic politicians Jesse Jackson Sr. and Al Sharpton, central leaders of the Jena protest, did *not* organize any significant protests over Katrina. The Katrina disaster could not be blamed solely on the criminal policies of the Bush administration but also indicted the Democratic Party, which for decades helped preside over the deterioration of the flood control system and ran the notoriously racist and corrupt New Orleans cops. A featured speaker on September 20 was New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin, who ordered the city's evacuation while abandoning those without cars—overwhelmingly black and poor—to the Katrina floodwaters. We wrote in a 4 September 2005 Spartacist League statement titled “New Orleans: Racist Atrocity” (WV No. 854, 16 September 2005):

“This disaster has laid bare the class and race divisions in America. The logic of U.S. capitalism is that whites mainly lost property, blacks mainly lost lives. It is overwhelmingly black people, deemed ‘expendable’ by the rulers, who suffered and died by the thousands in this two-thirds black city.... This catastrophic destruction of lives and livelihoods underlines that the oppression of black people is rooted in the very bedrock of American capitalism and will not be ended short of a socialist revolution that rips power and the means of production from the greedy rulers and places them in the hands of the working people.”

We look to the working class and its strategic black component as the social force that can overturn the capitalist order.

With its hands on the means of production—the factories, mines, transportation systems—the working class produces the profits of the capitalist exploiters. We fight to build a workers party based on the perspective of *revolutionary integrationism*. While combatting racist segregation and state repression, we understand that black liberation can be achieved only through the integration of black people into an egalitarian socialist society. This program is counterposed to the liberal myth that black people—an oppressed race-color caste—can achieve equality within the confines of the capitalist profit system. It is also counterposed to black nationalism, which capitulates to and helps perpetuate the racist segregation fostered by this country's rulers and despairs of multiracial class struggle.

### Liberal Misleaders

Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, whose longtime role as “black leaders” has been to quell social unrest, came down to Jena to preach reliance on the same “justice” system that from the county sheriff on up is a machine of racial and class oppression. Sharpton called in Jena for “federal intervention to protect people from Southern injustice,” intoning that “our fathers in the 1960's had to penetrate the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, we have to do the same thing” (Associated Press, 20 September).

It is a *lie* that the federal government is a friend of black equality. Fifty years ago during the battle to integrate Central

High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, President Eisenhower sent in troops to *head off* efforts by black people to defend themselves against racist mobs and KKK nightriders. Federal intervention into anti-racist and other social struggles has meant spying on and murderous repression of activists. President Bush, cynically claiming to be “saddened” by the events in Jena, noted that “the Justice Department and the FBI are monitoring the situation.” We're sure they are—just like they “monitored” the Black Panther Party and thousands of other radicals, black and white, in the civil rights, anti-Vietnam War and New Left movements.

Under the FBI's Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), 38 Black Panther Party members were killed and hundreds of others framed up. FBI “infiltrators” made up about 20 percent of Ku Klux Klan membership in the 1960s and were involved in bombings and murders, including the 1963 Birmingham church bombing and the murder of civil rights worker Viola Liuzzo in her car in 1965. The November 1979 Klan/Nazi massacre of five leftists and union officials in Greensboro, North Carolina, was aided by a government agent who helped train the killers and by a “former” FBI informant who rode shotgun in the fascists' motorcade of death.

A living symbol of the system of racist capitalist injustice today is the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther and later a MOVE supporter and radical journalist who has been imprisoned on death row for a quarter century, framed up on false charges of killing a Philadelphia policeman in December 1981. From the time he was a 15-year-old leader of the Philadelphia Panthers in the late 1960s, Mumia was a target of COINTELPRO spying and harassment. The cops, prosecutors, bourgeois politicians and their media jackals have howled for Mumia's legal lynching because they see in him the spectre of black revolt.

The big-name black liberals who organized the Jena Six protest have done nothing at all comparable on behalf of Mumia. While Jena is a small Southern town, Philadelphia is a major Northern city long run by the Democratic Party machine. And it was the local Democrats who joined with the cops and prosecutors in putting Mumia on death row. The D.A. who prosecuted Mumia in 1982, Ed Rendell, is now the Democratic governor of Pennsylvania. Since first taking up Mumia's cause two decades ago, the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee have urged all opponents of racist oppression to join the fight for his freedom and to abolish the racist death

penalty. But we understand that this fight must be waged independently of the capitalist courts and political parties that conspired to railroad Mumia.

### Democrats: The Other Party of Racist Capitalist Rule

What politicians like Sharpton, who admits that he wore a wire for the FBI in the 1980s, want above all else is to keep black people tied to the Democratic Party as the "lesser evil" to the Republicans, who openly appeal to the white racist vote. All the major GOP presidential candidates recently refused to appear in a debate at Baltimore's historically black Morgan State University. In an earlier calculated insult, all but one Republican candidate turned down the chance to debate on the Spanish-language Univision network. In his *New York Times* (24 August) column, liberal commentator Paul Krugman noted that the Republicans' "electoral strategy has depended largely on exploiting racial fear and animosity." He pointed out that "Rudy Giuliani remains the front-runner for the G.O.P. nomination," despite his big-city social life and record on abortion, because he "comes across as an authoritarian, willing in particular to crack down on you-know-who."

The impoverishment of the black populace is perpetuated by the American capitalist government—federal, state and city—whether run by Democrats or Republicans. It was the Clinton administration in the mid 1990s that axed the main federal welfare program, thereby condemning millions of women and children, disproportionately black, to destitution while further depressing wages at the low end of the labor market, where black workers are concentrated. Today in response to the Jena atrocity, Hillary Clinton has joined the call for an "investigation," while Barack Obama says he just wants "fairness" and claims it "isn't a matter of black and white." Tell that to the marchers who passed Confederate flags on the way out of Jena!

The bulk of the "socialist" left, which sows the illusion that the capitalist system can be reformed to serve the interests of workers and the oppressed, has offered no criticism of the Sharpton and Jackson leadership of the Jena protest. Typical are the eccentric Maoists of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), who went to Jena with stickers to "Impeach Bush!"—their longstanding gimmick to promote the Democratic Party of racism and imperialist war. The RCP's *Revolution* has pumped out a lot of newsprint on Jena that includes some ritualistic denunciations of capitalism and white supremacy. But you won't hear from them that Jackson, Sharpton &

Co. have repeatedly moved to steer anger over racist abuses into toothless "reforms" and bourgeois electoral politics.

### MLK and the Failure of Liberal Reformism

There was a lot of talk at the Jena protest about the need for a "new civil rights movement." It's obvious to millions of oppressed black people that *something* needs to be done. The bipartisan "war on drugs" campaign has led to the mass incarceration of black as well as Latino youth. A decision by the Supreme Court this summer effectively put the last nail in the coffin of school integration. The mass of black people is forced to live in ghettos that are little more than rotting shells: no jobs, no health care, primary and high schools little more than prisons. In some inner cities, infant mortality rates approach Third World conditions.

The civil rights movement succeeded in eliminating legalized racial segregation (the Jim Crow system) in the South. That system had taken hold in the late 19th century after the defeat of Radical Reconstruction, the period of racial equality and black political empowerment that followed the smashing of the slavocracy in the Civil War. An important factor leading to the end of Jim Crow was that by the late 1950s legalized segregation had become an increasing embarrassment for the U.S. imperialist rulers in their Cold War with the Soviet Union, especially in the former colonial countries of Asia and Africa.

But the civil rights movement was defeated in the mid 1960s when it came North, where blacks already had the same formal democratic rights as whites but remained segregated at the bottom of society. For here it ran straight into the conditions of black impoverishment and oppression rooted in the basic structure of American capitalist society: mass unemployment, rat-infested slums, rampant police brutality. These conditions could not be eradicated by Congress passing a new civil rights act.

However, the civil rights movement—in which the black masses courageously confronted the white-supremacist police states of the South—also had the possibility of developing into a working-class-centered struggle for black equality. Such a struggle was obstructed and sabotaged by Martin Luther King Jr. and the other black misleaders who tied the movement to the Democratic Party of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.

The main organization of young civil rights militants in the South was the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which in the early 1960s under-

went a leftward radicalization. Through their own bitter experience, SNCC militants came to recognize that the Kennedy/Johnson White House was a lot closer to the racist Dixiecrats than it was to them. At the same time, they also came to recognize that the Democrats, no less than the Republicans, were a party of imperialist militarism, seeking to overthrow the Cuban Revolution and escalating the war in Vietnam in the name of anti-Communism.

Tensions between the young militants and King & Co. came to the surface during the 1963 March on Washington. The liberal leaders pressured then SNCC chairman John Lewis into deleting from his prepared speech the following passage: "We cannot depend on any political party for both the Democrats and Republicans have betrayed the basic principles of the Declaration of Independence." Subsequently, Lewis, like many other activists, came to terms with the racist capitalist order, becoming a Democratic Congressman.

To black people, King preached "non-violent resistance" in the face of racist police repression as well as attacks by the Klan. And when in the summer of 1965 blacks in the Watts district of Los Angeles rose up against police brutality, King, at the behest of Lyndon Johnson, endorsed their bloody suppression by the L.A. cops and National Guard. King's support for the suppression of the Watts rebellion widely discredited him among young black militants who were already derisively calling him "De Lawd."

Our own political tendency emerged during this convulsive period. The Spartacist League originated as a left opposition, the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), in the once-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP). When the Southern civil rights struggles erupted in the late 1950s, the SWP was beginning to move away from the Trotskyist program, finally descending into reformism in 1965. The SWP leadership abstained from intervening in the mass struggles for democratic rights while acting as cheerleaders for both King and the black nationalists of the Nation of Islam.

The RT fought for the SWP to intervene into the civil rights movement based on a program of linking the struggle for black democratic rights and social equality with the working-class struggle against capitalist exploitation. Concretely, we called on civil rights militants to break with the Democratic Party and form a Freedom Labor Party. We called as well for a Southern organizing drive backed by the labor movement. Then as now, only on the basis of common class interests and struggle can the deep racial divide between black and white workers be overcome. After being expelled from the SWP, the

early Spartacist League intervened in the civil rights movement in both the South and North, to the best of the ability of our very small forces.

Recoiling against the liberal reformism of King and identifying the labor movement with its bureaucratic misleaders, many SNCC and other militants turned toward black nationalism. Black nationalism or, more accurately, separatism is at bottom a doctrine of despair. This outlook accepts that the racist character of American society is unchangeable and that no significant section of the white populace can be won to the struggle for black equality. The best of the young black radicals of this period were represented by the Black Panther Party, which was destroyed largely through murderous state repression. Many Panthers subsequently returned to the fold of liberal reformism and the Democratic Party.

### The Class-Struggle Road to Black Liberation

Black nationalism obscures the *class* divide in this society, denying the potential power that black workers have as a strategic component of the multiracial proletariat. Despite the destruction of many industrial jobs and erosion of union strength, black workers, whose rate of union membership is significantly higher than that of white workers, continue to be integrated into such industries as steel, auto, urban transit and longshore. The proletariat alone has the power to shatter this racist, capitalist system. Won to a revolutionary program and under the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party, black workers will be the living link between the anger of the dispossessed ghetto masses and the social power of the proletariat.

The two main obstacles preventing black workers from playing that historic role are the Democratic Party, especially its black component, and the trade-union bureaucracy, which chains workers to the capitalist Democrats. Beginning in the mid 1960s, the Republican Party positioned itself as the party of the "white backlash" while the Democrats moved to co-opt young black activists into the government bureaucracy. Black Democrats became mayors of major cities, where they acted as overseers of the ghetto masses and implemented the killing cuts in social welfare programs. One of those mayors, Wilson Goode of Philadelphia, ordered the firebombing of the MOVE commune in May 1985, killing eleven black men, women and children and destroying an entire black neighborhood in the process.

The failure of the trade-union misleadership to mobilize labor's power to com-

bat the oppression of black people is a major factor underlying the decline of the union movement. This is nowhere clearer than in the South, where the legacy of Jim Crow racism has made it the main regional bastion of anti-labor reaction since the building of the integrated industrial unions in the 1930s. Nonetheless, black workers retain considerable social power alongside their white and Latino class brothers and sisters. The strike of 7,000 shipyard workers at Northrop Grumman, the world's largest naval shipbuilder, in Pascagoula, Mississippi, earlier this year demonstrated the potential power of the integrated labor movement, which under class-struggle leadership could spearhead a drive to organize the open shop South.

Organizing the region's working class, which now includes increasing numbers of immigrants, especially from Latin America, cannot be achieved on the basis of narrow business unionism. Labor needs a leadership which does not bow to this country's harsh anti-labor laws and which mobilizes unions to fight the systematic

oppression of black people and to defend the rights of immigrants and all the oppressed. Black and working-class militants must stand for full citizenship rights for all immigrants.

Our perspective of revolutionary integrationism is premised on the understanding that black freedom requires smashing the capitalist system and constructing an egalitarian socialist society. There will be no social revolution in this country without a united struggle of black, white and immigrant workers led by their multiracial workers party. As stated in the preamble to the program of the Labor Black Leagues, which are fraternally allied to the Spartacist League: "The civil rights movement, tied to pro-Democratic Party pressure politics and sold out by liberal reformism, failed to complete the unfinished business of the Civil War. We fight to win the entire working class, including white workers as well as the growing number of Latino and other immigrants, to the fight for black liberation, strategic to the American revolution." ■

## International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

International Center: Box 7429 GPO, New York, NY 10116, USA  
Web site: [www.icl-fi.org](http://www.icl-fi.org)

<b>Spartacist League of Australia</b> .....	Spartacist League, GPO Box 3473 Sydney, NSW 2001, Australia
<b>Spartacist League/Britain</b> .....	Spartacist Publications PO Box 42886 London N19 5WY, Britain
<b>Trotskyist League of Canada/ Ligue trotskyste du Canada</b> .....	Spartacist Canada Publishing Assoc. Box 6867, Station A Toronto, Ontario M5W 1X6, Canada
<b>Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands</b> ....	SpAD, c/o Verlag Avantgarde Postfach 2 35 55 10127 Berlin, Germany
<b>Ligue trotskyste de France</b> .....	Le Bolchévik, BP 135-10 75463 Paris Cedex 10, France
<b>Trotskyist Group of Greece</b> .....	Box 8274, Athens 10010, Greece
<b>Spartacist Group Ireland</b> .....	PO Box 2944, Dublin 6, Ireland
<b>Lega trotskista d'Italia</b> .....	Walter Fidacaro C.P. 1591, 20101 Milano, Italy
<b>Spartacist Group Japan</b> .....	Spartacist Group Japan PO Box 49, Akabane Yubinkyoku Kita-ku, Tokyo 115-0091, Japan
<b>Grupo Espartaquista de México</b> .....	Román Burgos, Apdo. Postal 302 Admón. Postal 13, CP 03501 México, D.F., Mexico
<b>Spartakusowska Grupa Polski</b> .....	Jan Jędrzejewski, Skr. 148 02-588 Warszawa 48, Poland
<b>Spartacist/South Africa</b> .....	Spartacist, PostNet Suite 248 Private Bag X2226 Johannesburg 2000, South Africa
<b>Spartacist League/U.S.</b> .....	Spartacist League, Box 1377 GPO New York, NY 10116, USA

# For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

## Supreme Court: Segregation Forever

In a major setback for black rights, on June 28 the U.S. Supreme Court threw out school desegregation plans in Seattle and Louisville, giving the green light to those seeking to overturn some 1,000 school integration plans across the country. In eviscerating the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that banned school segregation, the Court majority in essence turned the clock back over a hundred years to the infamous 1896 “separate but equal” *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling—a cornerstone of the racist Jim Crow system. Their decision was the reflection on the legal front of the murderous contempt displayed by the government when it left black people and the poor to die in Hurricane Katrina’s wake. The court decision, part of a panoply of attacks on blacks, immigrants and working people, cries out for determined protest by the integrated labor movement against the racist onslaught.

Justice Clarence Thomas wrote a concurring opinion invoking the authority of the “color-blind Constitution.” But as our revolutionary Trotskyist forebears noted in the journal *Fourth International* (January 1942): “The original constitution of the United States, drafted by the representatives of Southern slave-owners and Northern capitalists, recognized the institution of chattel slavery as one of the ‘inalienable rights’ of American citizens.” They also pointed out: “Written constitutions are merely juridical expressions of class relations which have been established as a result of intense struggle in society.”

It took the Civil War to smash the Southern slave system. And it took the massive civil rights struggles of the 1950s and ‘60s to beat down the system of Jim Crow segregation that took hold in the late 19th century after the defeat of Reconstruction. But from integrated schools to abortion rights for women, such reforms are *always* reversible as long as power is in the hands of the capitalist exploiters. The latest Court decision gives the lie to the liberal myth that social equality can be achieved through piecemeal, incremental reforms. The whole system of U.S. capitalism in which black oppression is embedded must be torn up by the roots through socialist revolution.

The Supreme Court is on an aggres-

sive campaign to roll back the gains of past struggles. Its April 18 ruling upholding a law criminalizing certain late-term abortion procedures further trampled on women’s already severely diminished right to abortion. The Justice Department, meanwhile, has been dumping cases of racist police brutality and of blacks being denied voting rights, while promoting the “rights” of religious outfits to further their incursions into the public schools.

Against the plethora of reactionary court decisions, liberal spokesmen are beating the drums for the Democrats—the *other* party of racist capitalism and imperialist war—to take Bush’s place in the White House. During one of their TV debates, Democratic presidential hopefuls all bemoaned the Supreme Court ruling that had come down that day. But from the anti-busing president Jimmy Carter to Bill “end welfare as we know it” Clinton, the Democrats have themselves helped carry out the onslaught against black rights and the devastation of the ghettos, aided by black Democratic Party mayors. Jesse Jackson intervened in Norfolk, Virginia, in the early 1980s to *demobilize* black workers marching for busing.

It was the liberal strategy of reliance on the Democrats, the federal government and the courts that brought the fight for black freedom to a dead end in the 1960s. When the civil rights struggles came to the Northern ghettos, they ran into the solid core of racist American capitalism: segregated, dilapidated housing and schools, rampant cop brutality, entrenched unemployment. In the early to mid 1970s, the fight for school busing was a front line in the fight for elementary democratic rights for black people. A referendum on racism was posed in Boston and Louisville as anti-busing forces mobilized to kill school integration.

The Spartacist League intervened heavily in Boston, calling to defend school busing and extend it to the lily-white, wealthier suburbs. We called for qual-

ity, racially integrated housing and free universal education. While the NAACP and such craven reformists as the Socialist Workers Party called for federal troops to Boston, we fought for labor-black defense guards to stop racist attacks and protect black schoolchildren. As the racist mobs rampaged on the streets, the liberals in Congress caved in. The defeat of busing in Boston set the stage for further attacks against black people and for rolling back social gains more broadly.

Today, in many parts of the country black schoolchildren are more segregated than any time in the last four decades. Inner-city schools are mere holding pens for black and Latino youth, to whom the capitalist rulers offer menial jobs, at best, or service as cannon fodder for their imperialist military ventures. More than 50 years after the *Brown* decision, in 90-percent black Detroit over 75 percent of students drop out of high school, and the black youth unemployment rate is 70 percent. In New York City, in the shadow of Wall Street opulence, almost half of black men are unemployed. Of the more than two million entombed in the U.S. prison system, well over half are black or Latino.

This situation cries out for proletarian struggle in defense of black rights, linking the anger of the ghettos to the *social power* of the labor movement, where black workers play a crucial role. Our strategy of *revolutionary integrationism* is counterposed both to the liberal integrationist notion that blacks can achieve social equality within the confines of the capitalist profit system and to black nationalism, which accepts the racial divide in this society and despairs of multiracial class struggle. This despair is fed by the pro-capitalist labor tops, whose policies tie workers to the exploiters’ political parties. Labor needs a new leadership, one based on a program of class struggle. Ultimately, social conditions cannot be fundamentally altered short of the overthrow of the racist capitalist system and the construction of an egalitarian socialist society. The Spartacist League is committed to the fight to build a multiracial revolutionary workers party that can lead all the exploited and the oppressed in the struggle to sweep away this decaying capitalist system. ■

We print below an edited presentation by Partisan Defense Committee counsel Rachel Wolkenstein, a member of Mumia Abu-Jamal's legal team from 1995 to 1999, at a rally in Berlin on May 12. Held in the lead-up to Mumia's May 17 federal appeals court hearing, the rally was called by the Committee for Social Defense (KfsV), associated with the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany. The KfsV, a fraternal organization of the PDC, called this rally as part of an international campaign to revitalize mass, labor-centered protest on Mumia's behalf. (For a report on the Berlin rally and a similar event in London on May 5, see "International Rallies Demand: Free Mumia!" WV No. 893, 25 May.)

It's been 25 years since Mumia's conviction for the murder of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner, a crime the police, prosecution and courts know Mumia did not commit. Mumia has been on death row all this time, isolated in a cell that he describes as living in a toilet. He was framed up for his political beliefs and activism, for having been a Black Panther Party (BPP) member, a MOVE supporter and a journalist who fought with passion and conviction against racial, ethnic and class bias, against cop terror, for social justice.

As Mumia said some 17 years ago in the interview in the PDC video, *From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal*, he is "fighting to create revolution in America. Revolution means total change." Since then Mumia has not changed his political views. He has not been intimidated into silence.

To the capitalist rulers, Mumia represents the spectre of black revolt, of defiant opposition to their system of racist oppression. For them, Mumia is a dead man on leave. All elements of the "criminal justice system" supported by both parties of American capitalism, Democrats as well as Republicans, have coluded to kill this innocent man.

Why is Mumia's cause one that needs to be fought for internationally? The PDC took up Mumia's case in 1987, some 20 years ago, because Mumia's case is the fight against the ultimate weapon of state terror, the death penalty. We are opposed to the death penalty as a matter of principle. We do not accord to the state the right to determine who shall live and who shall die. In the U.S., the death penalty is the legacy of slavery, racist legal lynching.

We also took up Mumia's case as part of the fight against the state deeming perceived political opponents to be terrorists.

## Speech at Berlin Rally

# Mumia Abu-Jamal: The Frame-Up of an Innocent Man



May 12: Werner Brand of Committee for Social Defense addressing Berlin rally calling for Mumia's freedom.

The Black Panther Party and the MOVE organization were considered the terrorists of that time. And that meant it was legitimate for the state to blow them away in the dead of night, to frame them up on vague conspiracy charges. Mumia was targeted by the FBI's Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), placed under daily surveillance at the age of 15 and put on the list of those to be rounded up and put in concentration camps. Mumia's conviction and death sentence were the continuation of the government vendetta against the Black Panther Party that led to the murder of 38 Panthers and the frame-up convictions of hundreds, and part of the crescendo of legal frame-ups and outright terror tactics directed at the MOVE organization.

The fight for Mumia Abu-Jamal has

everything to do with the fight against the post-September 11 "war on terror," which has led to witchhunts against immigrants, primarily Muslims, and provided justification for the evisceration of democratic rights and a massive increase in state surveillance and repressive measures, including the open use of torture. Mumia's fight is the fight for every immigrant, such as Oury Jalloh, a 21-year-old African refugee who on 7 January 2005 burned to death in his Dessau, Germany, prison cell with his hands and feet tied; for leftists such as Red Army Faction (RAF) member Wolfgang Grams, who was executed in 1993 by a shot to the head by the GSG-9 "anti-terrorist" cops, and for his RAF comrades imprisoned for decades in an anti-Communist witch-hunt; for leftists rounded up and arrested



across Germany earlier this week to preclude protest against next month's G8 meeting in Heiligendamm; for workers who face increased attacks on wages, benefits, rights.

Mumia's fight is against racist state terror, reflected in the video showing a Bundeswehr (German Army) instructor telling a soldier to envision machine-gunning blacks. The ultimate target of this state repression is the multiracial workers movement. The fight to free Mumia is part of the fight for black liberation, and the broader fight for socialist revolution and therefore for the liberation of us all.

### Mumia's Trial: A Kangaroo Court

We are here on the eve of Mumia's appeal arguments in the federal court on May 17. In a matter of a few months, the court will decide what is next for Mumia—death, life in prison or possibly more legal proceedings. The U.S. federal appeals court is not required to consider all the issues that Mumia has raised—and virtually every democratic right, from freedom of speech and association to a trial based on due process, was violated in Mumia's case. The appeals court is deciding whether or not to uphold Mumia's death sentence. The court is *not* considering *any* evidence of Mumia's innocence or the state frame-up. The state and federal courts have refused to even consider the confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Faulkner.

The federal court of appeals is "allowing" only three of Mumia's more than 20 legal issues. These are the racially biased jury selection and the D.A.'s prejudicial summary argument undermining the jury's role by stating that Mumia would have "appeal after appeal." Lastly, the court is hearing a challenge to the kangaroo-court, lynch mob post-conviction hearings from 1995 to 1997 before the notorious judge Albert Sabo, popularly known as the King of Death Row. Sabo outright stated at the time of the 1982 trial that "I'm going to help them fry the n---r."

In fact, the legal arguments before the appeals court are issues researched, developed and formulated in the lower courts by myself and Jon Piper, another lawyer associated with the PDC who was part of Mumia's legal team. In the abstract, considering the questions of law and fact applied to Mumia's case, there is no reason that Mumia should not win on appeal. But the reality is that the capitalist courts do not mete out impartial justice—and Mumia is a man the state wants dead.

To impact on that upcoming appeals

court decision, a mass mobilization based on the international working class and its allies is necessary and urgent, now more than ever. The mobilization must be on the basis that Mumia is an innocent man, the "voice of the voiceless," a man on death row because of a political, racist frame-up. Mumia should never have been arrested, convicted, sentenced to death or spent one day in jail! Our fight—and demand—is to free Mumia, now!

But instead the fight for Mumia has been and continues to be demobilized by a policy pursued by liberals and the reformist left of impotent appeals to the justice and fairness of the capitalist courts, represented by the call for a new trial, a fairer process. To understand the politics behind this demobilization—and to turn this around—let's first examine the legal and factual issues in Mumia's case.

### The Frame-Up

The prosecution's story is that in the early morning hours of 9 December 1981, two people were on the street corner of Locust and 13th in Philadelphia—Billy Cook, who is Mumia's brother, and Daniel Faulkner. Mumia, then 27 years old, known for his mild manner and for being levelheaded, supposedly saw his brother being beaten by the cop and ran across the parking lot, shooting the cop in the back. As the cop was falling down, he supposedly shot Mumia in the chest. Then Mumia supposedly stood over the cop, then lying prone on his back, and

shot directly down several times at his head, "execution style." This is all lies, a fantastical frame-up by the police and prosecution.

In the post-conviction court hearings in Mumia's case in 1995, '96 and '97, over ten years ago, the prosecution's evidence was exposed over and over as false—based on witnesses who were threatened or bought, nonexistent ballistics evidence and a totally fabricated confession invented by the police two months after the shooting.

As I will further explain, on a factual level, there is not a scintilla of evidence against Mumia. What is there for a jury to hear and consider?

Regarding witnesses: The prosecution produced at trial one supposed eyewitness, the prostitute Cynthia White, who, according to the police, is now dead. No witness, including Cynthia White, testified that Mumia shot Faulkner. At the 1982 trial, Cynthia White said she saw Mumia with a gun in his hand as he ran across the parking lot. But two prostitutes and one other woman who knew White have since sworn that White admitted this was false testimony under threats from the cops. Two of these women stood up to vicious cross-examination in the post-conviction hearings. Two eyewitnesses, William Singletary and Dessie Hightower, testified that White wasn't on the corner during the shooting.

The other supposed key eyewitness, a cab driver named Robert Chobert, admit-

---

## For Class-Struggle Defense

Our fight for Mumia's freedom is based on the program of *class-struggle defense*. The legal lynchers must be answered by mobilizing the social power of the working class. We do not deceive those who would fight on Mumia's behalf by peddling the lie that pleading with the capitalist courts and political parties will bring him justice.

Over 800 individuals and organizations, including unions representing hundreds of thousands of workers, have signed a Partisan Defense Committee statement citing Beverly's confession and demanding Mumia's freedom and the abolition of the racist death penalty. But to turn this support into labor *action* requires a struggle against the policies of the pro-capitalist labor misleaders, who rarely use labor's strike weapon even in defense of their own members and look instead to the Democratic Party, the courts and other agencies of the enemy class. (To learn more about the political struggle to implement this

campaign, see "For Class-Struggle Defense to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal," *Workers Vanguard* No. 902, 9 November.)

We have repeatedly had to fight against the notion that the capitalist cops belong in the labor movement. Some U.S. union officials have told the PDC that they would not officially support Mumia because of the presence of cops, corrections officers and security guards in their unions. At the Berlin rally, Gert Julius of the Tempelhof/Schöneberg local of the DGB union federation said that one "shouldn't use the blanket label of *Bullen* [cops] for the police" and that "trade unions are for everyone." Steffen Singer of the Spartakist Workers Party, German section of the International Communist League, responded: "As Marxists, we understand that being—that what you do—determines consciousness. And the task of the police is indeed to carry out, with arms, the laws of the bourgeoisie, its rule. In practice, you can see that in any strike."

Cops out of the unions! ■

ted at the post-conviction hearing to receiving favors from the prosecutors. And he admitted to a defense investigator that his cab was not parked where the prosecution asserted it was and that he was not in a position to see anything. This is confirmed in photos of the scene recently brought to light by Michael Schiffmann.

Regarding Mumia's supposed confession: The hospital confession supposedly made by Mumia the night of the shooting was decisively exposed in the 1995 post-conviction hearing to be a prosecution and police fabrication, invented at a D.A. roundtable meeting some two months after the shooting to prepare cops for their trial testimony. No police report from that night mentions Mumia's confession, and in fact a cop who was with Mumia all night directly said that Mumia "made no comments."

Regarding ballistics: The utter nonexistence of ballistics and other physical evidence is crystal clear. There is no evidence that Mumia's gun was even fired

that night, let alone that the bullet in Faulkner's head wound matched Mumia's gun. There are recently uncovered photos showing the cop at the scene walking around with his fingers all over a gun. There are discrepancies in police reports regarding the type of bullets in Mumia's gun. There is a missing bullet fragment from Faulkner's wound and a missing medical examiner's X-ray of Faulkner's body. There is no physical evidence of Faulkner being shot as described by police—straight down at his head while lying on the sidewalk. There are no divots (marks) on the sidewalk. The bullets found at the scene do not support trajectories of Mumia shooting the cop, but rather that there was more than one shooter and that one came from a totally different direction than Mumia.

Moreover, there is evidence directly in support of Mumia's innocence already testified to in court hearings in '95, '96 and '97. Vietnam vet William Singletary was an eyewitness to the shooting and

testified in '95 that Mumia arrived after Faulkner was shot and that the shooter, wearing a green army jacket, came from the parked VW and then ran from the scene. Singletary told this to police the night of the shooting, and he was repeatedly threatened, his gas station was vandalized, and he was driven from town during the 1982 trial. Other witnesses, including Dessie Hightower, who testified at the trial, said they saw someone run from the scene. At the post-conviction hearing in '95, Hightower told how he was singled out for a lie detector test and other coercion in an attempt to stop him from testifying at trial.

Veronica Jones testified in 1996 that she had seen someone run from the scene and that police threatened her with long jail time on robbery charges unless she testified differently at trial. In 1997, prostitute Pamela Jenkins testified that other cops were there during the shooting, including one Larry Boston. She also testified that prostitute Cynthia White was a police informant and performed sexual favors for cops. Another witness came forward who testified that he saw undercover cops on the scene at the time of the shooting.

### The Beverly Confession

Even under the constraints of Sabo's totally biased court, the D.A.'s evidence was smashed to smithereens over ten years ago. It would be reasonable to expect that as more and more evidence of the conscious police frame-up was brought out in court proceedings, a movement defending Mumia Abu-Jamal would embrace these legal developments. The new evidence from the court proceedings could only support a mobilization in defense of Mumia—on the basis of Mumia's innocence and the fact that a black political activist was framed up by a state determined to see him dead. But in effect this legal evidence was rejected! The so-called left in the U.S. that belatedly took up Mumia's defense in 1995 and afterward did not take up the call to free Mumia now, which the PDC mobilized around, but *rejected* that demand as the basis for mass protests, centering their demands instead on the call for a new trial.

In early 1999, in preparation for a likely denial of the Pennsylvania court appeals and in preparation for federal *habeas corpus* proceedings, Jon Piper and I, with some other lawyers, intensely again combed over the records of the prior proceedings and the state's evidence and also renewed investigation efforts. In 1999, Mumia's brother admitted that the passenger in his VW, Ken Freeman, said

## Join the Campaign to Free Mumia!

### Funds are urgently needed for legal defense!

Make a contribution today, payable to "National Lawyers Guild Foundation" (earmarked for "Mumia") and mail to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, P.O. Box 2012, New York, NY 10159.

**Organize protest!** Pass motions in your unions, campus, community and religious organizations demanding Mumia's freedom. Get your union or organization to make a contribution and join rallies and protests for Mumia. Publicize Mumia's case in your union or organization's newsletter.

**Spread the word!** Contact the PDC for copies of *The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal—Mumia Is Innocent!* This pamphlet arms activists in the struggle for Mumia's freedom by presenting the political basis of the state vendetta against Mumia and the explosive

evidence which completely destroys the more than two-decades-long frame-up of this eloquent fighter for black freedom.

It is available for \$1. Get the PDC button: "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!"—\$1 each. Order the PDC video, *From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal*—\$10 for DVD, \$15 for VHS. Bundles of the

4-page brochure, *Mumia Is an Innocent Man: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!*—\$2 for 25 copies.

Order from/make checks payable to Partisan Defense Committee at our New York City address below.



### Partisan Defense Committee

e-mail: [partisandefense@earthlink.net](mailto:partisandefense@earthlink.net) • Web site: [www.partisandefense.org](http://www.partisandefense.org)  
 P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013 • (212) 406-4252  
 P.O. Box 802867, Chicago, IL 60680 • (312) 563-0442  
 c/o Box 29574, Los Feliz Station, Los Angeles, CA 90029 • (213) 380-8897  
 P.O. Box 77462, San Francisco, CA 94107 • (510) 839-0852

that he was involved in the shooting of Faulkner and he ran from the scene after the shooting.

Arnold Beverly confessed that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Faulkner. Moreover, Beverly stated that he was hired, along with someone else, to do so by cops and the mob because Faulkner was a problem for corrupt cops, interfering with rackets, bribery, drug dealing, etc. Beverly states that he was wearing a green army jacket and that he himself was shot that night. The police connection for the hit, according to Beverly, was Larry Boston, who Pamela Jenkins stated in the '97 hearing had been on the scene at the time of the shooting.

At the time of Faulkner's murder in 1981, there were at least three ongoing federal investigations into police corruption in Philadelphia, including *police-mob* connections. I recently learned that the Justice Department had evidence against some 400 Philly cops from those investigations and wanted to bring indictments. But the federal judge overseeing the investigation said to pick only the top 20 or so. Of the police involved in Mumia's case, at least one-third were indicted sometime over the next few years on corruption charges.

An FBI informant who was key to those federal prosecutions confirmed that at the time of Faulkner's shooting, the word was out that the Feds had a police informant. A former federal prosecutor acknowledged that they had a police informant whose brother was also a cop, like Faulkner's. The commanding officer of the Central Police Division, where the murder of Faulkner took place, the chief of the homicide division and one Inspector Alfonzo Giordano were all under investigation on federal corruption charges. These cops were the *chain of command* in the frame-up of Mumia.

Inspector Giordano was the ranking officer on the scene—and the central witness against Mumia at the preliminary hearing after the arrest. He not only was one of the cops under investigation for corruption but had been the right-hand man for Frank Rizzo, the former Philadelphia police chief and mayor. Giordano was involved in the daily surveillance of Black Panther Party members, and he led the police Stakeout team in the 1970 attacks on the Philly Panthers. Giordano was the police supervisor of the yearlong 1977-78 siege of the MOVE Powelton Village house. He knew just who Mumia was.

It is with these facts in mind that the confession of Arnold Beverly must be considered. Remember the prosecution's lying evidence. Beverly states that there was more than one shooter and that they



**Martyrs of class war:**  
Massachusetts anarchist workers Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco (above left), executed in 1927;  
Chicago Haymarket anarchists and workers leaders on way to gallows, 1887 (above right);  
German Communist leader Eugen Leviné (left), executed in 1919.

ran from the scene. This explains witnesses seeing a passenger in the VW and seeing the shooter running away. Beverly's confession explains the absence of ballistics evidence supporting the prosecution's scenario—how the shooting happened, the direction of the shots, the conflicts regarding the calibre of the weapon. Beverly states that Mumia was shot not by Faulkner but by another police officer on the scene. That fits with the trajectory of the shot to Mumia and the statement of a homicide cop at the scene who reported that Mumia was shot by an arriving police officer. It is also supported by a witness who said that Faulkner's gun was in its holster when he was taken away from the scene. The gun that was allegedly Faulkner's was likely a "throwaway"—it was inoperable and dirty.

Moreover, some five witnesses including *two cops* have said that *the shooter wore a green army jacket*. Both Beverly and Freeman were wearing green army jackets that night. But Mumia was wearing a red quilted ski jacket with wide vertical blue stripes on the front, and Billy Cook wore a blue Nehru-style jacket with brass buttons. This is incontrovertible evidence that there was at least one person there at the shooting who was not Billy Cook or Mumia. This fact, along with

the bullet trajectories and the absence of ballistics evidence supporting either the shooting of Faulkner or the shooting of Mumia, is absolute refutation of the police and prosecution version.

Mumia's arrival on the scene gave the cops a two-for-one. Mumia was well known. It had been a short span of time, less than ten years, between Mumia's prominence as a Black Panther and his becoming a prominent MOVE supporter and journalist. And prosecutions of MOVE members, including trials following the Powelton Village police siege, had taken place just a couple of months before the Faulkner shooting.

At the scene after Faulkner was killed, the cops tried to kill Mumia. He was critically wounded from a gunshot in the chest, through his lungs and to his liver. He was rammed into a lamppost and thrown into a police van. Giordano himself beat Mumia in the police van and later said Mumia had confessed to shooting Faulkner and that he threw his gun on the ground. The other cop who was in the van said there was no such confession. Giordano arranged the supposed identification of Mumia by the cab driver, Robert Chobert, who was promised favors and protected by the police. Giordano was the cop who first reported that Mumia's gun

was found on the street (according to the police radio records, some 14 minutes after hordes of cops arrived in the area). This contradicts the official police story that Mumia's gun was found within a minute. Giordano's intention was to finish Mumia off by taking him to police headquarters for further questioning. Mumia's crime that night was that he survived the cops' attempt to kill him, too.

To complete the picture: Despite Giordano being the senior officer at the scene who allegedly heard Mumia confess and found the murder weapon, he never testified at Mumia's trial. He resigned from the police force the day after the trial was over. In 1986 he copped a plea on federal charges based on his receiving tens of thousands of dollars in illegal payoffs during 1979-80. He didn't spend any time in jail.

### Reformists Demobilize the Fight for Mumia

Thus, the proof of Mumia's innocence and the state frame-up is overwhelming. But Mumia's former lawyers suppressed the Beverly confession and the totality of the supporting evidence. Longtime "movement lawyer" Len Weinglass rejected this evidence as too hot, unbelievable, and co-counsel Dan Williams said it would lead to arguing that the police knowingly framed up an innocent man! But this is not unbelievable, and to claim so denies the reality of the cops and the courts.

In fact, there is no limit to examples of the conscious frame-up of innocent people in the bourgeois courts. Before their convictions were exposed as complete government fabrications, the Guildford Four spent 15 years in prison, and the Birmingham Six were incarcerated for 16 years after being sentenced in the 1970s as part of British imperialism's war of terror against Irish nationalists. Before his release in 1997, former Black Panther leader Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt) spent 27 years in prison for a killing the FBI's own wiretap logs showed he could not have committed, while New York Panther leader Dhoruba bin Wahad was imprisoned for 19 years on frame-up charges before his release in 1990. "War on terror" repression has also taken many innocent victims.

Moreover, Mumia's case has been presented in court after court—each has denied the evidence of his frame-up and innocence. That includes three evidentiary hearings, plus three motions and two appeals to the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court, a federal *habeas corpus* petition filed in the U.S. District Court, a revised federal petition and yet another



WV Photo

**Witnesses Pamela Jenkins and Veronica Jones, flanked by attorneys Rachel Wolkenstein and Leonard Weinglass, at press conference during Mumia's March 1997 PCRA hearings.**

state court petition as well as three applications for hearing to the U.S. Supreme Court. A federal judge's reversal of Mumia's death sentence in December 2001 was immediately appealed by the prosecution, and Mumia has never been off death row since his conviction in 1982.

As a lawyer for Mumia, I had fought in the defense team to bring forward the evidence of the police frame-up and his innocence. When it was decisively clear with the rejection of the Beverly confession, Billy Cook's statement and all the other supporting evidence that Mumia's lead counsel, Len Weinglass, would not allow this, Jon Piper and I resigned from the legal team in July 1999. It was a betrayal of Mumia's legal defense to preclude bringing evidence of his innocence into the courts. And this betrayal is paralleled by so-called leftists who are behind the coalitions acting under the name "Free Mumia" but who mobilize on the basis of reliance on the justice and fairness of the courts and the call for a new, fair trial for Mumia.

To what end and for what purpose would leftists demand that this clearly innocent man be subjected to a new trial? As you can see, there is no evidence to be considered. Mumia himself submitted his own affidavit declaring his innocence when the Beverly confession and other evidence were finally submitted to court in 2001, with a new legal team. Mumia states: "I did not shoot Police Officer Daniel Faulkner. I had nothing to do with the killing of Officer Faulkner. I am innocent."

The bogus argument has been raised that the Beverly evidence is "divisive." But since 1995, long before the Beverly confession, the so-called left rejected the evidence of the extent of the state frame-up and the political lessons to be drawn from that. This became explicit at a Janu-

ary 1999 "leadership meeting" of some 100 groups and individuals—including the Workers World Party, Socialist Action, Solidarity, Refuse & Resist (associated with the Revolutionary Communist Party)—who debated the question. The decision pushed by the reformist left, represented as well by the International Socialist Organization, was to "broaden" the movement and go to the "mainstream." They renounced the demands to free Mumia and to abolish the racist death penalty in favor of the slogan: New trial for Mumia.

At all stages of the case, the reformists' political line is that the next court will be the just one. When the state courts ruled against Mumia, illusions were spread that the U.S. federal court would fairly rule on his petition. Now illusions are being spread in the fairness of the U.S. appeals courts since the U.S. federal court upheld Mumia's conviction. And in between court proceedings, the reformists undertook no significant mobilization.

These were political decisions, pure and simple. They were not based on fact—on Mumia's innocence and the enormity of the proven frame-up. Rather, the reformist left attempted to limit the political mobilization in defense of Mumia to an appeal for fairness in the courts. They appeal to bourgeois liberal forces who see Mumia's case not as the political and racist frame-up of an innocent man but as an isolated "miscarriage of justice," an aberration that threatens to stain the democratic process.

Even the legal papers that I filed in 1995-97, and agreed to by Mumia's lead counsel at the time, Leonard Weinglass, did not focus on the call for a new trial! We called for dismissing the charges because of the magnitude of the frame-up. Because if you want to deal solely on the plane of what the law in the United

States says, the suppression of evidence and the falsification of evidence are such that the whole case should be thrown out. This is part of the reason that I say that calling for people to mobilize around the demand for a new trial is not guided by legal precepts, as is often claimed, but by a *political program*.

### The System of Capitalist Injustice

Mumia's case is a real-life case of police frame-up, an object lesson in the class nature of the capitalist state, which is not neutral. The state, with its cops and supported by the courts, is a machine of organized violence on behalf of one class, the capitalist class, defending the profit system against the working people, against minorities. The job of the courts is to mete out capitalist injustice. That is the lesson of the Haymarket martyrs, anarchists executed in 1887 in Chicago for leading struggles for the eight-hour day; of the anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti, framed up in Massachusetts on murder charges and executed in 1927; of the Scottsboro Boys, nine black youths arrested in 1931 who spent nearly two decades in Alabama prison hellholes on bogus rape charges, eight of them sentenced to death; of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, executed in 1953 on espionage charges as part of the anti-Soviet Cold War.

In German history you have Eugen Leviné, a leader of the Spartakist uprising in Bavaria, executed in 1919 by the counter-revolutionary Social Democratic government. There is the case of Max Hoelz, a self-taught worker who organized a Red Army in the Vogtland area during the right-wing 1920 Kapp putsch and established a force of 2,500 partisans in Central Germany during the March Action in 1921, for which he was sentenced to life in prison. He was amnestied after seven years as the result of a mass movement on his behalf.

The slogan for a "new trial" represents a program of reliance on the racist capitalist courts that at every level have upheld Mumia's frame-up conviction. In the infamous 1857 Dred Scott case that sanctified slavery in the U.S., the Supreme Court said that a black man has no rights that the white man is bound to respect. The capitalist state and its courts have made clear that *Mumia has no rights the courts are bound to respect*.

Thus the significance of the Beverly evidence and why it has been suppressed in the legal battles as well as on the political plane has a simple answer. The Beverly evidence exposes the fraud that the American bourgeois legal system can provide justice. It demonstrates the unity

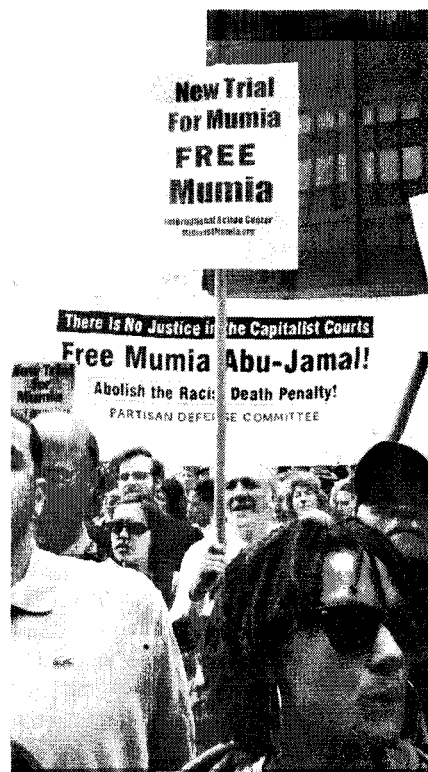
of purpose of the cops, prosecution and courts in upholding the capitalist rulers' interest. It makes it clear that the injustice to Mumia was not the action of one rogue cop, prosecutor or judge *but the entire functioning of the capitalist system of injustice*. The role of the reformist left is to act as an obstacle to the development of that understanding. They promote the same illusions in the "justice of the courts" as liberal journalists David Lindorff and Michael Schiffmann, whose writings ostensibly on Mumia's behalf actually *undermine* the fight for his freedom (see "Class-Struggle Defense vs. Faith in Capitalist 'Justice'," WV No. 892, 11 May).

Their purpose is to promote the notion of the inviolability of the bourgeois state. This means denying Mumia's innocence. It means denying the extent of the state frame-up and why. This all serves to politically disarm and demobilize those who are drawn to Mumia's cause. This political policy served to demobilize a mass international movement. It has meant rejecting the very reasons that millions around the globe took up Mumia's cause: revulsion with the injustices inherent in capitalism—poverty, racial oppression and ethnic bias, war; identification with Mumia's fight against "the system" and for justice for all of humanity.

To free Mumia now, to save him from execution or the slow death of a lifetime in prison, it is necessary to organize on the basis of a class-struggle defense. While that means utilizing all possible legal proceedings, class-struggle defense is based on an understanding of the nature of the capitalist state, and that there can be no reliance on its courts but all reliance on the power of the working class and its allies.

The courts do not sit in judgment and rule in isolation. There is a pressure that can be brought to bear. But it will take an international mobilization of the masses, centrally labor and its allies—youth, minorities, immigrants—to turn the tide and obtain Mumia's freedom. It was an international mobilization crucially including trade unionists, from South Africa to Europe to the U.S., that stayed the executioner's hand when Mumia was ten days from execution in 1995. It took that mobilization to get the stay of execution, to push the courts to abide by their legal obligation to allow Mumia to pursue his legal appeals. Now, with the possibility that the courts could reverse the overturning of Mumia's death sentence, the issue is Mumia's very life—whether execution or the slow death of life imprisonment.

The work undertaken by the PDC, our fraternal defense organizations and the International Communist League over the



WV Photo

**Philadelphia, May 17: PDC contingent at rally for Mumia combatted illusions in capitalist courts sown by WWP's International Action Center and other reformists.**

past months to revive the struggle for Mumia's freedom on the basis that he is an innocent man is a step forward. Hundreds of individuals and organizations, including unions representing tens of thousands of workers, have signed our statement emphasizing Mumia's innocence and demanding his freedom. But we need a mass movement based on the power of the working class, the power seen in its ability to withhold labor through strike action. Imagine, for example, what it would mean if Philadelphia and New York transit workers struck, not only to secure a decent wage, health care and job conditions but to demand Mumia's freedom! What it would mean for labor to withhold its power in other capitalist centers, stopping communications, transport and industry, demanding: Free Mumia now!

Mumia is up against the vast resources of the capitalist state. But there is a road for victory for Mumia—for his freedom. That begins with the understanding that the class enemy will stop at nothing—from lies to terror—on the street and in the courts. Freedom for Mumia lies in understanding that the power to fight and win lies in the class struggle—in the mobilization of the multiracial, multi-ethnic proletariat. Free Mumia Now! ■

# Labor Black League Speaker at Harlem Mumia Rally: “Strike!” and “Free Mumia!” Should Ring Out in the Same Breath

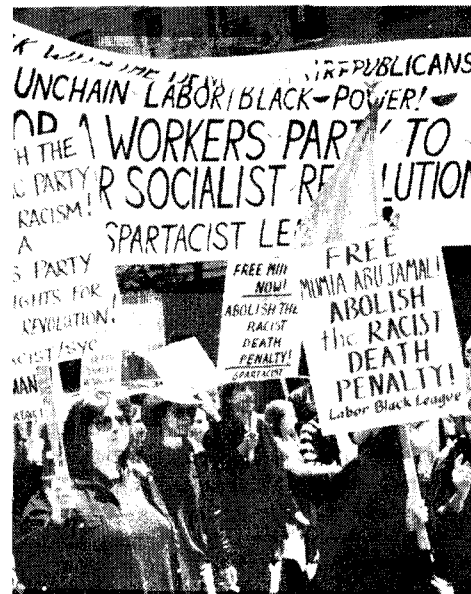
The following speech by New York Labor Black League spokesman Tom Cowperthwaite, who is a member of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100, was delivered at a 28 October 2006 New York City Partisan Defense Committee rally demanding freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal. For more on this rally see “For a Class-Struggle Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!” (WV No. 880, 10 November 2006).

Unbroken and unbowed, Mumia Abu-Jamal is a courageous fighter against racism and injustice who has spent nearly a quarter-century on death row. The unions and the entire working class have a stake in winning freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal! The capitalist system thrives on the profits derived from the exploitation of workers and undermines working-class struggle in this country by dividing the working class along race lines. Racial oppression is a cornerstone of American capitalism, and the bosses and their politicians keep black people on the bottom. Unions, organizations and individuals that struggle and speak out against exploitation and oppression are targeted and attacked. This is why Mumia—a former Black Panther, supporter of MOVE and an eloquent spokesman against racism and injustice—was framed up and faces the death penalty.

The fight for Mumia’s freedom is what our class-struggle program for black liberation—revolutionary integrationism—is all about. The integration of black people into American society on the basis of full economic, social and political equality can only be realized through a proletarian revolution that uproots the capitalist system and ushers in an egalitarian socialist society.

Black liberation cannot succeed apart from united class struggle against the capitalists; working-class emancipation cannot succeed without an implacable fight against anti-black racism. Taking up the fight for Mumia’s freedom is part of the fight against racial oppression *and* working-class exploitation.

We in the New York Labor Black League for Social Defense are dedicated to the fight to free Mumia and abolish the racist death penalty. The way to fight for



Left: TWU Local 100 strike in December 2005 crippled NYC, showed labor’s power. Right: Bay Area Labor Black League marches in Revolutionary Contingent at San Francisco Mumia demonstration, May 2000.

Mumia’s freedom is as part of a deeper social struggle, the class struggle. Mumia fights with the weapons he has—his voice and his pen. We must fight with the weapons we have—and our mightiest weapon is mobilizing the multiracial working class, which by its numbers, organization, discipline and consciousness can deliver blows against the capitalist exploiters and eventually overthrow them. Fraternally allied with the revolutionary Marxist Spartacist League, the LBL fights for a class-struggle alternative—a reinvigorated workers movement with a class-struggle leadership that fights to win, all the way to a workers government!

As a transit worker and a member of TWU Local 100, I’m proud that we showed our union power for three days last December. We paralyzed the racist, union-busting MTA and the city itself. That’s the same power we need to *free Mumia* and all class-war prisoners. Mumia wrote: “When the New York Transport Workers Union (TWU) went out on strike, their action sent shock waves across the nation and rattled the

rulers. Immediately, like a slave driver who claims he was ‘betrayed’ by ‘his’ ‘people,’ New York’s mega-billionaire mayor, Michael Bloomberg, unleashed an ugly verbal missile at those who demanded a fair contract under which to work.” Bloomberg railed that the leadership of our overwhelmingly black and Latino union was “thuggish,” but when we were on the picket lines in East New York, Coney Island, Harlem, Sunset Park and every other corner of this city, working and poor people gathered around us to say, “Right on! It’s about time the unions fought back!”

Blacks and Latinos supported our strike in significantly higher proportions than any other section of society. Before, during and after the strike, my friends and I in the LBL were sending out the message that Mumia is one of our own. Quite rightly, *Workers Vanguard* issued a special supplement on the strike that included an article on Mumia. [See “NYC Transit Strike: Union Power vs. Class Collaboration,” WV Supplement, 6 January 2006.] He is a prisoner of the same

WV Photos

capitalist class that slams us with dangerous working conditions, sinking pay and benefits, union-busting injunctions, Taylor Law fines, racist cop brutality and the blood-drenched "war on terror."

In every workplace, the words "Strike!" and "Free Mumia!" should ring out in the same breath. Especially now, we who are outside the prison walls must not forget Mumia, nor our obligation to appeal to labor and the entire working class to act now—stop the executioners! In 1995 when the first death warrant was signed, a worldwide protest by unions, civil rights activists and death penalty abolitionists forced the rulers to grant a stay of execution just days before Mumia was scheduled to die. Today, we need even larger mobilizations of union power. We need to turn those names of unionists on petitions, those motions, those resolutions into labor protest and strike action.

### The Death Penalty: "Legal Lynching"

When I ran for delegate to the TWU's international convention, my campaign program and proposed resolutions emphasized that our union must fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal as part of the need for labor to champion every struggle for black rights and black freedom. Marx wrote, "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded." Black people are the "last hired and first fired" in this country, a race-color caste segregated at the bottom of society. Of course, the racist rulers continuously and grotesquely blame the oppressed for their own oppression. But black people are not powerless victims. They are integrated into the economy and a strategic component of the American proletariat.

We say: "Finish the Civil War—For black liberation through socialist revolution!" It took the Civil War to emancipate black people from chattel slavery, but the unfinished business of the Civil War is still all around us: the hellish conditions of ghetto life, bipartisan attacks on the remaining gains of the civil rights movement like voting rights and affirmative action, mass unemployment and mass imprisonment of black youth under the racist "war on drugs." Last year we witnessed a man-made racist atrocity in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. Democratic and Republican politicians consciously prevented the evacuation and then the rescue of tens of thousands of mostly black residents. The ruling class left black people to die, and they're still brazenly pursuing their goal of so-called "urban renewal" (meaning *black removal*), gutting unions and disappearing entire



April 1927: International Labor Defense demonstration in New York City's Union Square calls to free framed-up anarchist immigrant workers Sacco and Vanzetti.

black neighborhoods like the Ninth Ward.

All this illustrates again and again that racial oppression is inherent in the capitalist system. The LBL fights the poisonous racism that divides the working class, not only because it cripples its immediate struggles, but also because it undermines workers' ability to acquire class consciousness and thereby engage in united struggle and build a workers party that can lead a workers revolution.

We call the death penalty what it is: "legal lynching." It is a legacy of chattel slavery, when for centuries blacks were not considered human beings, but property; when to kill a slave had the stamp of law. It's in the nature of American capitalism that black life is held cheap and black lives are expendable. Democrats and Republicans compete with each other over who can be "tougher on crime," so even the lethal spirit of slavery still exists with Jim Crow lynch law carried out by cops on the streets and carried over into the prisons. We know that the death penalty is race-biased, class-biased, arbitrary, barbaric, cruel and unusual punishment. It is the ultimate weapon in the capitalist state's arsenal of repressive power, and we in the LBL oppose it on principle.

The New York LBL was founded in 1986 following a successful campaign to defend a black token booth clerk, James Grimes, who was facing a gun rap after defending himself on the job during an assault by muggers. We said that Brother Grimes had the right to carry a gun and defend himself. We knew that the capi-

talist state and the capitalist courts would try to railroad a black transit worker. By organizing dozens of TWU brothers and sisters and other unionists in a show of union power and solidarity, our LBL predecessors turned the tide in Grimes' favor and all the charges were dismissed. That show of union strength on a much, much larger scale is what we need for Mumia now.

The LBL helped build the PDC-initiated mass rally that drove the Ku Klux Klan off the streets in New York City on October 23, 1999. Along with many other cases and causes taken up by the PDC, we fought for union action against racist cop terror in the cases of Abner Louima, Amadou Diallo, Alberta Spruill and many others, noting that police brutality can never be "reformed" out of the capitalist system which the cops are hired to enforce.

We fight for class struggle against bloody U.S. imperialism and its invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, and fought for military defense of these countries against U.S. attack. Imperialist war is not caused by bad policy or bad politicians, but is built into the capitalist system itself. We fought against the mass detention of Muslims and immigrants after 9/11 and completely oppose the bipartisan "war on terror," which is a pretext for rampaging imperialist adventures abroad and to carry out domestic repression at home aimed at immigrants, blacks and unions. Every repressive law and court decision is aimed at bolstering capitalist

rule and will eventually be directed at and used against the working class. We fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and for union action against *la migra* raids and deportations.

We fight for women's liberation, for free abortion on demand and for full democratic rights for gays. The recent killing of Michael Sandy, a young black gay man, on the Belt Parkway in south Brooklyn is a symptom of the vicious anti-gay bigotry pushed daily by the ruling class and their right-wing religious handmaidens.

The LBL condemns the Feds' "war on terror" against attorney Lynne Stewart—the "war on terror" witchhunt against Lynne Stewart and her legal assistants, Mohamed Yousry and Ahmed Abdel Sattar, who were sentenced just days ago [see "Overturn Terror Show-Trial Convictions of Lynne Stewart, Mohamed Yousry, Ahmed Abdel Sattar!" WV No. 879, 27 October 2006]. We brought LBL and union members to court sessions to join in widespread solidarity demonstrations with them. They shouldn't spend a minute in prison for defending the blind Sheik Abdel Rahman, providing the legal representation supposedly guaranteed under the Sixth Amendment. This witchhunt clearly threatens everyone's rights. We say: Throw out the convictions! No jail time for Stewart, Yousry and Sattar!

### Build a Workers Party!

The history of the struggles of workers and oppressed against capitalism shows that the bosses' courts are not in the business of providing "fair trials." They're in the business of maintaining capitalist "law and order" and the entire anti-labor, racist frame-up system. Illusions in the neutrality of the capitalist state, which is an instrument of organized violence by one class against another, are fatal to the independent mobilization of the workers and oppressed against their class enemy. As Sister Erica from the PDC described, a host of phony socialist groups, liberals and black nationalists derailed the struggle for Mumia in the late '90s by pushing the demand for a "new trial" and sowing illusions in the same government that framed him up. During every political show trial in this country's history—Sacco and Vanzetti, the Scottsboro Boys, the Rosenbergs—the liberals and reformists have sown false hopes in the supposedly evenhanded scales of justice. In doing this, they demobilize the masses who rally in defense of those who symbolize their own oppression.

The government and courts only intervene into the unions to hogtie and destroy them as fighting organizations. Just look at the recent court injunctions, fines and



WV Photo

**New York City, 23 October 1999: Trade unionists at PDC-initiated anti-Klan mobilization.**

prison time imposed on TWU Local 100. Yet there are many trade-union opportunists who drag their own unions into the bosses' courts and, in the guise of "fighting corruption" and for "union democracy," appeal to the union-busting Labor Department to intervene to "clean up" the unions. This is criminal! In Local 100's current union elections, just about every slate has candidates running for top positions who have been involved in suing the union and their opponents in the same Taylor Law capitalist courts. The LBL says: For complete and unconditional independence from the capitalist state! Cops and security guards out of the unions! No to union-suing! Labor must clean its own house!

The gains working people have made were wrested from the rulers through militant struggle. What's needed is working-class independence from the bosses' state and political parties. The trade-union bureaucracy's program of appealing to, supporting and showering money on the Democrats—that other party of racism and war—is fatal to successful class struggle and even winning strikes. Since the state's top cop Eliot Spitzer issued the injunctions attacking the TWU, it is grotesque that the Local 100 Executive Board and Toussaint leadership are now zealously campaigning for Spitzer for governor in the upcoming election. During the last *three* contract fights, when Mumia was writing articles from death row defending New York transit workers, pro-death penalty Spitzer

was writing *strikebreaking injunctions* against us! Spitzer was the jailer of our local union's president, Roger Toussaint, following the December strike. This program of class collaboration, shared by all wings of the trade-union bureaucracy, explains why the outcome of our strike is still in limbo and why we still have no contract.

Our strike was cut short and our power held back by our own union brass and the heads of all other major New York City unions. Instead of backing us up on the picket lines and boldly defying the slave-labor Taylor Law, they worked around the clock to get us back to work and smother the labor militancy it sparked. The AFL-CIO and Change to Win trade-union bureaucracy are the bosses' loyal "labor lieutenants." They waste *millions* of dues and COPE [Committee on Political Education] money trying to get capitalist politicians elected rather than leading class struggle and defending class-war prisoners like Mumia Abu-Jamal. It will take a political struggle within the unions to transform them into class-struggle organizations. Getting our unions to fight for Mumia Abu-Jamal is part of that struggle, which is international in scope.

The workers' greatest victory and the imperialists' greatest defeat in history was the Russian Revolution of 1917, led by Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party. The failure of the revolution to spread internationally and relentless pressures from imperialism laid the basis for the rise of a privileged, nationalist bureaucratic caste which usurped political power from the working class and repudiated the struggle for international workers revolution. Although a degenerated workers state, the Soviet Union remained a powerful counterweight to U.S. and world imperialism. It proved the superiority of collectivized property and socialist economic planning, guaranteeing jobs, housing, free health care and education to an entire population, most of which is now totally dispossessed and impoverished.

The collapse of the USSR greatly emboldened the U.S. rulers. We were for the unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution. Likewise, today the LBL continues to defend the deformed workers states of Cuba, China, North Korea and Vietnam, while also calling for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies, for workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism. Today, it's the duty of class-conscious workers everywhere to welcome North Korea's testing and possession of nuclear weapons. In the case of Iran, a Third World capitalist country also



## From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal



### Immigration Blues

Now, as polls show growing disenchantment with both political parties, the issue of immigration is raised once again, as politicians seek to stir the pot of social resentment.

Voices are raised, tempers are frayed, proposals are launched, and the destinies of millions are apparently held in limbo.

But, in numbers not seen for generations, mostly Mexican-born (or related) families pound the pavements in protest, demanding amnesty for the millions who live and work, in the most thankless jobs, here in the U.S.

The immigration "discussion" masks deeper currents in American life, of those who dread the approaching dawn when those who number the nation's majority are brown, instead of white.

As the government and the servile corporate media hawked fear to trap the nation into the Iraq War, so now fear is once again merchandised for political gain. The perpetual fear of the foreign Other, the fear of Spanish-speaking people, who are called "criminal" for daring to cross the Rio Grande, to inhabit the lands stolen from their ancestors!

The truth of the matter is that it is highly unlikely that over 11 million men, women and children will be returned to Mexican territory. That's because businesses, especially those engaged in agriculture, would virtually go out of business if their immigrant-based workforce up and disappeared.

But, like most people, many Latino immigrants are involved in other businesses and industries in U.S. life. Guess who's doing the lion's share of the work to actually rebuild New Orleans? (In case you've not guessed, let me just say—It ain't FEMA!)

With the exception of Native Americans (as in so-called "Indians"), and African Americans, every person in the U.S. today is a descendant of a willing immigrant. (OK, strict historians will object that many poor whites, especially in the Southern states, were sent to Georgia and Maryland as indentured servants, as part of a penal sentence.)

But the point is clear. Immigration was consciously used to craft the U.S. as a white nation. For centuries, certain racial groups, like Chinese, for example, were specifically excluded by law from citizenship. (Like their Mexican counterparts, many Asians were needed in the building of this country as cheap labor.)

As law professor Ian F. Haney Lopez has shown in his book, "White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race" (New York: NYU Press, 1996), American courts and legislatures have consistently defined "citizens" as "whites," and over the course of centuries, millions of people were denied entry to the U.S., or even if allowed in, denied citizenship, because they were not "white." In 1882, Haney Lopez explains, the U.S. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which barred Chinese workers for a decade. In 1884, the Act was expanded to bar all Chinese people, and shortly thereafter an indefinite ban was implemented. State and federal court decisions banned Syrians, Asian Indians, Palestinians, mixed-race people and multitudes of others on the basis of insufficient whiteness!

That ugly history may be reborn in this latest "battle" over Mexican immigration. Political storms have a way of giving way to political hurricanes that even those who planned them cannot control.

Several years ago, a right-wing politician in California tried to ride the anti-immigrant train to the White House. His name is Pete Wilson, and his playing with fire left him politically burnt. Angry Hispanics in Cali sent him, and some of his colleagues in the Republican Party, into retirement.

But this era of politicians, trying to create an issue that protects them from the falling numbers of the incumbent Bush Administration, look at Wilson's fate as ancient history.

Perhaps the recent demonstrations, massive in their size, vociferous in their spirit, have given them pause.

Time will tell.

The political entity that truly befriends this growing segment of the U.S. population will have tapped into a powerful social force.

Don't expect it to be either the Republicans or the Democrats.

From Death Row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

©2006 Mumia Abu-Jamal

**If you wish to correspond with Jamal, you can write to: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 175 Progress Drive, Waynesburg, PA 15370.**

targeted as part of Washington's "axis of evil," we think that Iran needs nukes too.

What the multiracial American working class desperately needs is its own party—not a pro-capitalist labor party like the one in Britain, not another shill for the Democrats like the Working Families Party, not Green Party eco-capitalists who want "kinder, gentler" imperialism—but a revolutionary party

that wages hard class struggle and fights for a planned economy under workers rule. A workers government will take American industry away from its incompetent, corrupt owners and use the productive wealth of this country to build a decent society for all. We built this country, we can run this country!

That's what the LBL stands for. There will be no social revolution in this coun-

try without the united struggle of black, white, Latino and Asian workers led by a multiracial vanguard party. So to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, to get rid of racist capitalism, to fight for socialism, check out the Labor Black League's ten-point program. Study with us. Join us! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the racist death penalty! For black liberation through socialist revolution! ■

## The Legacy of Richard S. Fraser

# Revolutionary Integrationism: The Road to Black Freedom

When Hurricane Katrina left untold thousands of poor, overwhelmingly black people either dead or homeless, the reality of black oppression in the U.S. was laid bare. Half a century after the outbreak of the mass struggles for black civil rights, official Jim Crow segregation in the South is long gone. But the conditions of black life in this country—North and South—have worsened, from jobs and wages to housing and education, while cop terror runs rampant in the ghettos and masses of young black men have been relegated to years in prison. The situation cries out for massive class and social struggle against the racist U.S. capitalist rulers, based on a firm understanding of the roots of black oppression and the lessons of past struggles for social equality.

From the formation of the Spartacist tendency in the early 1960s, we have stood for the perspective and program of revolutionary integrationism. This position is counterposed to both the liberal reformist response to black oppression and to all political expressions of black separatism. The liberation of black people from conditions of racial oppression and impoverishment—conditions inherent to the U.S. capitalist system—can be achieved only in an egalitarian socialist society. And such a society can be achieved only through the overthrow of the capitalist system by the working class and its allies. As we wrote in “Black and Red—Class-Struggle Road to Negro Freedom,” a document adopted at the founding conference of the Spartacist League in September 1966 and subsequently printed in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9, “Basic Documents of the Spartacist League”: “Because of their position as both the most oppressed and also the most conscious and experienced section, revolutionary black workers are slated to play an exceptional role in the coming American revolution.”

We have described the black population in the U.S. as an oppressed race-color caste. We noted in “Black and Red” that “from their arrival in this country, the Negro people have been *an integral part* of



WV Photo

**Detroit, November 1979: 500 auto workers, youth and leftists stopped the Klan in labor/black mobilization heavily built by Spartacist League.**

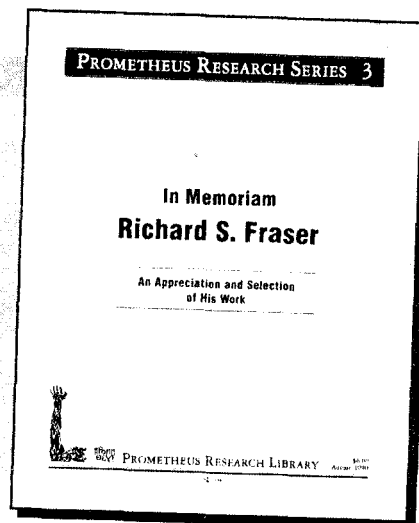
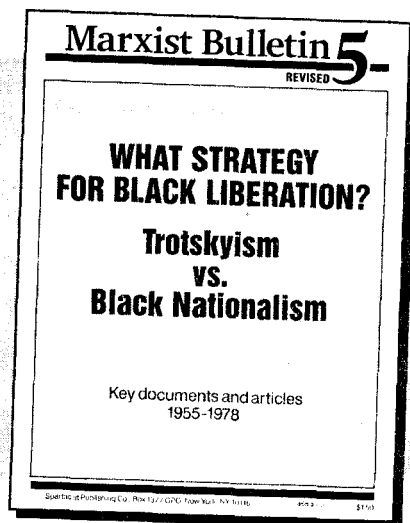
American class society while at the same time *forcibly segregated* at the bottom of this society.” Thus blacks face discrimination, in different degrees, regardless of social status, wealth or class position. Despite the increasing destruction of industrial jobs and erosion of union strength in recent decades, black workers, whose rate of union membership is a third higher than that of white workers, continue to be integrated into strategic sectors of the industrial proletariat, such as urban transit, longshore, auto and steel. Blacks also make up a large percentage of unionized government and public workers. Won to a revolutionary program, black workers will be the living link fusing the anger of the dispossessed ghetto masses with the social power of the multi-racial proletariat under the leadership of a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party.

Labor/black mobilizations initiated by the Spartacist League and its fraternal organizations, which defeated fascist Klan and Nazi provocations in a number of major cities over the past quarter-century, were concrete demonstrations of the fight for revolutionary integrationism.

The current expression of the concept of revolutionary integrationism derives from the ideas of Richard S. Fraser, a veteran Trotskyist who made a unique Marxist contribution to the understanding of American black oppression and struggle, particularly through his lectures and written documents in the 1950s. James Robertson, a founding leader of the Spartacist tendency, was won to Fraser’s views on the black question when both were members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the historic party of American Trotskyism which, however, underwent a process of rightward



Fraser Family



Richard S. Fraser developed Marxist analysis of black oppression. *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 (Revised) includes his "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Question," \$1.50. PRS No. 3 is available for \$7 (prices include postage). Order from/pay to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

degeneration beginning in the late 1950s. Comrade Robertson later recounted that when he stayed a few days at Fraser's home in Seattle, the latter pounded him incessantly with his views on the black question.

In 1963, the SWP leadership expelled the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), a left opposition that was the forerunner of the Spartacist League. In 1964, within the first months of our existence as an organizationally independent tendency, we published Fraser's "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Question" (reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 [revised], "What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism"). This document provided our members and supporters with the historical depth and Marxist understanding to combat the resurgence of black nationalism and its ersatz, bourgeois-sponsored offshoots like "community control," which was adopted wholesale by most of the left.

Fraser accepted our invitation to be a co-reporter on the black question at our founding conference. While Fraser rejected our use of the term "caste" as applied to the American black population, he agreed in substance with the description of black oppression captured in this term. By the time of our conference, Fraser and his co-thinkers had left the SWP and formed their own organization, the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP). In 2004, the FSP published a book titled *Revolutionary Integration: A Marxist Analysis of African American Liberation*. It consists of two documents: "Dialectics of Black Liberation," written by Fraser in 1963 when he was still in the SWP, and "Revolutionary Integration: Yesterday and Today," written by Tom Boot and adopted by the FSP's 1982 national conference.

While the FSP claims to be in Fraser's

tradition, Boot's views are fundamentally contrary not only to the Spartacist League's understanding of revolutionary integrationism but also to the main ideas of Fraser himself, who was cut off from the FSP by a split in 1967. The FSP saps the strong points of Fraser's revolutionary integrationist perspective, exacerbates the weak points and, finally, distorts the entirety with the FSP's own brand of eclectic reformism. It is necessary to examine and explain what revolutionary integrationism is and what it is not. In particular, we want to emphasize the strategic centrality of this concept in building a revolutionary vanguard party to lead the multiracial U.S. working class to power.

### Marxism and the Fight for Black Freedom

The October 1917 workers revolution in Russia, led by the Bolshevik party of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, was a declaration of war upon the world capitalist system and a clarion call for all the exploited and oppressed to prepare for battle. This call was heard in all corners of the globe—Europe, Asia, Africa, South America and North America. In the U.S. it found a sympathetic response among workers and black people.

Within the early American socialist movement, the aim of black equality was treated with, at best, benign indifference, typified by Eugene V. Debs' statement that socialism had "nothing special to offer the Negro," ranging to outright hostility on the part of racists like Victor Berger. In *The First Ten Years of American Communism* (1962), James P. Cannon—a veteran of the revolutionary-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World, a leader of the early Communist Party (CP) in the U.S. and later the

founding leader of American Trotskyism—described the crucial intervention of Lenin and Trotsky's Communist International in driving home the centrality of the fight for black freedom to proletarian revolution in the U.S. Cannon emphasized that Lenin and the Russian Revolution "contributed *more than any other influence from any source* to the recognition, and more or less general acceptance, of the Negro question as a *special* problem of American society—a problem which cannot simply be subsumed under the general heading of the conflict between capital and labor" (emphasis in original).

The Trotskyist movement debated the black question beginning with the founding conference of the Communist League of America (CLA), formed by supporters of Trotsky expelled from the Stalinized Communist Party by 1928. Leading CLA member Arne Swabeck also discussed the black question when he visited Trotsky in exile in Turkey in 1933. Swabeck argued against the CP's demand for "self-determination for the Black Belt" (a swath of majority-black counties across the Deep South), asserting that the race question was integral to the class question in the U.S. and that the main demand should be for full "social, political and economic equality" for black people.

Trotsky was inclined to support the self-determination slogan based on his experience with the national question in Europe. He admitted, however, that he had not studied the question and suggested, for instance, that Southern blacks might have their own suppressed "Negro language" (see "In Defense of Revolutionary Integrationism," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 49-50, Winter 1993-94). Trotsky was primarily concerned

that the American Trotskyists have a serious orientation to the black question lest they capitulate to the backward consciousness of the working class. He returned to this question in 1939 discussions with American Trotskyist leaders, underscoring that without such an orientation, it would not be possible to make a revolution in the U.S.

Most of the CLA leadership adopted an integrationist, anti-nationalist position, which was the line of a lengthy 1933 document by Max Shachtman titled "Communism and the Negro" (recently reprinted in *Race and Revolution*, Verso [2003]). However, the CLA's inchoate position was not theoretically grounded and developed. Unfortunately, Shachtman's document was not widely distributed or discussed outside the leadership in the CLA. A 1939 convention of the SWP, which had been founded the year before, adopted two resolutions on the black question. While both were written by the West Indian intellectual C.L.R. James, they were contradictory in their basic thrust. The first, "The SWP and Negro Work," stated that black people "are designated by their whole historical past to be, under adequate leadership, the very vanguard of the proletarian revolution." The second resolution, "The Right of Self-Determination and the Negro in the United States and North America," argued the theoretical possibility of the awakening of a national consciousness and mass demands for a "Negro state."

In practice, the SWP was guided by an integrationist, class-struggle perspective. The party was able to recruit several hundred black workers during World War II by acting as the most militant fighters against racist oppression in the factories, armed forces and American society at large. The SWP's courageous work, carried out in the face of government repression, was in the starkest contrast to the



CIO

**Packinghouse workers strike in Chicago in late 1930s. CIO organizing drive built mass industrial unions by uniting black and white workers.**

Communist Party, which, in line with its support to the Allied imperialist "democracies," explicitly opposed struggles for black equality during the war.

Dick Fraser joined the Trotskyist movement in 1934. He was a founding member of the Socialist Workers Party, serving on its National Committee from 1940 to 1966. He began a study of the black question in the late 1940s in response to the loss of hundreds of black worker recruits with the onset of the Cold War against the Soviet Union. He concluded that the problem was not with the SWP's practical, day-to-day work fighting discrimination and victimization of blacks but with the party's inadequate theoretical understanding. Vital to the development and consolidation of a black Trotskyist cadre is a scientific (materialist) understanding of black oppression and a program corresponding to the actual living struggle for integration and equality.

Fraser began from the premise that

black people, whom he described as "the most completely 'Americanized' section of the population," were *not* an oppressed nation or nationality in any sense. Crucially, black people lacked any material basis for a separate political economy. Whereas the oppressed nations and nationalities of Europe (e.g., in the pre-1917 Russian tsarist empire) were subjected to forced assimilation, American blacks faced the opposite: forcible segregation. Hence, in the struggle against black oppression, the democratic demand for self-determination—separation into an independent nation-state—does *not apply*. As Fraser wrote in "Dialectics of Black Liberation":

"The Black Question is a unique racial, not national, question, embodied in a movement marked by integration, not self-determination, as its logical and historical motive force and goal. The demand for integration produces a struggle that is necessarily transitional to socialism and creates a revolutionary Black vanguard for the entire working class."

He had earlier noted in "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Question":

"The goals which history has dictated to [black people] are to achieve complete equality through the elimination of racial segregation, discrimination, and prejudice. That is, the overthrow of the race system. It is from these historically conditioned conclusions that the Negro struggle, whatever its forms, has taken the path for direct assimilation. All that we can add to this is that these goals cannot be accomplished except through the socialist revolution."

### **Separatism or Social Equality?**

Fraser emphasized that the entire history of mass black struggle—from the abolitionists through the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction to the civil rights movement—was in the direction of integration,



**Civil rights protests of 1950s and '60s helped shatter Jim Crow segregation but could not attack roots of racial oppression in capitalist system.**

# THE MILITANT

## Lynn Case First Legal Test Of Army Jim Crow



Winfred Lynn

On Dec. 8, the United States Circuit Court of Appeals sitting in New York City, will hear the Winfred Lynn case. Arthur Garfield Hays, attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union, will argue the case and if necessary will carry it to the U. S. Supreme Court.

The Lynn case originated in June 1942 when Winfred Lynn, Negro worker of Jamaica, L. I., notified his draft board "that I am ready to serve in any unit of the armed forces of my country which is not segregated by race. Unless I am assured that I can serve in a mixed regiment and that I will not be compelled to serve in a unit undemocratically selected as a Negro group, I will refuse to report for induction."

The Lynn case is thus a part of the struggle of the Negro people against the whole Jim Crow system.

accepted induction in make the test case. If the army authorities fail to return to civilian grounds that the methods of his selection under the Draft Act.

A Practical Program to  
**KILL JIM CROW**

UNITE!

10¢

Second, Enlarged Edition

## Negro Soldiers Killed In Jersey, Arkansas, Texas

Army Jim Crow Responsible for New Wave Of Violence That Takes Lives of 4 Negroes

By ALBERT PARKER  
A new wave of violence has broken out against Negro soldiers. The April 2 Jim Crow provocation was the trial and the flogging by military police in Fort Dix, New Jersey, of March 29 a Negro sergeant in Little Rock, Arkansas, who shot dead a white policeman asked to whip him. In a few days it was known that a Negro private in Houston, Texas, was shot dead with a white sergeant's bayonet.

At the same time a Negro private was killed in a private automobile in Longview, Texas, for leading a mob of white hoodlums to beat a Negro soldier. In the same week a Negro soldier was killed in the rear of a truck in the case of a white sergeant's bayonet.

## Unions Must Come To Defense Of Negro People

An Editorial  
The tragic clashes in Detroit between the Negro people and the interests of the labor movement.

not separatism. Radical Reconstruction in the South following the Civil War was a period of racial equality and black political empowerment unique in American history. In the 1930s, black workers participated in and often played leading roles in the great labor battles that created powerful, racially integrated industrial unions. The civil rights movement was directed against legalized segregation in the South and de facto segregation in housing and education, along with job discrimination, in the North.

Significant political expressions of black separatism have come in the aftermath of defeats and consequent demoralization in the face of a seemingly intractable racist capitalist order. Marcus Garvey's ephemeral "Back to Africa" movement, which peaked in the early 1920s, was conditioned by the violent anti-black reaction at that time. Many black workers who had gained employment during the industrial boom of the First World War lost their jobs, the victims of racist discrimination and harder economic times. This period saw the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, and in a number of cities, white racist mobs attacked and terrorized black communities.

The upsurge of "revolutionary" black nationalism in the late 1960s, best represented by the Black Panther Party, was a response to the frustrated expectations of the Northern civil rights struggles. Those struggles promised much but left unchanged the hellish conditions of life in the inner-city ghettos that are rooted in the capitalist profit system. As an expression of despair, black nationalism, or separatism, would deny blacks their birthright: *the wealth and culture their labor has played a decisive role in creating.*

Fraser pointed out that the whole notion of "race" has been proven to be scientifically absurd. There is only one "race," the human race. But he also noted that any black person in the U.S. would laugh if you said that race does not exist, and he would be right. Race is a scientific absurdity but a social fact.

The color bar is the American social measuring stick ranging from blacks on the bottom to whites on the top. The social standing and prospects of all "people of color" are largely determined by this measuring stick, with dark-skinned people tending toward the black end and lighter-skinned toward the white end. This is clearly indicated by the extent of intermarriage (the basic mechanism of social integration) across racial and ethnic lines. The level of intermarriage between whites and Latinos or Asian Americans is far higher than that between whites and blacks. The U.S.-born daughter of a Chinese immigrant family is far more likely to have a white husband than is a

SWP press and pamphlets during World War II. Trotskyists courageously fought against racist oppression in factories, military and society at large during the war.

young black woman whose ancestors were brought to this country in chains three centuries ago.

The racial division of black and white is the fundamental fact that defines American culture and shapes political discourse, even though black people constitute a relatively small minority of the population (roughly 12 percent). Of course, the fundamental economic relationships operating in the U.S. are the same as in all other capitalist class societies: the basis of oppression, including racial oppression, is the exploitation of labor by capital. Anti-black racism is the *greatest obstacle* to working-class unity in the U.S., providing an illusion of common interests between white workers and their class enemy, the white capitalist exploiters.

Until the substantial entry of blacks into industry in World War I, anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic bigotry was the capitalists' chief weapon in dividing and holding back the working class and impeding the development of a strong, politically conscious workers movement. Since that time, anti-black racism has been the most prominent factor in the lack of even a reformist mass political party of the working class organized separately from the capitalist parties, such as exists in all

other advanced capitalist countries (and many not-so-advanced countries with a substantial working class). In the U.S., workers remain chained to the "liberal" capitalist Democratic Party. Anti-black racism is at the root of the backwardness of the working class and, in general, of the reactionary features of U.S. society. It is on this basis that the centrality of the black question to the American workers revolution must be understood.

## The Legacy of Slavery

The racial divide between black and white is the legacy of slavery and the defeat of Radical Reconstruction. Fraser held that blacks on the slave plantations of the Old South had developed a democratic and egalitarian subculture that enabled them to play a key role in the second American bourgeois-democratic revolution: the Civil War that smashed the system of chattel slavery and the period of Radical Reconstruction following the war. Fraser wrote in "Dialectics of Black Liberation" that the cultural attitudes of the black slaves

"inundated the transplanted Anglo-Saxon culture of the slave owners. In the rest of the country a cultural vacuum prevailed, born of the melting pot, of class fluidity, of constant migration and immigration.



Library of Congress



Harper's Weekly

**Left: Black troops in Union Army helped turn tide in Civil War to defeat Southern slavocracy. Right: Graphic depicts black people voting in the South in 1867 after Union victory.**

The vacuum acted like a sponge in absorbing Black folk culture. It was readily apparent that the chief barriers between Black and white were sociopolitical, not cultural, and that whites basically needed and responded to the Black culture.”

The War of Independence—this country’s first bourgeois-democratic revolution—freed the American colonial mercantile capitalists and farmers from subordination to the British ruling class in the late 18th century. The Civil War was a social revolution that freed an oppressed, exploited class—the black slaves—and destroyed the South’s basic ruling-class institution, the slave plantation. The ensuing period of Radical Reconstruction brought such gains as political enfranchisement and public education for black freedmen and poor whites alike. This period also saw an enormous expansion of democratic rights for immigrant and native-born white workers in the North as well. For example, the extension of citizenship rights to all those born in this country, codified in the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and now challenged by anti-immigrant bigots, was a direct result of the revolutionary destruction of the Southern slavocracy.

Spearheaded by the Ku Klux Klan, the white propertied classes of the South waged a war of terror against the Reconstruction governments and the black communities that were their core base of support. The fate of the post-Civil War South was determined by the now-dominant Northern capitalist class, whose members shared no fundamental interest with the black freedmen and poor whites of the region. Quite the contrary. Black labor was vital to the Southern agricultural economy that was, in turn, vital to the national capitalist economy. A renewed alliance of the propertied classes in the North and South was built on the broken back of black labor.

The former black chattel in his freedom was reduced to peonage. As slaves, blacks owned nothing, not even their own bodies, and worked collectively on large plantations. Black sharecroppers owned their bodies and a share of the crop, but not the land they worked individually on divided lots of the former plantations. Whereas the slave was held as property to the plantation owners, the sharecropper was held in debt to the white landlords and financiers, many of them members of the former slavocracy. In *New Data on the Laws Governing the Development of Capitalism in Agriculture* (1915), Lenin polemicized against the notion that the U.S., which had never known feudalism, was free from its economic survivals, noting: “The economic survivals of *slavery* are not in any way distinguishable from those of feudalism, and in the former slave-owning South of the U.S.A. these survivals *are still very powerful*” (emphasis in original).

As Fraser explained in “Dialectics of Black Liberation”:

“After the Civil War and Reconstruction destroyed the old slave-owning class, northern capital, from economic and political motives, betrayed its promises and created a revised, capitalist form of race relations based upon many of the traditions and social relations of slavery. *Segregation* took the place of the chattel slave as the main prop of the new racist order.” [emphasis in original]

Fraser also pointed out in the same piece that the re-establishment of white-supremacist rule in the South, supplemented by the extralegal violence of the KKK, and the violent and complete suppression of black democratic rights had a profoundly reactionary effect on American political culture as a whole:

“What was original to U.S. culture were certain progressive institutions—the plebeian folk-hero, democratic and informal manners, the relatively advanced position

of women, unionism, the public school, individualism and free speech, and many more.... But these were all corrupted by the victory of Jim Crow and segregation following Reconstruction.

“Denied the opportunity to further absorb Black creativity, white American culture was left in a feeble state. The mores and habits of the imperialist ‘robber barons’ took over. This new capitalist class, produced by the Civil War, stamped its ruthless, vulgar and Philistine image on American thought. A new house of culture was built upon White Supremacy and American Superiority.”

### The End of Legalized Segregation in the South

With the benefit of hindsight, a serious analytical error on Fraser’s part—exploited and vulgarized by the latter-day Freedom Socialist Party—was his belief that Trotsky’s concept of permanent revolution was applicable to the American South. Briefly stated, this concept is that in backward capitalist countries the historic tasks of the bourgeois revolution—i.e., removing the obstacles to socio-economic modernization, centrally imperialist domination and feudal-derived survivals in economic relations and political structure—could be achieved only through a proletarian revolution. Such a revolution would replace the capitalist system of production by a planned, collectivized economy, leading, through the international extension of proletarian revolution, to a socialist order.

In Fraser’s view, the struggle against the white-supremacist regimes in the South, which he described as “fascist-like,” was an uncompleted task of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the U.S.—an advanced capitalist society despite the backward conditions reigning in the South:

“The permanent revolution in America reveals itself in the following manner: the Southern system represents massive survivals of chattel slavery. These

survivals take the form of great social problems unsolved by the Civil War and Reconstruction: an antiquated system of land tenure, the absence of democratic rights, segregation and racial discrimination....

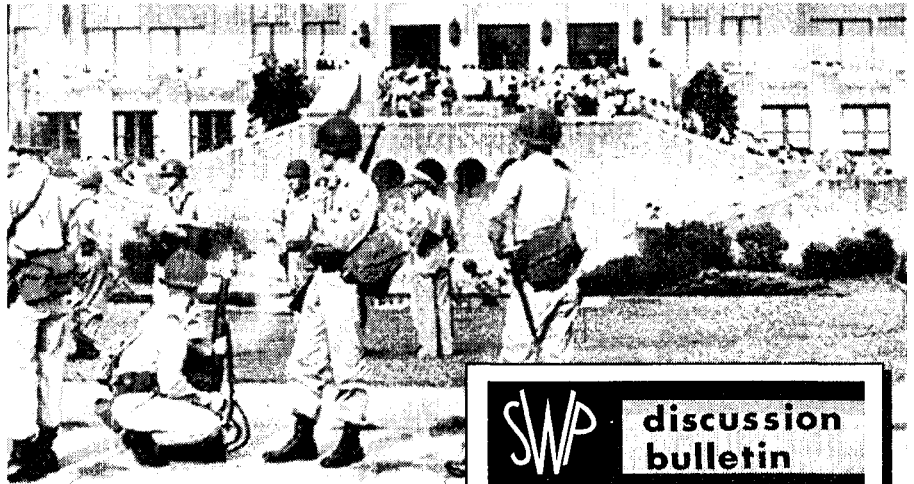
"This circumstance leads to the inescapable conclusion that although the tasks of the liberation of the South are of an elementary democratic nature, they have no solution within the framework of American capitalism: they become part of the socialist struggle of the proletariat to overthrow the capitalist system of production."

—"Resolution on the Negro Question" (1957), reprinted in "In Memoriam—Richard S. Fraser: An Appreciation and Selection of His Work," *Prometheus Research Series* No. 3, August 1990

Additionally, Fraser argued that the black middle class had a direct material interest in the preservation of segregation. Hence the black working class would be propelled into the leadership of the struggle for democratic rights. To be sure, black businessmen, such as the owners of local department stores and funeral parlors, wanted to retain a monopoly of commercial trade in the segregated black communities South and North. However, by the late 1950s, the social character of the black petty bourgeoisie was undergoing a significant change. A college-educated managerial/professional stratum wanted access to government, corporate and educational bureaucracies on the same footing as their white counterparts. And it was this stratum, which used to be called "the talented tenth," that was the *main beneficiary* of the civil rights movement. The sons and daughters of black businessmen typically became government functionaries and middle-level corporate managers.

In general, Fraser did not fully recognize the substantial changes in the socio-economic structure of the South at the onset of the civil rights movement. The white-supremacist regimes had as their basic purpose the suppression of the mass of black rural toilers, typically sharecroppers. The increasing urbanization of the South and the modernization of its agriculture in the 1940s and '50s eroded the social and economic basis of the Jim Crow system. These were the fundamental developments that gave rise to the civil rights movement: the mobilization of the black populace in the struggle for basic democratic rights. Additionally, legally enforced white supremacy in the South had become an embarrassment for the U.S. imperialist rulers in their global Cold War against the Soviet Union, especially among the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Between the 1960s and the late 1970s, the legal-political structure of the South was brought into alignment with the



Wide World

**Little Rock, 1957: Federal troops dispatched by President Eisenhower to suppress black defense efforts during school integration battle. Fraser (Richard Kirk) opposed SWP's call for federal troops.**

bourgeois-democratic norms in the rest of the country. This development underscores the fact that the root cause of black oppression lies in the workings of the U.S. capitalist economy, not the legal sanctions of the bourgeois state. Today, blacks possess at least formal equality under the law, although this is pervasively violated in practice. The past two or three decades have seen *increased* segregation, particularly in Northern urban areas, along with higher black unemployment and homelessness, a racist purge in higher education, the scourge of AIDS and the massive imprisonment of young black men carried out in the name of "the war on drugs." Black pockets of the rural South are still marked by deep poverty and vicious repression, to say nothing of the plight of black New Orleans. These conditions cannot be eradicated by a new civil rights movement and a new Civil Rights Act but only by the overthrow of the capitalist system through proletarian socialist revolution.

### The Degeneration of the SWP

It is profoundly wrong to assume that what actually happened in the course of history had to happen, that no other divergent paths, including radically divergent paths, were possible. The Southern civil rights movement in the early-mid 1960s offered a rare and fleeting opportunity for even a relatively small revolutionary organization to win to its program and ranks the best of a generation of young black (and white) radicals experienced in mass, militant struggle against what was then called the "white power structure." Had such a development taken place, the subsequent course of U.S. and therefore

SWP

discussion  
bulletin

#### CONTENTS

Page

- |   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. RESOLUTION ON THE LITTLE ROCK CRISIS                         |    |
| -- by Richard Kirk  | 1  |
| 2. REMARKS ON KIRK RESOLUTION --<br>"On The Little Rock Crisis" |    |
| -- by Dan Roberts   | 12 |
| 3. ANSWER TO DAN ROBERTS  |    |
| -- by Lois Saunders   | 16 |

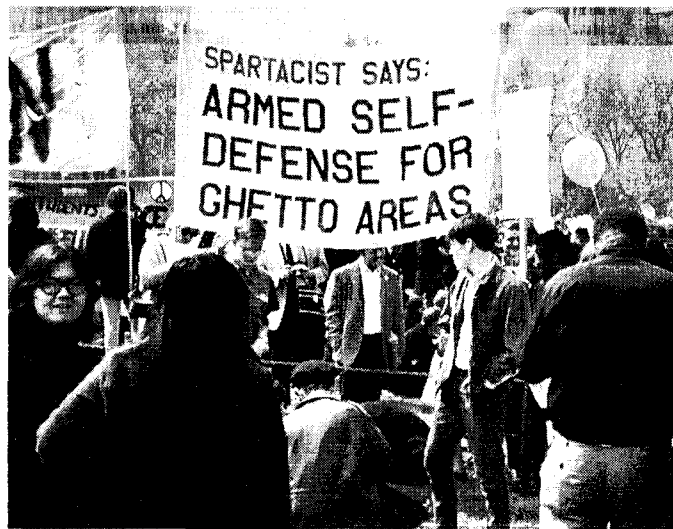
world history would have been radically different. It was not beyond the range of historical possibility that today we would be living in a socialist world.

In the U.S. at the time, the SWP was the only organization with a credible revolutionary past and traditions and with, at least formally, an authentically revolutionary program based on Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. However, by the early 1960s, ground down by the isolation and McCarthyite witchhunting of the 1950s, the SWP had lost its revolutionary bearings. The party's qualitative departure from its erstwhile revolutionary working-class politics began around 1960, when it slid into the role of uncritical cheerleaders for the petty-bourgeois radical-nationalist leadership of the Cuban Revolution. The SWP thus abandoned the centrality of the working class and the necessity of building Trotskyist parties in every country.

The abandonment of the struggle for Marxist leadership of the black struggle in the U.S. was the domestic reflection of the SWP's denial of the centrality of the proletariat in the destruction of capitalism. The "Freedom Now" resolution adopted at the SWP's 1963 Convention codified a wholesale embrace of black nationalism and was accompanied by a policy of *abstention from the Southern*



New York Times



Spartacist

**Left: Spartacist-initiated Harlem Solidarity Committee rally in NYC garment district, July 1964, called in defense of ghetto masses during cop riot. Right: Mid-1960s civil rights demonstration in Central Park.**

*civil rights struggle.* In the name of black "self-determination," the SWP's *Militant* became an unpaid public relations organ for all manner of black "leaders," from the pacifistic liberal Martin Luther King to the reactionary nationalist Elijah Muhammad, head of the Nation of Islam.

The Spartacist tendency originated in the early 1960s as a left opposition, the Revolutionary Tendency, in the SWP. A central axis of our political fight was for an active intervention into the Southern civil rights movement based on the perspective of revolutionary integrationism, i.e., linking the struggle for black democratic rights to working-class struggle against capitalist exploitation. At the 1963 SWP Convention, the RT presented a one-page amendment to the perspectives document arguing that the party should "expend significant material resources in overcoming our isolation from Southern struggles. In helping to build a revolutionary movement in the South, our forces should work directly with and through the developing left-wing formations in the movement there. A successful outcome to our action would lead to an historic breakthrough for the Trotskyist movement."

After the leaders and many members of the RT were expelled in late 1963-early 1964, we sought, despite our small forces, to make the civil rights struggles, North as well as South, a main focus of our intervention into society. We raised the transitional demand for a Freedom Labor Party as a means of breaking young black militants from the capitalist Democratic Party in the direction of working-class politics. As we wrote in 1967:

"Only by the development of a working-class program and by explicitly open-

ing the door to support by white workers can real political independence be maintained, real gains won and the basis laid for eventual working-class political unity. This unity will come about when the exploited section of the white South is driven into opposition and is compelled to forego color prejudice in order to struggle along class lines against its real enemies—the owners of land and industry.

"The creation of a South-wide Freedom Labor Party would serve as a tremendous impetus for similar action by Northern workers. The struggle for such a party would necessitate a rank-and-file revolt within the organized labor movement to overthrow the present labor bureaucracy."

— "Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom," *Spartacist* Special Supplement, May-June 1967; reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9, "Basic Documents of the Spartacist League"

We combined the call for a Freedom Labor Party with agitation for a labor-based campaign to unionize the "open shop" South.

### Fraser on the Civil Rights Movement

As the SWP began to move rightward in the mid-late 1950s, Richard Fraser often opposed the policies of the party leadership from the left, especially on the black question. Thus he strongly opposed the SWP's periodic demand for the federal government to send troops to the South in order to defend black rights against state and local white-supremacist regimes and Klan terrorists. Fraser wrote in 1956 in "Contribution to the Discussion of the Slogan 'Send Federal Troops to Mississippi'" (reprinted in *Prometheus Research Series* No. 3, "In Memoriam—Richard S. Fraser"):

"Under either Eisenhower or [Democratic presidential candidate] Stevenson, the

most probable condition under which the Federal Government will send troops to the South will be that the Negroes hold the initiative in the struggle. As long as the white supremacists have the initiative and the lid of repression is clamped on tightly, the social equilibrium is not upset by a lynching or other terrorist actions. When the Negroes take the initiative it is a 'race riot' and the public security is threatened and an excellent reason is given for the government to intervene.

"When the Negroes hold the initiative it will be the function of the Federal army to restore law and order on the basis of the existing social system, and will involve severe repressions against the Negroes."

A 1963 document by Fraser titled "Dialectics of Black Liberation" has recently been republished by the FSP in the 2004 book *Revolutionary Integration: A Marxist Analysis of African American Liberation*, which also includes a 1982 document by the FSP's Tom Boot, "Revolutionary Integration: Yesterday and Today." Fraser's document is scathing in its denunciation of the SWP leadership's kowtowing before the black misleaders of the day: "The concept of 'self-determination,' a revolutionary demand when used by the Bolsheviks, is denuded of all meaning and becomes a rationale for the SWP position that anyone who is leading at the moment is a good leader and a destined leader, regardless of program." He aptly described the SWP leadership as having "raised tail-endism to a political principle."

However, as the mass Southern civil rights movement acquired an increasingly militant character in the early 1960s, certain weaknesses in Fraser's analysis came to the fore. Because he believed that a bourgeois-democratic reform of the Southern legal-political structure was not



possible within the framework of American capitalism, he ascribed to the civil rights movement an intrinsically revolutionary dynamic. Thus his 1963 document begins with the statement: "The Black revolt in the southern U.S.A. stands objectively on the threshold of a new stage in its development: a stage of political organization for revolution, involving a showdown struggle *against* the southern police state and *for* a new democratic political system" (emphasis in original). Here a revolution in the South is given an essentially democratic content. The struggle of labor against capitalist exploitation receded into the background.

Along similar lines, Fraser no longer emphasized the necessary struggle for *black leadership* in the *racially integrated* organizations of the U.S. working class: the Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party at the most advanced political level, the trade unions at the mass level. He now advocated, or at least endorsed, the idea of a separate "black vanguard party" as a transitional step in breaking black radicals from the Democratic Party:

"A Black vanguard party would furnish (a) a principled program, a rostrum, and an apparatus for independent Black candidates; (b) a graduate school for militants, specializing in political theory, the strategy of the struggle, and electioneering; and (c) an object lesson for the labor, peace and 'progressive' movements."

Yet at the very same time, Fraser also advocated a Southern labor party, *substantially the same programmatic demand that we expressed in our call for a Freedom Labor Party*. He wrote in this regard: "A southern labor party is the only kind of organism which embodies the needs of class unity this side of socialism. Whatever it may be named, the construction of a political party serving the interests of Blacks and white workers is the next stage of development of the southern struggle."

### The FSP: Liberals with Attitude

The contradictions evident in Fraser's 1963 document were carried into the formation of the Freedom Socialist Party. (As we noted earlier, Fraser, who helped found the FSP in 1966, was cut off from the organization by a split the following year.) Under the leadership of the late Clara Fraser, these contradictions were resolved by openly repudiating the centrality of the struggle of labor against capital and embracing and glorifying various currents of petty-bourgeois radicalism—"people of color" ethnic politics, gay liberation lifestyle politics, and, above all, feminism.

As we have emphasized, a key aspect of revolutionary integrationism is that black workers, with their generally higher level of political consciousness, can and must

lead the mass of white workers, mainly through the organizations of the labor movement. But Clara Fraser and her followers contemptuously wrote off white male workers as incorrigibly reactionary bigots. She declaimed in *Freedom Socialist* (December 1980): "Given the class-collaboration politics of the U.S. worker, the culture of bigotry and misogyny lock the privileged white males into a prison of conservative or slow reformism *that has no exit*" (emphasis added). She then went on that these "lackeys of the bosses" are "being swiftly replaced and ignored by the army of new worker militants from the ranks of women, youth, minorities and lesbian/gays." Underlying this hostile contempt toward white male workers, which is shared by black nationalists (who extend their hostility to white women workers as well), is profound despair toward the prospects for a socialist revolution in the United States.

The FSP's despairing attitude toward proletarian struggle and revolution is often masked by a fatuous triumphalism with regard to struggle by other oppressed social groups. In "Revolutionary Integration: Yesterday and Today," written in the early years of Reagan reaction, the FSP's Tom Boot exults: "And hearken to the dialectics of the sexual revolution: the vitality of the Black lesbian/gay sector is the catalyst for restoring the entire Black movement to the revolutionary path!" Such bombast might pass as bad vaudeville were it not pronounced just as the AIDS epidemic was ravaging the gay population, puncturing the last balloon of lifestyle radicalism.

The FSP abandoned and repudiated Richard Fraser's understanding of the central importance of black oppression in maintaining the bourgeois order in the U.S. Thus Boot's document denounced the Spartacist League for "an over-emphasis and unbalanced view of the importance of the Black worker. This simplistic approach to the race question in the U.S. writes off the revolution-

ary potential of the masses of non-white workers who are not Black." In opposition to the FSP, we have always affirmed the revolutionary potential of *all racial and ethnic components* of the U.S. working class, including its white majority, while stressing the *central* importance of the struggle against black oppression in the fight for the American socialist revolution.

The FSP dissolves the black question into the fashionable notion of "people of color." This notion obscures the ability of Latinos, especially lighter-skinned Latinos, and Asian Americans to move up toward the white end of the American racial-social spectrum through intermarriage and other mechanisms of social advancement. It also obscures the very significant class as well as racial and ethnic divisions among the various "peoples of color." What does a third-generation Japanese American doctor really have in common with an undocumented Mexican immigrant farm worker? What does an Indian immigrant computer technician have in common with a black janitor who cleans the office building where the former is employed?

Just as the FSP abuses Richard Fraser's concept of revolutionary integrationism, so it abuses Leon Trotsky's concept of permanent revolution. Trotsky's understanding was that in countries of belated capitalist development, the tasks historically associated with earlier bourgeois-democratic revolutions can only be achieved through proletarian seizure of power, which must be extended internationally, principally to the advanced capitalist countries. Boot's document begins by pontificating that revolutionary integration "represents a continuous contemporary thread in the ideological fabric of international Permanent Revolution, the uninterrupted march of all the world's oppressed, led by the working class, toward social, political and economic equality." Permanent revolution is here presented as an all-powerful, transcendent

**American Nazi Party leader George Lincoln Rockwell (center) at 1960 Black Muslim meeting in Washington, D.C. Fascists supported policy of racial separatism put forward by Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam.**





AP

Powerful NYC transit strike in December 2005 drew broad support from ghetto and barrio masses.

(one might almost say God-like) force that will eventually bring about the triumph of all good things—democratic rights and freedoms, the eradication of all forms of social oppression, economic equality—the world over.

What Fraser said in 1963 of the SWP's misuse of "self-determination" can be said of the FSP's misuse of permanent revolution. It is denuded of all meaning and serves as a rationale for liberal reformist politics and fatuous enthusiasm over various petty-bourgeois radical currents. According to Boot, "The theory of Permanent Revolution, first formulated by Marx and later extended and enriched by Lenin and Trotsky, states in essence that *the unfinished tasks of bourgeois democracy can only be completed by proletarian socialist revolution*" (emphasis in original). In other words, the goal of proletarian revolution is to realize the principles of bourgeois democracy, which presumably represent the highest, most noble-minded aspirations of humanity.

Like most groups in the U.S. that call themselves socialist, the FSP appeals mainly to young liberal idealists. Socialism is thus presented not in terms of progressive working-class struggle against capitalist exploitation but rather as the expansion and consistent application of democratic principles. Abusing and trivializing the theory of permanent revolution, the FSP invests any and every liberal reform or demand—defense of legalized abortion, the legalization of same-sex marriage, amnesty for undocumented immigrants—with an anti-capitalist revolutionary content, dynamic or dialectic.

There's nothing very new about this. In

*The State and Revolution* (1917), Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin explained how social democrats like Karl Kautsky distorted and vulgarized the ideas and doctrines of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in order to make them palatable to bourgeois liberals and petty-bourgeois democrats. The reformist left obscures the Marxist understanding of bourgeois "democracy" as simply a facade that covers the reality of the capitalist state as an instrument of organized force and violence—consisting at its core of the police, army, courts and prisons—for maintaining capitalist property and profits. It is the task of proletarian revolution to smash the bourgeois state and establish a workers state, laying the basis for the abolition of classes in an international communist world.

### The Politics of Petty-Bourgeois Sectoralism

We describe the politics of the FSP as sectoralist. What does that mean? They begin from the premise that the basic actors on the U.S. left are separate movements of different oppressed social groups, based on gender (feminism), sexual orientation (gay liberation) or race and ethnicity ("people of color"). The FSP views itself as representing these diverse sectors, integrating and balancing their particular interests and demands. On a minute scale, the FSP offers a leftist version of traditional Democratic Party constituency politics.

The FSP's sectoralism is clearly indicated by its fervent championing of affirmative action and "community control," two programs promoted by the liberal wing of the U.S. bourgeoisie to divert and

undermine unified working-class struggle against the capitalist class as a whole. In a section of his document attacking the Spartacist League, Boot contends that "the SL's through-the-looking-glass approach to affirmative action condemns women and people of color to no improvement in their status until *after* the revolution" (emphasis in original).

Boot falsifies our position while underscoring the liberal reformist confines of the FSP's own outlook and practice. FSP members know full well, as do all regular readers of *Workers Vanguard*, that we have actively and consistently defended affirmative action programs in higher education against the right-wing campaign (now largely successful) to dismantle them. In an advanced capitalist country like the U.S., access to higher education should be feasible for everyone who wants it. We call for nationalizing the private universities and for open admissions and free tuition with a state-paid living stipend for students. Such a program can be achieved only through massive and sustained struggle by a greatly strengthened labor movement in this country.

However, in opposition to the FSP, we do *not* identify affirmative action as the only or even main way to improve the conditions of blacks and other ethnic minorities and women short of a socialist revolution. Affirmative action is at best a limited gain enacted in response to the civil rights struggles of the 1960s. Its basic premise is that there is a fixed number of jobs or college placements and that these should be redivided in favor of different oppressed groups. Thus, particularly in the workplace, affirmative action has tended to pit black and other ethnic minorities and women against one another and against white males, fighting for a bigger slice of a shrinking pie instead of fighting together against the capitalist class for a bigger pie.

Our answer to mass unemployment in the black ghettos and Latino barrios, especially among youth, is a labor-based struggle for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay to increase the number of jobs available. We have also called for unions to direct special recruitment efforts toward black, Latino and women workers.

But the FSP, in the name of affirmative action, *supports* the efforts of the U.S. ruling class to further *weaken* the labor movement. Boot writes that the SL "tells anyone within earshot that affirmative action is a ruling-class plot, devised by the bosses as a union-busting tactic." It is an incontestable fact that the capitalist government has used affirmative action when directed at unionized work forces in precisely that

way. Most of the significant early affirmative action court suits and programs were set up under the Nixon administration in the late 1960s and early '70s. A case in point was the Philadelphia Plan, an attempt to break the union hiring hall in the construction trades through setting quotas for jobs for minority workers. Such plans were especially effective in turning middle-class blacks and white liberals (and many radical leftists) against organized labor in the name of securing "racial justice."

Two basic features of trade unions in the U.S. are the closed shop (all workers being required to join the union) and the seniority list (layoffs determined by date of hire). These two features are the first line of defense against arbitrary management decisions and the victimization of individual workers. Seniority agreements are often to the disadvantage of blacks and women, who are typically the last hired. In this sense, they are imperfect but they are, along with the closed shop, essential to defense of the union. When the government rips up seniority lists in the name of affirmative action, this is union-busting. The result is no union or a terribly weakened union, to the detriment of *all* workers.

Another aspect of the FSP's reformist politics is its championing of "community control." This slogan was originally popularized by 1960s radical black nationalists, notably the Black Panther Party. Soon, other more moderate forces embraced the slogan en route to Demo-

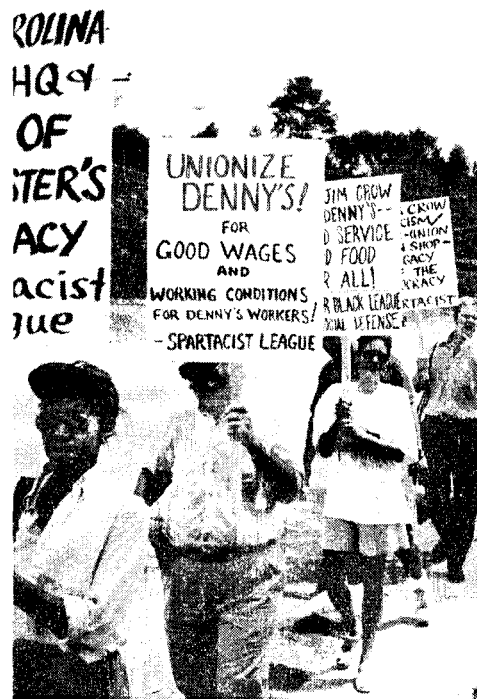
cratic Party machine politics to which the Panthers, too, soon found their way. In the aftermath of the ghetto rebellions of the 1960s, management of the inner-city black enclaves became a profitable career for ambitious black activists. The ghetto is treated as a permanently depressed fiefdom overseen by black operatives in the government bureaucracy.

In particular, the FSP raises the slogan of "community control" of the police in response to the murderous cop rampages in the ghettos and barrios. In "Escalating Police Violence Renews Demand for Elected Civilian Review Boards" (*Freedom Socialist*, October-December 2000), the FSP calls for civilian review boards "elected from the community, not 'yes men' or women appointed by city officials" (emphasis in original). Such boards should have "full authority to investigate police misconduct, subpoena witnesses, and order training, discipline, and firings." While conceding that these agencies would not "eliminate cop depredations," the FSP assures us that they "could certainly *reduce* police rampages" (emphasis in original). The FSP writes that "honest cops should welcome an independent review mechanism, because it's the medicine necessary to start getting rid of the racist, sexist, and macho viruses that infect the force" ("Curb Police Brutality with Civilian Review Boards," *Freedom Socialist*, July-September 1999). Thus the FSP informs us that "community"-based review boards would effect a benevolent moral transformation among the cops themselves—i.e., the very hired thugs of the capitalists whose job is to brutally repress labor and terrorize minorities—resulting in a kinder, gentler police force sensitive to the needs and interests of the oppressed.

Reading this nonsense one is reminded of the New Testament account of the conversion of St. Paul. Formerly a vicious and violent persecutor of Christians, one day on the road to Damascus he saw the light and was redeemed. Alas, the redemption of the members and cadre of the FSP for the cause of proletarian revolution will not be so easy.

### Richard Fraser: In Memoriam

The distance separating ourselves from the FSP of Clara Fraser and her followers has long been unbridgeable. In contrast, in the last five or six years before his death in 1988, Dick Fraser moved ever closer to the Spartacist League. We still had differences and disagreements, which were hon-



WV Photo

July 1993 protest in Atlanta against racist abuse at Denny's restaurant, part of nationwide campaign organized by SL and Labor Black Leagues to demand, "Down with Jim Crow at Denny's!"

estly acknowledged and seriously discussed. But we were always happy to bend the stick in favor of the areas of profound political agreement between us.

During this period, Fraser provided invaluable advice, informed by decades of practical experience as well as Marxist understanding, concerning the organization and work of the Labor/Black Leagues, transitional organizations of the Spartacist League involved in day-to-day struggles against racial oppression and capitalist exploitation. Addressing the SL/U.S. Seventh National Conference in 1983 on the question of organizing the Labor/Black Leagues, he spoke movingly:

"I've had some discussions with many comrades, which have been very gratifying, and I am humbled by the knowledge that the things I wrote 30 years ago, which were so scorned by the old party, have had some important impact, finally."

In particular, Fraser greatly appreciated our policy of initiating labor/black mobilizations to smash the Klan and Nazis whenever these fascist scum raised their heads in public, especially in cities with a large working-class and black population. Richard Fraser's last political act before his death was his endorsement of the 5 November 1988 mobilization that stopped a Klan/Nazi provocation in Philadelphia. ■

**Marxism and Religion**

A Spartacist Pamphlet

**Enlightenment  
Rationalism  
AND THE  
Origins  
of Marxism**

150 Years of the Communist Manifesto ..... 35  
Marxism and Religion ..... 48

**\$2 (48 pages)**

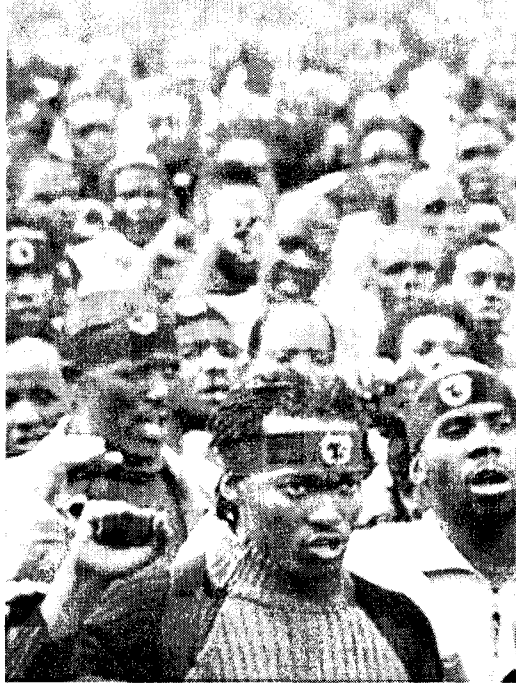
**Make checks payable/mail to:**  
Spartacist Publishing Co.  
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

# South Africa Permanent Revolution vs. “Two-Stage” Stalinist Betrayal

In 1994, after more than a decade of massive struggles by the predominantly black working class and township poor, the white-supremacist police-state regime in South Africa was replaced by Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC). The black African, coloured (mixed-race) and Indian working people were promised that their everyday conditions of life would be greatly improved by redistributing the country's wealth from the affluent white ruling elite. Instead, under the bourgeois-nationalist regimes of Mandela and his successor, Thabo Mbeki, conditions for the working class, rural toilers and township masses have in many important respects gotten worse.

Almost a million workers have been laid off through the privatization of government-owned industry and other kinds of capitalist restructuring. Sixty percent of the adult jobless black African population has never been employed. Two million people have been evicted from their homes because they could not pay the sky-high utility bills, and some ten million have had their electricity and water cut off. At the same time, a small black elite has arisen who drive Mercedes, vacation in Dubai and clink champagne glasses with the Randlords of the Anglo-Gold Ashanti corporation. The income of white families has increased substantially while that of the overwhelming majority of blacks has plummeted.

A key factor in the ANC's accession to power was the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, which for decades had supported the ANC materially and diplomatically. During the Cold War, the ANC and other bourgeois and petty-bourgeois “Third World” movements and regimes were able to play off Moscow and Washington, thereby achieving a certain latitude in which to maneuver. But as the Moscow Stalinist regime under Mikhail Gorbachev fell apart, the ANC leaders



Reuters  
**18 May 2006: Johannesburg rally during one-day COSATU general strike protesting unemployment, poverty.**

openly embraced “power sharing” with the white racist South African rulers, a section of whom accepted that ANC rule no longer posed a threat to the white economic oligarchy. Today, despite the change in the political and judicial superstructure, South Africa remains, as it was under the white-supremacist apartheid system, a country in which the black masses live in Third World poverty while most whites enjoy First World conditions. We have thus described South Africa under the ANC-led government

as a neo-apartheid capitalist state.

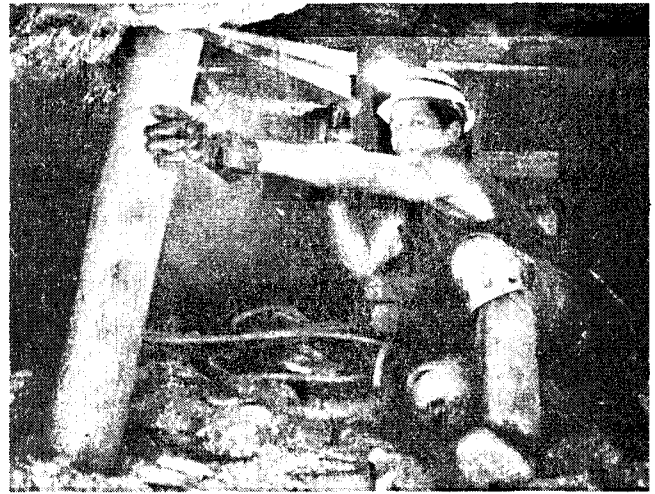
Nothing more clearly exposes the fact that the ANC-led regime is the enemy of the workers and the oppressed than its response to the AIDS pandemic that has ravaged South Africa. According to the United Nations, in 2005 an estimated 5.5 million South Africans were HIV positive and some 320,000 died from AIDS. Women are among the hardest hit by the pandemic. Today, over 39 percent of pregnant women in the province of KwaZulu-Natal test HIV-positive. An effective, scientific response to this crisis has been willfully frustrated by the *criminal policies* of the ANC-led government. Mbeki himself outrageously refuses to acknowledge the scientific fact that the HIV virus causes AIDS! On August 24, police using pepper spray attacked protesters in Cape Town who, as part of a national day of protest by the Treatment Action Campaign, were calling for the firing of the health minister and demanding that prisoners be treated with anti-retroviral drugs.

A key agency upholding the government is the heavily overlapping leadership of the reformist South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). As part of the governing “Tripartite Alliance,” the SACP/COSATU tops keep the country's powerful and combative working class tied to the bourgeois nationalists of the ANC, who in turn are the black front men for the dominant white capitalist class. Leading SACP cadres are senior officials in the government, including

**Break with the Bourgeois ANC—  
No Support to Mbeki, Zuma!  
Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist Party!**



Gold Fields Ltd.



AP

**Neo-apartheid capitalism: Nelson Mandela at New York Stock Exchange on day South African gold corporation began trading in 2002; gold miner in Boksburg.**

those branches directly engaged in the brutal repression of labor struggles and township protests: the Security Ministry and the intelligence service.

In the last two years, major labor strikes and militant township protests have signaled growing hostility on the part of the black masses toward the ANC regime. The future of the Tripartite Alliance is now being intensely debated within the workers movement and among broader layers of society. Amid the anger and bitter disillusionment among their working-class supporters, the SACP tops recently came out with a discussion document in which they openly criticized the central ANC leadership (*Bua Komantisi!* Special Edition, May 2006). The document raised the possibility of running candidates in future elections in the party's own name, within the framework of the Alliance. Such candidacies would have a purely token character, in no way challenging, much less weakening, the ANC's governmental power. The document categorically rejects "watering down the ANC's overwhelming electoral majority."

Along somewhat similar lines, the COSATU bureaucrats have issued a discussion document ("COSATU Political Discussion Document—Possibilities for Fundamental Social Change") in preparation for a congress in September strongly condemning the "neoliberal" policies of the Mbeki regime. It points out that the share of national income going to the workers has decreased while the share raked off in corporate profits has markedly increased. Nonetheless, the COSATU misleaders cite favorably surveys through 2004 that "have confirmed that the overwhelming majority of COSATU members support COSATU's approach of strategic engagement from within the Alliance."

The sordid reality behind the ideologi-

cal claptrap of the SACP document is the maneuvering inside the ANC itself. The SACP/COSATU tops are backing Mbeki's main factional opponent, Jacob Zuma. Mbeki's former deputy president, Zuma combines a "man of the people" posture with appeals to Zulu tribalist nationalism.

The SACP leaders have always used the Menshevik/Stalinist schema of "two-stage revolution" as an ideological justification for their historic alliance and interpenetration with the ANC. According to this schema, conditions are not currently ready for socialism. Therefore, first must come a political bloc with "progressive" bourgeois nationalists, which in South Africa is called the "National Democratic Revolution" (NDR). Then, some far-off and unspecified time later, this will evolve into socialism. Thus the recent document asserted "the inextricable linkage between the NDR and the imperative of 'building socialism now,'" while reaffirming "our commitment to the ANC-led Alliance."

South Africa's black workers and poor know damn well that the country is not moving toward socialism but in the opposite direction: toward increasingly brutal capitalist exploitation and immiseration. The SACP leadership is in some difficulty as it has failed to produce the gains it promised the masses. Hence, in order to repair the damaged credibility of the Alliance, the SACP/COSATU tops have adopted a more leftist stance toward the Mbeki regime while promising to fight for more worker-friendly policies. This is a cynical political con game. In order to go forward in its struggles, the working class must break with the ANC-led Alliance and with the reformist politics of class collaboration packaged as the National Democratic Revolution.

In opposing the "two-stage revolution" schema—a formula for class betrayal—Spartacist South Africa, section of the International Communist League, stands for the program and perspective of permanent revolution developed by Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky. This posits that in countries of combined and uneven development, the outstanding democratic tasks historically associated with the bourgeois revolutions can only be carried out through the assumption of power by the working class. In South Africa, genuine national liberation and the destruction of black oppression require proletarian revolution and its extension to the advanced capitalist (imperialist) countries of North America, West Europe and Japan. In fighting for that goal, we seek to build a Leninist revolutionary vanguard party of the working class that would champion the cause of the vast unemployed urban masses, the landless, immigrants, women, agricultural laborers and all of those oppressed under neo-apartheid capitalism.

### **Upsurge in Labor Struggles, Township Protests**

All too little has changed in the "new" South Africa. Retaining an ironclad grip on the economic resources of the country (mines, banks, factories and land), the white bourgeoisie subcontracts out the task of administering the capitalist state to the ANC.

Last year saw the largest strike wave since the ANC assumed power, as workers protested starvation wages in the face of booming profits and fat bonuses to management. Militant actions by South African Airlines workers grounded both domestic and international flights, stunning the company by their determination and the level of public support. In the



AFP



AFP



Gideon Mendel

**Top left: South African president Thabo Mbeki. Left: Former Mbeki deputy Jacob Zuma. Squatter camp in Soweto (above) epitomizes impoverishment, oppression of black masses under ANC-led regime.**

first national mine workers strike since the late 1980s, 100,000 members of the National Union of Mineworkers shut down the gold sector, supported in an important (and unprecedented) action by two historically white craft unions.

In June 2005, COSATU called a one-day general strike against unemployment and poverty, supposedly meant to launch a series of rolling mass actions. A rally at Johannesburg Library Gardens was characterized by heightened anti-ANC sentiment. When the COSATU bureaucrats persisted in raising desperate cries of "Viva ANC! Viva!", a large section of the crowd of up to 50,000 replied "Phansi!" (Down!).

For the past two years, a wave of protests—mainly over lack of water, electricity and decent housing—has swept South Africa. The most dramatic upheaval occurred in the Merafong township of Khutsong on the West Rand, where residents called for a boycott of the local elections in March 2006 and turned the area into a "no go zone" for the ruling party. When Defense Minister and ANC national chairman Mosiuoa "Terror" Lekota attempted to call a pro-government rally, he was greeted with chants of "voetsek" (f-k off).

In the township of Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, residents used rakes, spades and building tools to drive off security guards who had dismantled their shacks the night before. Police then arrived and

fired on the crowd with rubber bullets and stun grenades. In Durban, a march by the Shack Dwellers Movement, which organized an electoral boycott, was attacked by the cops. Protesters were beaten while in police custody. These scenes of revolt and repression take place almost daily in the "new" South Africa.

### **Jacob Zuma: Anti-Working-Class Politician**

The SACP and COSATU tops have sought to deflect the growing anger against the government among the working class and township poor into support for the Zuma "camp" of the ANC. When Mbeki dismissed Zuma as deputy president in June 2005, the COSATU leadership, the SACP and the ANC Youth and Women's leagues came to his defense. Mbeki is widely viewed as a coldblooded, arrogant technocrat whose main priority is placating the white corporate elite and their imperialist senior partners, as well as their black junior partners. But as a bourgeois politician and Zulu traditionalist, Zuma is no less a class enemy of the proletariat than Mbeki. He derives a lot of his support from the fact that he poses as a "man of the people," willing to listen to the workers and the township poor. But he is simply a bourgeois populist who endorses the austerity policies of the current government. Criminally, the SACP/COSATU tops have told the working class to take

sides in a power struggle between two bourgeois politicians. Opposing Mbeki is not the same as opposing class collaboration with the bourgeois ANC. *Break with the ANC! Forge a revolutionary workers party!*

The obscenity of the SACP's pro-Zuma position became utterly manifest during his recent trial for the rape of an HIV-positive woman, which resulted in his acquittal. In his trial testimony, Zuma ignorantly proclaimed that he showered after sex to minimize the chance of catching AIDS! Meanwhile, his supporters paraded outside the courthouse carrying the slogans "Burn the Bitch" and "100% Zulu-boy." Disgustingly, the Young Communist League joined the pro-Zuma protests, rendering absolutely contemptible the SACP's claims to stand against Mbeki's HIV denialism and against women's oppression.

One of the most sinister aspects of these events was their fostering of tribalist enmities. Many Zulus and others saw Zuma's dismissal as an anti-Zulu plot by Mbeki and other Xhosa central leaders of the ANC. The historically Xhosa region of the Eastern Cape in fact contains some of the most destitute areas in the country. In reality, the ANC represents the interests of the (overwhelmingly white) capitalist class against workers of all racial and ethnic groups: Zulu, Xhosa and other black Africans, Indian, coloured and white. Since coming to power, the ANC has

increasingly worked to pit different sectors of the oppressed against each other.

### The Tripartite Alliance: A Nationalist Popular Front

The Tripartite Alliance between the ANC, SACP and COSATU is a nationalist popular front in which the power of the African working class is held in check by its subordination to the supposedly “progressive” national bourgeoisie. The SACP’s class-collaborationist alliance with the bourgeois ANC goes back at least to the 1930s. The central purpose of the SACP discussion document is to provide a theoretical and historical rationale for maintaining the Alliance.

According to the document, the post-1994 period was a “democratic breakthrough” opening up progressive possibilities under the ANC-led regime. Focusing its criticism overwhelmingly on the GEAR policy—an anti-worker austerity plan implemented in 1996 under Mandela to attract foreign investment and boost profits—the document argues: “*Relative to the transformational potential of the 1994 conjuncture, this project [GEAR] represents a serious strategic setback for the working class (and the national democratic revolution)*” (emphasis in original). The document draws the conclusion that it is necessary to rebuild a mass-based ANC in order to fight for a “progressive developmental” (i.e., capitalist) state.

Even on its own terms, this account whitewashes the fact that the SACP initially endorsed GEAR and has played an active role in the ANC-led government for ten years. Underlying GEAR was not the sudden conversion of the central ANC leadership to neoliberal ideology but the imperatives of the world capitalist system: driving down the cost of labor in order to increase the international competitiveness of South African business.

Those like the SACP who argue that some other set of economic policies—e.g., the 1994 COSATU-authored Reconstruction and Development Program—could promote the welfare of labor and capital simultaneously are peddling a nationalist lie. And the purpose of that lie is to obscure the fundamental fact that modern society is divided into two main classes—the capitalist exploiters and the exploited proletariat—whose interests are irreconcilable.

By centering its criticisms on Mbeki’s particular policies, the SACP seeks to disguise the class nature of South African society and the neo-apartheid capitalist state. Thus the document asserts: “The post-1994 democratic state is not inherently capitalist, it is, in fact, a sharply class-contested reality.” Furthermore, in

regard to the judiciary, the police and intelligence forces, the document declares that “demagogic attacks on these institutions are short-sighted and reckless.”

As Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky argued repeatedly, there is no such thing as a class-neutral “democracy”; every state is an apparatus of repression—based on armed bodies of men, principally the army and police—that protects the social interests and property forms of the ruling class. Lenin wrote in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918): “Even in the most democratic bourgeois state the oppressed people at every step encounter the crying contradiction between the *formal* equality proclaimed by the ‘democracy’ of the capitalists and the thousands of *real* limitations and subterfuges which turn the proletarians into *wage-slaves*” (emphasis in original). The working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes. The capitalist state cannot be reformed. It must be smashed through socialist revolution.

Ironically, a counter-polemic against the SACP document published in an official journal of the ANC, *ANC Today* (13 June 2006), cites Marx to refute the notion that South Africa is not a capitalist society with a capitalist state: “In reality, the statement that South Africa ‘is not inherently capitalist’ is mere demagogy, with no scientific, Marxist foundation.” Indeed it is!

Apartheid’s purpose was the procurement, reproduction and control of super-exploited African labor for white-owned capital, initially centered on the mining industries. The legal edifice may

have changed, but the fundamental basis of South African capitalism, including the enormous disparities between racial groups, has not. During the anti-apartheid struggles, the SACP and COSATU leadership consciously maneuvered to tie the working class to the bourgeois-nationalist ANC despite the masses’ far more radical aspirations, thereby laying the basis for neo-apartheid capitalism. Exploitation, immiseration and oppression can be eliminated only through a *proletarian socialist revolution* modeled on the October 1917 Russian Revolution led by Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party.

### Menshevik/Stalinist “Two-Stage” Betrayal

The 1917 October Revolution was the great event of the 20th century. Leading the vast, impoverished peasant masses, the small Russian working class, concentrated centrally in a few industrial centers, seized political power across one-sixth of the globe. The Russian Revolution smashed the old state apparatus, inherited from the tsarist autocracy, replacing the class dictatorship of capital with the dictatorship of the proletariat based on democratically elected councils (soviets) of workers and peasants.

Despite the enormous poverty and backwardness that the Bolsheviks confronted (and the later degeneration of the Soviet workers state under Stalinist rule), the October Revolution laid the basis for a planned economy that would transform the country into an industrial powerhouse whose military might served as a counterweight to U.S. imperialism. Full employment, housing and health care



Cape Town, 18 August 2006: Treatment Action Campaign activists protest government’s criminal AIDS policies, call for resignation and arrest of health minister. AP



Left: Workers take over Shanghai as Chiang Kai-shek's forces approach city, 1927. Stalin's 1927 autographed photo (center) dedicated to Chiang "in honor of the victory of the Guomindang and the liberation of China." Right: Execution of Communist Party member, one of thousands massacred following Chiang's coup.

were won only through the overthrow of capitalism.

Against the Mensheviks, the original proponents of "two-stage revolution," Lenin wrote a few months after the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy while Russia was in revolutionary turmoil:

"The leaders of the petty bourgeoisie—the intellectuals, the prosperous peasants, the present parties of the Narodniks [populists]...and the Mensheviks—are *not* at present in favor of a revolution against the capitalists....

"The conclusion is obvious: only the assumption of power by the proletariat, backed by the semi-proletarians, can give the country a really strong and really revolutionary government" (emphasis in original).

—"A Strong Revolutionary Government" (May 1917)

This statement shows that Lenin had in effect come to the understanding earlier put forward by Trotsky that the revolution in Russia could be consummated only through the proletarian seizure of power.

As later practiced by the Stalinists, the "two-stage revolution" policy led not to socialism but to bloody counterrevolution. The second stage, so to speak, occurred when the bourgeois nationalists turned on and massacred their Communist would-be allies and the workers and peasants who supported them, such as in China in 1927 and Indonesia in 1965.

Consider the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27. By then the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state had placed at the head of the Communist International J. V. Stalin and Nikolai Bukharin, who applied the old Menshevik schema to colonial and semicolonial countries under the slogan of the "Anti-Imperialist United

Front." Insisting that the coming revolution in semicolonial China would be limited to a "national-democratic revolution" placing the bourgeoisie in power, Stalin and Bukharin, despite objections by Trotsky, continued the policy of the liquidation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) into Chiang Kai-shek's bourgeois-nationalist Guomindang (GMD), which soon engaged in a civil war against imperialist-backed Northern warlords in the name of unifying China.

In early 1927, the GMD army marched on Shanghai, then controlled by a local militarist backed by the British. Under CCP leadership, 500,000 workers staged a general strike that developed into a successful insurrection. Communist-led workers effectively took over this key metropolis. But the Shanghai proletariat laid down its arms on Stalin's orders. And shortly after Chiang's troops entered the city, where they were welcomed by the victorious workers, Chiang staged a bloody coup that beheaded the Chinese proletariat. Tens of thousands of Communists and revolutionary-minded workers were slaughtered. Following this catastrophic defeat, the battered CCP, under Moscow's instructions, shifted its support from Chiang to a rival "left" GMD bourgeois nationalist, Wang Jingwei, who controlled the major city of Wuhan. A few months later, Wang in turn massacred his Communist would-be allies and their working-class supporters.

### Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution

It was in the aftermath of the crushing defeat of the Chinese Revolution (and

part of his struggle against the treacherous and disastrous Stalinist leadership of the world Communist movement) that Trotsky generalized his theory of permanent revolution, which he had first developed in 1904-06 with regard to the course of the revolutionary struggle in tsarist Russia. Permanent revolution *rejects* the nationalist bloc between the proletariat and its capitalist class enemy.

By the late 19th century, the major imperialist powers had subjugated the rest of the world through either conquest or commercial/financial dependency, while the struggle among them for economic and military predominance intensified. In countries of belated capitalist development, the propertied classes emerged as too dependent on and tied to imperialism to complete the historic tasks of social and economic modernization. "Progressive developmental" capitalism in a country like South Africa or those of Latin America is an illusion. However, in many cases foreign investment has created a force capable of breaking the hold of imperialist domination and opening the road to social progress: the industrial proletariat.

Thus, Trotsky wrote in *The Permanent Revolution* (1930): "With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution to their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation."

In South Africa, adequate housing for



millions in the townships and shantytowns, electricity and clean water for the entire population, free quality education, the eradication of *lobola* (the bride price) and female genital mutilation, the mobilization of all available scientific and medical resources in combating the AIDS pandemic: these desperately needed measures require the socialist transformation of the economy and society. South Africa's industrial proletariat has the power and class interests to unite all of the oppressed in a determined battle for a revolutionary workers government.

Lenin, Trotsky and the other leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution never believed (contrary to Stalin's later falsifications) that socialism could be built in a single country, especially not in a relatively poor country besieged by world imperialism. As Trotsky wrote in *The Permanent Revolution*: "In a country where the proletariat has power in its hands as the result of the democratic revolution, the subsequent fate of the dictatorship and socialism depends in the last analysis not only and not so much upon the national productive forces as upon the development of the international socialist revolution."

As we wrote shortly after the ANC succeeded the apartheid regime:

"The consolidation or simply the survival of a socialist revolution in South Africa *requires* its international extension. This was the core of the Bolsheviks' program....

"For the moment South Africa is a weakened link in the chain of the world capitalist system binding the neocolonies of the Third World to the imperialist states of North America, West Europe and Japan. It is necessary to mobilize the forces of the proletariat to *break* that chain at its weakest links, and then fight like hell to take the battle to the imperialist centers, seeking allies against the vicious enemy of all the oppressed—international capital. Thus, the fight to build a South African Bolshevik Party is inseparable from the struggle we in the International Communist League are waging to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International."

—"South African Powder Keg: Part Four," WV No. 606, 16 September 1994, reprinted in *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 12

A socialist revolution in South Africa would reverberate among working people and the oppressed the world over, finding strategically powerful allies in the proletariat of the imperialist centers.

### For a Revolutionary Vanguard Party

Reflecting the growing popular discontent with the Mbeki government, several groups and individuals outside the Alliance have raised the call for a new mass workers party, for example, Trevor

Ngwane of the Anti-Privatization Forum (APF). The Johannesburg-based APF functions as a kind of political sandbox for various pseudo-Trotskyist organizations in South Africa, including the Cliffite Keep Left group and the Democratic Socialist Movement, which is affiliated with the Taaffeite Committee for a Workers International. Trevor Ngwane himself is a former ANC local councillor who was expelled from the party in 2000 for opposing the extensive privatization of government-owned industries.

In a brief document titled, "The Vanguard and the Mass" (February 2005), Ngwane calls for "a party which groups the majority of workers together on politics which reflects their own interests" and denounces any conception of an independent vanguard party as amounting to "not really a vanguard—just a sect." Ngwane's "Socialist Group" in the APF issued a similar call three years ago. In response, we wrote in "South Africa: Union Militants Protest COSATU Alliance with ANC" (WV No. 808, 29 August 2003): "This is essentially a call for a 'party of the whole class.' The model for this is the (old) British Labour Party.... We reject the notion that the South African working class must pass through the experience of a mass reformist party before a revolutionary party can develop out of it—a kind of two-stage theory of party-building."

In practice, the APF is a class-collaborationist outfit seeking to pressure the ANC-led regime from the left. This is clearly indicated by the APF's allegiance to the World Social Forum (WSF) movement, which is also supported by the COSATU leadership. The purpose of the Social Forums, which are bankrolled by various agencies of the imperialist rulers and their neocolonial underlings, was to draw left-radical youth protesting the evils of "globalization" away from pitched battles with the forces of the capitalist state and to corral them behind the "democratic alternative" of parliamentary reformism, while

pretending that these talk shops were "non-parliamentary" (see "Social Forum Con Game," WV No. 853, 2 September 2005).

The list of sponsors of the biannual meetings of the WSF in Porto Alegre, Brazil, include the Brazilian federal government, the Banco do Brasil and the country's giant oil company, Petrobras. The 2003 European Social Forum (ESF) in Paris was funded by the right-wing Chirac government. And the 2004 ESF in London was bankrolled and hosted by New Labour mayor Ken Livingstone, supporter of the U.S./NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999.

The Social Forums have been dominated by the misnamed "Non-Governmental" Organizations (NGOs). These organizations, sanctioned by and receiving much of their funding from churches, corporations and capitalist states, are hardly independent of the governments to which they are answerable. Like other components of the Social Forum movement elsewhere, the APF in South Africa is funded by NGOs such as Oxfam Canada and War on Want. As the old saying goes, "He who pays the piper calls the tune."

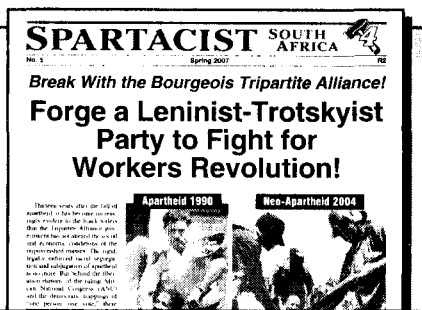
For the perspective of permanent revolution in South Africa to become a reality requires the forging of a vanguard party modeled on Lenin's Bolshevik Party, a party which led the first and only successful proletarian revolution in history. This party united the most politically advanced workers with the best of the leftist intellectuals. The Bolshevik Party was built through political and polemical struggle against the reformist pseudo-Marxists (the Mensheviks), the populist Social Revolutionaries and the left nationalists of the various oppressed peoples of the tsarist empire. Similarly, our comrades of Spartacist South Africa seek to aggressively confront the different currents of the South African left in political and polemical struggle with the aim of forging an authentic Leninist-Trotskyist party on a clear programmatic basis. ■

## Spartacist South Africa

Newspaper of the South African section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

Issue No. 5 (24 pages)  
**US\$1 R2**  
 Subscription (4 issues)  
**US\$4 R10 (R20 Overseas)**

**Make checks payable/mail to:**  
 Spartacist Publishing Co.  
 Box 1377 GPO  
 New York, NY 10116



**In South Africa:**  
 Spartacist, PostNet Suite 248  
 Private Bag X2226  
 Johannesburg 2000

# 50 Rounds: NYPD Killers

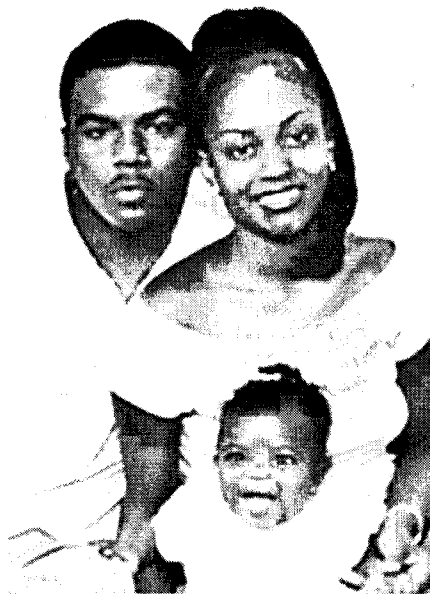
The Jamaica, Queens neighborhood where 23-year-old Sean Bell died in a fusillade of police bullets in the early morning of November 25 is seething. On December 1, 600 mourners attended his funeral in the church where he was to be married one week earlier. Hundreds more massed outside, some carrying signs reading "Justice for Sean Bell." The next day, comrades of the Spartacist League and Labor Black League joined some 200 angry protesters who gathered near the site where he was killed and where his two friends were gravely injured. Protesters chanting "50 shots from the New York cops!" marched to the 103rd precinct as the crowd, having swelled to close to 500 people, was confronted by a phalanx of cops. There, after a speaker announced that Bell's friend Joseph Guzman had been hit by 19 bullets—not the eleven that had first been reported—the crowd marched to the hospital where Guzman and Trent Benefield still lie.

Meanwhile, the NYPD continues its frenzied attempt to intimidate witnesses and blame the killing on the victims. In the guise of hunting for an illusory fourth man with a gun, the cops have smashed into homes in Queens and the Bronx, arresting several young black people. One of the arrested men told the *New York Daily News* (2 December 2006) that the cops busted his nose and were "screaming, 'Where's the f----g gun!'"

We print below an edited leaflet issued by the New York Spartacist League on 30 November 2006, which has been distributed at protests this week.

\* \* \*

Sean Bell, a 23-year-old black man, was gunned down in a storm of 50 bullets by plainclothes vice squad cops on his wedding day as he left his bachelor party in the early morning hours of November 25. Bell's fiancée Nicole Paultre, who is attending his funeral instead of their wedding, told the truth: "They barricaded him in and they executed him." Sean Bell's companions—Joseph Guzman, shot at least 11 times, and Trent Benefield, shot three times—were seriously wounded and then handcuffed to their hospital beds.



Family photo

**Sean Bell, killed by NYPD on wedding day, with fiancée Nicole Paultre and one of their daughters.**

After the killing came the mudslide of lies, the first being that the men had a gun. While the killer cops were put on paid vacation, the police department unleashed every gun-sniffing dog and investigator with a metal detector to find something to justify this heinous crime. But there was nothing but the innocent victims' blood to be found. Now a theory of "contagious shooting" has been concocted by the *New York Times* and other capitalist mouthpieces to try to explain away what happened—as if methodically loading two magazines in a 9-millimeter pistol and firing away at unarmed young black and Latino men is like catching the sniffles from your sneezing partner.

As shock in the community swelled to rage, the sellout black capitalist politicians moved fast to try to quash the anger of the people they claim to represent. Mayor Bloomberg rounded up the usual suspects to cool things down. Democrats like Congressman Charles Rangel, one-time FBI fink Al Sharpton and City Councilman Charles Barron, who uses his Black Panther past as a militant veneer for his service to the city rulers, flanked the

mayor as he appealed for "dialogue" and conceded that Sean Bell's killing appeared to be a case of "excessive force."

City Councilman Thomas White Jr. got his comeuppance from several hundred protesters massed outside the Queens hospital where Guzman and Benefield lay wounded following the shooting. When the councilman preached, "We are not going to be angry," the crowd roared back, "Oh, yes we are!" Now the NAACP is calling for a federal investigation—so the same Justice Department that justifies the torture of "terror suspects" is supposed to defend the victims of cop terror!

What's called for is mass protest, headed by New York City's integrated labor movement. The kind of independent working-class action that's necessary was seen in New York City last year when the Transport Workers Union defied the no-strike Taylor Law and crippled the finance capital of the world for three days. The same Mayor Bloomberg who now expresses concern over Bell's killing denounced the heavily black and immigrant transit workers as "thugs" for using their strike weapon. In defending themselves against the bosses and the government, the transit workers demonstrated the social power that must be mobilized in defense of the oppressed ghetto and barrio masses. A one-day strike or mass labor-led protest against racist cop terror would pack more wallop than a thousand photo-ops for Al Sharpton and Charles Barron. But this class-struggle strategy requires a political fight against the labor bureaucracy, which embraces the Democratic Party and the capitalist courts and cops.

Defining "acceptable force" will no doubt be a focus of the City Council and the police civilian review board. What's acceptable? The 41 bullets fired at the unarmed 22-year-old African immigrant Amadou Diallo in the vestibule of his home in 1999? Or the 20-odd bullets pumped into the backs of 18-year-old Antonio Rosario and 22-year-old Hilton Vega in 1995 in the Bronx as they lay on the ground as ordered by the police before their killing? Or will they draw the line at a more economical blast of bullets, such as police used to kill Timothy Stansbury, an unarmed

**For Labor Protest Against Racist Cop Terror!**

19-year-old, on the roof of his Brooklyn housing project in 2004, or Mingo Kenneth Mason, who was shot and killed outside a Harlem project with one bullet this September? The police arsenal of terror is not limited to semi-automatics: who can forget Haitian immigrant Abner Louima, brutally sodomized with a broom handle and beaten within an inch of his life in 1997 after being hauled into a police station for "questioning"?

It's been 15 years since the videotaped vicious beating of Rodney King showed the world what happens all the time to black people in racist America. Young black men have always been targets of racist violence in this capitalist system. But not even an aged black woman sitting in her own home is safe from the cops. In Atlanta, 88-year-old Kathryn Johnston managed to fire several shots in self-defense before cops with a "no knock" warrant broke down her door supposedly looking for drugs and killed her in a hail of bullets on November 21. One week later, protesters stormed police barricades in front of Kathryn Johnston's house. A church meeting was flanked with signs mocking the city's paid leave for the killer cops. One read: "Kill a Black Citizen and Get Paid." We say: Down with the racist "war on drugs"! No to gun control!

What happened to Sean Bell and Kathryn Johnston ought to dispel any illusions that having more black cops will change a damn thing. The latest victims were gunned down by a rainbow coalition of police: black, white and Latino, led by a white police chief in New York and a

black police chief in Atlanta. As the New York Spartacist League wrote in a leaflet issued immediately after the killing of Amadou Diallo (reprinted in *Workers Vanguard* No. 707, 19 February 1999):

"Such brutal, sadistic cop terror is not an 'aberration.' The cops, courts and prison system are at the core of the *capitalist state*, the repressive apparatus which protects the rule, the property and the profits of the tiny minority which owns the wealth of this country. While the capitalist class drives to increase profits, squeezing the working class and starving the ghettos, the gap between rich and poor grows ever wider. To enforce its rule, the capitalists must strengthen their apparatus of murderous repression."

It is crucial to understand that *systematic* racial oppression and segregation is a pillar of capitalist rule, and so it continues under Democratic as well as Republican administrations. Today the U.S. ruling class doesn't need black youth even as a "last hired, first fired" reserve army of labor. That means the government has no need to educate them either. So astounding numbers are locked up in the vastly expanding prison system, and others are poached by military recruiters to get blown away in U.S. imperialism's murderous occupation of Iraq. The "war on terror" is camouflage for the imperialist rulers to ride roughshod from Afghanistan to Iraq and for their war at home against immigrants, black people and the rights of the population as a whole. Bishop Lester Williams, who had been scheduled to perform Bell's wedding, bluntly said in referring to the cops' treatment of black Queens: "It's little Iraq."

Nationwide anger over the wave of cop killings should be tied to the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was railroaded to death row on false charges of killing a Philadelphia policeman in 1981. A former Black Panther and later a MOVE supporter and award-winning journalist, Mumia exposed the brutal workings of the racist cops and their "justice" system. For this he was victimized in a racist, political frame-up. The fight for freedom for Mumia is a fight against the capitalist state's ultimate instrument of racist terror: "legal lynching" by the death penalty. In this struggle, no confidence must be placed in the "fairness" of the racist capitalist courts, and all confidence placed in the power of mass, labor-centered protest.

The hard truth is that the only way to eliminate police brutality is to do away with the system of racist American capitalism, for which the "gang in blue uniforms" is the front line of defense. To fight for this kind of fundamental social change requires the understanding that the working class, which creates the wealth of this society, must lead the way forward to equality and justice for all, through socialist revolution. When the profit system is smashed and replaced with a planned economy, utilizing the wealth of this country for human need instead of capitalist greed, then we'll be on the road to completing the unfulfilled promise of the Civil War for black freedom. The Spartacist League, together with the Labor Black Leagues, is dedicated to the fight to build the revolutionary workers party that can lead this struggle. *Sean Bell, Kathryn Johnston: We will not forget!* ■

# Subscribe!

## Workers Vanguard

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League (includes English-language *Spartacist* and *Black History and the Class Struggle*)

- \$10 for 22 issues     \$2 for 6 introductory issues
- International rates: \$25 airmail/\$10 seamail

## Espartaco (en español)

Publication of the Grupo Espartaquista de México (includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)

- \$2 for 4 issues
- International rates: \$4 airmail/\$2 seamail

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Make checks payable/mail to:**  
Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116



# Immigrant Rights and the Fight for Black Liberation



WV Photo



Rubiera/Fayetteville Observer

**Left: Queens protest against racist cop killing of Sean Bell, 2 December 2006. Right: Walkout at Smithfield against victimization of immigrant workers, 17 November 2006.**

JANUARY 27—Three days ago, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents descended upon the Smithfield pork processing plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina, and arrested 21 workers who are now being deported. The Smithfield bosses have worked hand in hand with ICE, targeting workers on the pretext that their Social Security numbers cannot be verified.

After more than a decade of struggle by the United Food and Commercial Workers union to organize Smithfield, the company recently said it will allow a new union representation election. However, just prior to the ICE raid, the company said that beginning in February it will fire up to 600 workers, primarily those who walked out to protest the firing of 75 immigrants last year (see “Smithfield Walkout Saves Immigrants’ Jobs,” WV No. 881, 24 November 2006). Moreover, Smithfield has effectively blocked elections by appealing a National Labor Relations Board ruling that held that the company’s private cops had brutalized workers during an earlier walkout.

The arrests at Smithfield are the latest installment of a vindictive campaign launched by the government following immigrant rights protests last spring. More than 750 immigrants in Southern California were rounded up this month as part of “Operation Return to Sender,” a

nationwide drive in which more than 13,000 people have been arrested since June, ostensibly for evading deportation orders or for having previously been deported for crimes committed in the U.S.

“Homeland Security” repression is also bearing down on unionized black workers. Late last year in Chicago, some 70 mostly black rail workers lost their jobs, many for supposedly violating new government guidelines barring ex-felons from holding such positions. As we wrote in “Protest ‘War on Terror’ Firing of Rail Workers!” (WV No. 884, 19 January): “The fight for the rights of workers, immigrants and black people will either go forward together—independent from and opposed to the capitalist class and its government—or fall back separately.”

The following is adapted from a forum given in Los Angeles on 16 September 2006 by Spartacist League Central Committee member Don Alexander.

\* \* \*

Not a day passes without many horrible examples of the social barbarism inherent in this decaying, racist capitalist system. In the world arena, so-called civilized U.S. imperialism has been and is the outstanding example of imperialist rapacity, smugness, hypocrisy, torture and mass murder. In the U.S., the bipartisan “war against terror” is a war against immigrants, black people, the left and

labor. It is no accident that following the nationwide immigrant rights protests last May, the capitalist government dispatched the National Guard to the Mexican border and also sent Guardsmen back to New Orleans. Not a mere coincidence. The racist capitalist ruling class has never missed a chance to play whites off against blacks, blacks and whites against immigrants, men against women, old against young, and vice versa.

The struggles against anti-immigrant chauvinism and for black freedom are intertwined. The key to unlocking the power of labor in the United States is the fight for black liberation, which can be a motor force for proletarian revolution. We say that the color bar in America, the special oppression of black people as an oppressed race-color caste, serves to obscure the division of society into irreconcilable classes and to keep the working class divided.

Today immigrants are 12 percent of the population, with about half coming from Mexico and Central America and the rest from Asia and Europe. In the 1950s, only 2.5 million immigrants arrived in the United States, with 60 percent coming from Europe or Canada, 25 percent from Latin America or the Caribbean and only 6 percent from Asia. By the 1980s, however, immigration to the U.S. had nearly tripled to 7.3 million

people, only 12 percent of whom came from Europe or Canada, with 47 percent originating from Latin America and another 37 percent from Asia. During the 1990s, an additional ten million immigrants entered the country, exceeding the prior pace set in the previous decade by 37.7 percent. The vast majority came from Latin America and Asia.

Twenty years ago, the right-wing Republican Reagan administration introduced the Immigration Reform and Control Act. They came up with a "guest worker" program primarily serving the interests of huge agribusiness. But the Act legalized 2.3 million Mexican workers, who had to document at least five years of residence in the U.S. This meant that Hispanics—who had historically been concentrated in Texas, California and also Florida, with its large number of Cubans, Nicaraguans and others—could move elsewhere. During the 1990s, the Hispanic population increased by some 60 percent, rising from 22.4 million in 1990 to 35.3 million in 2000. By 2003, the new census counts confirmed that the Hispanic population surpassed black Americans as the nation's largest minority.

Our Marxist program speaks directly to immigrants' burning needs. We demand full citizenship rights for all immigrants, whether legal or "illegal"—for all who have made it here. We also say that if there were a real amnesty for undocumented workers, we would support that, while recognizing that such gains are partial. We stand for full equality of all languages in all spheres of public life and defend bilingual education against "English only" bigots. We stand unalterably opposed to the bourgeoisie's anti-immigrant laws and regulations. Against the capitalists' attempts to use undocumented, low-wage immigrant workers as a club against the trade unions, we seek to mobilize the labor movement to fight deportations and anti-immigrant raids through class-struggle means, and to organize such workers into unions with full rights and protections.

We fight to build a party—a multi-racial revolutionary workers party—that champions the interests and the rights of all the oppressed and exploited, whether fighting for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, for defense of the besieged Latino poor, for defense of Asians, for defense of abortion rights for women, for women's liberation through socialist revolution, for democratic rights for homosexuals, for black freedom. Immigrant workers, especially from Mexico and Central America, bring militant traditions of class struggle to the U.S. And they are not only a catalyst for class and

social struggle, but also a human bridge linking the struggles of working people on both sides of the border. And this is why it's so important to mobilize immigrant workers in struggle and to defend them.

It is not just a question of immigrant workers' continued militancy and determination, but that they share common class interests with the proletariat as a whole. There must be a class-struggle mobilization of the labor movement to fight for jobs for all through a shorter workweek with no cut in pay, a unified struggle for our burning, fundamental needs.

Worldwide, the imperialists have perfected the art of playing upon national, ethnic, religious and sexual divisions to perpetuate their barbaric rule. At their disposal are various weapons of mass deception: their press, their political parties, their preachers and priests. Above all, they have their armed bodies of men who safeguard their "right" to exploit and live off the labor of others. As Trotskyists, we fight

for international proletarian revolution.

We raise an implacable struggle against the U.S. capitalist rulers, both Democrats and Republicans, and demand the unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, Afghanistan, South Korea and elsewhere. We stand for the defeat of imperialism through international proletarian revolution. While the imperialist troops butcher Iraqis, the racist cops gun down blacks and Latinos here in racist capitalist America.

### Marxism and Immigration

Our revolutionary internationalist proletarian program flows from the reality of the world capitalist economy. As Marxists, we understand that imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, is not a preferred policy of capitalism but the inevitable product of the constant search for sources of cheap labor and raw materials. This has twice resulted in bloody interimperialist wars for the division and redivision of the world.

## 27 November 1982: "We Stopped the Klan!"



WV Photo

Twenty-five years ago, a mass labor/black mobilization initiated by the Spartacist League drove the race-terrorist KKK off the streets of Washington, D.C. With the working class reeling from capitalist attacks on labor and with anti-Soviet Cold War II in full swing, the Klan had announced a march against "illegal" immigrants, posing a direct threat to black people, trade unionists, leftists and all who are in the fascists' sights. But they were stopped cold when more than 5,000 union members, black youth and anti-racist militants turned out and took the streets instead. This demonstration of communist-led, integrated working-class power showed the way forward in the struggle for black liberation through socialist revolution!



**Mexico City: March 2006 rally in solidarity with National Mining and Metallurgical Workers Union, which launched two-day strike after government attack on union's leader.**

Whether it's immigration or trade policy, we don't seek to advise the bourgeoisie. There is no answer to the brutal immiseration produced by this boom-and-bust capitalist system without a proletarian socialist revolution that takes power out of the hands of the capitalist exploiters. Basing ourselves upon the lessons of history—the Paris Commune of 1871, and in particular the victorious October 1917 Russian Revolution—we understand that workers cannot achieve emancipation through a futile quest to reform the capitalist profit system. The fight must be for a socialist revolution that smashes the bloody capitalist state apparatus and constructs a workers state. This requires a consistently revolutionary program and the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party, a tribune of the people.

The system of capitalism long ago outlived any progressive historical role. Today, capitalism retards the development of the productive forces of society, which long ago outgrew the narrow shell of the bourgeois nation-state. We recognize that the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state and the East European deformed workers states, an unprecedented defeat of the international proletariat, has resulted in a retrogression of political consciousness, albeit unevenly. This has meant that the proletariat today does not view its struggles through the prism of the fight for socialism. Despite the bourgeois lie of the “death of communism,” there exists a rich body of theoretical and programmatic conceptions to draw upon in the struggle for the complete emancipation of the working class from capitalist exploitation.

The exploiters know this. And that is why they put out their anti-communist garbage. Outlived social classes fight back in defense of their obsolete systems, just like the pro-slavery ideologists in the pre-Civil War South did—those like George Fitzhugh, who wrote biting denunciations of the evils of the industrial capitalist wage-slavery system in the North in order to counter the slaveholders' Northern bourgeois opponents. It was the Southern slavocracy's desire to extend slavery that partly motivated the 1846 invasion of Mexico, which resulted in the United States government's stealing half of Mexico's territory. A workers government in the U.S. would return to Mexico certain predominantly Spanish-speaking areas along the border. It is worthy of note that in 1855 Texas slaveholders bitterly complained of the estimated loss of more than 4,000 black slaves, valued at more than \$3.2 million, who escaped to northern Mexico. According to one account, by the mid 1850s several Texas counties had passed laws prohibiting Mexicans from communicating with slaves.

Capitalism, paraphrasing Karl Marx, came into the world dripping with the blood of the oppressed. In Volume One of *Capital*, Marx laid out how the development of capitalism entailed horrific consequences especially for women and children. Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin quoted from this volume in *The Teachings of Karl Marx* (1915):

“The expropriation and eviction of a part of the agricultural population not only set free for industrial capital, the laborers, their means of subsistence, and material for labor; it also created the home market.”

“The impoverishment and ruin of the

agricultural population led, in their turn, to the formation of a reserve army of labor for capital. In every capitalist country a part of the agricultural population is therefore constantly on the point of passing over into an urban or manufacturing proletariat.... This source of relative surplus population is thus constantly flowing.... The agricultural labor is therefore reduced to the minimum of wages, and always stands with one foot in the swamp of pauperism’.”

This process also results in the amalgamation of the proletariat of different nations and brings to the fore their common interests as an international class. “The Thesis on the World Role of American Imperialism” (1938), one of the founding documents of Trotsky's Fourth International, exposed the deceitful “good neighbor” policy of U.S. imperialism toward Latin America. (The name has changed over the years. I know under Kennedy they used to refer to it as the “Alliance for Progress.”) The Thesis stated:

“The ‘good neighbor’ policy is nothing but the attempt to unify the Western Hemisphere under the hegemony of Washington, as a solid bloc welded by the latter in its drive to close the door of the two American continents to all the foreign imperialist powers except itself. This policy is materially supplemented by the favorable trade agreements which the United States seeks to conclude with Latin American countries in the hope of systematically edging its rivals out of the market.... The struggle against American imperialism is therefore at the same time a struggle against the coming imperialist war and for the liberation of oppressed colonial and semicolonial peoples. Hence, it is inseparable from the class struggle of the American proletariat against the ruling bourgeoisie, and cannot be conducted apart from it.”

This is still true. Currently there are some bourgeois-nationalist thorns in the side of U.S. imperialism, such as Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia, who spout anti-U.S. rhetoric as a way to conceal their own bourgeois rule.

We fight for the unity and integrity of the international working class against chauvinism and racism. The same racist U.S. capitalist butchers who brutally exploit the peoples of Latin America and elsewhere also let the poor and black people of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast drown, suffer and rot during and after Hurricane Katrina. They use their cops to torture black people in Chicago, and last January they sent white coal miners to their deaths in West Virginia.

### **The “Free Trade” Rape of Mexico**

Mexico today is in turmoil. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) forced millions of Mexican peasants out of the countryside. NAFTA came into

effect on January 1, 1994, and in its first two years more than 2.3 million Mexicans lost their jobs. The effect of NAFTA is an important component of increased immigration to the U.S. Also, capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe has accelerated immigration internationally, particularly to West Europe. NAFTA wreaked havoc for Mexican workers and peasants with the elimination of state subsidies for many goods and services. Mexican workers had their wages slashed, they were thrown out of work by the thousands, and many were forced into informal employment. The costs of basic necessities such as gas and

tion. Capital migrates to areas of higher profitability. This demands of Marxists the organization of workers, from the Yukon to the Yucatán, for common internationalist class struggle and for socialist revolution throughout the Americas.

The labor lieutenants of the capitalist class—the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy—holler about foreign workers “taking American jobs,” with China being at the top of their list. It’s in the interests of the U.S. proletariat to unite with the workers of the world to overthrow the hideous system of capitalism. The imperialists especially seek to restore capitalist rule in China, a deformed workers

ized and the bourgeois state should stay out of our bedrooms and our lives. Whether in Mexico, the Philippines or even the “land of the free,” the capitalist U.S.A., the fight for free abortion on demand, free quality medical and child care and equal pay for equal work requires winning the most conscious elements of the working class to carry out the proletariat’s historic task as the fighter for the interests of the oppressed. The working class must take up the fight for women’s liberation, which requires the overthrow of the capitalist order.

As Lenin explained in his classic work *What Is To Be Done?* (1902), revolutionary working-class consciousness is not a by-product of spontaneous struggle but must be brought into the proletariat from the outside, through the intervention of a vanguard party. Proletarian internationalism is not abstract. It is a necessity dictated by the increased economic integration of the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

### For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

In racist capitalist America, black rights and immigrant rights either go forward together or slide back separately. Black oppression is the cornerstone of U.S. capitalism, rooted in the very structure of the capitalist system and a key weapon of the ruling class historically to maintain its class domination.

The Labor Black Leagues, initiated by the Spartacist League and fraternally allied to it, promote and fight for common class struggle. On the masthead of the LBLs’ newsletters, we have Karl Marx’s statement that “labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.” Our program for black liberation is the program of revolutionary integrationism, the fight for black liberation through socialist revolution. This program is in sharp counterposition to the program of liberal integrationism, which is based upon the lie that you can have equality between the oppressed and the oppressors, that you can have genuine black freedom under capitalism. Equality, as Friedrich Engels put it in his magnificent book *Anti-Dühring* (1878), can only be achieved by abolishing the capitalist mode of production.

Despite disproportionately bearing the brunt of racist cutbacks and job losses, black workers are a strategic component of the unionized proletariat and potentially can play a vanguard role in the struggle for the rule of the working class. However, black workers’ weight in the proletariat has undergone considerable erosion. The renewal of this layer of the proletariat has been checked by new



Schumann/SABA

**Los Angeles, 1992: Multiracial upheaval over acquittal of racist LAPD cops in Rodney King beating shook capitalist rulers.**

electricity skyrocketed, and the masses today face increased starvation or are forced to emigrate.

This “free trade agreement” represented imperialist looting of Mexico. We opposed it from the very beginning from an internationalist, revolutionary standpoint. In 1991, the Grupo Espartaquista de México, the Trotskyist League of Canada and the Spartacist League/U.S., sections of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), issued a joint statement declaring, “There is a burning need for an *internationalist* proletarian opposition which stands with the working class and impoverished peasantry of Mexico against the imperialist assault” (“Stop U.S. ‘Free Trade’ Rape of Mexico,” *WV* No. 530, 6 July 1991). In contrast, the labor tops of the AFL-CIO and the Teamsters opposed NAFTA on the basis of poisonous chauvinism and protectionism.

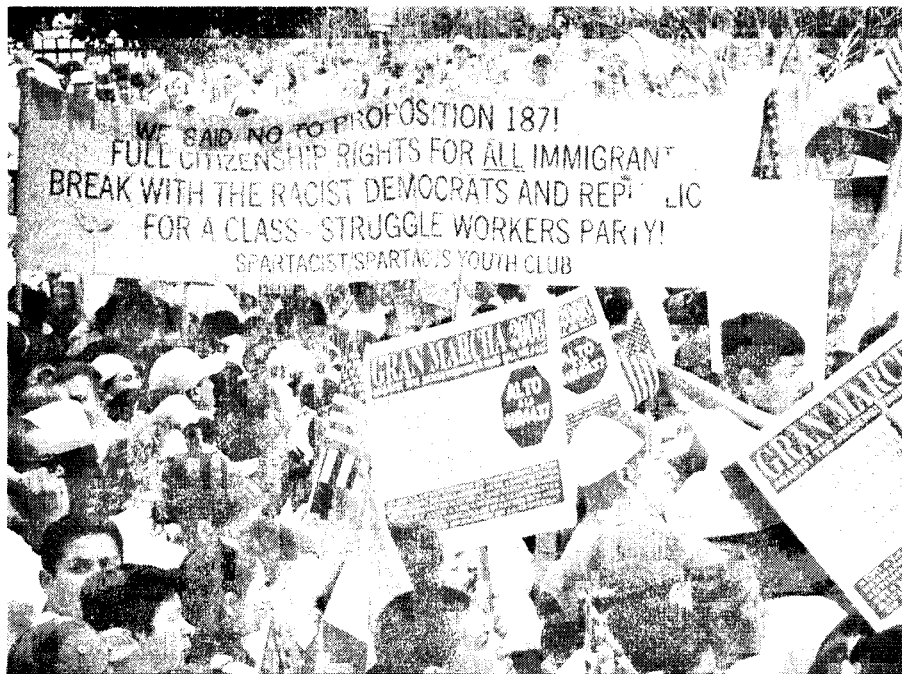
Apparently, the U.S. imperialists are building what they call a NAFTA super-highway—the construction of major transportation corridors from Mexico’s Pacific coast port of Lázaro Cárdenas to Kansas City, and also to Canada. This is the inexorable logic of capitalist produc-

tion, and completely turn that country into a giant sweatshop of superexploited labor and a haven for super-profits.

### Immigration and Women’s Oppression

Women workers in Mexico are brutally exploited, especially in the so-called free-trade *maquiladora* factory zones in the North. Women there as young as 16 suffer exposure to poisonous chemicals and endure wretched working conditions that maim and destroy them. They endure not only constant sexist abuse but outright murder by the police and their henchmen. Ideologically, the reactionary, anti-woman Catholic church and the bourgeois parties—the National Action Party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party and the Party of the Democratic Revolution—bolster their subjugation. The institution of the family is the main source of the oppression of women.

Many women from desperately poor Third World countries, including Mexico and the Philippines, endure racist, anti-woman abuse in the U.S. Some women opt for prostitution as a means to survive. Prostitution should be decriminal-



WV Photo

March 2006: Spartacist banner at huge L.A. demonstration for immigrant rights.

forms of racial and social controls devised by the racist rulers. Not a day goes by in which their racist “war on drugs” doesn’t add to the total of broken black lives—and also Latino youths’ lives. American capitalism is a prison nation, a gigantic jailhouse for the poor and the oppressed. In New York City, nearly half the black men are unemployed.

There are various schools of liberal idealism that posit race and not class as the fundamental dividing line in society. From their standpoint, racism is primarily a product of bad ideas. This notion divorces racism from its material, economic roots in capitalist society. In his latest book, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White*, the scholar David Roediger reflects the bankruptcy of liberalism. How is it possible to write such a book and not mention slavery? It’s not even in the book’s index. He can’t explain how black people became a race-color caste forcibly segregated at the bottom of this society, victims of the institutionalized racial oppression that is fostered by the bourgeoisie. Black oppression is bound up with black chattel slavery and is a foundation of American capitalism. Slavery’s legacy persists: the racist segregation, the unparalleled levels of imprisonment, the racist death penalty.

Slavery was the defining reality at the founding of the United States, from the slave trade’s very earliest phase and its tenuous hold in the 16th century to its full flowering in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. For the majority of the history of this country, black chattel slavery

made a mockery of the democratic ideology of the founding fathers. Most of the early presidents of this country were slaveholders, along with the chief justices of the Supreme Court. The ideology of black inferiority and white superiority was a rationalization for the brutal extraction of uncompensated slave labor in the production of commodities for an international market.

Today, on one hand we get the neocons and others proclaiming an “end to racism,” embodied in their obscenely misnamed “civil rights” initiatives that have abolished the remnants of affirmative action at many universities. The flip side of this is “people of color” liberal politics, which denies the distinct and different histories of different ethnic groups in this country and, especially, ignores the special oppression of black people. Its purveyors reject the fact that anti-black racism has been central to the maintenance of the bourgeois order in this country. Such an omission—color blindness if you will—is a backhanded concession to reactionary ideologues such as David Horowitz who openly and stridently deny the reality of black oppression.

Behind “people of color” politics is a political program. Race is viewed as the primary dividing line in capitalist society, as opposed to the class division between the capitalists and the workers. There is an implicit presumption that all non-white people have common interests against all whites. White workers and bosses are supposedly united in “white skin privilege.” Large sections of the

white working class do buy into the racism of this society, which is fomented by the exploiters. However, what material stake do white workers have in the perpetuation of this incredibly unequal society, whose white ruling class enjoys unparalleled riches coming at the workers’ expense? None whatsoever.

That is not to say that the racist rulers don’t constantly fill their heads with the lie of white superiority and black inferiority, and this has its effects. But it would be news to many of these workers—who along with black people, Latinos and Asian workers, have lost jobs and hard-earned benefits—that they, as opposed to the Wall Street money sharks, are the beneficiaries of the oppression of minorities. The presumption is that blacks and Latinos have more in common with Chinese or Indian businessmen than with Irish- or Italian-derived white workers. The presumption is that Condoleezza Rice and Alberto Gonzales are “our people.”

“People of color” politics serves to perpetuate the divisions in the working class and can only help drive white workers into the arms of this country’s white ruling class. Unlike the liberals and the reformists, we fight to win the multiracial working class to a program and perspective of class struggle against a common enemy, the capitalist exploiters. We fight to win the workers, no matter what their color or sex, to the struggle for socialist revolution to abolish capitalism.

### Capitalism’s Labor Lieutenants

In recent demonstrations for immigrant rights, we heard the slogan “Today we march, tomorrow we vote.” The large, nationwide pro-immigrant rights protests last spring were an expression of a lot of determination of immigrant workers—Mexicans, Central Americans, Asians—to fight for their rights against the bourgeoisie’s attempts to criminalize them. These protests also represented, on the part of their organizers, a conscious attempt to steer immigrants into Democratic Party electoral politics. The protests were politically dominated by the Democratic Party and the reactionary Catholic church. The so-called “path to citizenship” “guest worker” program, which California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger recently picked up on, is pushed by Massachusetts Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy and Arizona Republican Senator John McCain. It represents a form of indentured servitude, beefed-up border patrol repression and new, fortified border walls.

A key issue in this unfolding battle is the fight for working-class political independence from the capitalist Democratic



and Republican parties. Despite occasional differences, these parties contest every four years to run the government, which is an executive committee for running the affairs of the bourgeoisie. The pro-capitalist AFL-CIO labor bureaucracy opposes the expansion of the guest worker program, while refusing to mobilize labor's power on behalf of the oppressed. The leadership of the so-called "Change to Win"—more like Born to Lose—coalition, which split from the AFL-CIO in 2005, supports Kennedy and McCain's plan and also calls for more border "security" measures.

The misleaders of both major labor federations are dead set against organizing the unorganized through class-struggle means because they are staunch defenders of capitalism and the bourgeoisie's so-called national interests. They tie the workers and the oppressed to the "friends of labor" capitalist Democratic Party. They hate and fear united class struggle against the capitalist exploiters. That's why we fight to forge a class-struggle leadership of labor through a struggle to oust the treacherous labor bureaucracy.

The potential exists for common class struggle. We saw this during the multi-racial protests back in 1992 against the acquittal of the cops who savagely beat black motorist Rodney King. The Spartacist League fought for militant labor action in 1992 in defense of the besieged ghettos and barrios during the L.A. revolt. With the presence of immigrants, largely from Central America and Mexico, in these protests, this could have set the stage for genuine, united class struggle. The power existed within the labor movement nearby in the ports, in Long Beach, if the workers had been organized and mobilized. In the absence of such a struggle, the nationalists, both black and Latino, fought over the crumbs of who was going to "rebuild L.A."—i.e., who was going to line their own pockets.

More recently, anti-racist white youth, blacks, Latinos and others stood together on the picket lines during the hard-fought UFCW supermarket workers strike of 2003-2004. That strike was knifed and defeated by the labor tops, who prevented it from being extended nationally.

In New York City, black, white and immigrant workers united on the picket lines during the all too brief, three-day transit strike in December 2005. It was a powerful strike. It represented a fight against the anti-strike Taylor Law. It showed in action the tremendous social power of labor to cripple the financial center of U.S. capitalism. However, the transit workers union bureaucracy led by Roger Toussaint called the strike off after



Chambers/Orange County Register

### Pickers in Southern California face down scab truck during 2003-2004 UFCW grocery workers strike.

three days. The bureaucracy's program of class collaboration means an alliance with the very Democratic Party whose state attorney general, Eliot Spitzer, brought down the injunction against the strike. Now Spitzer is governor of New York. There was tremendous sympathy for the strike on the part of the black and Latino poor and New York City workers who saw this union as standing up for *their* future.

To build a revolutionary party we have to politically defeat the opportunist currents within the labor movement, the opponents of the revolutionary workers movement. There is no such thing as the "family of the left." While the fake-left reformists criticize aspects of the Democrats' proposed immigration legislation, they oppose the perspective of a class-struggle fight for immigrant rights and for black freedom. They oppose the struggle for proletarian revolution.

The International Socialist Organization (ISO) stated during last year's immigrant rights protests that they were "sending chills down the spine of Corporate America" (*Socialist Worker* online, 7 April 2006) and that "potentially the movement can break the logjam of U.S. politics, in which the Republicans launch attack after attack with little or no response from the Democrats" (*Socialist Worker* online, 31 March 2006). In other words, make the Democrats fight, and capitalists should cease to be capitalists. The ISO ridiculously whines that the ultra-legalistic and respectable NAACP merely supports a path to citizenship for college-age students and has firmly planted itself on the right wing of the

movement. From its inception, the NAACP has lobbied to get the viciously racist rulers to ameliorate conditions for black people in the smallest kind of way, to allow the tiny black middle class more access to perks and positions. Then you have Workers World Party, which claimed that the immigrant rights protests represented "taking a path independent of both Republicans and Democrats" (*Workers World* online, 27 April 2006).

Chiming in along similar lines is a tiny organization, mainly based in New York, called the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP), which claims to be Trotskyist. The LRP was founded on capitulation to anti-Sovietism and racist reaction, to anti-busing bigotry in Boston. They also chase behind the liberals, and in the words of Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin, bow to spontaneity. In regard to the protests, they said that this "partial victory has already begun to affect the consciousness of oppressed immigrant workers. They are learning a crucial lesson: their own power" (*Proletarian Revolution*, Spring 2006). What partial victory? The beefing up of the borders with National Guardsmen? Increased deportations and increased deaths in the deserts in Arizona? What planet do they live on?

Now I have already pointed out a few things about the historical role of anti-black racism in the U.S., that this has largely prevented the development of socialist consciousness within the proletariat. And I recall an old saying when I was growing up: "If you're white, you're right; if you're brown, stick around; if you're black, get back." It

has some truth to it, but not the whole truth. Because you don't have to be black to be kicked around, beaten down and locked away. Black people don't have a monopoly on suffering in this society.

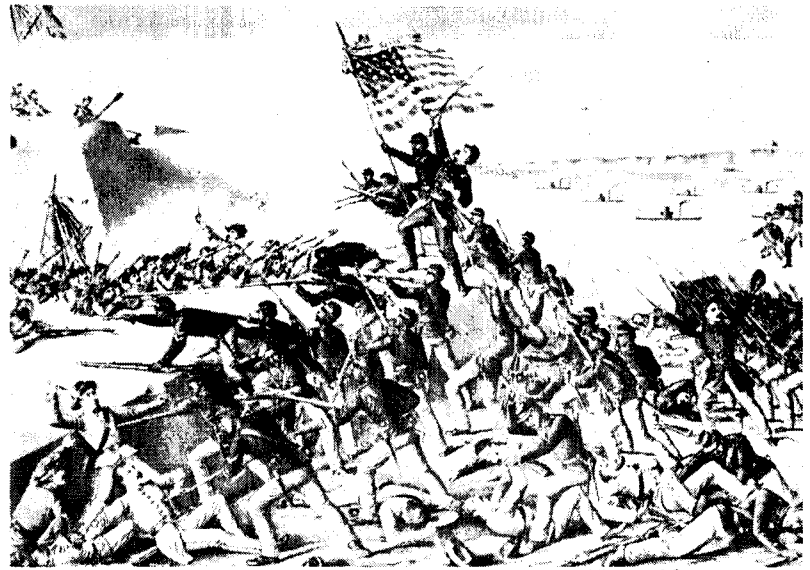
### Black Democrats and Immigrant Rights

In the U.S., there are a number of petty-bourgeois black hustlers, capitalist wannabes, who were the main beneficiaries of the civil rights movement and who demonstrate complete contempt for the oppressed black masses. They got PhDs in blaming the oppressed for their oppression. They include black Democrats like Jesse Jackson and Barack Obama, black nationalist demagogue Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam, and for a while Bill Cosby was not to be outdone.

A number of the political con artists who represented the legalistic-pacifist wing of the civil rights movement are still around, cynically talking about a so-called new civil rights movement—which to them means a new movement to chain labor, blacks, Latinos and immigrants to the Democrats. Some of them play the anti-immigrant card, like Andrew Young, the black former UN ambassador under Democratic president Jimmy Carter, who recently talked about how various immigrants rip off black people.

Although we defend such gains as the right to vote, we point out that the failure of the liberal-led civil rights movement to qualitatively change the conditions of the black masses shows that no number of laws can change the conditions of the black ghetto masses. Because the slightest fight for jobs, decent integrated education, an end to racist police brutality means a fight to abolish capitalism, the root cause of black oppression. We fight for black liberation through socialist revolution—the assimilation of black people in an egalitarian socialist order in which the monstrous edifice of caste oppression has been swept away.

Black Democrats are divided on the question of immigrant rights. Al Sharpton and Jackson posture as defenders of immigrants, lining up some of the immigrants' votes for the Democrats. We know and have pointed out (see "Labor and the Fight for Immigrant Rights," *WV* No. 871, 26 May 2006) that under the liberal Democratic administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mexican workers were used, abused and sent back to Mexico during the Great Depression of the 1930s. (This is not to mention the "Operation Wetback" deportations under a later administration in the 1950s.) This was the same Roosevelt who opposed anti-lynching



Library of Congress image

**Graphic depicts black Massachusetts 54th regiment charging South Carolina's Fort Wagner, July 1863.**

legislation because of his alliance with Southern racist Dixiecrats. This was historically the best the liberals have had to offer.

As a quintessential petty-bourgeois hustler, Sharpton wore a wire for the Feds in the 1980s. He has supported one or another sordid capitalist politician, like Republican Al D'Amato, as well as Roy Innis of CORE, who in the mid 1970s supported the UNITA organization, which was backed by apartheid South Africa, in Angola against the petty-bourgeois nationalists of the MPLA, which was backed by the Soviet Union and Cuba. Sharpton led boycotts in Harlem against Arab shopkeepers in 1986. He has served the racist exploiters well in keeping the masses in check—squelching struggle against the racist acquittal of the murderous cops who pumped 41 bullets at unarmed black African immigrant Amadou Diallo, and fronting for the Ku Klux Klan by going to court on their behalf in opposition to the Partisan Defense Committee-initiated labor/black mobilization that stopped the Klan from marching in New York City in October 1999.

L.A.-based, pro-Democratic Party liberal Earl Ofari Hutchinson issued one of his communiqués warning Latino capitalist politicians to not forget black interests as they rally for their rights. And he said, "Though Latinos have displaced blacks as the nation's biggest minority group, the popular notion lingers that they are years away from packing the political wallop of black voters and politicians" (*Pasadena Weekly*, 18 May 2006). And further he wrote in an online article (2 May 2006), "Latinos who want to change the mindset of blacks on illegal

immigrants' rights must make a visible and concerted effort to reach out to blacks and not just on immigrant rights issues but on issues that are important to blacks as well."

Earl Ofari Hutchinson is a former so-called radical who long ago made his peace with this rotten racist capitalist system. Today he pushes illusions in the pro-capitalist Martin Luther King wing of the civil rights movement and he praises the arch-Uncle Tom Booker T. Washington, who from the late 1880s to the 20th century pushed segregation and "black capitalism." Washington's gospel of self-help is fervently embraced today by petty-bourgeois black misleaders who ingratiate themselves with the white ruling class. This underscores the sharp, conflicting class interests within the black population.

Again we hear, from Ofari, that the liberal pacifist King was becoming a socialist toward the end of his life. This is not new. The reformists sing the same psalms. When you hear that, it's time to reach for your wallet and watch your back. This is the same King who supported the suppression of the black masses during the Watts rebellion in 1965. This deliberate deception by these hypocritical, self-serving Democratic Party liberals is aimed at fooling the oppressed masses into thinking that the liberals represent a realistic alternative to a class-struggle program for black liberation, a program which is inseparable from a struggle to get rid of the capitalist system.

### For Working-Class Unity!

The pervasive hopelessness and despair in America's ghettos today have a

basis. They grow out of several decades of defeats for working people and black people as a result of the betrayals of the pro-capitalist labor leadership and the savage attacks administered by black Democratic Party mayors as front men for racist capitalist rule. One can see the despair in the pervasive use of the “N” word.

Such defeats have generated among some blacks the growth of separatist sentiment, which is incapable, like the program of black separatism historically, of generating a program of struggle. Separatism acquiesces to the racist capitalist status quo, accepts “separate but equal” segregation. Najee Ali in L.A. is emblematic of the black nationalist program that embraces capitalism. While posing as a champion of the poor and oppressed, he rails against immigrants for “taking jobs from blacks.” He defends *sharia*, Islamic law, in Afghanistan and the veil. He embraces anti-woman, anti-immigrant, anti-labor and anti-communist ideology, and he says that he is for the protection of women from the supposed evils of rap music. This is poison to integrated class struggle against the capitalist exploiters, who seek to enslave us all.

His reactionary politics is cut out of the same filthy cloth of the CIA-backed fundamentalist *mujahedin* who in Afghanistan in the late 1970s and ‘80s skinned schoolteachers who taught women how to read and write. Teaching women how to read and write was a crime for U.S. imperialism and their *mujahedin* Islamic cut-throat allies, just like during slavery it was a crime to teach black people how to read and write. In opposition to “born again” Cold Warrior Democratic president Jimmy Carter, we said: “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Extend the social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!” We warned and fought against any pullout of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Indeed, the Soviet withdrawal in 1988–89 was a criminal betrayal that paved the way for the destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state itself.

We don’t romanticize the oppressed. We don’t shut our eyes to the poisonous divisions of capitalist society. Many immigrants do buy into the anti-black racism of the capitalist exploiters. For many immigrants, this has historically been one of the tickets for admission and possible acceptance in this capitalist society. The dominant ideas are the ideas of the ruling class. And we combat the ideological influence of the bourgeoisie upon the proletariat, be it through a struggle against racism, against the oppression of women or against anti-gay bigotry. Racial divisions among workers can be overcome through militant class struggle.

The reality and centrality of black oppression have come to bite many foreign-born immigrants over the years. This includes black immigrants, like the Jamaica-born poet Claude McKay, who in the 1920s captured his recognition of anti-black racism in this country, which he thought he was exempt from, in a powerful series of essays. One of these was titled, “He Who Gets Slapped.” It was him, when he tried to get into a theater. Even the relatively privileged Cuban immigrants, who are welcomed into the U.S. by the anti-Communist American rulers, soon find this out. While white Cuban *gusanos*—counterrevolutionary worms—run Miami, the black Cubans who get there are relegated to low-paid jobs. They’re segregated into the ghettos like Liberty City and Overtown and subjected to racist cop terror.

### **For a Workers Party to Fight for Socialist Revolution!**

It will take a fighting leadership of labor, committed to uncompromising class struggle, to transform the unions into instruments of revolutionary struggle against the bosses. The absence of a working-class-led fight against black oppression has crippled the labor movement in the United States, especially in the open shop South. With the significant growth of the immigrant workforce in the South, especially Mexican workers, the possibility of common struggle is sharply posed.

In Tar Heel, North Carolina, there exists the Smithfield packing plant, the biggest employer in the region and the largest pork production plant in the world. The few whites there are either mechanics or supervisors, while black and Latino workers have the dirtiest jobs. In 1997, after a failed union recognition struggle, management fired the pro-union black workers and replaced them with Latino immigrants. We know that this can blow up in the bosses’ faces, like when unionized black janitors were replaced in L.A. by immigrant workers who then went on to organize strikes in the city. The morning of the union vote in Smithfield in 1997, the deputy sheriff showed up in riot gear, and on the union trailer that had been set up were the words “n----r lover.” That was the management response.

We’ve pointed out that the fight to organize the South means a direct fight for black equality and against the anti-union company thugs who are backed up by the union-hating, racist Klan terrorists. Organizing the unorganized in the South today has necessarily got to be on an internationalist basis, to undercut the capitalists’ attempt to pit sections of the proletariat against each other. Opposed to the refor-

mists, who proceed from a nationally limited framework, we put forward a revolutionary internationalist program that flows from the nature of the world capitalist economy. As I’ve said, we do not advise the capitalist rulers on immigration. We fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations!

The racist atrocity in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina graphically shows the continued racial oppression of black people. It’s out in the open for the world to see. It shows the anarchy and bankruptcy of American capitalism, of capitalism period, and the necessity of struggling for a planned economy under workers rule. The working people of the world saw how this government let people suffer and die. The fight to rebuild New Orleans, the fight for jobs for the unemployed and displaced at union wages, for free, quality medical care, the fight to defend public education against the flourishing of charter schools—all these sharply pose the question of fighting for a new leadership in the labor movement.

There is no substitute for building a Leninist vanguard party, a tribune of the people like the Bolshevik Party forged in tsarist Russia that led the working class and the oppressed to the seizure of state power in 1917. They established Soviet rule: democratically elected workers councils that administer the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In the U.S., it took a civil war to end slavery, and it will take international socialist revolution to end capitalist wage slavery here and throughout the world. I want to conclude with a statement issued on August 18, 1945 by the then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party in its newspaper, the *Militant*, just a few days after the U.S. atomic-bombing of Japan:

“Let the cataclysmic horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki serve as a clarion call to the working class! The workers must wrench the power from the hands of the blood-drenched capitalist criminals and take their destiny in their own hands. The fight for socialism is now more than a fight to end poverty and inequality, to abolish the exploitation of man by man. Today the fight for socialism is a fight to prevent the annihilation of the human race. Mankind must now exterminate the capitalist system—or be exterminated!”

The fight for a communist future of humanity is our only guarantee to life—to live for the first time as free human beings, administering a world socialist order of material abundance and cultural enrichment, in which all of our potentials can be realized. That is what the Spartacist League, the U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), fights for. We call on you to join us in that fight. ■

# Join the Labor Black Leagues!

The Labor Black Leagues stand for mobilizing the masses of black and working people for militant integrated struggle against the brutal system of racist oppression that is capitalist America.

Initiated by and fraternally allied to the Spartacist League, a multiracial revolutionary Marxist organization, the Labor Black Leagues are part of the revolutionary movement of the workers and the oppressed against the bosses and for socialism.

Since they were brought to this country in chains and enslaved, black people have been an integral part of American class society while at the same time forcibly segregated at the bottom. It took the Civil War to emancipate black people from chattel slavery. But the Civil War was not carried to its completion, and black people were freed from slavery only to be stripped of political rights and economically subjugated. The civil rights movement, tied to pro-Democratic Party pressure politics and sold out by liberal reformism, failed to complete the unfinished business of the Civil War. We fight to win the entire working class, including white workers as well as the growing number of Latino and other immigrants, to the fight for black liberation, strategic to the American revolution. Black and working-class militants must stand for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and in their defense against racist and chauvinist anti-immigrant attacks. An injury to one is an injury to all!

The Labor Black Leagues raise the call: Finish the Civil War! Forward to a workers state! They base their perspectives on the realization that it will take a third American revolution, a workers revolution, to finally liberate black people.

WV Photo



## If You Stand For—

**1** Full rights for black people and for everyone else in jobs, housing and schools! Defeat the racist assault on affirmative action! For union-run minority job recruitment and training programs! For union hiring halls! Open up the universities to all—for open admissions, free tuition and a full living stipend for all students. Free, quality, integrated public education for all!

**2** A fighting labor movement—picket lines mean don't cross! Defeat police scabberding and strikebreaking through mass pickets and union defense guards! For sit-down strikes against mass layoffs! Fight union-busting; keep the capitalist courts out of the unions! Organize the unorganized, unionize the South! Jobs for all—for a shorter workweek at no loss in pay with full cost-of-living escalator clause! Cops, prison guards and security guards out of the unions!

**3** Fight for women's rights! Defend abortion clinics! Free abortion on demand; free, quality 24-hour childcare! Equal pay for equal work! For free, quality health care for all!

**4** Full citizenship rights for all immigrants; everyone who made it into this country has the right to stay and live decently! Stop deportations! No to racist "English only" laws! Down with anti-Latino, anti-Semitic, anti-Arab and anti-Asian bigotry!

**5** Defend the separation of church and state! Full democratic rights for homosexuals! Down with the anti-sex witchhunt—cops and courts out of the bedroom! Down with all laws against consensual activities such as "crimes without victims" like pornography, gambling, drugs and prostitution!

**6** Mass labor/black/Latino mobilizations drawing on the power of the unions against the racist terrorists. Stop the Nazis! Stop the KKK!

**7** Abolish the racist death penalty! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Free all victims of racist capitalist repression! No faith in the capitalist courts! No to gun control! Defend victims of cop terror and racist police frame-up! No illusions in civilian review boards or community control of the police! Down with the racist and anti-labor "war on drugs"! For decriminalization of drugs! For class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense; support the work of the Partisan Defense Committee!

**8** Unconditional opposition to every attempt to abolish welfare! Down with slave-labor, union-busting "workfare" schemes! Fight any and every attempt of the government to take away or cut back

even more social programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, public health and aid to education and housing! For a massive program of public works—high-quality integrated housing, schools, libraries, hospitals for the working people and the poor!

**9** Down with the chauvinist poison of protectionism! For international working-class solidarity! Support revolutionary struggles of working people abroad! Defend the deformed workers states—Cuba, Vietnam, China and North Korea—against capitalist restoration and imperialist attack! For proletarian political revolution to oust their Stalinist bureaucracies! For labor action against U.S. imperialist war moves and military adventures! For the right of independence for Puerto Rico! U.S. troops out of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean!

**10** Down with the Democrats and Republicans! For a revolutionary workers party that champions the cause of all the oppressed! Finish the Civil War! Those who labor must rule! For a workers government to take industry away from its racist, incompetent and corrupt owners! Rebuild America on a socialist planned economy!

## —Join the Labor Black Leagues!

Membership pledge: \$3/year unemployed; \$10/year employed.  
For more information:

### CHICAGO

Labor Black Struggle League  
Box 6938, Chicago, IL 60680

(312) 563-0441

### LOS ANGELES

Labor Black League for Social Defense  
c/o Box 29574, Los Feliz Station  
Los Angeles, CA 90029

(213) 380-8239

### NEW YORK

Labor Black League for Social Defense  
Box 2502, Church St. Station  
New York, NY 10008

(212) 267-1025

### OAKLAND

Labor Black League for Social Defense  
Box 29497  
Oakland, CA 94604

(510) 839-0851

lblsdbayarea@sbcglobal.com

reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 889, 30 March 2007

## Pascagoula Strike

# Key Battle for Labor in the Open Shop South

MARCH 26—Some 7,000 Ingalls shipyard workers in Pascagoula, Mississippi, are standing firm as they enter their fourth week on strike against Northrop Grumman, the world's largest naval shipbuilder. At a company where skilled workers make less than \$20 per hour, workers walked out after the company offered to raise wages a measly \$2.50 by 2009 and demanded that workers' contributions to their health plan be hiked 50 percent. This was a direct provocation against the workers, who were among the hundreds of thousands of victims of Hurricane Katrina. Federal mediators intervened last week to put pressure on the 14 striking unions, most of which belong to the AFL-CIO Metal Trades Council, to settle. Picketers told a *Workers Vanguard* reporting team about rumors that the Navy was getting ready to intervene to force an end to the strike, which has idled one of U.S. imperialism's key military contractors.

We stressed last issue (*WV* No. 888, 16 March) that this strike is a crucial battle for labor throughout the open shop South. It's also a chance to fight back against the capitalist rulers who viciously abandoned Gulf Coast residents, especially black people and the poor, to their fate following Katrina. "We didn't have enough time to get our houses fixed up before they wanted to write people up and fire them," one worker told us. "We felt that the company should give the people enough time to do what they had to do. When they didn't, that had a lot of impact on it." He continued, "Katrina dealt us a blow and our insurance wasn't paying—still not paying. It's most all about Katrina."

Workers described staying in the shipyard during the hurricane in order to save the facility, risking life and limb while sunk into water up to their necks. Then they started cleaning up muck in an area reeking of human feces and dead snakes, alligators and birds. The company gave them a pathetic two weeks off with pay.

### "It's Most All About Katrina"



WV Photo

March 19: Strikers man picket line at Northrop Grumman's Ingalls shipyard.

Only a few weeks later, management threatened to fire those who could not immediately get back to work. One striker told *WV*: "We had workers who had that dilemma, coming back to work and keeping their jobs right after Katrina, while trying to find a place to stay for their families."

Some workers had to live in cars and tents outside the plant gates—and many still live in FEMA trailers today. Workers are faced with skyrocketing costs for everything from milk to rent. The workers' hardships are compounded by the loss of cost-of-living raises in their last contract. And none of the production workers get sick leave. But the same company that squeezes its workers received billions of dollars in handouts from the Navy and FEMA after Katrina hit. Last year alone it did over \$30 billion in

business. Workers revile the company's nepotism and its grossly overpaid managers, who collect huge bonuses when ships are commissioned while the workers only get told to work faster.

The company's war profiteering and wage-gouging give the lie to the notion pushed by the pro-capitalist labor misleaders that American workers have common "national interests" with their bosses. The U.S. proletariat must oppose the imperialist pillage carried out by "its own" government, from the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan to the mounting military provocations against Iran, and fight tooth and nail against the attacks on democratic rights at home carried out in the name of the "war on terror." The military, police, courts and prisons form the core of the bourgeois state, whose role is to protect the profits and rule of

the capitalists against the working class at home and against their rivals and challengers abroad.

The racist malice and class contempt displayed during Katrina by the capitalist rulers—represented by both the Democratic and Republican parties—continue apace. Earlier this month, FEMA agents ordered everyone living at the Yorkshire Mobile Home Park in Hammond, Louisiana, to pack up and go within 48 hours. “It was like shock and awe,” one tenant told the *Washington Post* (12 March). “We called it Hurricane FEMA.” But the Ingalls workers are not just victims. This unionized workforce is showing that labor has power to *fight back* by shutting down production and the flow of profits. This social weight exercises a powerful pull in the surrounding community, as evident in the widespread sympathy for and identification with the strikers.

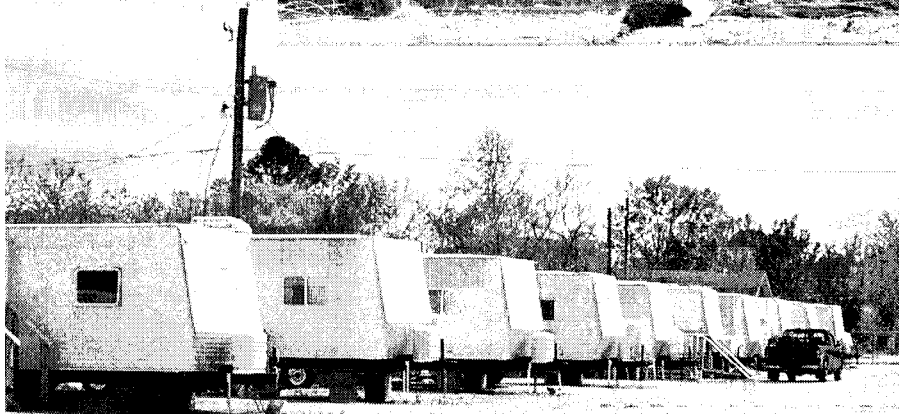
Although this is about as deep as you can get in the Deep South, the industrial concentration and the presence of strong, integrated unions make the area feel much less like an oppressive backwater. The current strike has the potential to spur unionization in the “right to work” South, just as earlier strikes at Ingalls helped to organize other Gulf Coast shipyards. Due to a “me too” contract clause, gains at Ingalls would be passed on to workers at other Northrup Grumman Gulf Coast yards in Avondale and Tallulah, Louisiana, and Gulfport, Mississippi.

**Devastation in Pascagoula after Hurricane Katrina. Below: FEMA trailer park near Ingalls shipyard.**

City of Pascagoula



WV Photo



Particularly in the South, where the racist color bar has historically been used to drive out unions, the labor movement must actively champion the fight

for black rights. Mississippi put a “right to work” amendment in its state constitution in 1960. As University of Mississippi journalism professor Joe Atkins wrote in the *Hattiesburg American* (25 March), Dixiecrat governor Ross Barnett “pushed it with the same fervor” he gave to fomenting a racist frenzy against attempts to integrate the University of Mississippi in 1962. Mississippi’s state flag still incorporates the battle flag of the slaveowning Confederacy.

The Ingalls shipyard is notorious for vicious harassment of black workers. One striker showed us a 2001 lawsuit by black workers against the company that documented racist graffiti blanketing restrooms, hangman’s nooses left in black workers’ areas and even mock lynchings. In 2000, Ingalls worker Earlean Bell, two of whose relatives had been lynched in the 1930s, sued the company after a white supervisor placed a noose around her neck and pulled on it. The union tops did nothing to mobilize the workforce in her defense. Such capitulation to the racist status quo can only cripple the cause of labor.

Strikers told WV about a column on the shipyard by New York City’s Jimmy Breslin in *Newsday* (27 December 2002), titled “Shipping Out Name of NY.” “They fly the rebel flag in our faces,” Breslin

## SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.

### Local Directory and Public Offices

Web site: [www.icl-fi.org](http://www.icl-fi.org) • E-mail address: [vanguard@tiac.net](mailto:vanguard@tiac.net)

National Office: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, (212) 732-7860

- Chicago** ..... Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680, (312) 563-0441  
[chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net](mailto:chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net)  
**Public Office:** Sat. 2-5 p.m., 222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)
- Los Angeles** ..... Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta., Los Angeles, CA 90029, (213) 380-8239  
[slycla@sbcglobal.net](mailto:slycla@sbcglobal.net)  
**Public Office:** Sat. 2-5 p.m., 3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215
- New York** ..... Box 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008, (212) 267-1025  
[nysl@tiac.net](mailto:nysl@tiac.net)  
**Public Office:** Sat. 1-4 p.m., 299 Broadway, Suite 318
- Oakland** ..... Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604, (510) 839-0851  
[slbayarea@sbcglobal.net](mailto:slbayarea@sbcglobal.net)  
**Public Office:** Sat. 1-5 p.m., 1634 Telegraph, 3rd Floor
- San Francisco**... Box 77494, San Francisco, CA 94107, [slbayarea@sbcglobal.net](mailto:slbayarea@sbcglobal.net)

## TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

- Toronto** ..... Box 7198, Station A, Toronto, ON M5W 1X8, (416) 593-4138  
[spartacan@on.aibn.com](mailto:spartacan@on.aibn.com)
- Vancouver** ..... Box 2717, Main P.O., Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2, (604) 687-0353  
[trotskyist\\_vancouver@shawcable.com](mailto:trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com)

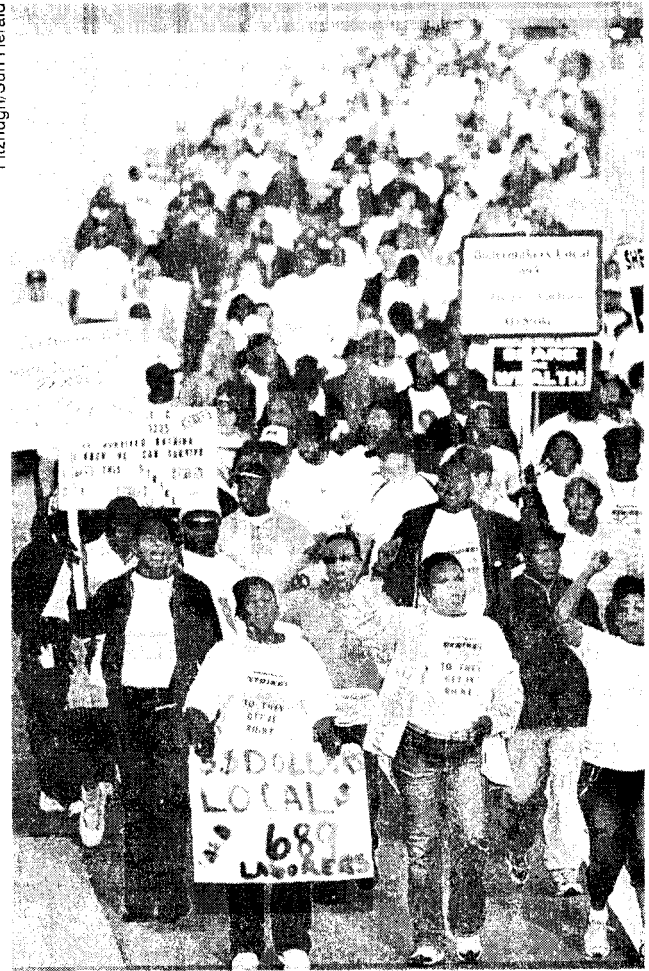
quoted the head of the area NAACP saying. "At the shipyard? Oh, they fly it all around there.... They still got the rebel flag to let us know who they think we are."

Several workers said that there is more unity and cohesion in this strike than the one in 1999. A white pipefitter credited this to the black trade unionists and remarked that too many white workers were still hanging back, to the detriment of the union. It is through united class struggle that workers can overcome the racial divisions sown by the capitalists to weaken labor. In the first week of the strike, at least 2,000 workers, black and white, marched from the shipyard to downtown Pascagoula in a powerful show of their determination. In fact, the *WV* team found out that the march was twice the size we reported last issue. Before the strike, the workforce had voted twice, by as much as 90 percent, to reject the contract proposed by the union tops.

One former head of the Ingalls shipyard has brought management's plantation mentality to nearby non-union Signal International, a major marine fabricator servicing and repairing oil rigs. Some 300 workers from India were enticed to Signal, each paying recruiters as much as \$15,000, only to find themselves jammed into cramped bunks on company property, denied the residency they had been promised and getting far lower wages than they had been told they would get. "We were like pigs in a cage," an Indian pipefitter told the *Los Angeles Times* (14 March). A number of workers who complained were fired without notice. Under the H-2 work program, some 100,000 such "guest workers" are effectively trapped in indentured servitude. And a new bill being proposed mainly by Democrats like Senator Ted Kennedy as an immigration "reform" would expand this brutal exploitation.

The plight of the workers at Signal puts a sharp focus on the need for the unions to champion the cause of immigrant and foreign workers. Subcontractors at Ingalls employ Mexican immigrants and others in non-union jobs. Labor must oppose all racist anti-immigrant measures and actively organize immigrant workers, legal and "illegal," into the unions. We demand: Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! Union-run recruitment and skills programs for blacks, women and immigrants would be a powerful way to break down the divisions in the workforce. Such divisions are reinforced by the separation of the shipyard into more than a dozen craft unions. Unity in struggle can open the road to industrial unionism. We say: one shipyard, one union.

**Northrop Grumman strikers and supporters, many of them Katrina victims, march in Pascagoula during March 2007 strike that shut down shipbuilding giant.**



Fitzhugh/Sun Herald

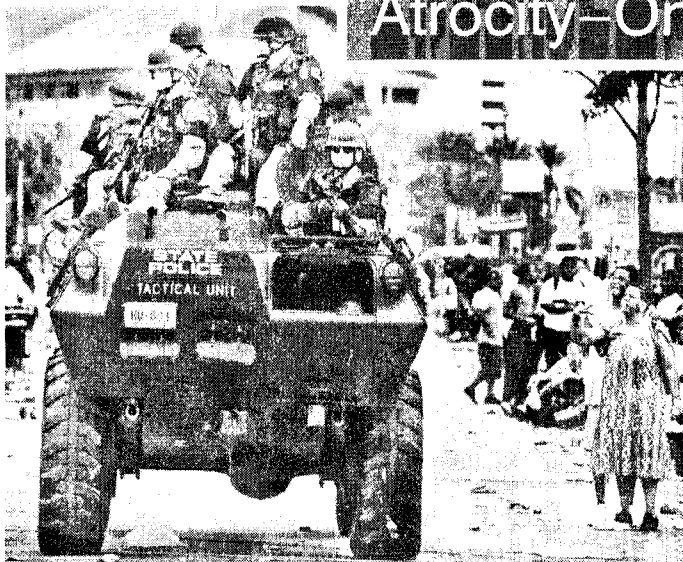
Although the strike has shut down shipbuilding, large numbers of office workers organized in OPEIU and some other workers are scabbing by going into the plant along with management, and owner-operated tractor trailers are entering the yard. Meanwhile, there is some "fraternization" between strikers and the cops. IBEW Local 733, which represents electrical workers at Ingalls, also includes Pascagoula County deputy sheriffs, while plant security guards are represented in the Metal Trades Council. Let's be clear: The role of the police and security guards is to protect capitalist property and profits and to enforce racist repression against black people and other minorities. In the struggle between labor and capital, the cops are on the side of the bosses. Cops and security guards, out of the unions!

The *WV* team heard a number of pointed comments about Mississippi Republican Senator Trent Lott, who a few years ago openly praised Strom Thurmond, the late arch-segregationist Senator from South Carolina. The Republican Party does not pretend to be friends of labor or of black people. But that does not mean that the Democrats are.

Quoting leftist writer Mike Davis, we wrote last issue in "Down With U.S. Imperialism! For Class Struggle at Home!": "Pressure from conservative white Democrats' led the party's strategists 'to deliberately delete any mention of New Orleans from 2006 campaign advertising.'" We left out that Davis had also noted that the Congressional Black Caucus "has been surprisingly listless in its response to an unending series of Bush administration provocations," such as ending housing aid to Katrina survivors and tearing down public housing in New Orleans. The labor movement needs a leadership that will mobilize workers independently of, and in opposition to, the capitalist government and its Democratic and Republican parties. We fight to build a workers party that can lead the struggle for a workers government.

The labor movement can win only by relying on the workers' own strength, drawing on the support of the impoverished and oppressed. The strike at Ingalls is an important battle for labor in the South and for the rights of the dispossessed. *Victory to the Pascagoula shipyard strike!* ■

## New Orleans Racist Atrocity—One Year After



AP



Laforet/NY Times

Left: In wake of Hurricane Katrina, SWAT teams roll past New Orleans Convention Center as desperate survivors wait for transportation out of city. Right: One year later, the Ninth Ward remains devastated, part of rulers' drive to keep black New Orleanians from returning.

# Race, Class and the Fight for a Workers America

*We print below a presentation, edited for publication, given at a New York Spartacist League forum held 16 September 2006 by Barry James, a longtime cadre of the Spartacist League.*

The continuing racist atrocity that is New Orleans in the aftermath of Katrina exposes the naked class- and race-hatred of the American ruling class for the working class and dispossessed. It is truly repugnant that Bush, one year later, could return to New Orleans and call for the return of "soul" and for the "saints to come marching back," along with his tone-deaf nostalgia, to once again sit on the racist patrician Mississippi Senator Trent Lott's porch and look out over the Gulf. Not for nothing did Nina Simone sing and rage against the Jim Crow South—"Mississippi Goddam"! If

Katrina has removed the fig leaf of Bush's last shred of credibility, it's the task of the revolutionary Marxists of the Spartacist League to place the blame no less squarely on the Democratic Party and the capitalist system itself.

Nothing that happened then or since was an accident or acts of some isolated criminals, though criminals they are. The forced displacement and dispersal of black New Orleanians must be reversed. In many cases, the displaced do not have the means to return. There are no jobs, no housing, no schools and no health care. By every measure—police brutality, incarceration rates, education, hospital care—New Orleans before the storm was a place of brutal exploitation and oppression, worse statistically but not dissimilar to other American cities with large black populations.

We place no faith in illusory appeals to the capitalist state or any capitalist party to change the priorities of the capitalist system. An urgent necessity is a class-conscious and combative labor movement. Such a movement requires the ouster of the pro-Democratic Party labor tops. The reality of black oppression will not change short of proletarian socialist revolution. We are for black liberation through socialist revolution and a socialist planned economy.

The response to Katrina by the government at all levels was profoundly racist and anti-working-class. To the extent working-class and poor whites got the shaft—and they did—it only underscores that attacks on the working class are wrapped in the envelope of raw racism. This is how this racist ruling

**Break with the Democrats! For a Revolutionary Workers Party!  
Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!**



class treats what it deems a surplus population. It was not an idle rant of a neocoon when a Louisiana Congressman said that Katrina and God had done what the New Orleans ruling elite could not: drive out the residents of New Orleans housing projects.

Business and real estate interests and politicians of both parties saw in Katrina an opportunity to shrink the city to an adult Disneyland on the Mississippi. The government's deadly delay and downright obstruction in assisting the victims of the hurricane is in stark contrast to the speed with which the crony capitalist looters of Iraq infamy have swooped in to extract massive profits in New Orleans. And the black Democratic political layer in New Orleans, very often drawn from the Creoles, are widely viewed as the junior partners of New Orleans business interests and in full accord with the plan to push out poor black people. Our job is to fan the flames of class hatred and sear into the consciousness of the working class the horrific magnitude of racist oppression and the desperate necessity for class struggle against capitalism and its ultimate overthrow.

Here's what a black longshoreman involved in rescue work in the immediate aftermath told me. He said rescuers in helicopters were "passing over the poor, black people that they left stranded on rooftops, in attics, on streets.... It was common citizens who did the right thing. They commandeered some boats, went out there and started gallantly and frantically rescuing people." He added, "At the time of a tragedy, there was segregation.... 'All for one and one for all'? That didn't exist here" [see "We All Gave, but We Received Nothing," WV No. 868, 14 April 2006].

Recall the two pictures, virtually the same yet with distinctly different captions. In one instance, a black person is supposedly "looting"; in the other, a white is availing himself of life's necessities in harsh conditions. When I asked this longshoreman about media reports of looting, here's what he told me. He said that he spent 24 hours straight rescuing people, seeing floating bodies of babies, children and adults. A producer for the *Oprah* show sticks a mike in his face and asks him what he's been doing. Longshoreman: I commandeered some boats to rescue people. Producer: What do you mean commandeered? Longshoreman: I stole them.

FEMA and the federal, city and state governments ignored, created and exacerbated by their prevarication a beyond-desperate situation. For two days, water from broken levees poured into the city

before any significant action was taken to stem that tide, while tens of thousands of poor and black people were trapped without any means of escape. Then they blamed the victims, heaping scorn and demonizing an entire population that could not evacuate.

The big players in the white elite are determining how to rebuild the city. These are dominated by real estate interests who are widely viewed as having decisive influence over Mayor Ray Nagin, who was re-elected with the white vote and supported Bush's election in 2000. One of these real estate investors is James Reiss, the chair of the Regional Transit Authority and responsible for the buses

torium on rebuilding in certain areas, Nagin initially backed off supporting the proposal. The real estate developers are counting on capitalist market forces—no insurance coverage, racist redlining and refusal to refinance mortgages, aided by new FEMA flood maps—to make the dispersal irreversible. Likewise, the Louisiana Recovery Authority believes that economic factors will shrink the city. Governor [Kathleen Babineaux] Blanco, a Democrat, who's reflecting the ambient racist hostility of the rest of Louisiana toward New Orleans, has engineered a state takeover of the schools, most of which remain closed. The bulk of the rest have been made into restricted charter



AP

**Abandoned by racist rulers, some Hurricane Katrina survivors were rescued through heroic efforts of individuals.**

that were *not* used to evacuate stranded residents. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was more attentive to animals than any government agencies were to people.

### The Prelude and the Storm

It has long been the plan to rid the city of public housing projects and poor residents. The plan is to abandon whole parts of the city and justify it in terms of ecology and science. Low-lying poor neighborhoods, known as the backswamps, would be returned to parks or retention ponds to protect the property holdings of the rich. The view of the ruling elite is that they want the black entertainers but not the black working or plebeian class.

The whole tack of the "Bring New Orleans Back" commission is to rebuild the city "with better services and fewer poor people." Because of vocal opposition to the plan that called for a mora-

schools. Like Bush, she has sponsored tax breaks for the oil companies in the name of economic recovery.

It would be naive not to assume a crass political motive for Washington's rejection of funds for Louisiana. New Orleans was a black majority, Democratic stronghold that often decided the balance of power in statewide elections. With the dispersal of so much of the black population, Louisiana as a whole might well shift to the Republican column. The attack on black voting rights has been a sustained theme of the Bush administration.

A model for gentrification may be River Garden, a supposed public/private, mixed-income, Clinton-era development, which replaced the demolished St. Thomas housing project. Again, Katrina was a perfect storm to enable the real estate interests to acquire prime real estate near the central business district and adjacent to the French Quarter. On June 14, the

Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Housing Authority of New Orleans approved a plan to demolish four public housing projects within three years. Of the 49,000 public housing residents before Katrina, only 1,000 are back in New Orleans. Ominously, New Orleans passed an ordinance requiring the gutting, mold remediation and boarding up of houses by August 29. If owners didn't comply, the city threatened to perform the job and place a lien on the property. Remember that 80 percent of New Orleans, or some 250,000 dwellings, were flooded. In this way the city may accomplish, using eminent domain, what the New Orleans commission wanted to do all along.

Thousands of unionized jobs have been lost with the closure of Charity Hospital, the virtual elimination of the public school system and the gutting of the large United Teachers of New Orleans, and the shrinking of bus routes driven by members of the Amalgamated Transit Union. Katrina has become a pretext for government-supported union-busting. FEMA originated under Jimmy Carter and was planned by Reagan as an agency that would run concentration camps for government-designated "undesirables" in the event of a so-called national emergency. Thus it should come as no surprise that, at a nearly empty FEMA trailer park in Morgan City, residents were prohibited from talking to the press without the presence of a FEMA representative!

If you visited New Orleans today, you'd be struck by how utterly destroyed and without city services whole swaths of the city are. The failure to rebuild, or make it possible for people to rebuild, in this lost year is part of the mechanism by which black people have been kept out of the city. As Douglas Brinkley, author of *The Great Deluge* [2006], put it: "The crucial point is that the inaction is deliberate—the inaction is the action."

Capitalism is a profit-driven system. From the standpoint of meeting human need, it's irrational. The Netherlands' complex of flood-control levees was strengthened in 1953 after a storm killed hundreds. So the technology and pumping systems exist. The racist American ruling class does not have the intention or the will to do it. Contrast this to the tiny Cuban deformed workers state and its meager resources exacerbated by imperialist blockade. Though located in hurricane alley, it manages, through social organization, to spare its population the tribulations visited upon the black population of New Orleans. In the storm's aftermath, Bush rejected the offer of aid



WV Photo

**4 April 2006: Demonstrators push past security guards in effort to reclaim their homes at St. Bernard public housing project.**

from Cuba—hurricane-hardened medical doctors and rescue teams.

### "Doing Katrina Time"

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) National Prison Project has issued a report on the inhuman abuse meted out to prisoners in the hurricane at Orleans Parish Prison (OPP). It is a devastating window on the capitalist system of injustice. The ACLU believes that the prisons can be reformed, even as they demonstrate in this report that all attempts at reform have been rebuffed in practice. This flows from their (and our reformist opponents') view of the capitalist state as a neutral body that can be pressured to serve the interests of the working class and oppressed. For Marxists, the capitalist state—which at its core consists of the cops, the military, the prison system and the courts—is the instrument for organized violence to ensure the rule of the capitalists over the proletariat. Down through history, it has been shown that the working class cannot reform the bourgeois state and use it in its own interests but must smash it and create its own state.

Before Katrina, the OPP held 6,500 prisoners. In the U.S., a country with the highest national incarceration rate in the world and where 12 percent of all black males in their late 20s are in prison, New Orleans had the highest incarceration rate of any large city. Orleans Parish is almost 67 percent black, but 90 percent of the inmates are black. Sixty percent of the OPP detainees were men and women who were jailed for traffic or parking viola-

tions, public drunkenness or failure to pay a fine. Most of the detainees were *pre-trial*, meaning they had never been convicted of anything. Moreover, at the time of the storm some significant number were enrolled in school, drug or alcohol treatment or GED programs as a condition of probation. Immigrant prisoners who had been rounded up in *la migra* raids faced the same hellish conditions. One attorney for them said: "It's easier to visit my clients on death row than it is to visit an INS detainee at Orleans Parish Prison."

The brutality before the storm in this place was legend. Women shackled during labor, juveniles punched and kicked in the face, mental patients in five-point restraints dying of dehydration. The daily racist brutality and dehumanization generated many lawsuits. Here you have the proper analog for the notorious American-run facility in Iraq, Abu Ghraib.

When the levees broke, the prisoners were put in lockdown and maced for asking to be let out of their cells. Women had to climb to the third level of bunks to escape the water. They had to urinate and defecate over the sides of their beds. Prisoners spent days in toxic waters as the prison guards left them to die. Detainees then opened the jail gates. Some prisoners managed to pound their way out to a rooftop, where they hung a banner: "HELP NO FOOD DYING." There were three boats to evacuate 7,000 people. Waiting for evacuation, the prisoners were bunched together like cattle and forced to stand in water up to their necks.

When the prisoners finally made it to the I-10 overpass, their ordeal was not over. They were placed in rows and seated back to back. The guards used taser guns on them if they stretched. They were forced to urinate and defecate on their clothes where they sat while SWAT teams called them racist epithets, crackheads, whores and bitches. Juvenile detainees were maced for asking for water in the broiling sun. So hellish were the conditions that some detainees were relieved to arrive at the notorious Angola state prison, a former slave plantation—not so former.

The flooded OPP opened quickly after the storm despite health concerns. The OPP was too profitable an enterprise to be out of commission long. The city of New Orleans was paying the OPP roughly \$100,000 per day for housing prisoners. Federal prisoners, including so-called illegal immigrants, are even more profitable and were returned to the prison quickly. The prompt return of the prison population was a source not only of income for the prison but also of prison labor, really akin to the pervasive prison labor system that flourished in the South after Reconstruction. The current sheriff wants to make prisoners available for work ordinarily done by city workers. The prisoners personally receive effectively no wages. Many prisoners await trial to this day for minor offenses. It's called doing Katrina time.

This penal servitude is both an affront and another threat to labor in the South. The return of the chain gang shows the link between black and labor rights. The need to organize and unionize the South will be a monumental battle. Prisoners are powerless. ILA longshoremen and Avondale shipyard workers are not. Undoing that power through the fight for a class-struggle opposition to the pro-capitalist labor bureaucrats, advancing the consciousness of the working class, is the task of the revolutionary party. Either the South will be organized through social struggle—which can only be achieved if the labor movement consciously addresses black oppression—or the features of the South will become increasingly dominant across the land.

### **“End of Racism” Mythology**

Katrina's aftermath did not generate massive nationwide social protest at all, and certainly not the necessary protest by the labor movement, due to the accommodation of its leadership to the racist, capitalist status quo. Even as Katrina exposed the realities of race and class and their inevitable intertwining in capitalist America, there is in the air the so-called

“end of racism” ideology that seeks to blunt the hard truth of racist oppression. In a CNN poll after the hurricane, only 12 percent of whites thought race was a factor in the government's virtually non-existent response in the immediate aftermath of Katrina. Five times that many blacks thought race was decisive. This split reflects a similar gulf in consciousness evident after the O.J. Simpson verdict in 1995.

Mayor Nagin can be heard on the radio fulminating that the mistreatment by the government was due to being poor, not to being black. This is also the line of the NAACP, one of whose youthful supporters told us that racism was not the main issue, class was. While Nagin is simply toeing the line out of Washington, there clearly is an adaptation to it from mainstream black organizations, local politicians and ostensible leftists. The question of class is fundamental in capitalist America; this is not in contradiction to the centrality of black oppression to American capitalism.

At a New Orleans AFL-CIO Labor Day picnic, on the other hand, we found that black workers were more clear-eyed and vocal about the treatment meted out to black New Orleanians. This may be because not a few of them spent days on the roofs of their flooded homes waiting to be rescued. One black longshoreman told us, “They wouldn't have done this to any other city.” In fact, the attacks on the working class and the population as a whole are presaged and “justified” by the gutting of advances and the diminution of the rights of black people.

The demise of the Soviet Union has spawned bourgeois triumphalism. The destruction of the USSR was a historic defeat for the proletariat that has thrown back consciousness and allowed the imperialist bourgeoisies to step up attacks domestically and internationally. The pernicious false consciousness that the “playing field has been leveled” must be combatted at every turn.

It's a sign of the times that we are obliged to make the case for the strategic centrality of the black question in the struggle for workers revolution in this country. One measure of how bad things are in America is that former President Clinton was dubbed the first black president, though he had ostentatiously returned to Little Rock during his 1992 campaign to oversee the execution of a brain-damaged black man and proudly ended “welfare as we know it.” The rise of a mealy-mouthed black Democratic politician, Barack Obama, is seen to be representative of a “color-blind” America.

This so-called end of racism is related

to and intimately linked to the bourgeois triumphalism attendant on the demise of the Soviet Union that was supposed to mean the “end of history” and the “death of communism.” This points to the relationship between black oppression and the Russian question. Put another way, the achievement of substantial legal equality for black people, beginning after World War II, was also heavily motivated by U.S. imperialism's felt need to look good internationally—not least in its competition with the Soviet Union in the Third World.

The civil rights movement represented a major social upheaval which broke up the reactionary Cold War consensus. Struggles against women's oppression and anti-gay bigotry were able to exploit openings created by the civil rights movement, which broke the back of Jim Crow in the American South. The civil rights struggles fed burgeoning protest against the Vietnam War and opened the door to some significant labor struggles in the U.S. The civil rights movement is not a distant, remote factor. Not least, today's “culture wars” are being fought against some holdovers from this period. And the ruling class is intent on reversing the gains of the civil rights movement, however minimal they may be now, to widen and deepen the wedge of attack against the working class.

### **Black and Red**

America's rulers foster racial divisions in the North and South in order to obscure the divisions between the classes that are fundamental to capitalist society and to head off united working-class struggle. The special oppression of black people as a race-color caste is a cornerstone of American capitalism. The mass of the black population is kept at the bottom of this capitalist society. At the same time, doubly oppressed black workers form a strategic component of the American proletariat. Won to a revolutionary program, black workers will play a leading role in the struggle to emancipate the black masses and all working people by sweeping away the entire system of capitalist exploitation.

We fight for revolutionary integration. We understand that the struggle for integration of black people into American society on the basis of full economic, social and political equality can only be realized through a proletarian revolution that uproots the capitalist system and ushers in an egalitarian socialist society.

We seek to mobilize the labor movement to fight every manifestation of racist rollback without defending the miserable status quo. We fight for open admissions

and free higher education for all. We demand a massive public works program in New Orleans at union wages with union protection. We fight for quality integrated housing and schools and for free, quality health care for all.

When the civil rights movement swept into the North, the bankruptcy of the liberal perspective of its leaders was quickly revealed as it collided head on with the cold, hard realities of American capitalism. The pro-Democratic Party pressure politics of the civil rights leaders meant inevitably an acceptance of the terms of oppression. As we said in one of our founding documents ["Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom" (1966)]:

"The vast majority of black people—both North and South—are today workers who, along with the rest of the American working class, must sell their labor power in order to secure the necessities of life to those who buy labor power in order to make a profit.... Ultimately their road to freedom lies only through struggle with the rest of the working class to abolish capitalism and establish in its place an egalitarian, socialist society."

The loss of unionized industrial jobs, which was accelerated by the deindustrialization of the Northeast and Midwest beginning in the 1970s, has been accompanied by a massive increase in homelessness and disease in the inner cities. Crucially, there has been skyrocketing incarceration of young black (and Hispanic) men carried out largely through the "war on drugs." This war on the ghetto masses, which we see being played out by the National Guard occupation in New Orleans right now, is part of an all-sided intensification of state repression, capped by the speedup on death row ("legal lynching") and by "extralegal" street executions in the ghettos and barrios by the cops. After the drive to eliminate welfare picked up speed in the 1980s, we called this "Genocide U.S.A." These ominous developments make all the more urgent what we said in "Black and Red":

"The fight for full employment at decent wages is not just the key to better housing, schools, etc., but a fundamental and necessary defense. If Black people are forced out of any economic role and become lumpenized as a group they will be in a position to be used as a scapegoat and could be totally wiped out during a future social crisis—just as the Jews in Germany were—without affecting the economy. The fight must be fought *now* to maintain Negroes as part of the working class."

### **Katrina and the Democratic Party Vultures**

The one-year anniversary events in New Orleans saw the Democratic Party politicians descending like vultures. The

Democratic Party is giving voice to concerns that Katrina, evoking scenes of a Third World country, is injurious to America's international reputation. This is not to say the Democrats will do one whit more for black people. Katrina was a public relations debacle for a super-power seeking to project its military might in the service of "freedom."

Democratic governor Blanco is best remembered for her callous response to the survivors of the flooding. Promoting the false image of wanton marauding and "looting," she warned that the National Guard troops being deployed were battle-hardened veterans of the war in Iraq, whose weapons were "locked and loaded,"



Gauthier/LA Times

**Thousands of Mexican workers flocked to Gulf Coast following Katrina for cleanup and construction work, laboring under brutal conditions.**

and said they would be prepared to "shoot and kill."

The shell game through which the Democratic Party—the historic party of the Confederate slavocracy—is portrayed as the "friend" of blacks and labor has been essential to preserving the rule of racist American capitalism. The U.S. is ruled by the dictatorship of a single class, the bourgeoisie, alternately administered by the Democrats and Republicans, two wings of the same property party. It was U.S. imperialism's Democratic Party that first prosecuted the bloody counterrevolutionary war in Vietnam and initially oversaw the capitalist state's physical annihilation of the Black Panther Party. The Democratic Party supported the invasion of Afghanistan and the "war on terror," which they maintain they can conduct more effectively and vigorously than the Republicans. This "war on terror" national unity is a deadly threat to immigrants, blacks and labor and means the shredding of democratic rights domesti-

cally and the projection of imperialist military might abroad. If some Democrats today are opposing the Iraq war (like ex-Marine Congressman Jack Murtha), it is for the express purpose of deploying U.S. forces elsewhere in the "war on terror." Actually, it is because the Democrats sell themselves as the friends of labor and blacks that they are in many cases the preferred party for the bourgeoisie to use to mobilize for war.

On certain social questions like abortion and gay marriage, some Democrats meekly support more enlightened positions. The main difference between them and the Republicans is that while the Republicans unabashedly enforce the

interests of big business, the Democrats lie and do the same thing. When the Transport Workers Union [TWU] struck in December, one of the most important unions in the country waged some much-needed class struggle. Gubernatorial candidate Eliot Spitzer got the injunctions to criminalize them. Hillary Clinton is a proponent of the union-busting Taylor Law. Yet both these Democratic pols are supported by the TWU's Toussaint leadership and are considered "friends of labor."

Some of you may have seen the powerful documentary by Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*. The interviews and footage are an indelible record of a racist travesty. Lee is quoted as saying that "what happened in New Orleans was a criminal act...the levees were a Band-Aid here.... Somebody needs to go to jail." Though Lee is not heard in the documentary, his point of view emerges in the steady parade of black politicians (Ray Nagin, former

mayor of New Orleans Marc Morial and Al Sharpton among them) who are given a pass and allowed to preen as crusaders for justice for black people.

During "Giuliani time," the New York police pumped 41 rounds at Amadou Diallo in the vestibule of his own apartment building. Sharpton channeled indignation at this police terror into the false hope of using the "independent" Civilian Complaint Review Board to right police misconduct. Such boards make cosmetic changes in order to perpetuate what is a police state in the ghettos and barrios.

Ray Nagin is in the line of black Democratic mayors that includes former Philadelphia mayor Wilson Goode. On 13 May 1985, Goode and his administration in collaboration with Reagan's federal government burned to death eleven members of the black MOVE commune, including five children. Nagin, at the behest of New Orleans' business interests, delayed evacuation. He knew from the very beginning that at least one-fifth of the population would not be able to leave. He isolated himself away from his command center during the storm and hid in a hotel, in a bunker, when a small group of people stranded at the Superdome marched to his hotel to ask for provisions. And that's not the half of it. Now he has the unmitigated chutzpah to say:

"I think the opportunity has presented itself for me to kind of go down in history as the mayor that guided the city of New Orleans through an incredible rebuild cycle, and really eliminated a lot of the pre-Katrina problems that we had with blight, with crime, with the public-school system."

## Organize the South!

With their legalistic, pro-Democratic policies, the AFL-CIO leaders are incapable of undertaking the kind of militant mass organizing drive needed to unionize workers throughout the South, where the racist cops and KKK lynchers have been instrumental in keeping unions out. The AFL-CIO is investing \$700 million of its pension fund for affordable housing and hospitals in New Orleans. Change to Win, the other coalition, is assisting with workers' centers. All well and good—but the purpose of unions is to mobilize the workers in struggle against the capitalists. It's necessary to unleash the social power of the working class, beginning with existing beachheads of integrated union power in the South—from the mainly black longshoremen in the southeastern and Gulf ports to shipyard workers and Teamsters truckers.

The fundamental starting point for a serious union organizing drive must be the understanding that this capitalist



Bettmann

**Bogalusa, Louisiana, 1966: Charles Sims of Deacons for Defense and Justice, which organized armed self-defense against racist nightriders.**

society is divided between two hostile classes—the workers who have to sell their labor power and the capitalists who own the means of production—whose interests are irreconcilably opposed. The labor bureaucracy openly supports the capitalist system and is duly rewarded for this with certain social and political privileges. The union tops stand for collaboration with the bosses, not class struggle against them.

The harsh anti-labor laws and practices in the South today are rooted in the black chattel slavery of the Old South before the Civil War. The re-establishment of legalized racial segregation following the betrayal of Radical Reconstruction by the Northern bourgeoisie in league with the Southern landed aristocracy entailed the suppression of any attempt to organize labor, white as well as black. The anti-union "right to work" laws, which are extant all across the South, were passed after the Second World War and have perpetuated the South as the main regional bastion of social and political reaction in the United States. These laws are an outgrowth of an entrenched apparatus of oppression—the post-Civil War "Black Codes," "anti-vagrancy laws," the sharecropping system of debt peonage and prison chain gangs.

In the 1990s, New Orleans Avondale shipyard workers were thwarted in their attempt to form a union for six years by repeated management appeals to the bosses' courts. Unions can only be built and defended and unionization extended across the South in class struggle against the employer and the apparatus of the capitalist state. Given the heavy weight of

"right to work" laws across the South, making a dent even in one locale will be difficult. What will break the back of these laws will be generalized social struggle across the region, if not the country.

Some 30,000 immigrants have moved into the Gulf Coast since the storm, and they are subject to frequent ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] raids that are called "Operation Community Shield." Much of the gutting of houses and clearing of trees has been performed by immigrant Mexican laborers who sleep in tents or in the moldy structures they work in daily. They have no access to health care and their health and safety is of no concern to their employers. In October 2005, Nagin ranted that New Orleans was being "overrun by Mexican workers." Similarly, in a January statement calling for a spring Katrina protest for the "right of return," Jesse Jackson echoed this chauvinist sentiment: "Why must people here look at people coming in from out of the country to do the work? That is humiliating. There are no jobs that cannot be done by the people who once lived here." Feeding off this, in early October the NAACP and the AFL-CIO held a joint press conference to denounce business owners who were hiring non-union workers from out of state. The answer to non-union labor is to unionize *all* workers regardless of where they are from.

It is particularly important to combat anti-immigrant chauvinism in the working class and especially among black workers, while the immigrant-derived proletariat must grasp that anti-black racism remains the touchstone of social

**Assault of the Louisiana Colored Volunteers on the Confederate breastworks at Port Hudson, Louisiana, 27 May 1863, the first major battle in which black troops took part.**



F.B. Schell/New York Historical Society

reaction in this country. Our team at the AFL-CIO picnic reported the following: "An older black woman jumped into my argument with a white woman who argued that racism wasn't really an issue in what had happened; we convinced her to back down and say we had a point. However, then the white woman *and* the black woman agreed that the problem facing them now is that immigrants are coming in and taking all the jobs, and I had to argue hard with both of them."

A number of lawsuits have been filed on behalf of these mainly Hispanic workers fighting against the contractors' refusal to pay overtime or any wages at all. These piecemeal efforts, however admirable and supportable, only underscore the necessity for labor to fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. This is a crucial part of mobilizing the power of labor in struggle to organize the South. Effective resistance to the immiseration of American working people requires unity in struggle between the trade unions and the black, Hispanic and Asian poor.

The role of a Leninist vanguard party must be to advance the consciousness of the working class. There is another tradition in Louisiana, one of black and labor power. The largest slave revolt in U.S. history, inspired by the Haitian revolution, took place in Louisiana in 1811. Some of the first black troops to fight on the side of the Union in the Civil War were raised from the free black population of New Orleans. During the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the Deacons for Defense and Justice organized a group of black veterans in Bogalusa and Jonesboro and used armed self-defense to protect CORE voter registration workers. The Spartacist League publicized the Deacons' critical role in defending black rights against the racist nightriders.

And there is the strategic port of New Orleans which, while heavily impacted by containerization, is a reservoir of union strength with an important history. When the longshore union locals first affiliated to the International Longshoremen's Association [ILA], there was a segregated union

structure, which was maintained. The ILA locals on the Gulf were not integrated until 1983. However, on the Southern waterfront the primarily black unions are dominant. In 1968, when Martin Luther King was assassinated, the black ILA in New Orleans called a three-day protest strike and the white longshoremen announced they weren't going to work without their black brothers. In 1972, Louisiana students demanded an anti-racist boycott of Rhodesian chrome and ILA dock workers refused to unload a ship. Several years later, in 1977, black and white longshoremen in New Orleans staged a militant wildcat strike that shut down all shipping in the port, while the ILA international struck only containerized cargo.

### **Finish the Civil War!**

It's been noted that, to this day Haiti and Haitians have never been forgiven by the imperialist ruling classes for the slave revolt led by Toussaint L'Ouverture. The past is not really past in the U.S. either when it comes to the struggle for black freedom and the Civil War. There is in Katrina's aftermath—in the racist contempt and dispersal of its black working class and dispossessed—more than an echo of the racist Redemption campaign of the former slave aristocracy against Radical Reconstruction.

Reconstruction went through several phases in Louisiana, and it's a rich and intricate history. I want to highlight the last period. One historian of the period, Ted Tunnell, put it: "The history of New Orleans was the story of its strategic location near the mouth of the greatest river system on the North American continent" [*Crucible of Reconstruction*, 1984]. Thus it was that in April of 1862 Union warships slipped past Confederate forts and fought the Confederate fleet guarding the city. The Union Army advanced overland



**Battle of Liberty Place, New Orleans, 1874: Klan-like White League defeated Radical Reconstruction governor's forces, including black militia. Obelisk commemorating race-terrorists' victory stands in New Orleans to this day.**

and took over New Orleans on May 1. The North controlled the South's largest city from that day forward and Reconstruction was underway.

New Orleans was a metropolis in the midst of a Louisiana plantation and village culture. There was a modest base of immigrants and yeoman farmers (with no slaves), the largest free black population in the South, if not the country, and some sugar planters who came to believe their profit interests might be better served by the North. The Union Army under the leadership of Generals Banks and Butler were the armed force that made it possible for Reconstruction to unfold. Within this mix there was an intense and volatile contention of ideas and clash of forces about the extent and meaning of black freedom and, importantly, black suffrage. Moreover, these forces profoundly influenced Lincoln himself.

The free blacks, or *gens de couleur*, were not of one mind, reflecting their intermediate position in society. They were light-skinned descendants of French settlers or wealthy mulatto immigrants from Haiti. They were bricklayers, cigar makers, carpenters and shoemakers. They were markedly better off than the slave, but their rights were constricted. But from this layer came some of the first black soldiers to fight for the Union Army, a fact related to their (uniquely) already having had their own militia. At the time, some held the view that their fate was "indissolubly bound up with that of the Negro race," and that "we have no rights which we can reckon safe while the same are denied to the field hands on the sugar plantations." Because Reconstruction began early and the slaves were given their freedom, it came to pass that black men were in the uniform of the Union Army. And as one black New Orleanian paper put it at the time: "From the day that bayonets were placed in the hands of the blacks.... This war has broken the chains of the slave, and it is written in the heavens that from this war shall grow the seeds of the political enfranchisement of the oppressed race."

The radical unionists and the unity of free blacks and freed slaves placed enormous pressure on Lincoln to grant suffrage to the freedmen. The emancipated slave had entered the political arena. The Radical Reconstruction Louisiana constitution abolished slavery and led to black suffrage and blacks holding office.

The planter aristocracy refused to make their peace with this state of affairs. In September 1874, the (Klan-like) White League routed the Metropolitan Police and black militia of the Reconstruction governor. In 1891 an obelisk monument

to this race terror was built to honor the Battle of Canal Street, later the Battle of Liberty Place. There was affixed an inscription in praise of the victory of white supremacy. This incident couldn't have more contemporary relevance. It speaks to what we call the unfinished business of the Civil War. And to this day, the American South is a low-wage bastion and a reservoir of social backwardness to the detriment of the entire working class.

The period known as Radical Reconstruction (of course it was not limited to Louisiana) was the most egalitarian period in U.S. history. It was finally brought to a close when the Northern capitalists looked at the devastated South and saw an opportunity—not for building a radical democracy but for exploiting Southern resources, and the freedmen, profitably. The Compromise of 1877 sealed this betrayal of black freedom and, with the withdrawal of the Union Army from the South, a new system of racist exploitation was established by restricting the rights of freedmen across the board. In 1896, the Supreme Court codified "separate but equal" segregation as the law of the land in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Plessy was a black New Orleanian who refused to vacate his seat on a railway car. The Jim Crow system thus came to infect the whole country.

America has evolved tumultuously from a slave republic, through the Civil War and the abolition of chattel slavery. Yet we live with that legacy of slavery. The struggle against black oppression and for working-class liberation will go forward together in this country or not at all. For the working class to become an instrumentality of its own liberation, it must become a class-for-itself. It must oppose every manifestation of oppression and consciously fight the special oppression of black people. To quote Marx at the time of the Civil War: "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded." The ultimate reconstruction in this country will come with a socialist revolution led by the multiracial proletariat.

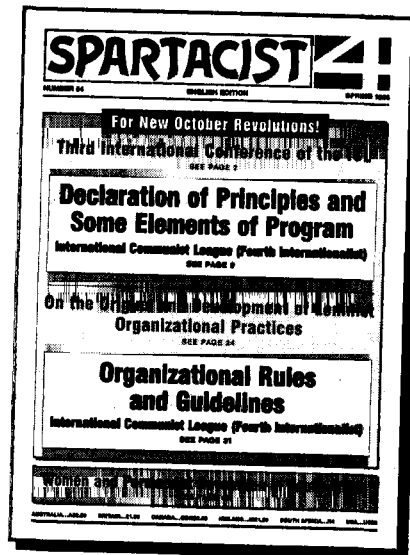
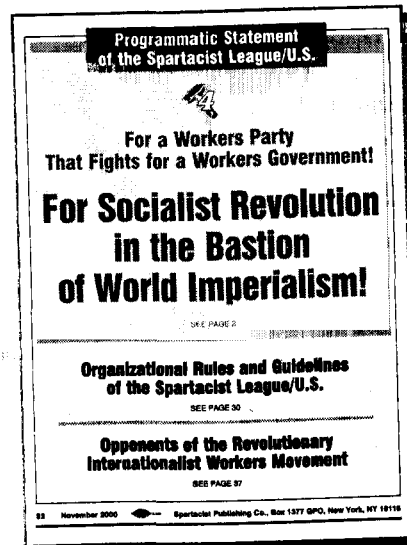
The Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League, seeks to impart the consciousness of this black centrality to the working class. We seek to forge in struggle the revolutionary workers party that will lead the American workers revolution, which alone can provide a decent life for all through a socialist planned economy. If you want a future without imperialist war, racist oppression and capitalist exploitation, we would ask you to join us. Finish the Civil War! ■

### Spartacist English edition No. 54, Spring 1998

**Includes:** "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program, International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)"

Adopted in 1998 at the Third International Conference of the ICL.

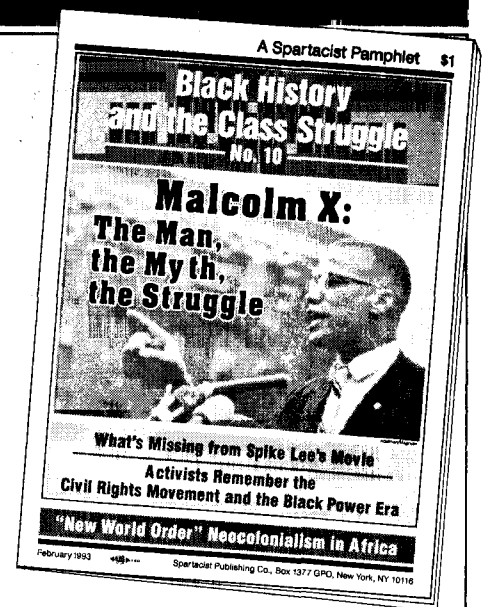
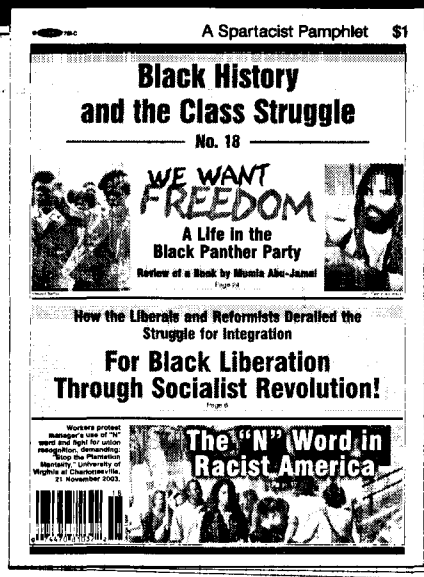
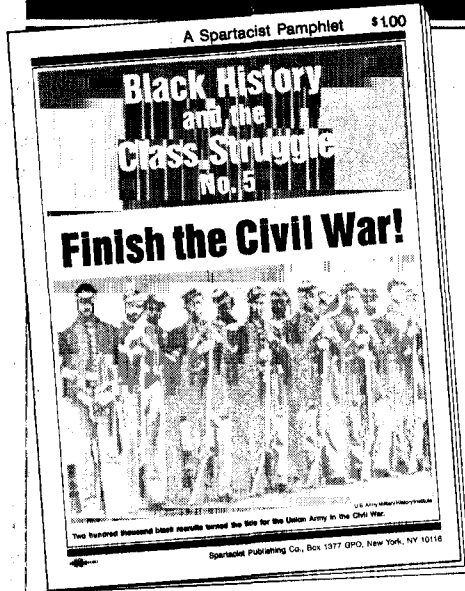
**\$2 (48 pages)**



**Programmatic Statement of the  
Spartacist League/U.S.**

**\$2 (40 pages)**

**Make checks payable/mail to:  
Spartacist Publishing Co.  
Box 1377 GPO  
New York, NY 10116**



## Order Back Issues of Black History and the Class Struggle

### No. 1 \$ .25 (16 pages) Includes:

- John Brown and Frederick Douglass: Heroes of the Anti-Slavery Struggle

### No. 2 \$ .75 (32 pages) Includes:

- Bourgeoisie Celebrates King's Liberal Pacifism
- Malcolm X: Courageous Fighter for Black Liberation
- SNCC: "Black Power" and the Democrats

**No. 3 \$ .75 (32 pages)** Articles from *Workers Vanguard* detailing the grotesque racist bombing of Philly MOVE, signature of the Reagan years.

**No. 4 \$ .75 (32 pages)** Articles dealing with the military question and black oppression.

**No. 5 \$1 (32 pages)** Articles on the continuing struggle to finish the Civil War and fulfill the promise of black freedom.

### No. 6 \$1 (32 pages) Includes:

- Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Haitian Revolution

### No. 7 \$1 (40 pages) Includes:

- Black Troops in Battle Against Slavery
- FBI Rode With the Klan: How Mississippi Burning Rewrites History

### No. 8 \$1 (48 pages) Includes:

- South Africa: Razor's Edge
- Smash Apartheid! For Workers Revolution!

### No. 9 \$1 (56 pages) Includes:

- Outrage Over Racist Acquittal of Cops in Rodney King Case
- Education U.S.A.—Separate and Unequal

### No. 10 \$1 (48 pages)

Articles on Malcolm X: what's missing from Spike Lee's movie; activists remember the civil rights movement and the black power era. Also "New World Order" neocolonialism in Africa.

### No. 11 \$1 (48 pages) Includes:

- Stop the Klan! For a Workers America! —Springfield, Illinois labor/black mobilization against KKK provocation on Martin Luther King holiday.

### No. 12 \$1 (48 pages)

- South Africa Powder Keg—Wave of strikes and land occupations after ANC neo-apartheid "power sharing" regime.

### No. 13 \$1 (48 pages) Includes:

- Lockdown U.S.A.
- Racist Backlash Against O.J. Simpson Acquittal
- Million Man March Appeals Racist Exploiters

### No. 14 \$1 (48 pages) Includes:

- Immigration and Racist "Fortress Europe"
- Courageous Fighter Against Racist Terror: Robert F. Williams, 1925-1996
- "Workfare": Enslaving the Poor, Busting the Unions

### No. 15 \$1 (48 pages) Includes:

- The Frame-Up of Mumia Abu-Jamal
- Abolish the Racist Death Penalty! Death Row Speedup Targets Minorities
- Down With "English Only" Racism! For Free, Quality Education for All Children!

### No. 16 \$1 (48 pages) Includes:

- South Africa Torn by AIDS Crisis
- South African Workers Battle ANC Union-Busting, Austerity
- Down With the Confederate Flag of Slavery!
- The Fight to Unionize the "Open Shop" South

### No. 17 \$1 (48 pages) Includes:

- Defend Immigrants! Defend the Unions!
- U.S. Bloodbath in Baghdad
- South Chicago: Snapshots of Latino and Black Life
- In Honor of Stephen Jay Gould: Science and the Battle Against Racism and Obscurantism
- The Russian Revolution and the Black Freedom Struggle

### No. 18 \$1 (48 pages) Includes:

- Black Disenfranchisement and American "Democracy"
- How the Liberals and Reformists Derailed the Struggle for Integration: For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!
- Down With Capitalist Rulers' War Against Blacks, Immigrants!

### No. 19 \$1 (48 pages) Includes:

- New Orleans: Racist Atrocity
- NYC Transit Strike: Union Power vs. Class Collaboration
- Black Women's Narratives of Slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction
- AIDS in America: Racism, Poverty, Bigotry
- The Lynching of Emmett Till and the Fight for Black Liberation
- Hail Charles Darwin!

All issues are still available. Complete set only \$15, including postage and handling.  
Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, USA