

Black History and the Class Struggle

No. 17



**“War on Terror”
Means War on
Immigrants,
Blacks, Labor**

WV Photos



Government War on Blacks and Reds in the Early '20s

**The Russian Revolution and
the Black Freedom Struggle...26**

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Introduction

This issue of our pamphlet series *Black History and the Class Struggle* appears as the U.S. capitalist rulers continue to wage an open-ended "war on terror." For the Bush administration, the criminal attack on the World Trade Center nearly two years ago was a "gift from god." In a Spartacist League/U.S. statement issued the day after the attack (*Workers Vanguard* No. 764, 14 September 2001), we declared: "The ruling parties—Democrats and Republicans—are all too eager to be able to wield the bodies of those who were killed and wounded in order to reinforce capitalist class rule. It's an opportunity for the exploiters to peddle 'one nation indivisible' patriotism to try to direct the burgeoning anger at the bottom of this society away from themselves and toward an indefinable foreign 'enemy,' as well as immigrants in the U.S., and to reinforce their arsenal of domestic state repression against all the working people."

The very right-wing Bush administration, with the Democratic Party firmly in tow, has seized on the chance to reassert the "right" of U.S. imperialism to run roughshod over the world while pushing through a series of laws and dictates here that mark a qualitative diminution in democratic rights. While taking aim first and foremost at Near Eastern, South Asian and Muslim immigrants, the domestic "war on terror" has also meant wholesale assaults on the rights of labor and the gutting of civil liberties. It has meant increased cop terror in the ghettos, like the NYPD killing in May of 57-year-old black union member Alberta Spruill and the police-state siege of overwhelmingly black Benton Harbor, Michigan the following month after the town's population erupted in protest against killings of black youth by the police.

But as we have stressed for the past two years, what America's capitalist rulers can get away with will be determined by the level of class struggle. As the article "U.S. Bloodbath in Baghdad" notes, there has been widespread opposition to the colonial invasion and occupation of Iraq among black people. But liberal black Democrats like California Congresswoman Barbara Lee and New York City's Al Sharpton, who were embraced by the reformist "socialist" organizers of the large antiwar protests, strive to keep the black masses chained to the Demo-

cratic Party and the racist capitalist order.

Our Revolutionary Internationalist Contingents in the antiwar protests stressed the integral link between the defense of Iraq (and Afghanistan earlier) against U.S. imperialism and defense of the working masses here against increasing exploitation and oppression. It is only struggle against the system of capitalist exploitation that can make inroads against its depredations and only the overthrow of that system through socialist revolution that can put an end to racist oppression and war. This cannot be accomplished without breaking the ties of the working class and black people to the Democratic Party and forging a revolutionary workers party.

In seeking to mobilize the multiracial labor movement in defense of the rights of immigrants and all the oppressed, the Spartacist League and the Labor Black Leagues fraternally allied with the SL have fought to tear through the strait-jacket of "national unity" promoted by the capitalist rulers, the black Democrats and the pro-imperialist labor bureaucracy. Our aim was exemplified by the labor-centered united-front mobilization initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee and the Labor Black League for Social Defense in Oakland, California on 9 February 2002 to protest the anti-immigrant witchhunt, the USA-Patriot Act and the Maritime Security Act. On a small scale, that mobilization illustrated how a revolutionary workers party would combat in action the chauvinism and racial divisions fostered by the ruling class, divisions which are candidly addressed both in our coverage of the protest and in the article "South Chicago: Snapshots of Latino and Black Life."

Other articles in this issue of *Black History* address earlier parallels with the "war on terror" which were unleashed in an attempt to suppress working-class militancy and black resistance. "The Russian Revolution and the Black Freedom Struggle" deals with the period of radicalization ushered in by the Bolshevik-led October Revolution of 1917, when the U.S. government led a witchhunt against immigrants, blacks, communists and other opponents of the racist capitalist order. The turbulent decade of the 1960s is depicted in our memorial to the courageous Bill Epton, an avowed communist

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Front cover: Longshoremen were at core of mobilization in defense of immigrant rights in Oakland, 9 February 2002 (top). Thousands of Iranian Americans in Los Angeles protested anti-immigrant roundups, 18 December 2002.

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Oakland Labor-Centered Mobilization Defies "National Unity"

Defend Immigrants! Defend the Unions!



WV Photo

9 February 2002 Oakland demonstration was first labor-centered protest in defense of immigrants against "war on terror."

OAKLAND—For the first time anywhere, on February 9 organized labor was mobilized here to flex its muscle in defense of its immigrant brothers and sisters targeted under the U.S. rulers' "war on terrorism." Some 300 unionists, immigrants, blacks and youth rallied in downtown Oakland in opposition to the USA-Patriot Act, the Maritime Security Act and the anti-immigrant witchhunt. At the core of this demonstration were over 30 dock workers from International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10, including members of the drill team. They joined transit workers from Bay Area Rapid Transit, water utility workers from the East Bay Municipal Utility District, printers, federal park workers from San Francisco's Presidio, day laborers, Asian and Near Eastern immigrants, college and high school students, and the revolutionary Marxists of the Spartacist League to declare that the U.S. working class will

fight to defend all the oppressed against their common capitalist class enemy.

In initiating and building this united-front protest, the Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense and the Partisan Defense Committee sought above all to win workers to the need to tear through the straitjacket of "national unity" promoted by the U.S. capitalist rulers and break down the poisonous racial and ethnic divisions among the oppressed that they promote. Marching through downtown Oakland, past the headquarters of the shipping employers' Pacific Maritime Association and the Federal Building housing the government enforcers of the capitalist attacks, the multi-racial, working-class protesters chanted: "National unity is a lie—Bosses profit, workers die!" and "Immigrant rights, black rights: Same struggle, same fight—Workers of the world unite!" Banners of the SF Day Labor Program; AFSCME

Local 444; National Parks and Public Employees, Laborers International Local 1141 and the Spartacist League joined those of the PDC and LBL on the march.

For many black longshoremen, acting in defense of immigrants—including the unorganized port truckers—represented a conscious break with widespread sentiment that immigrants and blacks are competitors, not allies—a lie cultivated by the capitalist rulers and their labor lieutenants in the trade-union bureaucracy. At the rally, they joined forces with the Filipino Workers Association and with the largely Latino immigrant workers of the SF Day Labor Program, whose spokesman Eduardo Palomo declared: "We are here to resist the Patriot Act, the law that is going to harm all the workers of this nation.... We want all the workers in all parts of this nation to come out to protest this law." In mobilizing for the rally, *Workers Vanguard* supporters sought to

win workers to the understanding that in defending immigrants, they were defending the whole working class.

This was no abstraction but flesh and blood reality to longshoremen threatened with losing their hard-won union jobs under the background checks mandated by the Maritime Security Act, a law pending in Congress aimed at purging the waterfront of blacks, Latinos and other immigrants and at undermining union power. The political impact of this mobilization spread far beyond those who came to the rally, raising the class consciousness also of the hundreds who took stacks of leaflets to distribute, and the thousands reached through discussion, leaflets and copies of *Workers Vanguard*.

The protest was built in distributions to key workforces: longshore dispatch, port truckers, bus barns and BART yards, postal facilities, municipal utilities, industries with heavily immigrant workforces organized by ILWU Local 6 and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees union, in Chinatown and other immigrant neighborhoods, campuses and high schools. The campaign intersected struggles from Santa Clara—where the husband of Alia Atawneh, a Palestinian woman fired in an act of anti-immigrant persecution by Macy's, endorsed the rally—to Salt Lake City, where hundreds of immigrant airport workers were fired. Solidarity greetings from one of the lawyers representing these workers were read to the protest.

The seriousness of longshoremen at the rally, which Local 10 endorsed, was underscored by the fact that a number of lower-seniority B-men had foregone a trip to L.A. to pick up a weekend's work, a real sacrifice during a slow month at the Port of Oakland. At the end of the protest, several longshoremen made a point of taking home the mobilization placards on which they had written the name of their union. Discussions afterward at a celebration in a local bar and restaurant grappled with key questions: which way forward for workers, why we need a revolutionary workers party to get rid of capitalism and how to build it, why unions in themselves are not enough. One youth joined the Bay Area Spartacus Youth Club at the party, and a number of workers expressed interest in joining the LBL.

Many longshoremen take a great deal of pride in their union, particularly in the gains that were won for black workers. At the same time, several longshoremen asked us why it took communists to fight to mobilize the social power of labor in defense of immigrant rights and in defense of the unions. To mobilize the multiracial proletariat in defense of immigrants,

black people and all the oppressed requires a conscious struggle against the million and one ways the capitalist exploiters, aided and abetted by their labor lackeys, foster the racial and ethnic antagonisms that divide the proletariat and undermine its fighting strength. At bottom this is a question of program and perspective. The worldview of the labor tops—even those of the most "progressive" stamp—is defined by what is possible or "practical" under capitalism, a system which is predicated on the exploitation of labor. We communists pursue another road, one based not only on improving present conditions but fighting to do away with the entire system of capitalist wage slavery.

This rally was held during Black History Month to underscore both the common interests of black and immigrant workers and the need for the labor movement to take up the fight against racial oppression. In a speech for the Labor Black League that was translated into Spanish, Adwoa Oni declared:

"The frenzied anti-Arab and anti-immigrant witchhunt is a deadly danger to all racial and ethnic minorities. This is especially true for the black population, whose forcible segregation at the bottom of this society is rooted in the history of chattel slavery and the defeat of Radical Reconstruction. Black oppression is the very foundation of this racist capitalist system—but also its Achilles' heel. It's time to finish the Civil War! Forward to a workers state!"

Death row political prisoner, MOVE supporter and former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal sent his endorsement, and a statement of support was read out at the rally. Speaking for the PDC, the legal and social defense organization associated with the SL, Steve Bull called for "mass protests centered on the social power of the labor movement to demand Jamal's immediate release." Also endorsing was Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), the former Black Panther who spent 27 years in prison on a similar government frame-up before mass protest brought about his release. Speaking at the rally, former Panther Kiilu Nyasha brought attention to the plight of Haitian immigrants as well as that of Hugo Pinell and Ruchell Cinque Magee, political prisoners who have spent well over three decades in the prisons of the U.S. capitalist system of racist injustice.

This united-front action intersected contradictions within the labor bureaucracy and exposed how this conservative layer resting atop the workers organizations acts as the key internal obstacle to mobilizing workers power. From the time the new "anti-terror" legislation was introduced in September, ILWU International officials, instead of opposing the MSA, proposed that the capitalists make the ILWU a part-

ner in the "national security" war, including against other sections of dock workers who are heavily immigrant. The Teamsters and East Coast International Longshore Association tops likewise refused to oppose the MSA. It was the ILWU tops who pointed to the port truckers to be targeted by the bill. As the call for the demonstration pointed out: "It is not the job of the workers to enforce the laws, 'security' or otherwise, that will be used against them: cops and security guards have no place in the union movement!"

In Local 10, however, with its heavily black membership, there was a lot of pressure from the ranks to do something to oppose this attack. Secretary-Treasurer Clarence Thomas helped build and spoke at the rally. Also present were both business agents, Trent Willis and Jack Heyman, who put the motion at a Local 10 meeting that the union endorse the mobilization. In his speech, Thomas noted, "There are people here today that don't necessarily share the same political views" but "we're all here to stand together against the issue of the USA-Patriot Act and the Port Maritime Security Act." All those at the rally were able to compare openly Thomas' views with those of the Spartacist League speaker, Brian Manning, as they presented two different perspectives on which way forward for the working class—class collaboration vs. class independence from the capitalists and their state.

Thomas upheld as a model the "legacy of Harry Bridges," under which in the 1930s "longshoremen refused to load and unload cargo in the form of scrap iron that was destined for Japan." Far from an act of international working-class solidarity, this boycott was rather very much in line with U.S. imperialism's battle with their Japanese capitalist competitors over which of these gangs of robbers would dominate the Pacific. The pre-World War II longshore action is an example of the same poison promoted today by the labor tops that pits workers of different countries against each other. This protectionism, premised on defending American capitalism, is part and parcel of the union bureaucracy's support for the capitalist Democratic Party.

In contrast was the powerful example of Japanese dock workers described in greetings read to the rally from the Spartacist Group of Japan: "To protest Japanese imperialism's cooperation in the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, dock workers near Nagasaki showed some of their potential power by refusing to load Japanese warships bound for the Indian Ocean." ILWU members also greatly appreciated meeting a young German worker who read greetings to the rally from the Spartakist-

"Black Rights, Immigrant Rights Go Forward Hand in Hand"

We print below in edited form a speech by Adwoa Oni representing the Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense from the February 9 rally.

The Labor Black League for Social Defense stands for mobilizing the multi-racial working class, leading all the oppressed, in a united struggle against the brutal system of racist oppression that is capitalist America. Fraternally allied to the Spartacist League, a multi-racial revolutionary Marxist organization, the Labor Black League is part of the revolutionary movement of the workers against the bosses and for socialism.

To line up the population behind their war-crazed ambitions abroad, both capitalist parties, the twin parties of capital, the Democrats and Republicans, are fanning the flames of patriotic bigotry through jingoistic "united we stand" anti-immigrant campaigns. They are fostering the false notion that the ruling class has common interests with the workers even as living standards plunge and the ranks of the unemployed grow. This racist lie means accepting second-class status for black people and denial of citizenship rights for the foreign born. This assault has particularly targeted immigrants of Near Eastern origin. The racial profiling of Arabs and Muslims is promoted by Attorney General John Ashcroft, a lover of the Confederate flag, the bloody flag of slavery and racist terror.

Many black people buy into the capitalist rulers' campaign to pit American-born workers against immigrants. The

racist white ruling class promotes the revolting lie among black people that poor immigrants are the reason why blacks continue to be forcibly segregated at the bottom of this society. This lie is aided and abetted by black demagogues like Louis Farrakhan. He denounces the small Arab and Asian ghetto shopkeepers as "bloodsuckers," thereby diverting black people away from a united struggle with immigrants for equality.

At the same time immigrants are taught to despise black people by swallowing wholesale the racist filth spread by the ruling class that the black masses remain at the bottom because they lack a "work ethic." Immigrant workers must grasp that the fight against black oppression is central to any struggle to defend democratic rights in America. Black rights, immigrant rights go forward hand in hand and our struggles advance the cause of emancipation of the whole working class.

Our program of revolutionary integrationism means, as Karl Marx put it, "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded." This emancipation is only possible in a socialist egalitarian society based on the fullest integration of black people. We, the workers—black, white, Hispanic and Asian—create the wealth of society. Those who labor must rule!

American workers must rise up from their knees, fight for their own interests with no regard to the interests or property rights of the capitalist exploiters. The main obstacle to such independent



Adwoa Oni

political action by the working class is political loyalty to the Democratic Party. So black Bay Area Congresswoman Barbara Lee cast the sole vote against giving Bush a blank check for war powers. But her vote also served to foster the illusion that the racist Democratic Party, the party of Jim Crow, the party of massive prison construction and wholesale welfare destruction, can be "pressured" to serve the interests of workers, blacks and immigrants. Black Democrats like Lee are positioning themselves to contain and head off increasing discontent as economic recession and racist repression devastate the working class. But as Malcolm X once said, a vote for the Democrats is a vote for the Dixiecrats.

The Labor Black League stands for the building of a revolutionary workers party that champions the cause of all the oppressed. It is time to fight or starve! For a world without racial oppression, without imperialist war, join the Labor Black League for Social Defense and fight for a socialist future! ■

Jugend, youth group of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany, section of the International Communist League.

This joint action by immigrant, black and white workers here in the U.S. against the bloodthirsty U.S. imperialist rulers struck a chord internationally. Reflecting the international character of the world market and common interests of the working class of all nations, greetings to the rally brought attention to the struggles of immigrant workers from Zimbabweans, Mozambicans and Basothans in South Africa to North Africans, Turks and Kurds in Europe, from Koreans in Japan to Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants in Australia. A solidarity statement to the rally by Pedro Wasiejko, secretary of international relations for the Central de los Trabajadores Argentinos

union in Buenos Aires, declared that in the "profound political and economic crisis" of that country, "the social disciplinarians of today are basically two: unemployment on one side and judicial prosecution of social struggles on the other."

Other messages of support came from the National Federation of Undocumented Workers of France (Coordination Nationale des Sans-Papiers de France), Australia Asia Worker Links and the Brescia branch of the Italian FIOM (Federation of Metal Workers and Employees), which has been very actively involved in defense of Pakistani, North African and Senegalese immigrants in Italy. Statements were sent by sections of the ICL not only in Japan but Mexico, South Africa, France, Britain, Ireland, Germany, Italy, Canada and Australia.

The Oakland demonstration repudiated in action the equation of the working class in the U.S. with the racist, imperialist U.S. state—an equation pushed both by the U.S. ruling class and those who killed thousands of working people in the attack on the World Trade Center, as well as nationalists of all stripes, and widely believed by people throughout the world. The statement by the Grupo Espartaquista de México in particular had a strong impact when read out near the end of the demonstration. Noting that Mexican immigrant workers in the U.S. create "a broad human bridge between the working class of the two countries," it went on:

"It is of great importance for workers and the oppressed in Mexico to see American workers, blacks, immigrants and youth fighting against the repressive and racist measures of the U.S. imperialist rulers.

Down with the lie of national unity!

"A fundamental part of our fight to forge a revolutionary and internationalist workers party in Mexico is to expose the lie of nationalism, an ideology that seeks to deceive the workers, tying them to their own exploiters.... The true allies of the Mexican workers are not their brutal exploiters. Their true allies are you: the American workers fighting for their rights and those of all the oppressed. For joint class struggle against capitalist rulers in Mexico and the U.S.!"

While the demonstration helped workers to concretely see the need for and be part of joint struggle with immigrant workers, radical-minded students who came from as far away as Santa Cruz and Los Angeles were impressed to see the presence of workers who represent the only force that can defeat the imperialist

rulers of the U.S. and put an end to racism, exploitation and war. Students who drove up from the University of California at Santa Cruz were joined by a contingent of high school students from San Francisco's School of the Arts; among others were students from Berkeley High, UC Berkeley, San Francisco State and Oakland's Laney College.

In contrast to other recent protest demonstrations, this rally was a mobilization of the working class and the oppressed *independent of the capitalists*, their parties and their state. It was built despite the boycott by most of the rest of the left, who claim to fight for an end to war and for solidarity with immigrants but who will not breach the bourgeoisie's "national unity" campaign, instead placing their hopes in ally-

ing with the liberal Democratic wing of the class enemy. The International Socialist Organization flatly refused to endorse the protest, falsely counterposing a rally at the San Francisco Marriott for largely immigrant hotel workers. The Bolshevik Tendency attended but would not endorse the demonstration; the Socialist Workers Organization and Freedom Socialist Party endorsed but did not attend.

This demonstration illustrated on a small scale what a revolutionary workers party would do. The task ahead of us is to forge such a party, in political struggle against the pro-capitalist misleaders of the working class, which will mobilize all the oppressed in a united struggle for workers power. Those who labor must rule. Join us! ■

Introduction...

(continued from page 2)

in Harlem, and in our review of the movie about Muhammad Ali, whose defiant opposition to the U.S. imperialist war in Vietnam spoke for a generation of young black militants.

As well, we continue our ongoing coverage of the fight to free former Black Panther Party spokesman, MOVE supporter and journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was sentenced to death in 1982 and remains on death row despite overwhelming evidence of his innocence. The frame-up of Jamal is a continuation of the FBI's murderous COINTELPRO terror operation of the 1960s, which resulted in the assassination of dozens of Black Panther activists and the imprisonment of hundreds more. As the "Central Park Jogger Case" makes clear, the racist frame-up system is wielded with full force against the ghetto masses as a whole. In "War on Drugs' Texas Style," we point to a particularly grotesque example of this war on minorities and the poor, which has led to a massive increase in black and Latino imprisonment over the past two decades.

The Bolshevik Revolution put the multinational working class in power and provided a beacon for the workers and oppressed of the world. The subsequent degeneration of the Soviet workers state under the misrule of a nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy is addressed in "The Russian Revolution and the Black Freedom Struggle," though in a telescoped manner implying that Stalinist rule was fully consummated with the defeat of the emerging Left Opposition in January 1924. That did

mark the qualitative point at which the bureaucratic caste seized political power from the working class—from then on, the people who ruled the USSR, the way the USSR was ruled and the purposes for which it was ruled all changed. But the struggle did not end there. It took a series of bloody purges through the 1930s for the Stalin clique to consolidate its rule. Throughout, Trotsky's Left Opposition continued the fight for authentic Bolshevism and in defense of October.

The final undoing of the October Revolution through capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92 plunged the working people of the former USSR into immiseration and pogromist fratricide while emboldening the U.S. imperialists in their attacks on the masses of the semicolonial world and on working people and minorities in the U.S. The ground for today's war against the oppressed was well prepared by the previous eight years of the Democratic Clinton administration, which vastly expanded the racist death penalty, anti-immigrant measures and other repressive powers of the state and carried out imperialist terror bombing against Serbia and Iraq.

As we note in "Affirmative Action Under Fire: For Free, Quality, Integrated Education for All!," even the most minimal remaining gains of the civil rights movement are today on the chopping block. In late June, the Supreme Court upheld the notion of "diversity" in the case of the University of Michigan Law School while ruling unconstitutional an affirmative action point system for minority applicants to the undergraduate school. That this was widely painted as a major victory for the rights of minorities speaks to the bankruptcy of

the liberal and reformist proponents of affirmative action. The racist rollback has been accompanied by an ideological crusade aimed at justifying black oppression, which is built into the very foundations of the American capitalist system. "In Honor of Stephen Jay Gould: Science and the Battle Against Racism and Obscurantism" pays homage to the noted evolutionary biologist and science writer who powerfully fought against pseudo-scientific justifications for racism.

Finally, our article "Save Amina Lawal!" points to another manifestation of the religious obscurantism and oppression that have been intensified internationally since the collapse of the Soviet Union, as seen in the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria and other areas in Africa and Asia. As we go to press, Amina Lawal awaits a final appeal against her sentence of death by stoning.

For us, the study of black history, which is a key part of the history of the class struggle in the U.S., is not a passive endeavor: we seek to understand the world in order to change it. We tell the truth to the exploited and oppressed: that black freedom and social equality will not be achieved short of an American edition of the October Revolution. The Spartacist League and the Labor Black Leagues fight to mobilize the working class on the program of *revolutionary integrationism*—the full integration of black people in an egalitarian socialist order in which those who labor rule. As part of a Leninist vanguard party, black workers will play a powerful vanguard role in the struggle to abolish the monstrous, class-divided, segregated capitalist system in the U.S. and to establish workers rule across the planet. ■

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Down With Colonial Occupation of Iraq!

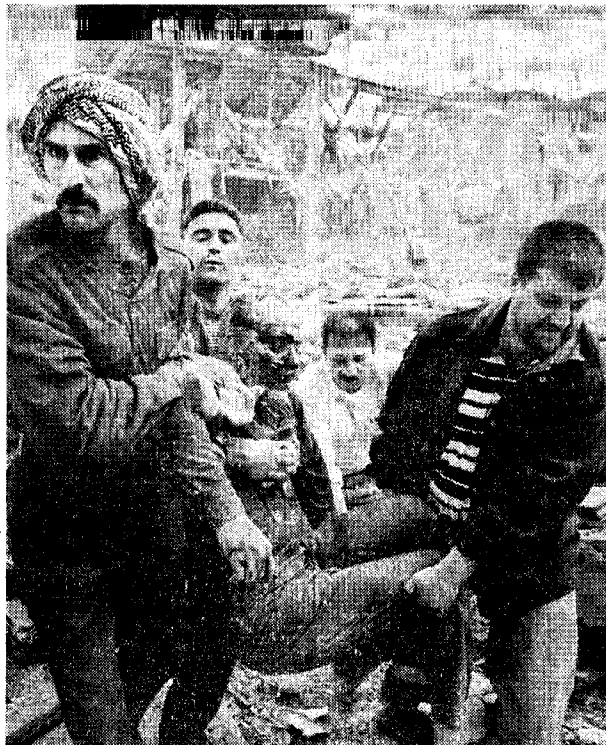
U.S. Bloodbath in Baghdad

APRIL 8—As U.S. forces tighten their stranglehold around the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, they are leaving behind a trail of savage death and destruction. The morgues are filled with the bodies of dead Iraqi soldiers and civilians; the hospitals are overflowing with men, women and children who have been bombed by American jets, shot by American tanks, or who have lost arms and legs to American cluster bombs. After U.S. tanks rolled through residential and industrial areas on the outskirts of Baghdad, firing for three hours at anything that moved, one American soldier recalled, "People lying all over the side of the road—I can't even count how many."

The Pentagon boasted of 3,000 Iraqis killed just in those few hours—far more than even U.S. commanders in the field claim. There is no way to know how many have really been massacred. The International Red Cross reports that the casualty rate in Baghdad is so high that hospitals have stopped counting the number of wounded. Last night, under the guise of targeting Saddam Hussein and his sons, the U.S. dropped four 2,000-pound "bunker buster" bombs on a residential neighborhood of Baghdad, killing at least 14 people.

The Pentagon and its kept media brag about their victories in Iraq. *This is not a war but a one-sided slaughter.* In just over two weeks, the U.S. and Britain have carried out over 30,000 air missions, including 12,000 military strikes. One BBC correspondent likened American bombing raids against Iraqi troops to "shooting fish in a barrel."

Despite heroic acts of resistance, Iraq barely has any means to defend itself. The



Imperialist devastation and slaughter: Iraqi worker being rescued from telecommunications facility hit by U.S. missile.

Pentagon's budget for this war alone is twice Iraq's total national income. Iraq has been bled white by 12 years of United Nations sanctions, which have resulted in the slow deaths by malnutrition and inadequate medical care of over 1.5 million of its citizens. That same blockade has deprived it of the realization of its wealth in oil. As a result, Iraq's infrastructure is in shambles and its armed forces, starved of resources and subjected to incessant bombing, has been reduced to a third of its size at the time of the 1991 Gulf War.

Leading up to the invasion, obliging UN inspectors in search of the still undiscovered "weapons of mass destruction" revealed Iraq's remaining military

resources to the poised colonial invaders of American imperialism. Today, Iraq can barely maintain a stable army on the battlefield. It has been denied any ability to manufacture weapons or to resupply its armed forces. In short, Iraq was and is a society on the ropes, now besieged by the greatest military power that has ever existed. That the Iraqi people, confronted with such overwhelming odds and saddled with a bloody regime installed by U.S. imperialism in the first place, have been able to mount any resistance is a measure of their hatred of the colonial invaders.

To this inhumane onslaught, the Bush administration has added a propaganda barrage, the lying hypocrisy and racist overtones of which seem a hybrid of the efforts of Joseph Goebbels and Pat Robertson. Not a day passes without another Bush sermon on good and evil or another paean to America's "war of liberation"—this while his administration moves to erase such liberties and freedoms that are still

available to U.S. citizens. Not a day passes without a cover-up of U.S. responsibility for civilian deaths and without a fabrication of Iraqi "war crimes." In the service of sustaining the pretense of the invincibility and righteousness of American imperialism's military forces, efforts were made to silence newsman Peter Arnett for simply reporting on Iraqi TV that military resistance to the invasion had not been anticipated by the White House.

As U.S. imperialism rides roughshod over the people of Iraq, the Bush administration is making it amply clear that not only Iraqis but working people all over the world will pay for the American victory. At home, this can be seen in the

All U.S. Troops Out of the Near East Now!



AP

U.S. soldiers terrorize unarmed Iraqi.

attack by Oakland cops, firing wooden bullets and concussion grenades, on anti-war protesters and longshoremen yesterday. Abroad, it will mean a bloody colonial occupation of Iraq and the unleashing of the American war machine against other countries. Emboldened by the rape of Iraq, former CIA chief James Woolsey raved that this was the onset of a "Fourth World War" (the third being the Cold War). He went on to declare: "As we move toward a new Middle East over the years and, I think, over the decades to come... we will make a lot of people very nervous. Our response should be, 'Good! We want you nervous. We want you to realize now, for the fourth time in 100 years, this country and its allies are on the march'."

From the outset of the drive to war we have forthrightly stood for the military defense of Iraq against U.S. attack without giving any political support to the Saddam Hussein regime. In contrast, the reformist organizers of antiwar protests, bleating "No to war" alongside the handful of Democratic Party politicians they have pursued, have served to mask the fact that it is in the interest of workers and the oppressed, especially in the U.S., to take a clear stand against U.S. imperialism.

In a 19 March Spartacist League/U.S. statement, issued the night the bombing began, we wrote: "Every victory for the U.S. imperialists can only encourage further military adventures. In turn, every humiliation, every setback, every defeat they suffer will serve to assist the struggles of working people and the oppressed around the globe." Our call for class struggle against the U.S. capitalist rulers is premised on the understanding that there can be no unity between the exploiters and exploited in the fight against imperialism and war. The bloodbath

being perpetrated in Iraq underlines the urgency of forging a revolutionary workers party committed to the defeat of U.S. imperialism through socialist revolution.

U.S. Imperialism Menaces the World

It is the intention of America's imperialist rulers to perpetuate and extend their domination of the world, now possible as a result of the capitalist counterrevolution in the USSR in 1991-92. But the way this war is being waged is very much the product of an arrogant, reactionary, insular and simple-minded administration that actually seems to believe that the world's peoples eagerly seek its "liberating" interventions. These god-like illusions quickly encountered reality in Iraq. It is not hyperbole to call heroic the actions of those Iraqis who attack tanks and Bradley vehicles in pickup trucks armed, at best, with .50-calibre machine guns. Or the actions of those who directly confront Marine units with only rifles in hand, or even of those who exterminate themselves to kill the invaders. Iraqi Shi'ites resident in Jordan, no lovers of Saddam, have returned in busloads to the hell that is home to fight the American/British colonialists.

In the aftermath of a suicide attack that killed four U.S. soldiers, a Pentagon official declared, "Everyone is now seen as a combatant until proven otherwise." What this meant was seen in the killing of at least seven women and children, as an American soldier shot up the van they were traveling in. Three British soldiers were sent home in custody for complaining about unwarranted civilian deaths caused by trigger-happy U.S. troops. Since then, a convoy of Russian diplomats on their way to Syria was attacked and a convoy of U.S.-allied Kurds in the

north was bombed. When an American A-10 pilot opened fire on a British convoy on March 28, killing a British soldier and also shooting dead one 12-year-old Iraqi, another British soldier complained of the pilot: "He had absolutely no regard for human life. I believe he was a cowboy." In a piece in the London *Independent* (6 April), British correspondent John Pilger wrote:

"We now glimpse the forbidden truths of the invasion of Iraq. A man cuddles the body of his infant daughter; her blood drenches them. A woman in black pursues a tank, her arms outstretched; all seven in her family are dead. An American Marine murders a woman because she happens to be standing next to a man in uniform. 'I'm sorry,' he says, 'but the chick got in the way'."

These atrocities are not just the result of trigger-happy soldiers. As Pilger goes on to write:

"These Anglo-American invasions of weak and largely defenceless nations are meant to demonstrate the kind of world the US is planning to dominate by force, with its procession of worthy and unworthy victims and the establishment of American bases at the gateways of all the main sources of fossil fuels. There is a list now. If Israel has its way, Iran will be next; and Cuba, Libya, Syria and even China had better watch out. North Korea may not be an immediate American target, because its threat of nuclear war has been effective. Ironically, had Iraq kept its nuclear weapons [*sic*: Iraq never had nuclear weapons], this invasion probably would not have taken place. That is the lesson for all governments at odds with Bush and Blair: nuclear-arm yourself quickly."

Washington is well into the planning for a postwar Iraq. Current proposals are to divide the country into three administrative regions, similar to when it was part of the Ottoman Empire, before the British imperialists forcibly amalgamated the Shi'ite, Sunni and Kurdish areas into an artificial entity that became Iraq. While hundreds of CIA-sponsored Iraqi "freedom fighters" are being parachuted into the country to act as an auxiliary to the American occupation, the U.S. has already made it clear that the country will be under direct military rule for at least six months. The quality of the "native" stooges can be assessed by a current leading candidate, one Ahmed Chalabi, an Iraqi-born financier (who has not seen Baghdad in over 45 years) touted by Vice President Cheney and who, in recent years, was convicted of bank fraud in Jordan. His projected administrative area is, of course, finance. The Iraqi "opposition" has dutifully pledged to denationalize the state monopoly on oil to enable a takeover by American oil companies.

"Cronies Set to Make a Killing," declared a headline in the London *Observer*

(6 April), reporting on how the “reconstruction” of Iraq is being doled out to Bechtel and other corporations with close ties to the Bush administration. The docking facilities at the port town of Umm Qasr have been given to the anti-union Stevedoring Services of America, which is a lavish contributor to the Republican Party and which headed last autumn’s lockout of West Coast longshoremen. The corporate greed that has led to job losses, wage-slashing and the disappearance of pensions over the last decade in this country will be magnified 100 times through the lens of U.S. colonial occupation.

While America’s overwhelming military preponderance all but assured quick victory in the invasion, the Iraqi military resistance portends what is likely to be a long, bloody and uncertain occupation. The 1898 Spanish-American War was also an easy win for the U.S., but the subsequent decades-long colonial occupation of the Philippines was met with a series of insurgencies, including one in which up to a half million Filipinos were slaughtered between 1899 and 1902.

The current spectacle of the lesser great powers—France, Germany, Russia—that led UN “opposition” to the war now demanding their place at the trough of Iraqi oil would be humorous did it not augur the rape of that country once it has fallen. National security adviser Condoleezza Rice stated bluntly, as the *New York Times* (5 April) put it, that “the American-led alliance had shed ‘life and blood’ in the Iraq war and would reserve for itself—and not the United Nations—the lead role in creating a new Iraqi government.” This is a statement to the European powers to expect not a penny from the postwar “reconstruction” bonanza.

interesting to remember that the American Revolution was essentially won by those who, dressed in rags and animal pelts, ambushed the British forces and then melted back into the swamps, the forests and the hills. A prime example of this was South Carolina’s Francis Marion, known as the “Swamp Fox.” After his regular army regiment was defeated by the British, he organized a band of guerrillas that staged bold raids over swampy terrain, often defeating larger bodies of British troops. By demonizing Iraqi resistance as “terror,” the U.S. imperialists have reduced the American Revolution to a terrorist enterprise!

Predictably, to follow in the wake of the invasion of Iraq are the Christian missionaries to “civilize the savages”—in other words, religious bigots who have been in the forefront of support for the Bush administration, in this case notably the Southern Baptist Convention and Samaritan’s Purse, led by Franklin Graham, the son of evangelist Billy Graham. The leaders of the former recently characterized Muhammad as a “pedophile” and “terrorist” while Graham has been satisfied to label Islam as “wicked” and “violent.” It is accurate, but not enough, to say that the forerunners of these zealots were steeped in unwashed ignorance until those under Islam’s sway recivilized Europe. It is more to the point that their minions are a reservoir of racist reaction who, not infrequently, find religious adherence compatible with membership in or sympathy for the KKK.

Iraqi resistance to the colonial invasion has fueled increasingly militant, mass demonstrations against American imperialism throughout the Near East. These

have not, in all cases, been led by Muslim religious reactionaries, especially in Egypt where just resentment against national oppression has, in part, been led by left nationalists who hark back to the days of Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s and ’60s. Referring to the current Egyptian president, many of the protesters chanted, “Mubarak leave!” Bush’s current consultants for mopping up urban resistance are British (with recent experience in Northern Ireland) and Israeli “experts,” past and, in the case of Israel, present masters in turning whole cities into concentration camps. At base, the driving force of outrage in the Near East is the hideous and potentially genocidal national oppression of Palestinians by Israel.

But history and current experience show that neither the left nationalism of a Nasser nor its current right-wing variant in Iraq can provide an answer to imperialist domination. That can only be accomplished by a proletarian revolution in the area that inspires class overturns throughout the region, including Israel, where currently a nationwide general strike against government-sponsored cutbacks is posed. What is needed to achieve self-determination for all the region’s national minorities and to throw off the yoke of imperialist domination is a series of workers revolutions to sweep away all the capitalist regimes of the region and create a socialist federation of the Near East.

The conquest of power by the proletariat does not complete the socialist revolution, but only opens it, by changing the direction of social development. Short of the extension of the revolution internationally, particularly to the advanced,

Down With Racist Colonialist Conquest!

Echoing the typical complaints of all imperialist colonizers, native resisters to such depredations are seen by Bush & Co. as bloodthirsty cowards only capable of attacking from ambush and then scurrying away to hide among the populace (perhaps because they, unlike the invaders, are part of the populace). Such insidious elements then, in the eyes of the imperialists, become responsible for the mass executions of innocents forced on the “decent” conquerors. And no world power—save, perhaps, Nazi Germany—has massacred more innocents under these racist premises than the U.S., which in Korea and Vietnam alone slaughtered six million people.

U.S. imperialism is waging war against the weak, and the weak have no other way to fight back than from ambush. It is

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industrialized imperialist centers, that social development will be arrested and ultimately reversed, as happened in the case of the Soviet Union. This underscores the need to forge Leninist-Trotskyist parties of socialist revolution as part of a working-class communist international to lead the proletariat in struggle against all forms of oppression, exploitation and injustice.

The War at Home

With the start of combat in Iraq, there has been an increase in patriotic sentiment and support for the war in the U.S. and Britain, accompanied by increasing government moves to quash protest. That this patriotic upswing has been relatively modest gives testimony both to continuing reservations about the justice of this colonial venture and to the fact that working people in both countries remain primarily concerned about more mundane matters, like the ability to remain employed and survive from day to day in the bleak economic circumstances they face. Among black people in the U.S., however, opposition to the war remains strong and unchanged. A recent *Washington Post/ABC News* poll indicates that opposition to the war stands at 61 percent of the black population as contrasted to 20 percent of whites.

A black academic told the *Washington Post* (25 March), "Black Americans are routinely told that there's not enough money for housing, medicine, education and rebuilding the inner city, but...considerable sums can be raised for war." It is true that war costs will be used as an

excuse to continue to savage such meager social benefits as are available in this country.

Just as importantly, most black people understand that Bush is president only as the result of a swindle. Indeed, it is likely that had not Bush's brother, Jeb, organized to exclude black people from voting in Florida, Al Gore would have won the election. It was under the Clinton/Gore administration that welfare and many other social services were axed while the prison population, which today numbers over two million, soared. And it was under Clinton/Gore that the starvation and devastation of Iraq continued apace. In 1996, Clinton's secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, was asked what she thought about the half million Iraqi children who had died as a result of the blockade. She replied, "We think the price is worth it." Two years later, Clinton signed into law the "Iraq Liberation Act," which sailed through the Senate with unanimous approval. That same year, Clinton launched a massive bombing campaign against Baghdad, the biggest of a number of air assaults against Iraq under his administration. Most recently, the \$80 billion war appropriations bill passed with the support of every Democrat in the Senate and the opposition of fewer than a dozen Democrats in the House.

Speaking at a rally in defense of affirmative action in Washington, D.C. on April 1, the president of the Detroit NAACP declared of the Iraq war, "If we can build democracy there, we must also maintain democracy over here." The "democracy" that this liberal wants to

maintain is the "democracy" that consigns millions of black children to abject poverty and malnutrition. One in eight young black men is currently in prison and more than one in four young black men can expect to be imprisoned at some point in their lives. In fact, some black people identify, as the *New York Times* (27 March) put it, "with poor Iraqis, whom they saw simply as people of color being attacked by a rich, and largely white, American government."

The development of American imperialism began shortly after the Civil War and emerged on the world arena with the 1898 Spanish-American War, launched as a mission to "civilize savages," a racist battle cry that Bush now echoes. It is no accident that that development was accompanied by the entrenchment of Jim Crow legislation and lynch law "justice," including racist mob riots against black people. The plight of the black population is rooted in the race/caste oppression that is the cornerstone of the American imperialist order.

Imperialism is, at base, business, the expression of the desire by a nation's capitalist rulers to extend their capacity to reap profits. As Lenin put it, politics is concentrated economics. The imperialists will not sacrifice their guns for the benefit of the people any more than a boss would sacrifice profits to provide job security and a decent living for workers. It is only struggle against the system of capitalist exploitation that can make inroads against its depredations and only the overthrow by socialist revolution of that system that can end, for all time, exploitation and war.

This social overturn cannot be accomplished without breaking the ties of the working class and black people to the Democratic Party and forging a party of proletarian revolution. This is no small task. While the Republicans offer only thinly disguised contempt for working people, and are openly racist, the Democrats offer false promises and words of support for racial equality as they carry out the dictates of the capitalist order. In this regard, the liberal black Democrats are invaluable to the capitalist rulers in maintaining the adherence of black people to this system. While, for the most part, white contenders for the Democratic nomination for the presidency have dropped any criticism of the war, black Democrats like Al Sharpton have continued their qualified opposition to the war, now tempered by calls for support of "our boys."

For these black politicians, support for "our troops" is a statement of allegiance to the American imperialist order. But for the black masses, in many cases, the troops



British troops enter Baghdad, March 1917.

National Geographic

literally are their sons and daughters. As one black New Yorker told the *New York Times* (27 March), "We're going to be in the front lines—blacks and minorities." The fact is that blacks compose some 29 percent of the active enlisted ranks of the U.S. Army and over 20 percent of the Navy, 18 percent of the Air Force and 16 percent of the Marines—i.e., well above their demographic weight. It is difficult to find a black person who does not have a close relative in the armed services. Many poor, minority and working-class youth are induced to join the military in search of financial, educational and employment benefits. As a result, the military is a concentrated expression of the seething racial and class contradictions in U.S. civil society.

As communist revolutionaries, we are not for meaningless deaths whether, in this context, American or Iraqi. It is America's rulers who bear all the responsibility for sending young working-class and minority men and women to kill and be killed in order to extend the power and profits of U.S. imperialism. The Iraqi soldiers and others who are resisting the imperialist invasion are simply defending their homes and country. It must be recognized that support for "our boys" necessarily entails support for what they are doing, i.e., for a particular manifestation of U.S. imperialism's drive to subjugate all nations to its mandates.

The "Left" at War—The Price of Class Collaboration

Predictably, most of the left, some of whom would describe themselves as socialist but whose real aspiration is to achieve sufficient weight to influence bourgeois policy, have capitulated to the—less than virulent—increase in patriotic fervor. From the beginning, the ersatz socialist builders of protest against the war, primarily Workers World Party (through its International ANSWER coalition) and the International Socialist Organization (ISO), have argued that the largest possible and, therefore, most effective movement can only be built on the basis of slogans palatable to all—"No to war" or, in the case of the upcoming April 12 ANSWER protest in D.C., "Bring the troops home now." What this has meant and could only mean is building a coalition with the soft wing of the bourgeoisie, i.e., with liberal Democrats.

The essence of such politics is most clearly expressed by the more right-wing antiwar coalitions that have come to the fore as the war drew closer, like Win Without War and United for Peace and Justice, which sponsored the mammoth February 15 demonstration in New York.



5 April 2003: Spartacist/Labor Black League contingent at Harlem antiwar protest.

Leslie Cagan of United for Peace says, "Our opposition to the war doesn't mean that we're opposed to the troops. We want to support them by bringing them home." Win Without War's Medea Benjamin, director of Global Exchange, recently explained that their aim is to work "with the progressive wing of the Democratic party. We want to reclaim the right to portray the flag. For all those who want to show their sense of patriotism and oppose the war, we want to create a space for that" (*London Guardian*, 1 April). Like the antiwar Democrats invited onto ANSWER platforms, these types are unabashed defenders of the interests of U.S. imperialism, but propose other means than war to subjugate Iraq.

"Bringing the boys home" did not end the Vietnam War, which continued for some years after U.S. troops were withdrawn. The war ended only when the North Vietnamese Army and the southern National Liberation Front rolled over the remaining forces of U.S. imperialism's puppet forces in the South. The military defeat of U.S. imperialism at the hands of Vietnam's workers and peasants was a victory for working people and the oppressed the world over, not least in the U.S. What the liberal Vietnam antiwar movement did succeed in doing was to deflect many of the millions of youth radicalized by that war and the civil rights movement back into the arms of the Democratic Party, thereby undercutting a significant opportunity for the development of a revolutionary workers party in this country.

These are the same treacherous politics that are being pushed by the liberal anti-

war movement of today. Despite the occasional lip service to socialism in their newspapers, in their antiwar coalitions on the ground Workers World, the ISO and the various other fake-socialist organizations push anything and everything but socialist revolution as the way to end imperialist war.

Real opposition to imperialist war is impossible without opposition to the system that breeds it, an opposition that must, in the final analysis, be based on the mobilization of the working class, the only force capable of challenging and overturning bourgeois rule. In the course of sharp class struggle and through the instrumentality of a revolutionary party that patiently educates the working class in the understanding not only of its social power but of its historic interests, the workers will become conscious of themselves as a class fighting for itself and for all the oppressed against the entire capitalist system and its government.

The representatives of the ruling class, Republican and Democrat, will do everything in their power to forestall and oppose any independent mobilization of the working class. From the beginnings of this war drive, the Spartacist League has opposed class collaborationism and called for class struggle against American imperialism's rulers. What the reformists are, in reality, promoting is faith in the reformability of blood-drenched U.S. imperialism. Our commitment is to building an international revolutionary working-class party to lead the proletariat to power, consigning this whole system of exploitation, racial oppression and imperialist war to the dustbin of history. ■

South Chicago: Snapshots of Latino and Black Life

The following contribution, dated July 3, was submitted by Comrade Seneca of our Chicago branch.

* * *

Shame, shame, shame.

*I don't wanna go to Mexico no more,
more, more.*

*There's a big, fat policeman at my door,
door, door.*

He made me pay a dollar;

He made me go to jail.

*I don't wanna go to Mexico no more,
more, more.*

This was the clapping game the neighbor's young girls were singing in my kitchen just the other day. Incidentally, the father of these two immigrant girls came home about a month ago after serving six years in jail as a "convicted drug trafficker" (i.e., peddling a few grams of cocaine). He may be facing deportation soon, which will most likely mean yet another perilous trip across the river to come right back to where he was deported from. For the Mexican immigrant children of South Chicago—a neighborhood located on Chicago's Southeast Side in the shadow of the old South Works steel plant—words like "*la migra*" and "social security numbers" have a place in their everyday vocabulary.

For Latino working-class immigrants, the fight for immigrant rights is *central* to the fight for labor rights. And *this is a life or death question* in many ways. Occasional news investigations offer a glimpse into the very real danger of the Mexican border crossing which many make after each time they get deported; and they *do* make it because, for many Mexicans, "home" offers them little or no means for survival. Immigrants without a social security number in Chicago cannot open an account with the electric or gas companies, and this means suffering sub-zero temperatures without heat in their homes. There were two cases in Chicago of immigrant children who needed organ transplants and could not get them because they were undocumented and the families couldn't pay cash for the transplant procedure. This is to say nothing of life-threatening dangers of state repression for non-citizens, and particularly "illegal aliens," on the part of cops, bor-

der patrol agents and vigilantes. Undocumented immigrant workers are very attuned to the fact that the American bourgeois injustice system does not offer them a legal leg to stand on in *any* fight.

These points I mention just to provide a backdrop to the reality we are dealing with when we talk about the question of Latino immigrants in America. This is important to consider when dealing with the question of class struggle in America and specifically the wedge that the racist white ruling class seeks to drive between the black and Latino immigrant working class. And, together with the help of black and Latino petty-bourgeois misleaders, the bourgeoisie has been to a large extent successful in driving this wedge.

South Chicago has historically been, and continues to be, an entry port for working-class Hispanic immigrants. It is also one of the neighborhoods where the displaced black ghetto masses have moved, increasingly more so since the demolition of housing projects. While they live side by side, the two communities interact as little as possible. Many Mexicans say they are afraid of blacks, and they attribute criminality and violence in the neighborhood to black people.

Resentment is often expressed by Mexican immigrant women about the mistreatment and humiliation that they are subjected to by some of the black and even Chicano staff in the area's public clinic. Many complain of being greeted with comments like, "You're back again?!" and "Speak English! You're in America!" and being sent home from the Emergency Room with nothing but a bottle of aspirin to show for it. This reflects a conversation I had with a comrade from the Bay Area. His sister is a nurse in a school and she said to him that, as bad as the black children are treated, the Mexican children are treated even worse.

One also perceives a strong sense of resentment around the question of public aid (i.e., food stamps, vouchers, workman's comp, etc.). Many Mexican immigrants I have spoken with perceive America's "safety net" for workers and the poor, or rather what is left of it, as some sort of treasure chest that allows black Americans and Puerto Ricans to live so

much better off than their immigrant counterparts. Rather than seeking to organize to fight for the same entitlements for immigrants, often this perception translates into a sour-grapes attitude of "well, we immigrants want to work, we don't want any handouts."

In the workplace, many Mexicans hold a perception that blacks have a bad work ethic. Upon probing them to define what they mean, I have found that their conception of a "bad" work ethic amounts to wanting to have better wages, a shorter and less intensive workday, and better and safer conditions at the workplace! Mexican workers could stand a whole lot to gain by adopting the very "work ethic" that many now despise! Once I overheard a supervisor (who, incidentally, is a black Latina woman from Belize) say to her Mexican employee that she prefers to hire Latinos because blacks "don't like to work." And this employee, beaming with pride, just ate up every word she said. I later found out that 16-hour nonstop shifts are frequent occurrences for him.

The "work ethic" question is closely tied into the "Amnesty Campaign," which is a nationwide campaign to legalize undocumented immigrants through public marches and lobbying politicians. In the precarious circumstances they live in, undocumented Latino immigrants tend to take comfort in the illusion that, if they just prove to the bourgeois rulers that they are essential to American capitalist society—by doing grueling work for pitiful wages in dangerous conditions and paying taxes faithfully while asking nothing in return in the way of benefits—then the capitalist rulers will somehow be convinced to grant them full citizenship rights.

On the other side of the issue, many black workers feel resentment toward Latinos. Many see yet *another* immigrant group which, in a generation or two, manages to climb the ladder and "pass over" them, so to speak, while they remain at the bottom. It is important to recognize that there is a lot of truth in this statement: being a white Hispanic and a U.S. citizen opens up a lot of possibilities that their immigrant parents, as well as blacks and black Latinos, just do not have. It can also lead to a false sense of security and a cer-

tain hostility toward "illegal" immigrants. I would like to make a side note here of the considerable antagonisms I have seen between Latino citizens "with papers" and the undocumented immigrants. Where I live, the term "Chicano" or "Chicana" has become a derisive term that Mexican immigrants use in reference to privileged, petty-bourgeois Mexican Americans who refuse to speak Spanish and use their position of power to humiliate immigrants or otherwise not solidarize with them in any way.

I know a young boy whose father is Puerto Rican and mother is Mexican American. He is dark-skinned with European features, and he can speak a little Spanish, which he learned at the insistence of his grandmother. He has two cousins on either side of the family; one is a blond-haired white boy and the other is black. All three are "Latino" since all six of their parents are "Latino." But you

would be a fool to think their experiences in America will be the same just because they are all "Latino." My point is, within two or three generations, as the language falls away, "Latinos" in America are essentially assimilated into one of two categories: black or not black.

The central issue here is *the vital interest* of black and immigrant workers to unite in common struggle. It is necessary to combat the false consciousness that the black and Latino petty-bourgeois misleadership peddle: that the other worker is the enemy; that blacks will never fight for immigrant rights; that immigrants are nothing but scabs who want to steal black workers' jobs.

Combatting such false consciousness is the task of a revolutionary workers party; this is what I sought to explain to incredulous Mexican immigrant workers in South Chicago who couldn't understand why black longshoremen in Oak-

land would give up their Saturdays (when they can make \$1,000 in one day if they drive down to the L.A. ports) to come out to a labor-centered mobilization in defense of immigrants! It is not a moral issue; it is a question of survival and of labor defense, I told them. Our February 9 Oakland mobilization against the Maritime Security Act and in defense of immigrant rights has indeed made an impact on workers I have spoken with.

Racial tensions between black people and Hispanics is a nationwide issue, and this must be understood and fought against as we seek to forge a multi-racial vanguard party. The fight against black oppression, which is a cornerstone of American capitalism, must be posed pointblank with any and all potential Latino contacts as part of the fight to raise the consciousness of the Latino working class to understand that black liberation is integrally linked to their own liberation. ■

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New Court Papers Filed Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now!



WV Photo

On August 27, attorneys for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal filed an appeal with the Pennsylvania Supreme Court seeking to reverse the order of Judge Pamela Dembe barring the confession of Arnold Beverly and rejecting Jamal's second application to reverse his conviction under Pennsylvania's Post-Conviction Relief Act (PCRA). In his latest papers, Jamal is also seeking a special hearing before the state's highest court to present Beverly's testimony.

One and a half years after Jamal's current attorneys filed Beverly's sworn affidavit that he, not Jamal, shot and killed Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner on 9 December 1981, state and federal courts have refused to even consider his testimony, leaving Jamal under the shadow of death in Pennsylvania's Greene County prison. Last December, a federal court overturned Jamal's death sentence while affirming the con-

viction, condemning Mumia to life in prison. Appeals filed by both the state and Mumia's attorneys are on hold pending the outcome of this latest PCRA petition.

Jamal's appeal papers constitute a devastating indictment of the machinations used not only by the courts and prosecutors but also Jamal's former attorneys, Leonard Weinglass and Daniel Williams, to suppress the evidence proving that Mumia is an innocent man. They paint as well a searing portrait of the racism that pervades the Pennsylvania courts and the judiciary's utter indifference to even the appearance of a fair trial for a black radical like Mumia.

The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal is a textbook example of a racist frame-up. A Black Panther Party spokesman at the age of 15, an award-winning journalist and a supporter of the Philadelphia MOVE organization, Jamal was saddled at trial with a lawyer he didn't want—and one who did not want Mumia's case—a judge, Albert

Sabo, known as the "king of death row," an overwhelmingly white jury, a prosecutor's office that concealed evidence and a parade of witnesses who were coerced by the notorious Philadelphia police into giving lying testimony against Mumia.

Judge Dembe barred the Beverly confession and other evidence of Jamal's innocence on the pretext that Jamal had failed to comply with the filing deadlines mandated by a 1995 state law enacted to drastically cut off death row appeals. But the statute provides an exception to the filing deadline where "interference by government officials" is responsible for the failure to previously raise a claim. As the new legal papers explain, in actively working to suppress Beverly's confession and other evidence of Jamal's innocence, Weinglass and Williams "acted in function, if not in fact, as *agents* of government officials insofar as their actions served the interests not of

petitioner, but of the District Attorney.”

Using information contained in the affidavit of one of Jamal’s former attorneys, Rachel Wolkenstein (reprinted in the September 2001 Partisan Defense Committee pamphlet “Mumia Abu-Jamal Is an Innocent Man!”), the new papers detail how “for nine whole years, attorney Weinglass and attorney Williams did more than any prosecutor could ever do to send Petitioner Jamal to his death. They strangled at birth the evidence which shows that he did not kill Police Officer Faulkner and, in the process, jettisoned numerous other decisive claims for relief.” Wolkenstein, who is counsel for the PDC, resigned from the legal team in 1999 precisely over the suppression of the Beverly confession. As she explained in her affidavit, Weinglass’ refusal to proceed with Beverly’s confession and other evidence “was also my final realization that Attorney Weinglass would not carry out the defense demanded by our innocent client.”

That Weinglass and Williams played the role of prosecutor was set forth for the world to see in the publication last year of Williams’ false “inside account” of Jamal’s case, *Executing Justice*, published shortly before Beverly’s confession was submitted to court. Jamal’s latest papers point out, “Williams falsely and malevolently suggests in his introduction to *Executing Justice*, subtitled ‘The Problem of Ambiguity,’ that Petitioner Jamal is guilty. This *ambiguity*, which is the central theme of *Executing Justice*, is something which attorneys Weinglass and Williams implanted into Petitioner Jamal’s case by suppressing” evidence that someone else shot officer Faulkner. Williams’ declaration that Beverly’s confession was “lunacy” was the core argument used by prosecutors in

fighting to keep this conclusive evidence of Mumia’s innocence out of court.

In a letter to Jamal last year, Weinglass acknowledged that Williams’ book was to be a “pre-emptive strike” against use of the Beverly confession, should it later emerge. Jamal’s new legal papers summarize, “Among the unsavory motives that Messrs. Weinglass and Williams had in publishing the book was that of ruthlessly covering up the manner in which their own cowardice and mishandling of Petitioner’s case over the previous nine years, capped off by their suppression of Arnold Beverly’s confession and the evidence which corroborated it, had undermined and sabotaged Petitioner’s defense at the very same time that they had built their careers on cynically and hypocritically posing to the world as his courageous and self-sacrificing *radical* lawyers, fighting a heroic battle against ‘the system.’”

Their radical veneer notwithstanding, Weinglass and Williams’ outlook is premised on absolute faith in the inherent justice of the capitalist courts. But as Jamal’s new papers point out, his treatment by the courts is reminiscent of the infamous Supreme Court decision in the case of fugitive slave Dred Scott in 1857.

In turning down Jamal’s PCRA application last year, Judge Dembe dismissed the sworn account of court stenographer Terri Maurer-Carter of a conversation she overheard in the courthouse where Mumia was tried: “Judge Sabo was discussing the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. In the course of that conversation, I heard Judge Sabo say: ‘Yeah, and I’m going to help them fry the n----r.’” According to Dembe, such a blatant statement of racist bias was insignificant—since Jamal had a jury trial, he had no right to an impartial judge!

As Jamal’s legal papers state:

“Judge Sabo’s vile racist comment... meant that, in Judge Sabo’s courtroom, Mr. Jamal, like Dred Scott before him, was not a citizen with rights guaranteed to him by the Constitution, but rather an inferior being with ‘no rights which the white man was bound to respect.’”

Mumia’s attorneys also pointed out that “in ruling that Mumia Abu-Jamal had no right to an impartial judge, Judge Dembe implicitly ruled that Petitioner Jamal had no right to a fair tribunal. But since being tried before an *unfair tribunal* is no different from being ‘tried’ by a lynch mob, the ‘right’ to be tried before an *unfair* tribunal is no right at all.”


Among those on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court is former D.A. Ronald Castille. Castille was District Attorney at the time when his subordinate Jack McMahon made an infamous videotape instructing members of the D.A.’s office on how to exclude blacks from juries. The video bears not only Castille’s name but also the logo of DATV Productions, the video production department of the Philadelphia D.A.’s office. A critical issue in every one of Mumia’s appeals has been the unconstitutional exclusion of black men and women as jurors. Castille was the D.A. opposing Jamal’s first appeal, and was later one of the members of the Supreme Court who turned down Jamal’s appeal of Sabo’s denial of his PCRA in 1997. A number of defendants have had their convictions overturned on the basis of this racist jury-rigging—but not Mumia. Jamal’s attorneys demonstrate how as a Supreme Court justice Castille has blocked every effort by Jamal to determine his role in the production of the McMahon video.

In turning down Jamal’s appeal, Dembe sneered, “It is hornbook [text] law that witnesses...who mysteriously appear long after trial are regarded with suspicion by the courts.” In the past three years, dozens of death row inmates have been spared execution by evidence of their innocence only discovered years later. After serving 13 years of his life sentence on a false murder conviction, Lamont Branch was finally released from a New York prison last week, six months after his brother Lorenzo confessed to the murder.

Jamal’s legal filing illustrates that for a defiant and outspoken opponent of this racist system like Jamal, there is no justice in the capitalist courts. As the introduction to the PDC pamphlet “Mumia Abu-Jamal Is an Innocent Man!” explained: “The long hidden and suppressed evidence of Mumia’s innocence is the truth. But in this capitalist system of injustice, the truth is insufficient to secure Jamal’s freedom. What we need is not just more truth but more social power. It is elementary that if labor’s power is to be brought to bear in a mighty blow on Jamal’s behalf, it must be mobilized independently of the very forces of the capitalist state that have worked for years to frame up and kill this innocent man.” *Mobilize now to free Mumia! Abolish the racist death penalty!* ■

PDC Partisan Defense Committee
September 2001 Pamphlet \$ 50

Mumia Abu-Jamal Is an Innocent Man!



New Evidence Explodes Frame-Up

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for Mumia’s legal defense. Checks made payable to “**SEE Mumia Free**” should be sent to: **Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs, 20178 Rockport Way, Malibu, CA 90265.**

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

reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 804, 23 May 2003

Protest Cop Killing of Alberta Spruill!

New York City

We reprint below a 19 May leaflet issued by the New York Labor Black League for Social Defense.

Alberta Spruill was brutally killed on the morning of May 16 under the pretense of fighting "the war on drugs." A concussion grenade was thrown into her apartment by NYC police under cover of a "no-knock" search warrant. A dozen heavily armed thugs in blue stormed into the 57-year-old black woman's apartment on West 143rd Street in the very heart of Harlem as she was preparing for work at 6 a.m. This was more like a gestapo-style raid. Bush's "shock and awe" brought home and into the black working-class neighborhoods of the U.S. Alberta Spruill had a history of heart trouble and later died as a direct result of this sadistic act in which she was terrorized, handcuffed and forced to endure the horrendous explosion of this weapon.

Alberta Spruill was a proud union member of DC 37 Local 1549, a 29-year city worker with the Division of Citywide Administrative Services. And this kill-

ing happened on the exact same day that Mayor Michael Bloomberg rammed through layoffs of at least 2,000 municipal workers.

We in the New York Labor Black League for Social Defense condemn this atrocity and call on *all* of the integrated labor movement to mobilize and protest against this racist police killing. On the day of Alberta Spruill's funeral, all of city labor should come out to commemorate their fallen union sister. No business as usual! This would give an organized political expression and social power to the just outrage of the inner city against cop terror, which has been rampant this year with execution-style shootings of blacks and Latinos.

This cop terror is the domestic reflection of U.S. imperialism's war and present colonial occupation of Iraq and the bipartisan war drive against workers, blacks, minorities and immigrants. As we wrote in our leaflet issued following the February 2000 acquittal of the cops who killed Amadou Diallo, "There will be no end to police brutality short of the destruction of the system of capitalist exploitation and racist oppression which the cops serve as armed guard dogs." It is the multiracial American working class that has the power to shatter the bloody rule of the most violent ruling class in history. *Those who labor must rule!*

There is, however, a roadblock on the way to this fight for workers power. The existing pro-capitalist union bureaucracy's role has been to maintain exploitation and oppression by the ruling class, which controls the wealth of this society that is produced by the blood and sweat of the working masses. Thus the union *mis*leadership seeks to divert any struggle and outrage against the current and previous rounds of layoffs, cutbacks and tax increases. What the TWU's [Transport Workers Union] Roger Toussaint, the UFT's [United Federation of Teachers] Randi Weingarten, DC 37's Lillian Roberts and other labor bureaucrats all have in store are more calls for "reforming" the racist NYPD and pleas to vote Democrats into office in the next elections. This is echoed by black politicians like Al Sharpton, who, when the city seethed with anger over the cop killing of Amadou Diallo in 1999, rushed to divert this justified anger into building illusions that this inherently oppressive



NY Daily News

capitalist police system can be reformed.

The Labor Black League champions the cause of *all* the oppressed. The "war on drugs" is a war on black people, minorities and the poor; we call for the decriminalization of all drugs. Along with the Partisan Defense Committee, we have organized militant, integrated labor-centered mobilizations in defense of black, immigrant and union rights and successfully stopped the race-terrorists of the Ku Klux Klan from holding recruitment rallies here in New York in October 1999 and other major cities. We've also participated along with the Spartacist League and the Spartacus Youth Club in citywide protests against cop terror and helped build Revolutionary Internationalist Contingents in defense of Iraq in the recent mass antiwar demonstrations.

Our job is to finish the unfinished business of the American Civil War! For black liberation through socialist revolution! The killing of Alberta Spruill and other victims of cop terror is not an aberration but standard operating procedure for the thugs in blue: concussion grenades similar to those that killed Alberta were also used against antiwar protesters and longshoremen on the Oakland docks a few weeks ago. The cops' sole purpose is to terrorize minorities and working people and increase the repressive powers of the capitalist state. Working people need a party that is based on a program of class struggle—the understanding that the interests of the working class are irreconcilably counterposed to those of the capitalist class exploiters and their political parties, be they Democrats or Republicans. *Build a workers party to fight for a workers government!* ■

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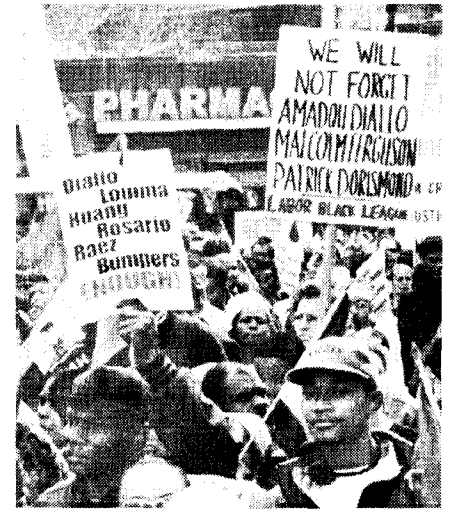
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The first Labor Black Leagues were formed as a result of the Spartacist League-initiated, 5,000-strong labor/black mobilization that stopped the Ku Klux Klan from marching in Washington, D.C. in November 1982. We stand for mobilizing the masses of minority and working people in militant integrated struggle against the brutal system of racist oppression that is capitalist America. Initiated by and fraternally allied with the Spartacist League, a multiracial revolutionary Marxist organization, the Labor Black Leagues are part of the revolutionary movement of the workers and oppressed against the bosses and for socialism.



WV Photos

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-Hispanic, anti-Semitic, anti-Arab and anti-Asian bigotry!
- 5** Defend the separation of church and state! Down with anti-gay laws! Full democratic rights for homosexuals! Government out of the bedroom!
- 6** Mass labor/black/Hispanic 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 is \$3/year unemployed; \$10/year employed. For more information, contact:

CHICAGO (312) 563-0441
Labor Black Struggle League, Box 6938, Chicago, IL 60680

NEW YORK (212) 267-1025
Labor Black League for Social Defense
Box 2502, Church St. Station, New York, NY 10008

OAKLAND (510) 839-0851
Labor Black League for Social Defense
Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604

Nigeria: Woman Sentenced to Death by Stoning

On August 19, an Islamic high court in Nigeria's northern Katsina state rejected an appeal by Amina Lawal, a 30-year-old single mother, and upheld her sentence of death by stoning for having sex outside marriage. Lawal was first sentenced in March by a lower Islamic court. She is scheduled to be executed in January 2004, as soon as she finishes breast-feeding her baby. ***The workers movement throughout the world must mobilize in protest action to stop this hideous execution!***

Amina Lawal was not the first woman to incur the wrath of Islamic fundamentalists in Nigeria. Safiya Hussaini, a divorced mother, was sentenced to die by stoning last year. An appeals court overturned her sentence this past March. A third woman's case is on hold until she is healthy enough to appear in court.

Since *sharia*, the Islamic set of social and penal codes, was introduced in a dozen of the predominantly Muslim northern states of Nigeria two years ago, women have been forced to wear the veil and mixed schools have been turned into single-sex establishments, if girls are schooled at all. A teenage girl was given 100 lashes for having premarital sex. Women are banned from riding in the same buses or taxis as men. The sale of alcohol is banned and men caught drinking have been caned in public. A vigilante force was established to enforce the new codes.

The implementation of *sharia* in the northern states is a lethal addition to an already worsening situation for women in Nigeria. Abortion is illegal in the country. The bride price is prevalent in both Christian and Muslim communities. The horrific and dangerous practice of female genital mutilation, performed on young girls to "curb their sexuality" and ensure chastity, is rampant across ethnic and religious groups, with millions of Nigerian women subjected to this bar-



Save Amina Lawal!

barism. Nigeria is one of the few sub-Saharan countries that have no laws prohibiting the practice.

Largely illiterate, the chattel of their fathers and husbands, women in Nigeria are forced into marriages, overworked, malnourished and, in times of the ethnic bloodlettings that constantly plague the country, subjected to rape and killing. Polygamy, based on the subordination of women, is widespread. With little control over their reproductive lives, women are under enormous social and economic pressures: infertility is a stigma and male children are the only potential support in old age. The exponential spread of AIDS in the country, with over four million people infected with the HIV virus, and the attendant ostracism and stigmatization are used to reinforce backward anti-woman ideologies. Because it is a sexually transmitted disease, AIDS is used to intensify the repressive taboos, guilt and shame over sex that subjugate women.

On September 9, the mayor of Rome, Italy conferred "honorary citizenship"

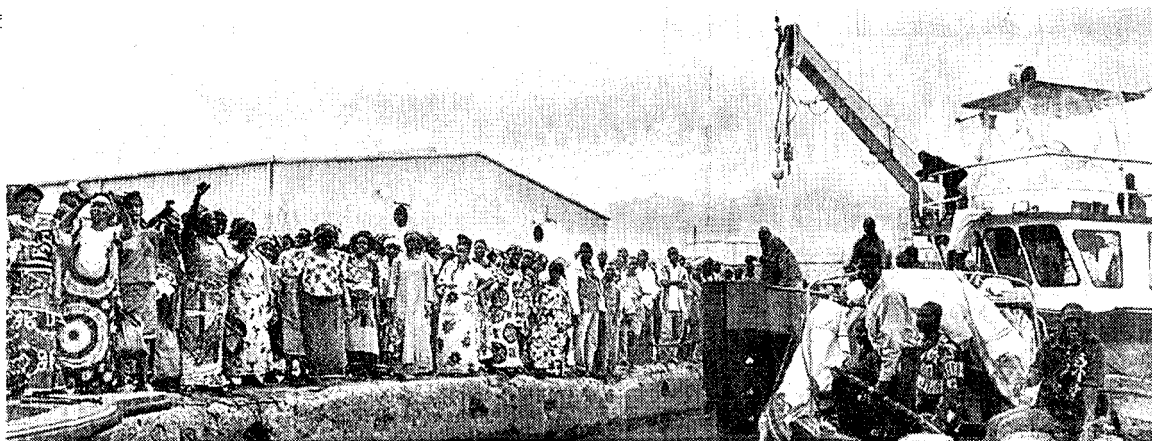
on Safiya Hussaini, a Nigerian woman whose death sentence was reversed earlier this year. As Oscar Wilde put it, "Hypocrisy is the homage vice pays to virtue." Indeed, barbaric practices oppressive to women are not confined to Nigeria or the Islamic world. In all societies based on private property, various forms of oppression have been meted out by all religions to buttress women's subjugation. In medieval Europe, women were burned at the stake for purported witchcraft and forced to wear the chastity belt. The "adulteresses" of 17th-century New England were forced to patch the scarlet letter to their breasts. Foot binding was prevalent in pre-revolutionary China. In Ireland, unmarried pregnant women were declared mad and forced to slave in convents for decades. To this day, *suttee* (widow-burning) is rampant in India.

In all these class societies, the central source of women's oppression is the institution of the family, a vehicle through which property is transmitted from one generation to the next and the mechanism for raising new generations of workers. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, written in the late 19th century, Friedrich Engels explained that the monogamous patrilineal family arose "to make the man supreme in the family, and to propagate, as the future heirs to his wealth, children indisputably his own." The family is used to regiment society to the powers that be, instilling subservience for authority and reinforcing religious obscurantism.

The struggle for the full liberation of women is tied to the struggle to overthrow capitalism. But to unleash the tremendous revolutionary potential of the fight for women's liberation requires the leadership of a genuinely communist party armed with the broad vision of a social

AP

Nigerian women shut down ChevronTexaco oil facilities in July 2002, protesting desperate living conditions and demanding employment for their families.



order of equality and freedom and drawing in women as part of its leadership. Even the most basic needs of the vast mass of women in Nigeria—an end to seclusion and the veil; an end to forced marriages, polygamy and the bride price; freedom from poverty and legal subjugation; the right to free quality education and decent health care, including the right to abortion and contraceptives—demand an attack on the foundations of the imperialist-dominated capitalist social order and pose nothing less than socialist revolution. Ultimately, overcoming the hideous impoverishment and cultural backwardness of sub-Saharan Africa requires an internationally planned socialist economy based on proletarian revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries of North America, West Europe and Japan. *For women's liberation through socialist revolution!*

Imperialist Hypocrisy over Women's Rights

The implementation of *sharia* in northern Nigeria triggered a violent religious and ethnic conflagration between the majority Muslim Hausa and the minority Christian Ibo tribes. As thousands were killed on both sides and countless churches, mosques and houses were destroyed, hundreds of thousands of Ibo fled to the east, where they are the ethnic majority. A similar exodus of Hausa headed north, fleeing the revenge killings. The ethnic killings recalled the events leading up to the Biafra war in the late 1960s. At that time, following massacres of the Ibo in the north, that ethnic group tried to secede from the rest of the country. The war that followed, with close to two million killed, was one of the most brutal conflicts in Africa's post-independence history.

President Olusegun Obasanjo, a military ruler during the '70s, was brought back to power in 1999 with the backing of the military and the support of the

northern elites. He openly supported the introduction of *sharia* in the north, saying that "sharia is not a new thing and it's not a thing to be afraid of...the federal government would not dispute the rights of states to use it" (London *Guardian*, 20 August).

An outcry of protests filled the imperialist press following the sentencing of Amina Lawal. The European Union, the U.S. State Department and the Canadian government all joined in condemning the "gross violation of human rights." Nothing could be more cynical coming from the imperialist powers, who in their own countries promote attacks on women's rights, most graphically shown by the attacks on abortion rights and the axing of welfare in the U.S. On September 9, Regina Norman Danson, a Ghanaian woman seeking asylum in the U.S. to escape genital mutilation in her country, was arrested and now faces loss of her passport and deportation on the bogus claim that she fabricated her story.

The imperialists have never had the least concern for women in the countries they sought to dominate and exploit. For centuries, these powers enslaved black Africans and plundered the continent. Most recently, it was these powers that "liberated" Kabul in Afghanistan, installing the regime of the Northern Alliance cutthroats, which has kept all the barbaric *sharia* laws of the Taliban, only slightly "modified." A leading Afghan judge declared that those convicted of "adultery" would still be stoned to death...but with smaller stones.

For Permanent Revolution!

Nigeria, with over 300 ethnic groups cobbled together into an amalgam of a nation, is a creation of British colonialists following the carve-up of the continent at the conference of Berlin in 1884. The main ethnic groups are the Hausa, the Ibo and the Yoruba, who form about 70 percent of the population and lord it over

the hundreds of other smaller ethnic groupings. The Hausa, who dominate the north, are mostly Muslims; the Ibo in the east are mostly Christian; the Yoruba in the southwest are divided between Muslims and Christians. Kept divided and further subdivided along ethnic and religious fault lines, these groups are thrown into unrelenting communal bloodletting fomented by the country's rulers, who rule on the behalf of the imperialists and international oil magnates. As journalist Norimitsu Onishi writes, "These hatreds and divisions are staggeringly complex, fueled by the misrule and corruption that have left most residents of one of the world's top oil producers in poverty. What is more, these rifts have been encouraged and exploited by the country's rulers, from the British to the military governments to the European and American oil companies that pump crude in the Niger delta, an area largely abandoned by the federal government" (*New York Times*, 26 March 2000).

A report published on August 26 by the World Organization Against Torture documents the role of Obasanjo's regime in the killing of over 10,000 people since 1999:

"Security agents, acting in most cases on direct orders of the government, have been responsible for many of the deaths as well as accompanying rapes, maiming and torture of thousands of women, the aged, children and other defenseless civilians...."

"The local and international media coverage of these incidents portrays them as ethno-religious in nature. However, our investigations show that this euphemism has helped in obscuring the visible roles of the state and its security agencies in the perpetuation of these egregious violations, thereby shielding the government from full responsibility for their occurrence and recurrence."

Earlier this month, Obasanjo admitted responsibility for ordering the massacres, grotesquely claiming that he acted to "save lives and property."

Ruled by a succession of generals for

all but 12 years after its independence in 1960, Nigeria became a synonym for corruption, terror, brutality and neglect. With nearly 70 percent of its estimated 125 million people living below subsistence levels, the degree of social misery in the sixth-largest oil-exporting country defies description. The per capita income of less than \$300 remains unchanged since the pre-oil days. Most of the mass of city populations live in overcrowded slums with electricity seldom on. Thousands are homeless. The telephone system works intermittently at best, and often not at all. Factories are idle. Schools are without books, hospitals are without drugs and public transport has collapsed. In the vast countryside, the peasant population, mired in grinding poverty, ekes out a bare subsistence. Particularly since the counterrevolutionary collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, the imperialist blood-sucking of Nigeria has greatly intensified. The IMF and World Bank are now demanding payment on money they had previously given as a sop to such African countries during the Cold War with the USSR.

Despite the constant repression, Nigeria has seen continued labor and social struggles in recent years. Following a government-ordered increase in the price of gasoline and diesel fuel, the country was shut down by a general strike in June 2000 called by the Nigeria Labor Congress. The five-day general strike and massive demonstrations forced the government to scale back a 50 percent fuel price increase. In January of this year, another general strike forced the regime to reduce another hike in fuel prices. In July, hundreds of women courageously occupied four ChevronTexaco pumping stations in the Niger delta demanding jobs, electricity, clean water, schools and health facilities. These are precisely the issues facing all of those within Nigeria's borders, and it is the task of a fighting workers movement to fight for these demands.

The mass impoverishment and degradation in the country, as elsewhere in the semicolonial world, are the direct product of the depredations of imperialist domination enforced by the local lackeys. From Iran to Algeria and Egypt to Nigeria, plebeian frustration over the desperate conditions has provided fertile ground for the spread of Islamic fundamentalism. With the expectations born out of independence struggles shattered, the dispossessed masses and the unemployed urban youth find solace in religion. They flock by the thousands into the ranks of the Islamic fundamentalists.

The rise of political Islam as a mass movement is the reactionary reflection of

both the manifest dead end of nationalism and the absence of a communist alternative. As put by a leading Nigerian Islamist, "It is the failure of every system we have known. We had colonialism, which was exploitative. We had a brief period of happiness after independence, then the military came in, and everything has been going downward since then. But before all this, we had a system that worked. We had Shariah. We are Muslims. Why don't we return to ourselves?" (*New York Times*, 1 November 2001).

In a world economy dominated by imperialism, the neocolonial African countries have no chance of achieving significant economic development. With scant industrial production, the bourgeoisie consists mainly of generals, government ministers, government contractors and merchants. Such a ruling class cannot achieve genuine national emancipation from imperialism. The key to social and economic progress in these countries is provided by the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution. As Leon Trotsky explained, in economically backward countries the weak national bourgeoisie—tied by a thousand strings to imperialism and fearful of its "own" working class—is incapable of realizing the goals of classical bourgeois revolutions such as the 1789 French Revolution. He wrote that "the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving democracy and national emancipation is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses" (*The Permanent Revolution*, 1930).

While the industrial proletariat exists only in marginal and isolated pockets in much of Africa, oil workers in Nigeria and Angola, dock and rail workers in Kenya and miners in Zambia and the Congo, for example, represent a strategic industrial workforce. It is the challenge of an internationalist revolutionary workers party to transform these layers into a human link to the industrial proletariat of South Africa and the workers movement in the Near East, which are key to a revolutionary perspective on the African continent. To mobilize against its capitalist exploiters, the proletariat must launch a struggle against all oppression, crucially the oppression of women.

The struggle for democracy and social progress on the African continent necessarily requires proletarian revolution. It is a given that the imperialists will seek to crush such a revolution. The struggle for proletarian power in sub-Saharan Africa must be linked to the fight for workers rule in the advanced capitalist countries. The hundreds of thousands of immigrant African workers who are a key component of the strategic unionized sectors of the proletariat in Europe will provide the necessary bridge for the critical extension of the revolution.

To this end the working class must forge a revolutionary leadership, Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard parties, as part of a reformed Fourth International. The International Communist League seeks to build such parties to lead the struggle against imperialism and its neo-colonial surrogate regimes. **Stop the execution of Amina Lawal!** ■



Reuters

Lagos: Union-organized rally protests government plans to increase fuel prices, March 2001.

Science and the Battle Against Racism and Obscurantism

It is hardly news that racism is alive and well in America. This was amply demonstrated by the pro-segregationist accolades heaped upon the not-yet-late Strom Thurmond by former Senate Republican leader Trent Lott (see “Undead Racist Zombies of Mississippi (And Beyond),” *WV* No. 794, 3 January). And it’s not just the racist ravings of bourgeois politicians. Racial oppression today can be seen in the daily life of black people—from racist cop terror to unemployment and more.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, white-supremacist ideology, with the patina of religious sanction, was used by the slave-owners to justify black chattel slavery. Today, black oppression is the legacy of the unfinished business of the Civil War, the Second American Revolution which abolished slavery. The Civil War was followed by Radical Reconstruction, which promised full equality for black people. But as codified in the Compromise of 1877, the promises of Radical Reconstruction were cast aside by the Northern bourgeoisie—the magnates of industry, transport and banking who derived their profits from the exploitation of “free labor”—in its deal with the Southern landholders.

The racist ideology of the Old South was carried over to justify the new conditions of exploitation of the black freedmen, most of whom became sharecroppers on the former plantations. With the withdrawal of Northern troops after 1877, racial oppression was literally the law under the political structure of Jim Crow segregation, enforced by the official police and the extralegal terror of the KKK. It wasn’t until the struggles of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and ’60s that the legal institutions of Jim Crow were overturned in the South.

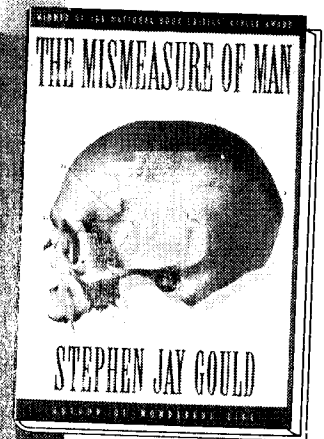
The ideology of racism also played a key role for the United States as it emerged as an imperialist power around the turn of the last century. American military interventions abroad—such as the invasion of the Philippines in the 1898 Spanish-American War—were justified on the basis of the “white man’s burden,” i.e., that white America had a mission to “civilize” the dark-skinned

In Honor of Stephen Jay Gould



Terrence McCarthy

Renowned paleontologist and author Gould powerfully exposed pseudo-scientific justifications for racism.



“savages” of the world. Today, the language may be a bit less crude but the same pretext is used, as evidenced by U.S. imperialism’s coming bloody war to “liberate” Iraq.

The fight against black oppression is a strategic question of the American workers revolution. Our program of revolutionary integrationism is based on the pioneering work of Richard Fraser in the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party in the 1950s. Revolutionary integrationism is counterposed to the liberal notion that black people can achieve real social equality under capitalism. Rather, it is based on the understanding that the racial

oppression of black people is rooted in the American capitalist system. Fraser argued that American blacks are an oppressed race-color caste, forcibly segregated at the bottom of capitalist society. But that bottom layer includes a substantial number of black workers organized in powerful unions, from the auto industry to transport; i.e., black people are not just victims of racial oppression but, as a strategic sector of the multiracial working class, have real social power.

The ruling class will always use racial, ethnic, sexual, religious and other divisions within the working class to prevent the proletariat from uniting against its

common enemy, the bourgeoisie. Overcoming the poisonous racism that divides the working class is a critical task of the multiracial vanguard party which will lead the U.S. proletariat in a social revolution to abolish the capitalist system. The fight for black freedom in America is thus strategic for the emancipation of all of labor and the oppressed. Only the seizure of power by the workers will open the road to the construction of an egalitarian socialist society. And only then will racial oppression and the myriad other abominations of capitalism be cast into the rubbish bin of history.

Debunking “Scientific” Racism: Gould vs. Biological Determinism

The same ideology used to justify anti-black racism in the 19th century was used to justify the anti-immigrant hysteria of the early 20th century. And this was given full backing by the scientific establishment. It is therefore appropriate to honor the contributions of a man who throughout his life conscientiously opposed the “scientific” racist theories of biological determinism. That man was Stephen Jay Gould, renowned paleontologist and author who died of cancer on 20 May 2002.

Gould was a rare breed. Ignoring the disdain of assorted snobbish members of academia, he, like the late Carl Sagan, believed that a serious scientist could and also should communicate his ideas to a broad audience. Despite an earlier bout with cancer and the overwhelming demands on his time for research and teaching, Gould produced finished copy from his manual typewriter for his essay column “This View of Life” in the magazine *Natural History*—every issue for 25 years!

For us Marxists, Gould’s greatest political work was *The Mismeasure of Man*, originally published in 1981. This book is a magnificent gift to anyone interested in fighting inequality. In it, Gould exposes the various historical proofs of “scientific” racism based on consciously—or worse, unconsciously—twisted data that have been used to justify existing racial prejudices and the lording of one class, race and sex over another. On the title page, Gould quotes Charles Darwin: “If the misery of our poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin.”

As Gould shows, the history of the IQ test is particularly revealing because Alfred Binet, its French inventor, developed the test for benevolent reasons: to identify children who needed extra attention. Transplanted to the U.S. at the turn of the 20th century, amid the rise of American imperialism, the testing of

“intelligence” to obtain a single quantifiable number—an “intelligence quotient” or IQ—was used to reinforce racist and anti-immigrant governmental policies, particularly the imposition of quotas against immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. From the turn of the century through the 1920s, the eugenics movement dominated the American biological scientific mainstream, with its fear of the “Nordic” American stock being bred out through inundation by (and interbreeding with) immigrants from Italy, Poland, etc. As Jonathan Marks notes in his fascinating book *Human Biodiversity: Genes, Race, and History* (1995):

“We see in the eugenics movement how any study of human biology encodes social values, a situation that the study of clam biology or fly biology does not have to face. We see how scientists expounded on subjects they knew little about, derived results we can now see as thoroughly unjustified, and validated their own social prejudices with the ‘objectivity’ of science.”

There is absolutely no scientific basis for racial divisions within the human species; “race” is nothing but a *social* construct. Any “scientific” idea that there are biologically “inferior” and “superior” races merely reflects a social consensus, backed by the force of ruling-class ideology. This logically leads to the notion that the “superior” race should be encouraged to reproduce, and the “inferior” should be eliminated. This was cast into law by Congress in the restrictive immigration bill passed in 1924, which sought to protect the “purity” of America’s racial stock against the dark-skinned peoples of the world. Gould noted in *Mismeasure*, referring to the American government’s refusal to allow Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust entry into the U.S.: “We know what happened to many who wished to leave but had nowhere to go. The paths to destruction are often indirect, but ideas can be agents as sure as guns and bombs.” Indeed, the decline of the eugenics movement in the U.S. just prior to World War II was largely caused by the embarrassment of Nazi Germany carrying out its conclusions in gruesome practice.

But the hoary notions of biological determinism have never been far from the surface. When in the 1960s the black ghettos exploded across the North, expressing the anger and frustration born of the unmet promises of the civil rights movement, no less an authority than the *Journal of the American Medical Association* asked: “Is there something peculiar about the violent slum dweller that differentiates him from his peaceful neighbors?” In *Mismeasure*, Gould responds:

“But why should the violent behavior of some desperate and discouraged people

point to a specific disorder of their brain while the corruption and violence of some congressmen and presidents provokes no similar theory?... Shall we concentrate upon an unfounded speculation for the violence of some—one that follows the determinist philosophy of blaming the victim—or shall we try to eliminate the oppression that builds ghettos and saps the spirit of their unemployed in the first place?”

In 1996 Gould re-issued an expanded version of *Mismeasure* after Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, longtime purveyors of pseudo-science in the service of racism, published *The Bell Curve*, a book which rehashed timeworn theories of the genetic inferiority of black people and resurrected long-discredited “data” in order to bolster the stripping away of all social services for blacks and the poor. Gould added a new chapter making the point that the popularity of *The Bell Curve* had less to do with any novelty of yet another set of racist arguments and more to do with the political climate in which the ruling class required ideological affirmation of social inequalities. We wrote in “The ‘Bell Curve’ and Genocide U.S.A.”: (WV No. 611, 25 November 1994): “Thus *The Bell Curve*...was an instant phenomenon; the ‘science’ for a ruling class which promises to combat the problems of the ghettos with boot camps, prisons, capital punishment, and by gutting social services.”

Human Origins: Contingent Equality vs. Separate Races

The scientists of the 19th century who claimed that race had any biological significance had little to go on except measurements of brain size, skull dimensions and the like. Gould demolished those “studies” in *Mismeasure*. But the 19th century also saw the development of paleontology—the study of the fossil record—as a science. The first Neanderthal bones were found in Europe in the mid 1800s. With Raymond Dart’s discovery of a much older hominid fossil, the “Taung Baby,” in 1924 in Africa, there was a great hunt for yet earlier hominid fossils tracing human evolution, especially outside of Africa. Roy Chapman Andrews’ famous expedition to Mongolia in the 1920s—which discovered the first dinosaur eggs and illuminated the evolution of the Ceratopsian dinosaurs—was actually meant to find hominid fossils in Asia. The idea of an African origin for modern humans (accepted by Darwin as well) was something of an anathema for the white European/North American ruling classes. But the existing fossil record strongly supported Africa as the source. Subsequent fossil discoveries and the analysis of mitochondrial DNA from



Young Spartacus

Harvard University, 1994: Student protesters denounce *The Bell Curve*, a “scholarly” rehash of racist theories of black inferiority.

existing human populations have only reinforced that conclusion.

In 1984 Gould gave a series of lectures in Johannesburg, South Africa on the African origins of humans, and the racist bias which prevented scientists from acknowledging the overwhelming empirical evidence for years. Ironically, he spoke at the University of the Witwatersrand, historically designated as a “white only” institution by the apartheid regime. With Gould’s teachings challenging the very basis of white-supremacist South Africa, it took some courage to travel there. While in Pretoria, he wrote a powerful essay, “Human Equality Is a Contingent Fact of History” (reprinted in *The Flamingo’s Smile* [1985]). The essay is an ardent declaration of the basic equality of all humans and a denunciation of the history of biological categorization of humans into a hierarchy of races—a theme he returned to throughout his life. For Gould, this was not moral exhortation, but simply a statement of *biological fact*. Human evolution could have taken a rather different course: as Gould asks, what if one or some of the other twigs on the evolutionary branch containing *Homo sapiens* had survived to the present? Referring to the hominid *Australopithecus robustus*, which died out less than a million years ago, Gould states:

“It might well have survived and presented us today with all the ethical dilemmas of a human species truly and markedly inferior in intelligence (with its cranial capacity only one-third our own). Would we have built zoos, established reserves, promoted slavery, committed genocide, or perhaps even practiced kindness? Human equality is a contingent fact of history.”

The possibility of co-existence of ancestors, or cousins, on the branch *Homo*

is not so remote—the Neanderthals died out a mere 30,000 years ago. The history of life is full of examples of new species radiating off an ancestral line without the extinction of the old stock. For modern humans, it simply didn’t happen that way.

There is no scientific basis for dividing humanity into biologically distinct “races.” In the essay cited above, Gould pointed to the results from electrophoretic analysis of proteins produced in human cells:

“Thus, with electrophoresis we could finally ask the key question: How much genetic difference exists among human races?”

“The answer, surprising for many people, soon emerged without ambiguity: damned little. Intense studies for more than a decade have detected not a single ‘race gene’—that is, a gene present in all members of one group and none of another. Frequencies vary, often considerably, among groups, but all human races are much of a muchness. We can measure so much variation among individuals *within* any race that we encounter very little new variation by adding another race to the sample. In other words, the great preponderance of human variation occurs within groups, not in the differences between them. My colleague Richard Lewontin...who did much of the original electrophoretic work on human variation, puts it dramatically: If, God forbid, the holocaust occurs and ‘only the Xhosa people of the southern tip of Africa survived, the human species would still retain 80 percent of its genetic variation’.”

This conclusion is reinforced by more modern molecular genetic analysis, which can detect more subtle variations invisible to electrophoresis. Jonathan Marks, in *Human Biodiversity*, points to the results from a genetic analysis called “restriction fragment length polymorphism” (RFLP)—the DNA-testing technique that has been used to exonerate quite a number of

death row inmates who otherwise would have been executed. Marks notes:

“These data, at the most fundamental genetic levels—the presence of one nucleotide versus another—reinforce what was established in the 1960s from cruder genetic comparisons based on proteins: genetic polymorphism in the human species is far greater than polytypism. In other words, most genetic variations are found in most populations, though in varying proportions. The study of human genetic variation, then, is principally the study of diversity within populations; to focus on genetic differences *between* populations is to define a very narrow and biologically trivial question.”

Genetic variation is nature’s way of protecting a species from the attack of a new parasite or pathogen, or to adapt to new environmental conditions. The eugenicists’ goal of preserving a supposedly “pure” Nordic stock would necessarily lead to inbreeding and a collapse of essential genetic variation. If you want that, just look at the chinless wonders of the British royal family.

Gould and Darwin: Upstart or Grandson?

Gould was grounded in Darwin and paid many tributes to his revolutionary ideas. Contrary to popular notions, Darwin did not “invent” evolution—the idea that species may change over time was acknowledged by natural scientists who also believed in divine creation. The revolutionary aspect of Darwin’s idea was that the whole evolution of the natural world could be explained on a purely materialist basis—natural selection—rather than through any supernatural intervention. The motor force was survival of the fittest: all organisms produce more progeny than can possibly survive within their ecological niche—the most intense

competition is *within* a species, whose members all compete for the same life-style and food sources. The competition *between* species is important, but on a slightly lower level. For example, lions like to eat antelopes, and antelopes, naturally, do not want to be eaten. Faster antelopes tend to survive, but they still have to compete among themselves to assure that they can mate and produce progeny inheriting their speed.

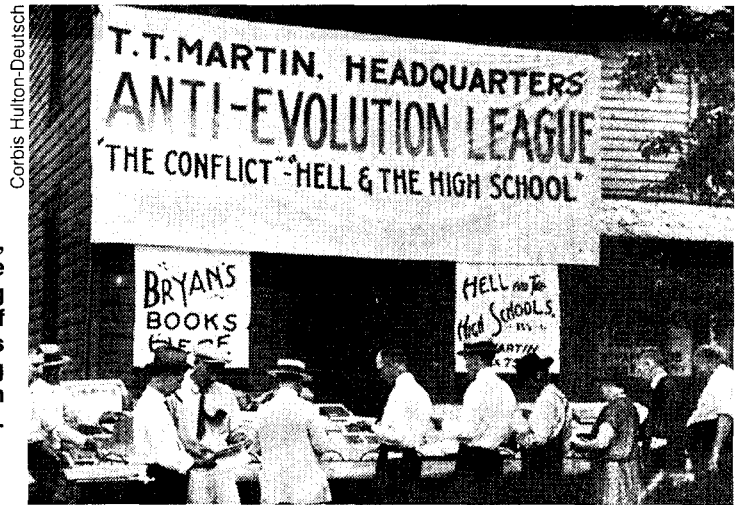
Gould and his co-thinker Niles Eldredge developed their most famous and sometimes controversial contribution to evolutionary theory: "punctuated equilibrium." Eldredge wrote in *The Pattern of Evolution* (1999) an interesting account of how the problems of gaps in the fossil record had been addressed by others, but that no one had figured out the motor force for the apparent "abrupt" changes in evolutionary development. Gould and Eldredge argued for periods of stasis punctuated by rapid leaps (within the scope of geologic time), as Gould put it in *Hen's Teeth and Horse's Toes* (1994) "a jerky, or episodic, rather than a smoothly gradual, pace of change"—a dialectical view which fits the current geological and paleontological evidence.

Gould and Eldredge proposed that the apparent gaps were real and that rapid evolutionary changes were instigated by external forces, such as sudden climatic changes, volcanic eruptions, or, for example, the asteroid impact at the end of the Cretaceous period which is generally accepted as the cause for the extinction of the dinosaurs some 65 million years ago. Living things, by their very nature, exhibit very nonlinear behavior; success tends to be exponential. Gould wrote a whole book, *Wonderful Life*, describing the spectacular profusion of body types when the first multicellular organisms arose in what is known as the Cambrian explosion, some 540 million years ago. Many of these truly weird creatures became extinct, but all major groups of modern animals inhabiting this planet today have an ancestor going back to the Cambrian creatures.

Gould's punctuated equilibrium has been portrayed by his opponents as an attack on Darwin himself. Punctuated equilibrium is solidly *within* the Darwinian tradition. In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin states:

"As species are produced and exterminated by slowly acting and still existing causes, and not by miraculous acts of creation; and as the most important of all causes of organic change is one which is almost independent of altered and perhaps suddenly altered physical conditions, namely, the mutual relation of organism to organism,—the improvement of one organism entailing the im-

Dayton,
Tennessee
during
1925 trial of
John Scopes
for teaching
evolution
in school.



provement or the extermination of others; it follows, that the amount of organic change in the fossils of consecutive formations probably serves as a fair measure of the relative though not actual lapse of time. A number of species, however, keeping in a body might remain for a long period unchanged, whilst within the same period several of these species by migrating into new countries and coming into competition with foreign associates, might become modified; so that we must not overrate the accuracy of organic change as a measure of time."

Though Darwin here tends to dismiss the effect of sudden environmental changes, it is clear that the reading of the fossil record done by Gould and Eldredge was thoroughly within the Darwinian tradition.

Gould wrote that he, like Darwin, was predisposed to certain ideas reflective of the philosophies of his own times. In regard to the development of punctuated equilibrium, in 1977 he wrote: "It may also not be irrelevant to our personal preferences that one of us learned his Marxism, literally, at his daddy's knee." Gould was reviled for acknowledging his debt to German dialectical philosopher Hegel and Engels and Marx, and he had to fend off criticism from the academic establishment for this for the rest of his life. In his last book, *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory* (2002), he wrote that he was alternately dismissed and attacked supposedly because, among other reasons, "I advanced punctuated equilibrium in order to foster a personal political agenda." Gould's complaint is quite accurate. While perhaps influenced by Marx's idea of dialectical materialism, Gould was never a partisan of Marxist politics.

Gould vs. Creationism

Gould and Eldredge often expressed their anger that anti-scientific zealots would cynically claim that the impact of provable physical phenomena on the course of evolution somehow opened the

door to the belief that supernatural forces, i.e., god, could likewise intervene.

Gould spent a large portion of his life not only combatting pseudo-scientific racist ideas but also Christian biblical-based challenges to teaching evolution in the schools. Why in the most technologically and industrially advanced country in the world would the teaching of long-time, universally acknowledged scientific principles be a contentious issue? Why would *Scientific American*, one of the most established science magazines in the country, have to publish a cover article last year titled: "15 Answers to Creationist Nonsense"?

The revival of reactionary attacks on the teaching of evolutionary science arose as part of a much broader rightist offensive aimed at rolling back the gains of the struggles of the 1960s, not least the right to abortion. This came amid a rise in religious reaction internationally, including as an ideological spearhead for capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states—e.g., the Vatican-inspired Solidarność movement in Poland and the CIA-backed Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan.

In 1985, the state of Louisiana mandated that "creation science" (an oxymoron, as Gould has noted) be taught along with evolution. Gould was happy to be an expert witness to testify against teaching creationism in the Louisiana case. We revolutionary Marxists also had an interest in the outcome of this case, and we submitted an *amicus* brief to the Supreme Court appeal. We wrote in our brief that allowing the teaching of the Bible in science classes was a challenge to one of the most basic gains of the American Revolution—the separation of church and state: "The current battle poses the defense of the gains of the American Revolution, Civil War—

and the Enlightenment.” We raised the Civil War to lay bare the historical roots of black oppression and to make the point that all-sided social reaction, from anti-immigrant chauvinism to anti-abortion bigotry, is always linked to attacks on black people:

“Evolution, the science of man’s ‘descent with modification’ is the particular object of the fundamentalist religious attack. The reasons for this lie in the fact that evolutionary theory deprives man of a mythical ‘special’ status in nature, and exposes the lack of scientific basis for the various religious and other justifications for belief in racial inferiority. The not so hidden agenda of the proponents of teaching creationism in the schools is to enforce the destructive and dangerous dogma of racial inferiority.”

That the United States has a secular public education system is largely a heritage of the period of Radical Reconstruction following the Civil War, when schools were built widely to teach ex-slaves and poor whites. Today, the proliferation of school voucher programs, the tax credits to subsidize parochial and private schools and the privatization of inner-city school districts are all attacks on the public school system and the separation of church and state, undermining the goal of providing quality education for all. It is no surprise that when the Louisiana decision was finally held to be unconstitutional, Supreme Court justices Rehnquist and Scalia dissented—both are arch supporters of the racist death penalty and opponents of abortion rights. Scalia recently proclaimed in *First Things*, a religion journal, that “government... derives its moral authority from God.”

Gould and the “Death of Communism”

Gould, despite what he may have learned at his daddy’s knee, was really not more than a left-liberal, one who was comfortable swimming in the stream of petty-bourgeois academics, ex-New Leftists and social democrats such as those around the journal *Rethinking Marxism*. In the aftermath of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, this crowd was “rethinking Marxism” indeed—and abandoned it altogether. For his part, Gould lent his voice to the wave of bourgeois triumphalism over the “death of Communism” in a 1992 essay titled “Life in a Punctuation,” where Gould stated that “Marx’s economics has failed spectacularly, at least in the largest and longest experiment ever carried out in its name.”

We responded with a carefully measured polemic titled “Punctured Equilibrium: Stephen Jay Gould and the Mismeasure of Marx” (*WV* No. 563, 13



Cristiano Banti

Galileo was convicted by the Inquisition for maintaining that the earth goes around the sun.

November 1992). In that article, we explained that it was not Marxism but its antithesis *Stalinism* which had failed, a point predicted by Leon Trotsky in his classic 1936 book *The Revolution Betrayed*. Gould’s impressionistic pronouncement on the failure of Marxism was less apostasy than a reflection of American liberal academic opinion—always a weathervane whipped about by prevailing ruling-class ideology. As Gould himself had explained in *The Mismeasure of Man*, science is not at all some rarified exercise of pure reason; rather it is bound up with the prevailing material and cultural circumstances of the times in which the scientist lives, particularly when the subject is human biology, behavior and history.

Pseudo-socialists associated with journals or organizations such as *Against the Current*, Socialist Action and the International Socialist Organization (ISO) wrote paeans to Gould on the occasion of his death while at the same time disappearing his repudiation of Marxism. Why is that? In the case of the ISO, they have always embraced “democratic” imperialism and opposed defense of the gains of the 1917 Russian Revolution, hailing the capitalist counterrevolution in Russia. As for *Against the Current* and Socialist Action, they hailed every reactionary, priest-riddled, nationalist anti-Soviet opposition nurtured by Western imperialism that arose in East Europe, most notably Polish Solidarność. The capitulation of these renegades to bourgeois anti-Sovietism was and is a conscious betrayal

of their stated adherence to socialism and working-class liberation.

Rocks of Ages: Gould Returns to God

In 1999 Gould compiled an entire volume devoted to the reconciliation of science and religion, a perfectly logical extension of his disillusioned political world outlook. Gould argued that science and religion did not conflict, and he coined a phrase, “non-overlapping magisteria” or “NOMA,” to describe this relationship. He claimed that science covers the empirical realm and religion addresses “ultimate meaning and moral value.” Gould may have never claimed to be an atheist in his earlier days, but he never particularly campaigned *for* religion either. In his 1999 book *Rocks of Ages*, Gould uses his usual witty anecdotal style, but this time he presents a philosophical justification for religion in general. He goes so far as to present an apologia for the Catholic church’s persecution of Galileo. Galileo’s observations of the planets (and particularly the moons of Jupiter) did indeed challenge the long-held view of an earth-centered universe. At one point in the book, Gould acknowledges:

“The basic facts cannot be gainsaid: Galileo was cruelly treated (forced to recant on his knees, and then placed under the equivalent of house arrest for the remainder of his life), and he was right; his conflict with the Pope did, to cite the best modern work on the subject (*Galileo, Courtier*, by Mario Biagioli, University of Chicago Press, 1993), represent ‘the clash between two incompatible world-views,’ and [Pope] Urban did defend the

traditional geocentric universe as established dogma."

But on the facing page (page 73), Gould puts the onus on Galileo!

"But Galileo moved too fast and too far in an unnecessarily provocative manner. He had lived his life in necessary pursuit of courtly patronage, but now he fell from grace and into a common role of his time and place. In Biagioli's words: 'Galileo's career was propelled and then undone by...patronage dynamics.'"

Contrast this to the earlier Gould, who wrote in *The Mismeasure of Man*:

"Galileo was not shown the instruments of torture in an abstract debate about lunar motion. He had threatened the Church's conventional argument for social and doctrinal stability: the static world order with planets circling about a central earth, priests subordinate to the Pope and serfs to their lord."

Science and religion *are* bitter enemies. Religion arose in the most primitive times out of ignorance and helplessness in the face of a world of unknown forces. Lightning, thunder, fire and flood—the seemingly implacable forces of nature were deified. Rituals and sacrifices were carried out to placate the gods and appeal for succor in the here and now. With the invention of agriculture—allowing for the creation of surplus wealth—and the advent of class society, religion took on a social function, legitimizing the rule of the oppressing class as part of "divine will." Since then, religion has served as an ideological mainstay for the oppression of women, centrally through the institution of the family, instilling patriarchal submission and dictating that women be chained to hearth and home.

Although the spectacular advances in science in the epoch of capitalism should undermine and narrow the basis for spirituality, the ruling class perpetuates religious mystification to obscure the roots of capitalist exploitation and oppression and to reconcile the masses to their "fate." And, as Marx observed at the advent of industrial capitalism, for the dispossessed and exploited masses, religion serves as solace, "the opium of the people." The faithful may still pray for divine help in case of disease, but all hopes for an end to the misery of daily life is put off until death and the supposed afterlife. How very convenient for those that lord it over us in this life! In the Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S., we note:

"When it was an ascending class, the bourgeoisie embraced the Enlightenment in its struggle against the old feudal order and its ideological bulwark, the church. Yet soon after the capitalists triumphed, they turned about and encouraged organized religion as one more means to prop up their class rule. Today, late in the epoch of imperialist decay, the

bourgeois ideologues of the most powerful capitalist countries on the planet explicitly reject Enlightenment rationalism, embracing irrationality as a weapon against the proletarian revolution."

In his later years, Gould declared that morality and "ultimate meaning" can only come from religion. Whose morality? Concepts like morality and ultimate meaning have always been defined by and served the class interests of those in power. What is moral for one class may be immoral for another, as each class has its own interests. Engels writes in the 1888 book *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*: "In reality every class, even every profession, has its own morality, and even this it violates whenever it can do so with impunity."

The ABC of Communism (1919), a primer of basic communist ideology based on the program of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), states:

"Man has been extremely successful in the struggle with nature. He influences nature in his own interests, and controls natural forces, achieving these conquests, not thanks to his faith in God and in divine assistance, but in spite of this faith. He achieves his conquests thanks to the fact that in practical life and in all serious matters he invariably conducts himself as an atheist."

Gould never claimed to be a Marxist, or an atheist for that matter. His accommodation to religion at the end of his life is not really a negation of his worldview but something of a cop-out. We are left with a bitter taste: Darwin freed the study of biology from the clasp of relig-

ion by providing a materialist explanation for the evolution of life on this planet. Gould devoted the better part of his career to defense of Darwin and opposition to the creationists whose interpretation of "NOMA" is "no more evolution." Carl Sagan, Gould's contemporary, also succumbed to malignant disease, but near his end he never wrote anything so wretched as *Rocks of Ages*. Sagan's last book was *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*, a forthright defense of science against religious superstitions. We also appreciate the comments of physicist Steven Weinberg, who candidly stated:

"I am all in favor of a dialogue between science and religion, but not a constructive dialogue. One of the great achievements of science has been, if not to make it impossible for intelligent people to be religious, then at least to make it possible for them to not be religious."

—"A Designer Universe?"
New York Review of Books,
21 October 1999

The full liberation of humanity from religion and all its attendant backwardness and superstition will never occur under capitalism, with its grotesque class divisions and adulation of religious mythology. When all the bishops, bankers and bosses are swept aside by a victorious proletarian revolution, the material basis will be laid for a truly liberated humanity. Then, and only then, will the limits to each individual man and woman be set by their own creative powers, freed at last from the shackles of class divisions, poverty and religion. ■

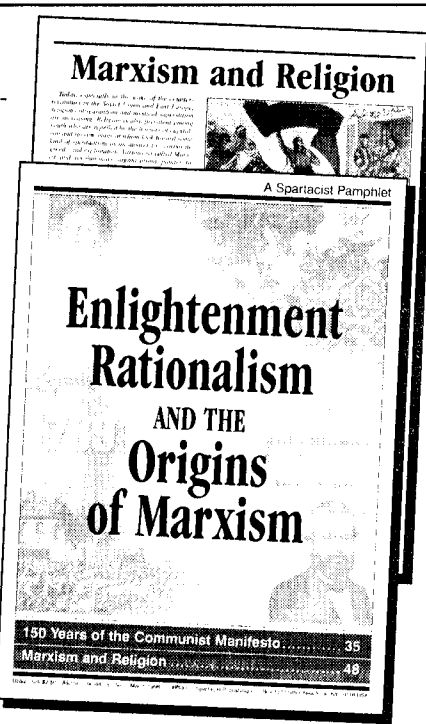
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Government War on Blacks and Reds in the Early '20s

The Russian Revolution and the Black Freedom Struggle

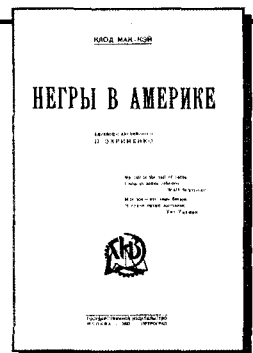
"Everything new on the Negro question came from Moscow—after the Russian Revolution began to thunder its demand throughout the world for freedom and equality for all national minorities, all subject peoples and all races—for all the despised and rejected of the earth."

—James P. Cannon, "The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement" (*International Socialist Review*, Summer 1959; reprinted in *The First Ten Years of American Communism* [1962])

These words, describing the revolutionary ideas which inspired a generation of radicals in the early 1920s, were written by American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon as the historic struggle for black freedom and equality in the U.S. entered a new chapter with the civil rights movement. The October Revolution of 1917 was a beacon to the exploited and oppressed throughout the world, the greatest victory ever achieved by the working people. As the multinational working class, led by the Bolshevik Party of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, smashed the bloody rule of the capitalist masters and erected its own state power, it opened the portals of liberation to all the many oppressed peoples of Russia.

In the U.S., the reverberations of the Russian Revolution coincided with the great migration of Southern black sharecroppers to the cities of the North and the return of some 400,000 black World War I vets. This combination of events gave birth to the rise of a new black militancy. It also gave birth to the far-flung web of repression that a half century later took the form of the FBI's COINTELPRO (Counter-Intelligence Program) terror operation. From the time of the slave revolts before the Civil War, the sight of black people armed not only with guns but with "radical" notions of freedom and equality has struck fear into America's racist rulers. In a 1919 Senate report, Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, author of the infamous 1920 Palmer Raids,

Black poet Claude McKay addresses Fourth Comintern Congress, 1922. McKay's book *Negroes in America* (1923) was printed in Moscow.



Wide World

warned that "the Negro is 'seeing red'."

Many black radicals in the early '20s did indeed look to the Russian Revolution, and a few joined the early American Communist Party (CP). Among them were leaders of the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), mainly composed of West Indian immigrants, which advocated race pride and armed self-defense against racist terror. As black people took up arms in self-defense against a series of racist pogroms and lynchings that swept American cities from Washington to Tulsa, Oklahoma at the end of World War I, the ABB defiantly proclaimed in an article headlined "The Tulsa Outrage" (*Crusader*, July 1921):

"As at Washington, D.C., so at Tulsa, Okla. The entire power of the State, all of the forces of capitalist 'law and order,' were turned upon the Negro in the process of 'putting down' race riots that were started and most actively prosecuted by white mobs.... That is the kind of justice the Negro gets in capitalist

America! That is the kind of justice the Jew used to get in capitalist-Czarist Russia, until the workers of all races arose in their wrath and overthrew the capitalist-Czarist combination and set up Soviets. Now the workers of all races get equal justice—in Russia. How long will the Negro in America continue to fall for capitalist bunk? How many more Tulsas will it take to line up the Negro where by all race interests he belongs—with the radical forces of the world that are working for the overthrow of capitalism and the dawn of a new day, a new heaven and a new earth?"

These questions are posed with no less urgency 80 years later. The last great struggle for black equality in the U.S., the civil rights movement, resulted in the formal elimination of entrenched Jim Crow segregation in the South. But it did nothing to ameliorate the de facto segregation of the black masses at the bottom of American society—massive and chronic unemployment, segregated and substandard housing and schools, rampant

cop terror in the ghettos—rooted in the very foundations of this capitalist system. Thousands upon thousands of civil rights activists faced down shotgun-wielding cops and Klan lynchers in white robes. But the movement was steered away from a revolutionary challenge to racist American capitalism by Martin Luther King Jr. and other liberal civil rights leaders, aided by the long-since reformist Communist Party, and into the dead end of Democratic Party liberalism.

The Spartacist League was born in good part in a fight for a revolutionary proletarian intervention into the civil rights movement. The SL originated as the Revolutionary Tendency within the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which had been founded and led for many years by Cannon, in struggle against the party's descent from Trotskyism into centrism in 1961-63. Weakened by years of isolation during the McCarthyite witchhunt, the SWP criminally abstained from the struggle to win the thousands of left-wing militants who rebelled against King's liberal pacifism, instead adapting to the liberals and later the black nationalists.

Today, the material conditions of the mass of the black population are by every measure worse than they were in the 1960s, while even the minimal gains achieved then have either been rolled back or are under incessant attack. Meanwhile, King's political heirs—Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, etc.—seek to bind a new generation of black youth to the Democratic Party as a capitalist “lesser evil” and to convince them that “communism is dead.” The destruction of the Soviet Union, the final undoing of the October Revolution, was an enormous defeat. But the lessons of the Russian Revolution remain no less vital. It will take nothing short of a new October Revolution that sweeps away the U.S. bourgeoisie to bring about freedom and equality for black people and all working people.

The First COINTELPRO

If the class-struggle road to black freedom was first charted in the immediate aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution, it was in this period as well that the American capitalist state constructed the deadly apparatus of political repression—with its vast army of spies and informers, local police “red squads,” wiretaps and mail interceptions—that was later deployed by J. Edgar Hoover's FBI in the '60s. COINTELPRO singled out the Black Panther Party, the best of a layer of radical black militants who spurned the accommodationism of King & Co., for defiantly asserting the right of armed self-defense. The FBI's war of terror left 38

Panthers dead and hundreds more framed up and imprisoned in America's dungeons, ultimately including onetime Philadelphia Panther spokesman Mumia Abu-Jamal, who now fights for his life from a prison cell on Pennsylvania's death row.

Theodore Kornweibel's “*Seeing Red*”: *Federal Campaigns Against Black Militancy 1919-1925* (1998) presents a history of the first edition of COINTELPRO. Kornweibel opens: “Modern America's political intelligence system—surveillance, investigation, and spying on individuals because of fear or dislike of their beliefs, resulting in harassment, intimidation, or persecution—came of age during World War I and the Red Scare of 1919 to 1921.” America's entry into World War I, the first interimperialist world war, in 1917 gave impetus to the creation of a far-flung domestic espionage apparatus—including the Bureau of Investigation, the Military Intelligence Division (MID) and the Office of Naval Intelligence—which grew from a handful of agents to a staff of thousands by war's end in November 1918. At its center was the newly formed Bureau of Investigation—to be recast in 1935 as the FBI amid a new wave of working-class radicalization—and its General Intelligence Division (GID), headed by the same J. Edgar Hoover.

Within months of its formation in 1919, the GID had compiled a list of 55,000 names. Initially aimed at antiwar dissidents, left-wing Socialists and IWW members, Hoover's political police went on to pursue the fledgling American Communist movement. As always, black militants were a particular target. The federal agencies were assisted by local red squads and private anti-Communist outfits like the American Defense Initiative. The Palmer Raids in the first week of January 1920 resulted in the arrest of over 6,000 Communists and the deportation of thousands of foreign-born anarchists and other radicals. All of this was carried out under “progressive” Democratic president Woodrow Wilson.

Foreshadowing the “human rights” rhetoric which was later used to justify a host of imperialist military interventions by the Clinton White House, Wilson proclaimed that the imperialist war for redivision of colonies and spheres of exploitation was fought to make the world “safe for democracy”—even as he presided over the brutal subjugation of American colonies like the Philippines and Puerto Rico and Jim Crow terror against black people in the U.S. Wilson's “14 Points,” including the right of national self-determination, were cynically crafted to counter Bolshevik influence among working people and colonial slaves

around the world. As a staunch supporter of segregation, Wilson was representative of ascending U.S. imperialism, whose racist wars of conquest abroad, beginning with the Spanish-American War of 1898, were accompanied by the intensification of racist repression at home.

Based on previously unavailable government documents, Kornweibel presents a powerful exposition of how the federal government mobilized its resources—from the armed forces to the postal service, from the State Department to the Justice Department—to defend the racist capitalist status quo and to crush the new movements for black emancipation and red revolution. A liberal anti-Communist, Kornweibel argues that the Feds had “reasonable grounds for monitoring” black Communists because they supposedly advocated the violent overthrow of the American government and acted as spies for Soviet Russia. He condemns the capitalist government only for spying on large numbers of liberals and non-Communist radicals. Kornweibel sneers that “the Bolsheviks failed to convert more than a handful of blacks to communism in the 1920s.”

It is true that as late as 1928, the CP had only some 50 black members. The Palmer Raids and the anti-red witchhunt had served their purpose. The decade of the '20s was marked by an ebb tide in labor struggle, as union membership shrank to barely 10 percent of the workforce. Emboldened by the right-wing climate, the Ku Klux Klan reached a peak of power and popularity, with several million members, including in the urban North. In 1925, the Klan staged a march of 40,000 in Washington, D.C.

But in the immediate aftermath of the Russian Revolution, the bourgeoisie's fears that the black masses might “see red” were not misplaced. The black GIs who had been sent to die in the “great war for democracy” in Europe and were now determined to fight for some democracy at home were, in Wilson's eyes, the “greatest medium in conveying bolshevism to America.” As Kornweibel himself recounts, the Bolshevik Revolution was popular among wide layers of urban blacks and even among moderate black newspapers and organizations. The accommodationism of Booker T. Washington, who preached acceptance of Jim Crow segregation and lectured impoverished blacks to pull themselves up “by the bootstraps,” had held sway in the years following the elimination of the last remaining gains of Reconstruction in the 1890s, when the downtrodden masses of black sharecroppers in the South entertained little hope of social struggle. But

the end of World War I ushered in a new spirit of militancy, the "New Crowd Negro," in the words of black social democrat A. Philip Randolph.

Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

The experience of the Bolshevik Party in leading the first victorious proletarian revolution provoked a polarization and regroupment within the workers movement internationally. In the U.S., many left-wing Socialists and members of the revolutionary-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) joined together to forge an American section of the Communist International (CI). Of particular importance was the profound change inspired by the Russian Bolsheviks in the way American radicals viewed the black question.

Samuel Gompers' American Federation of Labor was largely composed of lily-white craft unions. Even the IWW, which fought heroically to organize black and immigrant workers, had no program to address the special oppression of black people. The Socialist Party ranged from open racists like Victor Berger, who considered black people "a lower race," to "colorblind" socialists like Eugene V. Debs. Debs staunchly opposed racist discrimination and the exclusion of black workers from the unions but denied that black people suffered from any form of oppression other than as workers, going so far as to challenge: "What social distinction is there between a white and a black deckhand on a Mississippi steamboat?" (Jean Y. Tussey, ed., *Debs Speaks* [1970]). This Debsian outlook was manifested in the 1919 founding program of the Communist Party, while the program of the rival Communist Labor Party (the two groups merged in 1920) simply ignored the black question.

As Cannon, a former Wobbly who became an early leader of the CP and then founder of the American Trotskyist movement, noted in his 1959 article:

"The earlier socialist movement, out of which the Communist Party was formed, never recognized any need for a special program on the Negro question. It was considered purely and simply as an economic problem, part of the struggle between the workers and the capitalists; nothing could be done about the special problems of discrimination and inequality this side of socialism....

"The difference—and it was a *profound* difference—between the Communist Party of the Twenties and its socialist and radical ancestors, was signified by its break with this tradition. The American communists in the early days, under the influence and pressure of the Russians in the Comintern, were slowly and painfully learning to change their *atti-*

tude: to assimilate the new theory of the Negro question as a *special* question of doubly-exploited second-class citizens, requiring a program of special demands as part of the over-all program—and to start doing something about it."

Though the early Comintern tended to conflate the black struggle in the U.S. with the colonial struggle in Africa, the manifesto adopted by the First Congress of the CI in 1919, drafted by Trotsky, was a clarion call to the dark-skinned masses throughout the world, proclaiming: "Colonial slaves of Africa and Asia! The hour of proletarian dictatorship in Europe will strike for you as the hour of your own emancipation!" The first full discussion of the black question from a Communist viewpoint took place not in the U.S. but in Moscow, at the Second Comintern Congress in 1920. At Lenin's personal request, American Communist John Reed—author of *Ten Days That Shook the World*, the first popular account of the Russian Revolution—was designated to report on the "Negro Question." Describing the horrors of lynch law and Jim Crow segregation as well as the effects of proletarianization and imperialist war, Reed said:

"If we consider the Negroes as an enslaved and oppressed people, then they pose us with two tasks: on the one hand a strong racial movement and on the other a strong proletarian workers' movement, whose class consciousness is quickly growing. The Negroes do not pose the demand of national independence....

"The Communists must not stand aloof from the Negro movement which demands their social and political equality and at the moment, at a time of the rapid growth of racial consciousness, is spreading rapidly among the Negroes. The Communists must use this movement to expose the lie of bourgeois equality and emphasize the necessity of the social revolution which will not only liberate all workers from servitude but is also the only way to free the enslaved Negro people."

In the years before and during World War I, more than a million blacks fled the rural Jim Crow South to enter Northern industry. In his 1915 pamphlet, *New Data on the Laws Governing the Development of Capitalism in Agriculture*, Lenin wrote: "To show what the South is like, it is essential to add that its population is fleeing to other capitalist areas and to the towns.... For the 'emancipated' Negroes, the American South is a kind of prison where they are hemmed in, isolated and deprived of fresh air." The black question in the U.S. was thus transformed from primarily a Southern agrarian question left unresolved in the aftermath of the Civil War and the radical-democratic Reconstruction era to a key question of the *proletarian* revolution.

Particularly with the formation of the integrated CIO industrial unions in the

latter half of the 1930s, black workers became a strategic component of the multiracial proletariat. The special oppression of black people as a race/color caste—segregated at the bottom of this society while integrated into the economy—is the cornerstone of American capitalism. Black workers serve as an industrial reserve army, the last hired and first fired as economic need demands. As well, America's rulers foster racial divisions in order to obscure the fundamental and irreconcilable *class* division between labor and capital and to head off united working-class struggle.

The Spartacist League's proletarian, revolutionary strategy for black liberation derives from the seminal understanding laid out by Reed in Moscow in 1920 and powerfully developed by the later writings of veteran Trotskyist Richard Fraser. In the late 1940s and early '50s, Fraser pioneered the perspective of revolutionary integrationism upheld today by the SL. We fight to mobilize the multiracial proletariat in struggle against every manifestation of racist oppression, a struggle which can only be victorious through the full social, political and economic integration of black people in an egalitarian *socialist* society.

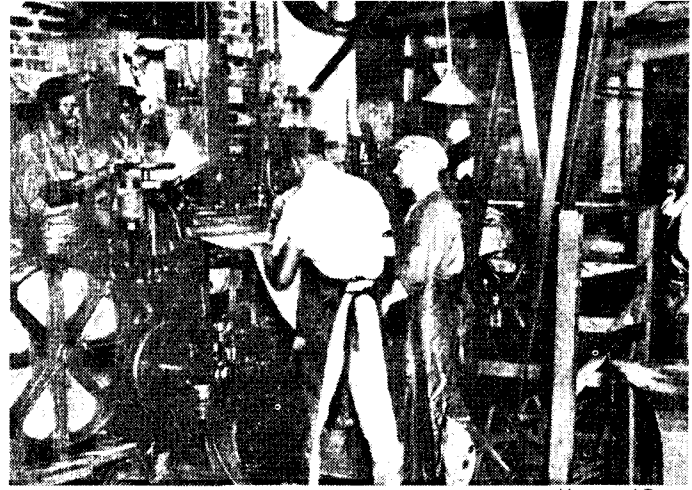
Won to a revolutionary program, doubly oppressed black workers will play a leading role in the fight to emancipate the black masses and all working people by sweeping away the entire system of capitalist exploitation. There can be no socialist revolution in this country without united struggle of black and white workers led by a multiracial vanguard party, and there is nothing other than a workers revolution, smashing the capitalist state and expropriating the capitalist class, which can at last realize the historic struggle for black equality and freedom.

Racist Terror and Black Self-Defense

The Red Scare hit full stride in 1919. That year saw the crest of the wave of labor radicalism which swept Europe in response to the great carnage of the war and under the impact of the Russian Revolution. In the U.S., the ranks of the Socialist Party swelled to more than 100,000, mostly foreign-born workers, with two-thirds supporting the pro-Bolshevik left wing. The U.S. was hit by the biggest strike wave up to that time, as four million workers walked off their jobs in response to the mounting cost of living induced by war inflation. Drives to organize unions in meatpacking and steel culminated in a huge steel strike that year which was smashed by federal troops. Shunned by the Jim Crow craft unions of the AFL, many black workers had first



Chicago Historical Society



Vanguard Press

Left: Racist riots in Chicago, 1919, helped break meatpackers union organizing drive. Right: Chicago factory in 1920s. Migration from rural South to industrial North gave black workers social power as integral part of proletariat.

been hired by the bosses as scabs and worked in non-union "open shops." Many more had been brought in to replace white workers drafted into the military.

In the South, the sight of armed and uniformed black soldiers drove the racists into a frenzy. In Houston, 13 black soldiers were hanged in September 1917 and 41 imprisoned for life for defending themselves against a racist mob, and the number of lynchings escalated over the next couple of years. Conflicts over housing and jobs set the stage for a series of bloody pogroms and racist massacres, beginning in East St. Louis in July 1917, where over 40 blacks were killed. These conflicts intensified with the end of the war, as white workers demobilized from the army demanded jobs at the expense of black workers and a postwar economic downturn set in.

The Red Summer of 1919, so called for the blood of black victims that flowed through city streets, saw a series of racist rampages that left hundreds dead across the country. In Washington, D.C., the entry of black workers into lower-level civil service jobs during the war provoked a riot by returning soldiers in which six blacks were killed. A five-day riot in Chicago, which broke the back of the meatpackers organizing drive, left 23 blacks and 15 whites dead and over 500 people seriously injured. In Elaine, Arkansas, the formation of the black Progressive Farmers and Householders Union was met with a racist onslaught. Following a mob attack on a union meeting in October, in which some 200 black men, women and children died, federal troops were called in and 12 sharecroppers were sentenced to death and another 80 to prison for "inciting to insurrection." They were finally freed after prolonged efforts by the NAACP.

The worst of these racist atrocities

came in Tulsa, Oklahoma in May 1921. As false rumors spread that a young black man had attacked a white female elevator operator, lynch mobs looted and burned black homes and businesses. Black residents, many of them army vets, organized to defend themselves. The police, commandeering private planes, dropped dynamite on the heart of black Tulsa. By the time it was over, the once-thriving black business district, known as "the Negro Wall Street," had been razed. Over 200 black men, women and children (as well as some 50 white attackers) were killed, and over 4,000 more were thrown into concentration camps.

What alarmed the bourgeoisie was not the murderous ferocity of the racist attacks but that they were met by blacks with growing resolve for armed self-defense. The *Chicago Whip*, one of a number of small black newspapers which typified the "New Crowd Negro," drew the ire of the Feds when it headlined a report on a 1920 racist riot in Jersey City in which three whites were badly beaten in self-defense by besieged blacks: "Started by White Hoodlums, Finished by Tough Negroes." Following the Tulsa pogrom, the paper carried a scathing indictment of racist American "democracy": "Americanism! Is that the thing which lynches, burns and murders the weak? If so, then give us Lords and Kings with guillotines and dungeons" (quoted in the *Crusader*, July 1921).

Claude McKay gave voice to the new spirit of militancy in his famous poem "If We Must Die" (1919):

"If we must die, let it not be like hogs....

Like men we'll face the murderous cowardly pack,

Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!"

Though never a member of the CP, McKay was outspoken and eloquent in his support for the Russian Revolution and was invited to attend the CP's 1922 Fourth Congress as a special delegate. When McKay met Trotsky, the Bolshevik leader and Red Army commander talked of his hopes of training a group of American blacks as officers in the Red Army and invited McKay for a three-week tour of Russian military facilities. But, stressed Trotsky, "The training of black propagandists is the most imperative and extremely important revolutionary task of the present time."

Even the cravenly legalistic NAACP ran an editorial in its *Crisis* in May 1919 in which editor W. E. B. DuBois called for black vets to "battle against the forces of hell in our own land" and declared, "We return from fighting. We return fighting." This was deemed so inflammatory that the New York Postmaster ordered 100,000 copies of the issue withheld, despite the NAACP's record of loyalty to the racist rulers. During the war, DuBois had urged blacks to "close ranks" behind U.S. imperialism, while NAACP chairman Joel Spingarn served as an officer in military intelligence, briefly heading up subsection M14E, which specialized in "investigations of blacks' loyalties," as Kornweibel reports.

After the war, DuBois appealed to the victors of the imperialist bloodbath to apply the "principles" of their robbers' peace—Wilson's "14 Points" and the Versailles treaty—to Africa and played a leading role in the Second Pan-African Congress in 1921, which demanded nothing more lofty than the "right" of the colonial slaves "to participate in the [colonial] government as fast as their development permits." Writing about this period in 1972, even a scholar sympathetic to

Pan-Africanism, Harvard political science professor Azina Nwafor, observed:

"These were, after all, the historical moments when the Bolsheviks had just triumphed in Russia and were exhorting all subject and colonial peoples to rise and overthrow their oppressors, their respective feudal and imperialist regimes, and to 'expropriate all the expropriators.' Such revolutionary principles and appeals were the real radical demands of the epoch—and not a wind of these blew through the civilized halls of the Pan-African Congresses."

—"Critical Introduction" to George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism* (1972)

When McKay criticized the *Crisis* in 1921 for "sneer[ing] at the Russian Revolution, the greatest event in the history of humanity," DuBois replied that "the immediate work for the American Negro lies in America and not in Russia" and pronounced it "foolish for us to give up this practical program...by seeking to join a revolution which we do not at present understand" (*Crisis*, July 1921; reprinted in Philip S. Foner and James S. Allen, eds., *American Communism and Black Americans: A Documentary History, 1919-1929* [1987]). This the liberal DuBois would never understand, even after joining the by-then thoroughly reformist CP in 1961, shortly before his death.

Hoover's Witchhunt Against Black Militants

As racist mobs rampaged against blacks in 1919, Hoover directed his agents to pay "special attention" to "the Negro agitation which seems to be prevalent throughout the industrial centers of the country and every effort should be made to ascertain whether or not this agitation is due to the influence of the radical elements such as the IWW and Bolsheviks." In a report to Congress that year, Hoover railed that "a certain class of Negro leaders" had shown "an outspoken advocacy of the Bolshevik or Soviet doctrines," had been "openly, defiantly assertive" of their "own equality or even superiority" and had demanded "social equality" (quoted in Robert Goldstein, *Political Repression in Modern America: 1870 to the Present* [1978]).

In its venomous crusade against anything smacking of black self-assertion, the government even targeted Marcus Garvey's *Negro World* as "probable Bolshevik propaganda." In fact, Garvey was an early exponent of the reactionary separatism and black capitalism today espoused by Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam. In 1922, Garvey even staged a meeting with the head of the KKK. Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association tried to get blacks to move to Africa and establish themselves as a

new colonial elite with himself as their emperor. The only black nationalist movement in the U.S. ever to attain a mass base, the Garveyites fed off the disillusionment and demoralization which followed the defeat of the postwar strike wave and the 1919 riots. After a years-long vendetta, the Feds imprisoned Garvey in 1925 on fraud charges, deporting him to Jamaica three years later.

The main targets of government repression, intimidation, infiltration and frame-up were black leftists, especially those like McKay who had traveled to Moscow and were suspected of bringing back instructions from Trotsky to set up a "colored Soviet." The small number of black agents and informants recruited by the Feds were kept busy infiltrating numerous organizations, in some cases simultaneously, and reporting on public meetings and discussion circles. A particular focus of government spying was Martin Luther Campbell's tailor shop in Harlem, where regular discussions were attended by a wide range of black radicals and Communists, including McKay and leading CPer Rose Pastor Stokes.

Among those targeted by the Feds were left social democrats A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, who published the *Messenger*. The second issue of the *Messenger* (May/June 1919) featured headlines like "The March of Soviet Government" and "We Want More Bolshevik Patriotism." It was from the *Messenger* group and the Harlem branch of the Socialist Party that the Communist Party recruited its first black members, including founding CPer Otto Huiswoud, a union printer from Dutch Guiana (now Surinam). The post office withheld permanent second-class mailing status from the *Messenger* for two years for the following piece puncturing the racist hypocrisy of American bourgeois society:

"As for social equality, there are about five million mulattoes in the United States. This is the product of semi-social equality. It shows that social equality galore exists after dark, and we warn you that we expect to have social equality in the day as well as after dark."

Though initially an admirer of the Bolshevik Revolution, Randolph sided with the reformist wing of the SP in the 1919 split that led to the formation of the CP. In 1923, he and Owen ran an editorial titled "The Menace of Negro Communists." By the 1950s, Randolph was a Cold War liberal and Democratic Party stalwart.

The African Blood Brotherhood

The CP's real breakthrough in black recruitment came from the African Blood Brotherhood, founded in 1919 by West

Indian militant Cyril Briggs, publisher of the *Crusader*. Announcing the formation of the ABB, the *Crusader* wrote: "Those only need apply who are willing to go the limit!" Briggs was led by his uncompromising hostility to imperialist capitalism to embrace a revolutionary outlook, and he and other ABB leaders joined the CP. When the CP, before then underground, set up the Workers Party as a legal party, the ABB sent a fraternal delegation to its founding convention in December 1921 and many ABB members joined the new legal party.

Briggs himself came under surveillance in 1919 when the MID was alerted by a British intelligence report on "Negro Agitation" which described the *Crusader* as a "very extreme magazine" for its opposition to imperialism, its admiration of Bolshevism and its "abuse of the white man." Garvey's pro-capitalist separatist movement was a chief target of the *Crusader's* polemical fire. This political struggle soon became muddied as Hoover's provocateurs tried to push it toward a violent confrontation, just as 50 years later FBI provocateurs seized on the antagonism between the Panthers and Ron Karenga's "cultural nationalists" in Los Angeles to foment murderous feuding. DuBois and Randolph were trying to get the Feds to prosecute Garvey. Indefensibly, in 1922 Briggs joined with them in this, according to Kornweibel, alerting the "New York authorities that the *Negro World* had violated the law by printing advertisements for a cure for venereal disease."

In the wake of the 1921 Tulsa massacre, the ABB was subjected to even closer government scrutiny and a hysterical press witchhunt for supposedly organizing black self-defense efforts there. But the ABB's membership soared as it defiantly affirmed the right of armed self-defense. The CP distributed hundreds of thousands of copies of its own leaflet, "The Tulsa Massacre," which called for blacks "to resist the armed assaults upon their homes, their women and children." Three CPers were convicted and sentenced to five months under Connecticut's sedition law for distributing this leaflet.

While the ABB retained a separate existence and identity through 1924, it was closely associated with and served as a recruiting ground for the Workers Party. In 1925, the CP attempted to launch a black transitional organization, the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC), in line with the CI's recognition of the need for special organizational forms to draw into the revolutionary movement specially oppressed

layers. Today's Labor Black Leagues initiated by the Spartacist League are an example of such transitional organizations, which are linked to the proletarian vanguard party both programmatically and through their most conscious cadres. The ANLC opposed the color bar in the AFL, calling for unionization of black workers, demanded full social and political equality for black people and hailed "the workers' and farmers' government of Soviet Russia." Its founding conference declared, "The white workers cannot free themselves without the aid of us dark-skinned people, and we cannot liberate ourselves unless they join with us in an assault of the world bastions of imperialism" (*Daily Worker*, 14 November 1925; reprinted in *American Communism and Black Americans: A Documentary History, 1919 to 1929*).

The CP did not have enough black cadre to get the ANLC off the ground, making little headway overall in this period marked by a sharp decline in union membership and massive growth of the KKK. Moreover, by this time the Bolshevik leadership of Lenin and Trotsky which had sought to guide and educate the American Communists had been replaced by the bureaucratic regime headed by Stalin. Hostile imperialist encirclement and the failure of revolution to spread beyond backward Russia to the advanced capitalist world led to the consolidation of a parasitic, nationalist bureaucracy which usurped power through a political counterrevolution consummated by the smashing of the Trotskyist Left Opposition in January 1924. The Stalinist bureaucracy proclaimed the nationalist dogma of "socialism in one country," transforming the Communist parties in the capitalist world from instruments for socialist revolution into appendages of the Kremlin's diplomatic maneuvers.

The Stalinists' conservative policies found an echo among American CP cadre weighed down by the reactionary pressures of an expanding and self-confident imperialism. The Soviet bureaucracy manipulated the ongoing and politically unclear factional warfare within the American party for its own ends. In 1928, the CI decreed the so-called "black belt theory," insisting against all reality and the opposition of the majority of the CP's black cadre that the black population in the South constituted a nation and that the key task was to fight for black "self-determination." But as Cannon noted in his 1959 essay, "The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement," it was the CP's "aggressive agitation for *Negro equality*

and Negro rights on every front... that brought the results, without the help, and probably despite, the unpopular 'self-determination' slogan."

Cannon explained that the profound changes in the attitude of the American Communists to the black question introduced in the early 1920s, "brought about by the Russian intervention, were to manifest themselves explosively in the next decade." As the Great Depression led to a new period of struggle in the early '30s, the CP took the lead in fights against evictions, in struggles of the unemployed and in the Scottsboro and Angelo Herndon defense campaigns. When the tumultuous battles that gave rise to powerful new industrial unions erupted, "the policy and agitation of the Communist Party at that time did more, ten times over, than any other to help the Negro workers to rise to a new status of at least semi-citizenship in the new labor movement."

But, as Cannon put it, "the American Stalinists eventually fouled up the Negro question, as they fouled up every other question." By the mid-1930s, the CI had adopted the overtly class-collaborationist "people's front" line, manifested in the U.S. in a policy of subordination to Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" Democratic Party, whose Southern wing was the Klan-infested Dixiecrat segregationists. The CP played a key role in subordinating the CIO unions and the fight for black rights to the Democratic Party, *opposing* labor and black struggles during World War II in order to promote the war effort of racist U.S. imperialism.

Break with the Democrats— Forge a Workers Party!

In their introductory note to *American Communism and Black Americans: A Documentary History, 1919 to 1929*, Stalinist academics Philip Foner and James Allen seek to justify this history of sell-outs by spitting on the heroic and pioneering work of the early CP. They deep-six the central role of the Russian Bolsheviks in reorienting the American Communists on the black question and criticize them for "requiring adherence to their full program" in the ANLC. They attack the early CP's "negative attitude toward the Black middle class"—i.e., its revolutionary proletarian perspective—and counterpose the need for a class-collaborationist "united freedom front." Because they uphold the Stalinist class collaborationism of the later CP, Foner and Allen are necessarily hostile to the perspective of black liberation through proletarian revolution which animated the American Communist movement under

the guidance of Lenin and Trotsky.

The Stalinists' sellout of the fight for black rights in the service of FDR's Democrats cast a heavy shadow over the American workers movement. That goes a long way to explaining why, in the subsequent years, many blacks—and white workers as well—turned their backs on the Communist Party and the left in general, leaving the field open to Democratic Party liberals like Martin Luther King Jr. and, today, Jesse Jackson. In concluding "The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement," Cannon wrote:

"In the next stage of its development, the American Negro movement will be compelled to turn to a more militant policy than gradualism, and to look for more reliable allies than capitalist politicians in the North who are themselves allied with the Dixiecrats of the South. The Negroes, more than any others in this country, have reason and right to be revolutionary.

"An honest workers' party of the new generation will recognize this revolutionary potential of the Negro struggle, and call for a fighting alliance of the Negro people and the labor movement in a common revolutionary struggle against the present social system.

"Reforms and concessions, far more important and significant than any yet attained, will be by-products of this revolutionary alliance. They will be fought for and attained at every stage of the struggle. But the new movement will not stop with reforms, nor be satisfied with concessions. The movement of the Negro people and the movement of militant labor, united and coordinated by a revolutionary party, will solve the Negro problem in the only way it can be solved—by a social revolution."

The forging of an authentically communist vanguard party to lead the multi-racial proletariat to power requires breaking working people and the black masses from the grip of the racist capitalist Democratic Party. This is the task of the Spartacist League. As we state in the SL/U.S. programmatic statement "For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism!": "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. Our principal task in the U.S. is to break the power of the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy over the labor movement. It is this bureaucracy—itsself a component part of the Democratic Party—which politically chains the proletariat to the bourgeoisie and is the major obstacle to revolutionary class consciousness, to the forging of a revolutionary workers party." *For black liberation through socialist revolution!* ■

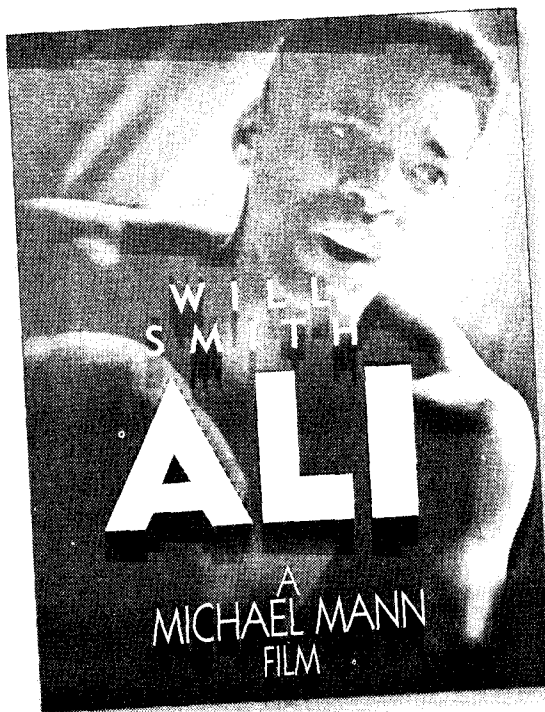
The movie *Ali* brings to the screen the story of boxer Muhammad Ali, the heavyweight champion whose intransigent opposition to racist oppression and U.S. imperialism's dirty war in Vietnam made him a hero to millions around the world. This gripping movie captures not merely the champ's prowess in the ring, his searing wit and compassion, but his courage in standing up to the

By Paul Costello

U.S. government which threatened him with imprisonment and stripped him of his heavyweight title and livelihood. The movie reminds those who lived through this period, and acquaints those who didn't, why Ali could claim, "I am the greatest."

Directed by Michael Mann, with Ali's close cooperation, and starring Will Smith, the movie focuses on ten years of Ali's life. It begins in 1964, when Ali (then named Cassius Clay), as a brash 22-year-old underdog known as the "Louisville Lip," won the heavyweight title from Sonny Liston in 1964. It ends on a morning in Kinshasa, Zaire in 1974, when as an aging "over the hill" underdog, Ali recaptured the championship from the seemingly unbeatable George Foreman. This was a period of vast social upheavals—marked by ghetto rebellions, the rise of the "Black Power" movement, the mass protests against U.S. imperialism's brutal war against Vietnam. In 1975 came the battlefield victory of the Vietnamese workers and peasants over the world's most powerful imperialist military.

Ali grew up at the beginning of the movement for black civil rights. In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court declared school segregation unconstitutional. Rosa Parks' arrest in 1955 for refusing to move to the back of a Montgomery, Alabama bus led to the year-long Montgomery bus boycott and thrust Martin Luther King Jr. of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) onto center stage as a national spokesman for pacifist "direct action." Across the South the KKK, heavily overlapping with local police forces, launched a blitzkrieg of racist terror—lynchings, church burnings and brutal beatings of civil rights workers and just about any black



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person who "got out of line." In 1955, 14-year-old Emmett Till was castrated and lynched for the "crime" of whistling at a white woman in Mississippi.

The movie's riveting opening sequence intersperses shots of Ali training for the Liston fight—including being stopped by a cop who asks, "What you running from, boy?"—to moments in Ali's childhood which shaped his consciousness. One scene shows Ali being forced to move to the back of the bus in segregated Louisville, Kentucky, as he sees a newspaper headline on the Till lynching. Not shown, however, is how Ali was greeted upon returning home after triumphantly representing the U.S. in the 1960 Olympics. As Ali later recalled, "With my gold medal actually hanging around my neck, I couldn't get a cheeseburger served to me in a downtown Louisville restaurant." In disgust, Ali threw the medal into the Ohio River.

Even before his public condemnations of American racism, Ali was being vilified by white sportswriters because he didn't fit their image of what a boxer, especially one who is black, is supposed

to be. This brutal sport has always been about pitting two impoverished fighters, who are increasingly likely to be black or Hispanic, against one another to beat themselves senseless to the thrills of a bloodthirsty—mostly white—crowd. Shortly after Georgie Flores became the sixth boxer killed in 1951, James P. Cannon, leader of the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) wrote:

"Cock-fighting is illegal; it is considered inhumane to put a couple of roosters into the pit and incite them to spur each other until one of them keels over. It is also against the law to put bulldogs into the pit to fight for a side bet. But our civilisation—which is on the march, to be sure—has not yet advanced to the point where law and public opinion forbid men, who have nothing against each other, to fight for money and the amusement of paying spectators."

—*Militant*, 24 September 1951, reprinted in *Notebook of an Agitator* (1958)

Ali was different. As he said after his 1971 victory over Jimmy Ellis, "Ain't no reason for me to kill nobody in the ring." Ali used his speed and agility, circling to the left on his toes, snapping off jabs and rapid-fire combinations. With his hands at his waist, Ali dared his opponent to hit him, only to miss widely as Ali either pulled his head back or darted to the side, ripping off a stinging jab as he "danced" away. This style gave birth to his trademark slogan, coined by his black Jewish ring assistant, Drew "Bundini" Brown: "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee."

Ali and Malcolm X

Ali captured the title at the height of the struggles against Jim Crow segregation and a growing polarization within the civil rights movement. Young activists were becoming increasingly disillusioned with King's pacifist strategy. Through bitter and repeated experience, young black militants, like those of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), learned firsthand that despite King's capacity to land thousands of activists in jails, he was unable to dent the stone wall of racist reaction. On the streets of Birmingham, Alabama in 1963, the dead end of King's pacifism was exposed in blood. Sheriff Bull Connor and his storm-

Black Struggle and the Vietnam War

troopers set upon black demonstrators with police dogs and firehoses set at pressures sufficient to strip bark off a tree, hurling children up against the walls. King's nonviolent philosophy was junked by the black masses who fought back with sticks, rocks, knives and bottles against the racists in the streets.

As the young civil rights activists became more radical, they found in Malcolm X the one man who expressed boldly the thoughts they were still afraid to voice themselves. Malcolm was the voice of the angry black ghetto, of black militancy. He was black America's truth-teller, intransigently opposed to the "white man's puppet Negro 'leaders'," as he called King, Bayard Rustin and other liberal civil rights leaders. He reviled their calls to "turn the other cheek" in the face of murderous attacks by the KKK and other agents of Southern Dixiecrat rule. He denounced their appeals to Democratic president John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert, the attorney general who "came to the aid" of civil rights activists by sending the FBI and federal marshals to suppress militant black protest.

After capturing the heavyweight crown, Ali immediately came under fire for his association with Malcolm, who was then the most prominent spokesman for the Nation of Islam (NOI). As the movie shows, Malcolm had been seen with Ali before the Liston bout and rumors surfaced that Ali had joined the NOI. The morning after he defeated Liston, Ali confirmed the rumors, announcing he was a Muslim, henceforth to be known as Cassius X. Shortly afterward, NOI leader Elijah Muhammad gave him the name Muhammad Ali.

Ali's relationship to Malcolm X was outside the bounds of what was deemed acceptable for a black sports figure in racist America. And they were going to make him pay. Because he consistently spoke out in support of the struggle for black freedom, Ali was pilloried by virtually the entire corps of white sportswriters. They wanted him to "know his place" in American society. This is conveyed in the movie when Ali, walking in Harlem with Malcolm X, is asked by a reporter if he is going to be "a great champ, like Joe Louis." Ali replied, "I'll be a great champ, but not like Joe Louis." Louis agreed to be used by the racist rulers to build support for their imperialist war aims in World War II, which they claimed was a "war for democracy against fascism."

One of the film's great attributes is its portrayal of Malcolm X's split with Elijah Muhammad and the NOI in a much more honest way than Spike Lee did in his movie *Malcolm X*. The NOI had existed

for more than a quarter of a century, attracting a few thousand followers and no serious interest among politically active blacks. In the early 1960s, at the height of the civil rights movement, the Black Muslims suddenly exploded into the consciousness of black (and to a lesser extent white) America. It had always been a tenet of the NOI that the black Christian preacher was the white man's main tool for keeping blacks subjugated. By this Elijah Muhammad meant nothing more than that Christianity prevented the black masses from discovering "the natural religion of the black man." But amid growing dissatisfaction with the liberal leadership of the civil rights movement, the Muslims' condemnation of Christian submissiveness appeared to be something more, namely a political criticism of King's pacifistic liberalism and ties to the white ruling class.

Although they considered the white man to be the personification of evil, the NOI opposed in principle any struggle against racial oppression. Instead they stood for *maintaining* hard racial separation, even inviting American Nazi leader George Lincoln Rockwell to attend a 1961 NOI rally in Washington addressed by Elijah Muhammad. Where Elijah Muhammad continued to emphasize the sect's religious nature, Malcolm X did not. It was largely through his powerful oratory that the Muslims attracted young black men who wanted to struggle against racist oppression. At the same time, Malcolm upheld the NOI's separatism, declaring "No *sane* black man really wants integration."

Yet masses of blacks were fighting precisely for social, political and economic equality *within* American society. Though a critic of the civil rights movement, Malcolm remained outside. And while the young black militants admired him, they marched against the racists with King & Co., not with the minister of the NOI's Temple No. 7 in Harlem. In the face of the historic struggles for black rights that were shaking the country, Malcolm let it be known that he wanted to see the NOI abandon their abstentionism, arguing that the Muslims were perceived as people who "talk tough, but they never *do* anything, unless somebody bothers Muslims."

When Malcolm responded to the 1963 assassination of John F. Kennedy by saying it was a case of "chickens coming home to roost," the civil rights and liberal establishment went apoplectic. Elijah Muhammad responded by suspending him from the NOI. A scene in the movie captures the increasing political gulf which would later lead Malcolm X to split with the NOI. Following Ali's victory over Liston, Malcolm, under suspension at the time, visits Ali and talks of how his

"blood was boiling" when a bomb planted by the KKK ripped through Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist church a year before, killing four black girls. Malcolm declares that no more will he allow himself to be restrained by Elijah Muhammad in fighting for black freedom.

Refusing to be silenced by Elijah Muhammad and increasingly aware that the NOI was responsible for the death threats he and his family had received, Malcolm split from the NOI and formed his own organizations, the Muslim Mosque, Inc. and the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). At an OAAU meeting in January 1965, Malcolm read aloud a telegram he had sent to the Nazi Rockwell:

"This is to warn you that I am no longer held in check from fighting white supremacists by Elijah Muhammad's separatist Black Muslim movement, and that if your present racist agitation against our people there in Alabama causes physical harm to Reverend King or any other black Americans who are only attempting to enjoy their rights as free human beings, that you and your Ku Klux Klan friends will be met with maximum physical retaliation from those of us who are not handcuffed by the disarming philosophy of nonviolence, and who believe in asserting our right of self-defense—by any means necessary."

Ali stayed with the NOI. The movie shows his last meeting with Malcolm, a chance encounter while both were on separate tours of Africa before the rematch with Liston. On 21 February 1965, Malcolm was assassinated in Harlem's Audubon Ballroom. In the movie Ali, driving down a Detroit boulevard when he learns of Malcolm's murder, pulls the car over and breaks down in tears. Ten years later, Ali himself left the NOI.

"No Vietcong Ever Called Me N----r"

The year Ali won the championship, 1964, saw the lynching of civil rights workers Goodman, Schwerner and Chaney in Mississippi, the cop riot in Harlem and passage of the Civil Rights Act, which formally ended Jim Crow segregation in the South. The next four years were marked by ghetto rebellions in Watts, Detroit and Newark, the rise of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense and the assassination of King, which provoked an explosion of ghetto upheavals in scores of cities. It was marked as well by the rapid development of massive opposition to U.S. imperialism's war on Vietnam.

Because it omits all but one of his boxing matches during this period, the film fails to convey just how public a figure Ali was, and accordingly why he was so despised by the Feds. Unlike other

heavyweight champs, Ali took on all challengers. He went overseas to fight Europe's top boxers, and gave a shot at the title—and the only chance at a real payday—to journeyman fighters at the end of their carcens, like Cleveland Williams and Zora Folley. Just about every match was broadcast live on television. Ali was a fixture on the screen for weeks of pre-fight promotion and post-fight interviews, speaking out against American racism and drawing perceptive analogies between his mistreatment by the boxing establishment and the press and how the U.S. imperialists were trampling on dark-skinned peoples at home and abroad.

For his stand against racist oppression, Ali became one of thousands of black activists targeted by the FBI's deadly COINTELPRO program, which was responsible for the killings of 38 Black Panthers and the frame-ups of hundreds more. But it was his refusal to join U.S. imperialism's killing machine that brought down the weight of government repression upon him.

Earlier found ineligible for the draft, in 1966 Ali was reclassified. As the press corps hounded him about whether he would serve if called up, Ali announced, "I ain't got no quarrel with them Vietcong." Capturing the sentiments of millions of black people, Ali added, "No Vietcong ever called me n----r," which promptly became a slogan carried by black activists at protests against the war. On 28 April 1967, he was called up. *Ali* depicts how the champ refused to step forward and complete the induction ceremony when the name "Cassius Marcellus Clay" was called, even though promised

that he could coast through military service by performing boxing exhibitions as Joe Louis had done. Ten days later, he was indicted by a federal grand jury for draft evasion. Convicted on June 20, Ali was sentenced to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. The government's lead prosecutor was former NAACP Legal Defense Fund counsel and liberal icon Thurgood Marshall, who shortly afterward was appointed the first black justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Despite their increasing success in football, baseball and basketball, black athletes, who overcame vicious racism in their college and early professional careers, were then subjected to a quota system which made sure that enough spots on team rosters were reserved for whites. Any step out of line would threaten the loss of their sports careers, which was the only ticket—often fleeting—out of the ghetto hells. The few boxers who made any money found themselves fleeced by unscrupulous managers, promoters or the IRS, and left the sport with nothing to show for their careers but broken noses and scrambled brains. If they minded their Ps and Qs, they could make a few bucks as "greeters" at gambling casinos or resort hotels. Middleweight champ Dick Tiger, who had donated his savings to his native Biafra during the civil war in Nigeria in the late 1960s, was working as a security guard for New York City's Museum of Natural History when he died penniless at the age of 42. The advent of free agency and million-dollar salaries didn't alter this much. Just a few years ago, black basketball player Mahmoud

Abdul Rauf was vilified for refusing to stand for the national anthem, in accordance with his religious beliefs, and ultimately driven out of the NBA.

The New York State Athletic Commission stripped Ali of the heavyweight crown and revoked his boxing license. In short order, every other boxing commission in the U.S. followed suit. Although he remained out on bail while he appealed his conviction, the government took away his passport, preventing Ali from boxing overseas as well. Unable to support his family, Ali's major source of income was the money he received for speaking at college campuses, where he encouraged student activists in protesting against the war.

With their cash cow dried up, the NOI turned its back on its most famous and popular member. The film shows Ali being suspended for a year by the NOI when he told Howard Cosell in an interview that he needed money. In an article titled "We Tell the World We're Not with Muhammad Ali" (*Muhammad Speaks*, 4 April 1969), Elijah Muhammad wrote: "Mr. Muhammad Ali shall not be recognized with us under the holy name Muhammad Ali. We call him Cassius Clay. We take away the name of Allah from him until he proves himself worthy of that name.... We, the Muslims, are not with Muhammad Ali in the desire to work in the sports world 'for the sake of a leetle money'."

A Decade of Social Struggle

Ali's refusal to join the U.S. military resonated not only with the growing movement against the Vietnam War but spoke for a generation of young black men. In the early years of the war, blacks (11 percent of the U.S. population) made up 31 percent of combat troops and 23 percent of fatalities.

As revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky, founder of the Soviet Red Army, pointed out, "An army is always a copy of the society it serves—with this difference, that it gives social relations a concentrated character, carrying both their positive and negative features to an extreme." Not surprisingly, black soldiers in Vietnam got shafted. They were singled out for front-line duty, forced to walk point on patrol—making them first in the line of fire—while positions in the rear were generally reserved for whites. Confederate flags were common in the rear areas, and there were even cross-burnings. As one GI recounted in the book *Bloods* (Random House, 1984), which contains personal accounts by 20 black vets, edited by Randall Terry:

"A few days after the assassination [of Martin Luther King], some of the white



Left: Black soldier in Vietnam. Sign reads: "U.S. Negro Armymen! You are committing the same ignominious crimes in South Vietnam that the KKK clique is perpetrating against your family at home."

LNS



Howard L. Bingham

**Malcolm X with Ali
in New York City,
1963.**

guys got a little sick and tired of seeing Dr. King's picture on the TV screen. Like a memorial. It really got to one guy. He said, 'I wish they'd take that n---r's picture off.' He was a fool to begin with, because there were three black guys sitting in the living room when he said it. And we commenced to give him a lesson in when to use that word and when you should not use that word. A physical lesson."

Vietnam was one of America's dirtiest colonial wars. American forces and their Vietnamese puppets killed, maimed and tortured millions of Indochinese men, women and children before they were driven out by the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants in 1975. The Vietnamese National Liberation Front found resonance in its appeal to black soldiers. In the jungles of Vietnam was a sign reading, "U.S. Negro Army-men! You are committing the same ignominious crimes in South Vietnam that the KKK clique is perpetrating against your family at home."

A big reason that the U.S. Army lost on the battlefield was that the troops saw no reason to fight and die, and that was doubly true for black GIs. Toward the end, there was not just indiscipline but outright mutiny in the army. There were numerous instances of "fragging" of unpopular officers, who were usually killed by a fragmentation weapon, most often a hand grenade. Throughout all branches of the service, black soldiers organized "Black Power" groups and carried out militant protests against the war and racist discrimination. Often overlapping with this Black Power movement in the armed forces were integrated groups of GIs who published antiwar newsletters.

The war played a major role in radicalizing young black militants. At the same time that SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael was calling for "black power" in 1966, he denounced the "illegal and immoral war." When King, the NAACP's Roy Wilkins and the Urban League's Whitney Young pleaded with SNCC to call off an antiwar protest outside the wedding of President Johnson's daughter,

SNCC denounced them as messengers for the White House. Seeking to maintain credibility among the black masses, King also spoke out against the war shortly before his assassination.

Returning from Vietnam, many of those black vets who became radicalized were, not surprisingly, particularly drawn to the Black Panther Party, which campaigned for black self-defense against racist victimization and cop terror. Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt) was one of those who joined the Panthers. As a soldier, Geronimo was wounded three times, received two Purple Hearts, two Bronze Stars for valor, one Silver Star, a soldier's medal, an army commendation medal, three combat infantry badges and master paratrooper's wings. As a Panther leader, Geronimo was framed up and sent to prison for 27 years for a killing the government knew all along he could not have committed—because they had FBI tapes proving he was nowhere near the site of the murder.

At the same time, hundreds of thousands of students were marching against the war, driving army and CIA recruiters off campus. Yet the antiwar movement and the black movement remained separate rather than flowing together in a revolutionary tide. The New Left and reformist organizations never mobilized the black masses against the war but instead glorified separate sectoralist struggles—students, blacks, women, workers. This was the crisis of revolutionary leadership in the flesh.

The Communist Party, which had long since sold its political soul to embrace the Democratic Party, stood foursquare behind the King leadership of the civil rights movement. The once-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party was in the process of a rightward political degeneration—a signal reflection of which was its refusal to intervene into the civil rights struggles, instead adapting to black nationalism while simultaneously tailing the liberal reformism of King & Co. As a result, the "Black Power" radicals never found the bridge between their

struggles and the program of workers power. The recruitment of a substantial layer of black communists would have had an enormous impact on the course of subsequent struggles.

Although our forces were small, the Spartacist tendency fought to intersect the growing militant wing of the civil rights movement. Against *both* the liberal pacifism of King and the growing tendencies toward nationalist separatism, we stood for revolutionary integrationism, a program of struggle against every manifestation of discrimination premised on the understanding that black freedom requires smashing the capitalist system. We advanced the call for a "Freedom Labor Party" as the axis to link the struggle against segregation to the power of labor, North and South. Fundamentally, we sought to bring to black militants the understanding that the working class, which is racially integrated at the point of production, is the only class with the historic interest and social power—derived from its role in production—to sweep away the system of exploitation and racist oppression.

To lead the struggle for black freedom and the emancipation of all of the working people from the chains of capitalist exploitation and oppression requires a revolutionary vanguard party of the proletariat. As we wrote in our October 1967 leaflet "From Protest to Power": "With the widespread discontent over the war, the rising militancy and restiveness in the labor movement, and the explosiveness of the black ghettos, the prospect for initiating such a party is better now than at any time in the last twenty years."

But this anger and militancy were dissipated by the reformist misleaders of the antiwar movement who consciously suppressed revolutionary politics to keep the protests safe for the Democratic Party politicians they pandered to. Locked up in a popular-front coalition with "antiwar" Democrats, the "official" antiwar movement led by the reformist SWP made it a virtue to refuse to address black oppression, stressing the need for a "single issue" focus on the war!

The endless peace crawls were nothing more than a giant postcard to your Congressman, a pressure tactic aimed at shifting administration policy. The impoverished black masses would never be attracted by such reformist tactics. *To mobilize the ghetto requires a struggle for proletarian power*, a fight against black oppression and class exploitation at home as well as imperialist war abroad. The Panthers, who wrote off the working class and looked instead to mobilizing lumpen rage, had nothing to

offer but heroic gestures while the cops and Feds murdered some of their leaders, and bought off the rest.

Stressing that what was posed in Vietnam was a social revolution, the Spartacist League raised the slogans of revolutionary proletarian internationalism, "Victory to the Vietnamese Revolution! All Indochina must go Communist!" We called for labor strikes against the war, to mobilize the U.S. working class in *action*. The prospects for such action were not far off at the time, despite the efforts of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy under George Meany—a racist and rabid Cold Warrior—which did all it could to oppose any mobilization of labor power in the black freedom struggles of the 1960s and was among the staunchest supporters of the war.

The same National Guard unit that murdered four students at Kent State in 1970 had been called out to put down a Teamsters strike in Ohio. That same year, postal workers went out in the first major strike against the federal government in the history of the U.S. Open defiance

was breaking out in the army: at Fort Hood in Texas, for instance, 43 black soldiers refused to go to Chicago to be used against antiwar demonstrators outside the 1968 Democratic Convention.

What was missing was a revolutionary party, with roots and authority in the working class and among the black masses, to have brought this all together in the fight for proletarian state power.

Imperialist War and Bourgeois Hypocrisy

In June 1970 the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Ali's conviction, and months later the boxing lords reinstated his license to fight. Rusty after his forced exile from the sport for three years, Ali suffered his first professional loss in March 1971, a 15-round decision in his effort to regain the championship from Joe Frazier in Madison Square Garden. A rematch was squelched when George Foreman took the championship from Frazier in 1972. Though few "experts" gave him a chance, in 1974 a 32-year-old Ali knocked Foreman out in the eighth

round to recapture his crown. This was a fitting triumph for Ali.

Foreman's career was propelled by winning the heavyweight gold medal at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. Ten days before the games opened, hundreds of student protesters were slaughtered by Mexican troops and cops in the infamous Tlateloleo Massacre. The games themselves were marked by a boycott by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (then still known as Lew Alcindor) and other prominent black athletes to protest racist oppression in the U.S. One of their demands called for Ali to be reinstated as the heavyweight champ. In solidarity with the protests, black sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their gloved fists when receiving their gold and bronze medals for the 220-yard dash. They were immediately kicked off the team and banished from the Olympic Village. Foreman's response to the protests was to demonstratively wave an American flag after winning his gold medal.

Today, Muhammad Ali is no longer a pariah. Two years ago, he was named athlete of the century by *Sports Illustrated*. Last month, a star-studded extravaganza was held to celebrate his 60th birthday. But while the racist rulers may have temporarily forgiven his "transgressions" of the past, they have not been forgotten. New York's *Daily News* chose to "honor" Ali's birthday by reprinting 30-year-old drawings of what for them is the "highlight" of Ali's career—his loss to Joe Frazier.

The ruling class of this country mercilessly hounded Ali for his courageous opposition to its dirty, losing war in Vietnam. Today, they hypocritically seize the opportunity to parade Ali, seriously debilitated by Parkinson's disease, before the media to promote the virtues of their "war against terrorism" in Afghanistan and at home. But the movie *Ali* reminds audiences of why "the champ" was so revered by tens of millions of people around the world. In Brooklyn, overwhelmingly black audiences cheer as Ali declares: "I am not going ten thousand miles from here to help murder and kill and burn poor people simply to help continue the domination of white slave masters over the darker people." Here is a measure of the fragility of the American imperialists' "national unity" crusade, a cynical fraud aimed at furthering brutal exploitation and racial oppression at home and abroad. Our purpose is to take the sympathies of those who identify with the Ali who refused to serve the interests of American imperialism and translate them into the forging of a revolutionary proletarian party that will end the rule of the capitalist slave masters through workers socialist revolution. ■

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New York Times Smears Courageous Harlem Communist

In Memory of Bill Epton

Bill Epton, a longtime leftist active at various points of his life in the Progressive Labor Party (PL), the Negro American Labor Council and the Black Radical Congress, died of gastric cancer in New York City on January 23. He was 70 years old.

As an avowed communist in Harlem in the 1960s, Epton embodied the combination of black and red so feared by the American ruling class. When the country's largest ghetto was subjected to a police occupation and reign of terror in the summer of 1964, Epton sought to provide leadership and organization to the besieged black masses. For his courageous efforts, he became the first person convicted of "criminal anarchy" in New York State since the 1919 "red scare."

The *New York Times*, which acted as a mouthpiece and apologist for the New York Police Department (NYPD) in 1964, continued its vendetta against Epton even after his death. In a 3 February obituary, the bourgeoisie's "newspaper of record" indicted Epton for "preaching violence" in the midst of a "bloody race riot," claiming that he urged the killing of cops and judges. The only riot in Harlem in the summer of 1964 was the NYPD rampage, and it stopped when the cops withdrew. Epton was a levelheaded, lucid man interested in jazz, a skilled printer and an eloquent orator and writer. He *did* play a key role in the events of 1964, but of a rather different nature than the *Times* insinuated. We were there, and we remember Epton's courage and militancy in that tumultuous time.

Bill Epton, a founding member of the Progressive Labor Movement (later the Progressive Labor Party), was at the time vice chairman of PL and the head of its Harlem branch. PL came out of the Communist Party (CP) in 1962, based primarily on trade unionists repelled by the CP's abject reformism and support to the Democratic Party. Rejecting the staid pro-Moscow Stalinism upheld by the CP,



Wide World

Harlem, July 1964: Bill Epton (left), arms linked with Conrad Lynn, at assembly point for banned march, just before arrest by cops.

PL instead looked to the seemingly more militant Chinese Stalinists under Mao (eventually breaking with Beijing as well). Though PL was always limited by its continued adherence to Stalinism, it was a *left* split from the CP and at that time a very serious group.

The Harlem Police Riot

The years 1963-64 saw the Southern civil rights movement move North into the center of American capitalism. Rent strikes exploded throughout Harlem and by 1964 had spread into Brooklyn. Two effective school boycotts against segregated and run-down conditions galvanized opposition to the racist policies of the New York school board. The second boycott pulled 90 percent of children out of ghetto schools, despite lack of support by "respectable" black leaders and social democrats like Bayard Rustin, who used their influential role in the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to try to sabotage the boycott. Self-proclaimed communists were getting a hearing in Har-

lem, prominent among them Bill Epton.

In early April 1964, the Brooklyn branch of CORE planned an action in which cars would run out of gas in order to disrupt traffic heading toward the World's Fair site in Queens at which Democratic president Lyndon B. Johnson was planning to speak. The city rulers turned the threatened "stall-in" into a showdown, mobilizing tens of thousands of cops and tow trucks, passing new laws with heavy penalties in one day and unleashing a withering scare campaign in the mass media. Although the CORE "stall-in" was rather haphazard, it was yet another indication that black people in New York were becoming increasingly politicized and militant.

Democratic Party mayor Robert Wagner and Police Commissioner Michael J. Murray were intent on confronting and smashing this wave of black protest. The city administration

beefed up the police presence in Harlem, including generous detachments of Tactical Patrol Force heavies. In April, one of these squads provoked what was called the "Little Fruit Stand Riot," using clubs and blackjacks against a group of youngsters who had simply been playing with some fruit from a street stand. When a black hosiery salesman, Frank Stafford, tried to intervene, the cops beat him with clubs at gunpoint, gouging out one of his eyes. By the time Stafford was taken to a hospital 19 hours later, after a further beating in the station house, it was too late to save his eye. A Puerto Rican seaman, Fecundo Acion, had his nose shattered for attempting to pull the cops off Stafford. Eventually Acion, Stafford and Wallace Baker, a member of a karate club who tried to intervene, were arrested.

Soon thereafter, when two Jewish shopkeepers were brutally attacked, one, fatally, the cops simply rounded up Baker and several fellow karate club members who had been seen at the fruit stand and framed them up for the attack.

This became the case of the Harlem Six, which was taken up by radical civil rights attorney Conrad Lynn and is recounted in his autobiography, *There Is a Fountain* (1979).

In an article headlined "Negro Struggle in the North" (*Spartacist* No. 2, July-August 1964), written just before the cop occupation of Harlem, we warned: "Over the past few months New York has witnessed an unprecedented campaign of



Report on arrest of Epton and Lynn in *New York Times*, which acted as mouthpiece for NYPD before and during Harlem cop riot.

press terror against the Negro people.... This press terror campaign has as its purpose the psychological preparation and justification for the smashing, through police terror, of the coming stage of the Negro rights struggle." Leading the way, the *New York Times* ran a lengthy front-page article claiming that the Black Muslims were directing a dope-selling, karate-trained gang of 400 "Blood Brothers" bent on maiming and killing whites.

When an off-duty police lieutenant, Thomas Gilligan, shot and killed James Powell, a 15-year-old black youth, on July 16, the cops used the resulting protest as an excuse to launch a preemptive strike against unrest in the ghetto. A demonstration at Harlem's 28th precinct two days later was repeatedly pressed back by the cops, who hurled racist slurs at the demonstrators and eventually charged into the main body of the protest. In the ensuing days, as we reported in *Spartacist* No. 3 (January-February 1965), "wave after wave" of the tactical cops "swept through Harlem indiscriminately beating and terrorizing all who crossed their paths."

In the face of the police occupation, most Harlem organizations joined to-

gether to form a "Unity Council," whose members ranged from the Nation of Islam to the NAACP, Malcolm X's Organization of African American Unity, businessmen and local Democratic Party hacks. The Unity Council pledged itself to "restore peace in the community." But the only *action* pursued by this alliance of "leaders," as we noted in our article, "was directed *against* the one serious attempt that was made to give effective organization and direction to the people in the streets," that of the Harlem Defense Council (HDC) led by Epton. The HDC issued a leaflet urging:

"ORGANIZE YOUR BLOCKS. The events of the last two days have shown that if we are not organized we are just a mob and not in a position to properly deal with the enemy. ORGANIZE APARTMENT BY APARTMENT, HOUSE BY HOUSE! The Harlem Defense Council calls on all black people of Harlem to set up Block Committees with the purpose of defending each and every block in Harlem from the cops."

The HDC called for a march and mass demonstration on July 29 and, though a small group, did what it could to concretize this call.

The cops banned the march; the position of the Unity Council was that while the police ban was bad, the march was even worse. The Unity Council tried to get Epton to call off the march and circulated leaflets along the proposed route urging people not to participate. James Lawson, a member of the Unity Council and the head of the United African Nationalist Movement, went so far as to offer up his membership *to aid the police* in suppressing the march! When Epton refused to call off the march, 27,000 cops were mobilized to make sure no one dared protest in Harlem that day. In a singular act of personal courage and defiance of New York's arrogant racist rulers, Epton, surrounded by supporters, went to the march assembly point at 116th Street and Lenox Avenue. At his side, arms linked with Epton's, was Conrad Lynn. Epton and Lynn were arrested as they stepped off the curb. Leaderless, the demonstration did not materialize.

Our organization, then still in its infancy, played an active role in the events. Two Spartacist comrades, Paul Gaillard and Shirley Stoute, were in the HDC. In an attempt to take the pressure off the ghettos, we initiated the Harlem Solidarity Committee (HSC), which organized a mass rally in the downtown garment district around the slogans: "Remove the rioting cops from Harlem" and "Support the right of the citizens of the ghetto to defend themselves." Despite the cops' denial of a sound permit for the rally, nearly a thousand workers came out

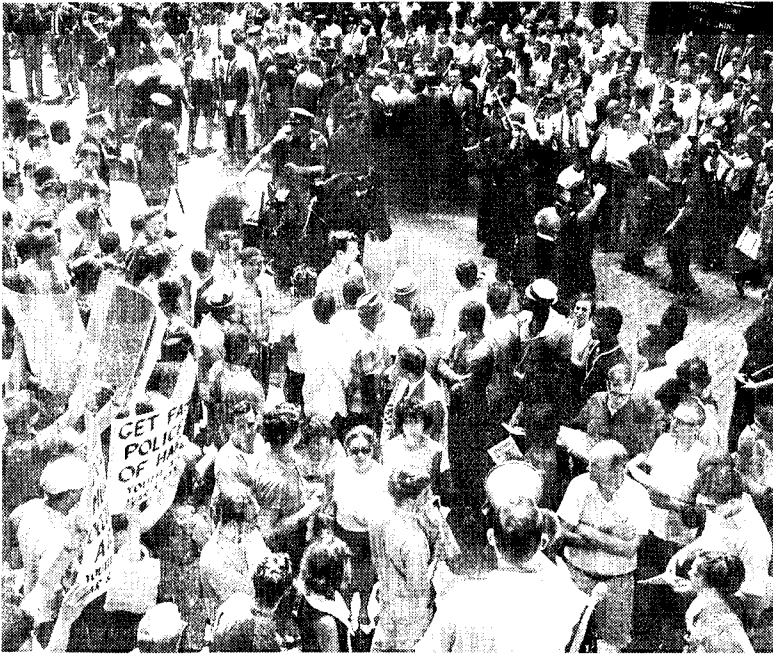
and responded enthusiastically to the speakers. Among the speakers at this united-front rally were Lynn, PL leader Milt Rosen and *Workers World* editor Vince Copeland. In his speech, *Spartacist* editor James Robertson described the role of the cops in creating the riots and responded to frenzied redbaiting by the bourgeois press, which sought to blame the Harlem protest on a communist conspiracy. Robertson remarked, "Unfortunately there aren't many Reds in Harlem now—but *there will be!*"

Epton: "Guilty" of Being a Black Communist

While anti-Communist black nationalists were granted audiences with the mayor and allowed to stage their own rallies in Harlem, Epton and those who supported him were subjected to fierce repression and a wide-ranging witch-hunt. Sweeping injunctions were issued against all those who were even remotely associated with either Epton's march or the HSC, including Robertson, preventing them from "assembling, gathering together, convening, parading, marching, demonstrating or acting in concert" anywhere between 110th and 155th Streets and the Harlem and Hudson Rivers. In early 1965, more than 20 PLers, including Milt Rosen, were subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury "investigation" and subsequently arrested for contempt of court for refusing to testify. The investigation was then widened to also go after Robertson and the Spartacist group.

Epton was framed up on charges of "criminal anarchy" based on three claims: that he and PL put out a pamphlet describing how to make Molotov cocktails, that he led the "riot" and that he was actively involved in arming Harlem residents. When these charges didn't wash, Epton was charged with advocating killing police officers and judges—on the basis, as we noted in our article in *Spartacist* No. 3, "of a paraphrase of Lenin's *State and Revolution*." According to a contemporary account in the *New York Times* (26 July 1964), the cops claimed that Epton had declared that in order to achieve freedom it would be necessary to "set up a new state of our own choosing and liking. And in the process of smashing this state, we're going to have to kill a lot of these cops, a lot of these judges, and we'll have to go up against their army."

The recent obituary in the *Times* maliciously distorted even its own 1964 version of the statement attributed to Epton, "quoting" only the last bit to make it sound as though his sober description



New York Times

Spartacist-initiated Harlem Solidarity Committee rally in NYC garment district, July 1964.

was an immediate call to action. Piling one falsification atop another, the *Times* obituary portrayed Epton's "criminal anarchy" case as raising the question of whether there was "a constitutional right to say, 'Burn, baby, burn'." In fact, that phrase wasn't even heard until the time of the Watts upheaval in 1965 and only became famous when it was used by H. Rap Brown in 1967.

In a powerful statement to the court at the time of his conviction, published by PL as a pamphlet titled *We Accuse: Bill Epton Speaks to the Court* (1966), Epton explained the real reason for the capitalist state's vendetta against him:

"I have been found 'guilty' of agitating against the conditions that my people are forced to live under in New York and all over the country.

"I have been found 'guilty' of protesting the murder—yes, murder—or legal lynching, whatever you choose, of James Powell by Thomas Gilligan, a New York policeman.

"I have been found 'guilty' of organizing the Harlem community against police brutality that has been occurring in the Black ghettos for hundreds of years.

"I have been found 'guilty' of standing up for the right of all men to be free—to be free from the system of exploitation of man by man.

"I have been found 'guilty' of proclaiming that capitalism is an oppressive system and that socialism is the only solution for mankind to live in peace and humanity....

"And finally—I have been found 'guilty' of being a communist—and a Black one at that!"

We were actively involved in Epton's defense from the start. In February 1965,

at a protest against the witchhunting grand jury, Robertson was himself served with a subpoena to testify. Lynn agreed to serve as Robertson's legal counsel, and assisted in preparing his testimony. A *Spartacist* Special Supplement (March 1965) issued as a "Report to Our Readers" summarized several key points from Robertson's appearance before the grand jury, including that "Robertson has never heard Bill Epton advocate acts of violence and terrorism; moreover, since Comrade Epton is a declared Marxist such advocacy would be in fundamental contradiction to his beliefs." Robertson also testified that "the New York City cops, not communists, provoked the riots last summer."

Explaining why the Spartacist group was cited by the state along with PL, the supplement noted:

"The SPARTACIST editor has been dragged into the witchhunt because of our detailed exposure of the police over the riots last summer; our determined defense of Bill Epton and Progressive Labor against legal intimidation and persecution; and our initiation last summer of the militant Harlem Solidarity Committee which rallied working class support in New York's garment center for the people of Harlem during the police riots."

The supplement also explained why we chose to have Robertson appear before the grand jury: "The Spartacist group has no reason or desire to conceal either its political views or its actions. Quite the contrary; should its officers be sent to jail for refusal to testify, we want it crystal clear that such punishment is exclu-

sively for refusal to drag in the names of innocent people or to render false testimony."

In defense of Epton and others targeted in the witchhunt, we collected signatures, distributed literature and organized meetings and Epton defense committees in various cities, including Chicago, the San Francisco Bay Area and Ithaca, New York. Our defense of Epton was not always welcomed by PL, however, which in sectarian fashion declared their Committee to Defend Resistance to Ghetto Life (CERGE) off-limits to "Trotskyites." In a letter to one of our Chicago comrades, PL leader Bill McAdoo fulminated that "in general" Trotskyists were "counterrevolutionaries." In February 1965, PL expelled Spartacists Paul Gaillard and Shirley Stoute from the HDC on the basis of their Trotskyist politics. Nonetheless, we forthrightly continued to defend Epton. That month, a Spartacist supporter proposed a motion which was passed unanimously in CORE's Harlem branch that read: "N.Y. CORE condemns the attempt to make Bill Epton the scapegoat for the brutal action of the police last summer against the people of Harlem. It supports Epton's right to speak, and calls upon the City to drop its indictment against him."

Epton's case drew support from around the globe, ranging from philosophers Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre to Amnesty International. In a statement of support, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam stated:

"We strongly protest against the unjustifiable arrest and trial of Bill Epton on the ground of trumped up charges and demand his immediate release by the U.S. authorities. We call upon all justice loving people in the U.S.A. and in the world to raise their voice of opposition to this effect as they have raised their voice to protest against the aggressive war waged by the U.S. imperialists in Vietnam."

In later years, Epton moved to the right, bitterly exiting PL in 1970 in the midst of internal turmoil. Unable and unwilling to transcend its Stalinist framework, PL itself soon began moving rightward, promoting one "single issue" reformist campaign after another. Epton spent many of his later years working with the Malcolm X Museum. He was also involved in the Black Radical Congress and the Citywide Coalition to Stop Giuliani, both "left" shells for the Democratic Party and both a far cry from Epton's politics in the 1960s. Nonetheless, we remember Epton as a committed and courageous working-class militant who in a volatile time did not bow before the onslaught of the bourgeois state or bend to the pressures of liberalism. ■

Mass Jailing of Blacks in Tulia

“War on Drugs” Texas Style

On 23 July 1999, 46 men and women were rounded up in early-morning raids in Tulia, a windswept West Texas town of 5,000 halfway between Lubbock and Amarillo. All but six of those dragged from their homes to the county courthouse, often half-dressed and wondering what they were being targeted for, were black. Framed up on phony drug charges by a racist, corrupt narcotics agent, 42 of those arrested were thrown into prison by overwhelmingly white juries for mammoth jail terms. Tulia epitomizes what the rulers' racist “war on drugs” can mean in the rural South.

The case has recently gained national coverage through the efforts of *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert, who has catalogued the egregious manufacturing of evidence, racist targeting of black people and harsh sentencing in recent columns. Herbert has also exposed how this “monstrous, racially motivated miscarriage of justice” wrought havoc in Tulia's small black community and how those who organized this breathtaking series of frame-ups were lauded for their efforts by the Texas state government, then run by George W. Bush.

The now-defunct local newspaper, the *Tulia Sentinel*, crowed, “Tulia's Streets Cleared of Garbage” after the raids and praised the cops for sweeping up Tulia's “scumbags.” Reverend William Guenther, the jury foreman in one of the first trials, which handed down a 25-year sentence, proclaimed, “The whole idea behind the sentence was to send a message to drug dealers: We don't want you in this community.” The defendants, overwhelmingly poor, had to rely on underpaid and overworked public defenders in the face of racist juries and a D.A. out for blood. The charges and arrests, though, had nothing to do with drugs and everything to do with terrorizing the town's black population.

Tulia's black community of 350 people was devastated as over 10 percent of the black populace and half the adult black men were swept into prison. House after house stands empty, and virtually every black family in town has been

affected as friends and family members were caught up in the dragnet. Those whites who were arrested either had close connections to Tulia's black population or lived in the ramshackle part of town, still often called “N----rtown” by racist whites.

The narcotics agent almost single-handedly responsible for the arrests, Tom Coleman, is a real piece of work. Coleman is a stone racist noted for his frequent use of racial epithets against black people. Even Coleman's former boss, Sheriff Ken Burke of nearby Cochran County, informed the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement that “Mr. Coleman should not be in law enforcement if he's going to do people the way he did this town” (*London Independent*, 20 August). In the midst of Coleman's “investigation,” Cochran County brought him up on misdemeanor charges of theft and abuse of his position. Swisher County sheriff Larry Stewart, Coleman's boss in Tulia, allowed Coleman to put his “investigation” on hold while he resolved the charges.

Coleman's “investigation,” had it not been so devastating, would be almost comical. He wrote down “reports” of “drug deals” on his body, threw away many of his records and built his case on uncorroborated, unsubstantiated testimony. Everyone who knew Coleman well knew that he was a liar and a crook, but the word of a white cop was sufficient to railroad the Tulia defendants into prison.

In spite of polygraph tests corroborating the innocence of those arrested and the obvious unreliability of Coleman as a witness, only four cases were thrown out, generally over egregious misidentification by Coleman, whose physical descriptions of several defendants were wildly inaccurate. In most cases, though, a combination of inadequate legal representation and relentless prosecution led to sentences breathtaking in their severity. “What happened in the courtroom,” says Freddie Brookins Sr. of Tulia's NAACP chapter, which has been fighting the convictions, “was really a kangaroo

court. They run 'em through like cattle and put a number on 'em. They just stuck 'em all in prison.” For his role in this monstrous frame-up, Coleman was named the Texas “Lawman of the Year”! Fifteen of those arrested remain behind bars despite overwhelming evidence of their innocence.

And who were these “drug dealers”? Overwhelmingly, they were poor, local black people, most of whom had no criminal records or anything to do with the drug trade. Police found no traces of illicit drugs in the houses of those arrested, no weapons and no money. There were no fingerprints on the drugs the cops claim to have “seized.” Joe Moore, a 57-year-old black pig farmer, currently serving a **99-year sentence**, was identified as the “kingpin” of the ostensible cocaine ring despite his obvious poverty and even though the charges against him involved only 3.5 grams of powder cocaine. Kizzie White, a 24-year-old mother of two with no criminal record, got 25 years, while her husband, a white man named William “Cash” Love, received a sentence of **434 years** in prison.

Liberal *Times* columnist Herbert has placed his hopes in a federal investigation. He states that “federal investigators who are both honest and diligent will find plenty of evidence of official wrongdoing waiting for them in Tulia” (*New York Times*, 22 August). While Tulia may be an extreme example of the degree to which the war on drugs is aimed at black people, it is not an aberration or an isolated miscarriage of justice. The war on drugs is a **racist war against black people!** In many inner-city ghettos, one in three black men is entangled in the criminal “justice” system, often due to minor drug charges like those the Tulia defendants faced. Over half of the two million people in America's prisons, most of whom are black and minority, are there on the basis of drug-related convictions.

West Texas is not New York, Philadelphia or Chicago, however. Tulia's black population is isolated in the arid plains of a remote region of a Southern state

justifiably infamous for its heavy-handed approach to "justice." While the "war on drugs" is used throughout the U.S. to terrorize black people and other minorities, in the rural South it has been used to decimate entire communities, and that's exactly what happened in Tulia. The authorities manufactured a drug ring out of whole cloth and then used it, in effect, to target the entirety of the town's black population. Perhaps 80 years ago a racist mob might have been the instrumentality, as when a deputized white mob burned the black Greenwood section of Tulsa to the ground in 1921. Now all you need is a zealous D.A. and a creative narc. "It was a mass lynching that day," Roy Credico of the William Moses Kunstler Fund for Racial Justice asserts. "It's like being accused of raping someone in Indiana in the 1930s. You didn't do it, but it doesn't matter because a bunch of Klansmen on the jury are going to string you up anyway."

Such blatant disregard for the rights of the accused is not unique to Tulia. A former narcotics agent in Chambers County, Texas summed up a typical drug bust as follows:

"It's probably better known as a free-for-all. You get a bunch of warrants, search and arrest, get 'em all ready to go, get 30 or 40 officers from differ-

ent jurisdictions, anybody who wants to come along can play. During the course of this, the wrong doors get kicked.... A whole lot of illegal searches and seizures go on."

— *Texas Observer*,
26 October 2001

In the United States, where the special oppression of black people is integral to capitalist class rule and to the exploitation of the entire working class, drug laws are used to repress and herd a generation of black youth into jail. Tulia grotesquely reveals the racist injustice in which drugs are used as a *pretext* for waging war against the black population as a whole. We Marxists call for the decriminalization of drugs. Those addicted to drugs should have free access to quality medical care and counseling.

Herbert favorably quotes New York Democratic Senator Charles Schumer as saying that Tulia looks like "racial profiling, arresting and prosecuting with trumped-up evidence." Yet Schumer has long supported both the racist death penalty—a direct legacy of chattel slavery in the U.S.—and the very "war on drugs" that spawns such outrages as Tulia. The Democrats are just as responsible for the racist assault on black people under the auspices of the "war on drugs" as the Republicans. Indeed, it was Demo-

cratic president Bill Clinton who in 1996 ordered the Department of Housing and Urban Development to strictly enforce the "one strike you're out law" in public housing, which mandated the eviction of any public housing tenant if that person—or even a guest of the tenant—is caught using drugs anywhere. And black Democrats like Jesse Jackson played a prominent role in promoting the racist rulers' anti-drug crackdown in the ghettos.

The "war on drugs" is one expression of an overall ratcheting-up of repression against working people and the oppressed. But black people, who form a significant portion of the American working class, are not helpless in the face of this onslaught. The working class, the only class with the social power and objective interest to take down the capitalist system, can and indeed must take up the fight against the racist "war on drugs" as part of a fight for the rights of all the oppressed. A political struggle against both the Democrats and their hangers-on in the trade-union bureaucracy is necessary to bring the social power of the working class to bear. Key to this struggle is forging a revolutionary workers party that will fight for an egalitarian socialist future, from the South Bronx to the southern plains. ■

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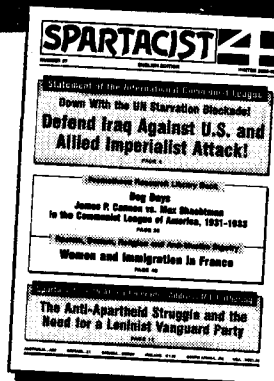
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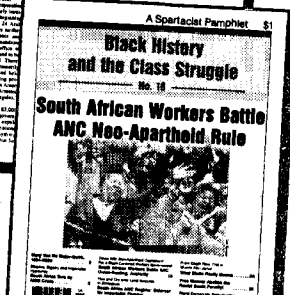
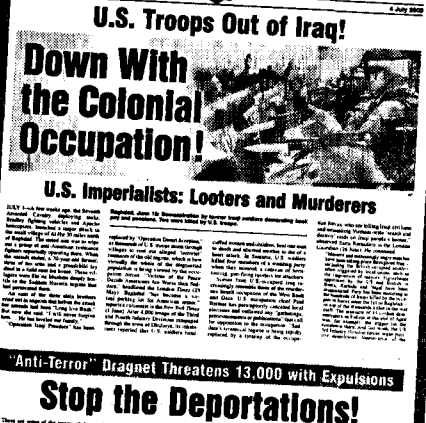
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NYC: Racist Frame-Up of Black, Latino Youth

Central Park Jogger Case

On 19 April 1989, two particularly heinous crimes were committed in New York City. The first was the bludgeoning and brutal rape of a 28-year-old woman who came to be known as the Central Park jogger. The second was the launching of a racist frame-up of five black and Hispanic teenagers who were rounded up by the cops. Everyone from the bourgeois media to racist pig and then-mayor of New York Ed Koch and billionaire real estate mogul Donald Trump clamored for a lynching. All pretense of “innocent until proven guilty” was tossed out the window amid screams over “wolfpacks” of black youth, “animals on a feeding frenzy.” The not-so-subtle message that black and Hispanic ghetto youth are subhuman was brought home in a full-page ad by Trump howling: “They should be forced to suffer and, when they kill, they should be executed for their crimes.... CIVIL LIBERTIES END WHEN AN ATTACK ON OUR SAFETY BEGINS.”

The five youths—Anton McCray, Raymond Santana, Kevin Richardson, Yusef Salaam and Kharey Wise—were all convicted and served their full terms, ranging from nine to twelve years. They were consistently denied parole for refusing to admit to the rape, *which they did not commit*. Last January, serial rapist Matias Reyes confessed that he, and he alone, committed the rape. DNA testing corroborated his account. But the District Attorney’s office still refuses to exonerate its victims. At a court hearing on October 21, the D.A.’s office was given until December 5 to complete its “investigation” and advise the court whether it is joining in the defense application to overturn the convictions.

The conviction of these youths was a racist frame-up in the best American style. The centerpiece of the prosecution’s case was coerced “confessions”—four of them videotaped—extracted after hours of interrogation, threats and false promises of leniency. Police only man-

aged to extort a statement from 15-year-old Yusef Salaam after unlawfully denying requests by family members and close friends to see him. Among them was Salaam’s “Big Brother” counselor, who happened to be an Assistant United States Attorney. Throughout the trial, the five recanted the “confessions” and maintained their innocence.

Even in the forced “confessions,” not one of the youths ever admitted to actually raping the jogger. Instead, they told stories of being part of a group attack in which others committed the rape. In the basic details as to the location of the attack, the description of the woman, the number of people involved and the weapons used, the stories told by each of the five were so disparate from each other—and the known facts—as to have cast significant doubt that they were anything but the product of scared kids trying to tell

the cops what they wanted to hear so they could go home.

The cops and prosecutors always knew there was no physical evidence linking the five to the attack. Although the jogger lost 75 percent of her blood during the brutal beating, not a drop of it was found on them. The tabloids dutifully reported days after the attack that the cops believed not only that the jogger was raped eight times but that the attacks came in shifts. But only one semen sample was ever discovered—which turned out to be Reyes’. It has recently been revealed that the cops knew that a similar rape had occurred in the park two nights earlier, which Reyes has also since confessed to. But they never told the teens’ lawyers about the earlier attack—information which would have been vital to the defense—because it didn’t jibe with the frame-up that had been concocted.

The police department’s forensics expert testified that hair found on one of the youths, Kevin Richardson, could be described as “consistent with and similar

21 October 2002:
Dolores Wise
(at left), mother of
framed-up youth
Kharey Wise,
at rally outside
Manhattan
Supreme Court.



with" the jogger's hair. This is a standard ploy by the cops when they don't have an iota of physical evidence to back up their case. "Consistent with" is meaningless; there could be countless millions of people who had hair "similar" to the jogger's. But the prosecuting attorney then baldly told the jury at the trial that the forensics expert "found on Kevin Richardson's underpants a hair that matched the head hair" of the jogger. DNA tests performed earlier this year revealed conclusively that the hair did not match.

Northwestern University Law Professor Steven Drizin, an expert on false confessions, pointed out, "It is almost an absolute certainty they were not involved in this rape. That would require a scenario so unlikely, it's impossible to believe. You also have to explain how five teenage boys could sexually assault a woman and not leave a shred of physical evidence at the scene. Why is there no DNA? Teenage boys can't make peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches without leaving a mess behind" (*Newsday*, 18 October).

New York 1989: A City on the Edge

At the time the jogger's bludgeoned body was discovered lying in the park, Ed Koch was in the middle of a tightly contested mayoral primary race with black Democrat David Dinkins. Koch, who rode into office appealing to the white "ethnic" vote, seized on the jogger case to once again play to the racist vote, giving fuel to lynch mobs on the street. Four months after the rape, a gang of white punks in Bensonhurst blew away 16-year-old black youth Yusuf Hawkins, who was in "their" neighborhood to visit his white girlfriend. The neighbors excused this coldblooded murder by pointing to the Central Park rape.

New York had long been a city on the edge, a trail of horrors punctuated by the names of those many black people killed by Koch's cops—among them 67-year-old grandmother Eleanor Bumpurs, 25-year-old artist Michael Stewart, 17-year-old black honor student Edmund Perry. In 1987 alone, Koch's killer cops gunned down 24 people—21 of them black or Hispanic.

Emboldened white thugs on the streets had for years engaged in a wave of pogromist attacks. In 1982, black transit worker Willie Turks was beaten to death after he stopped into a bagel shop in the Gravesend section of Brooklyn. In 1986, a Howard Beach lynch mob chased 23-year-old Michael Griffith to his death on the Belt Parkway. In 1987, a bus of mostly black passengers was attacked by a gang of 20 white punks with ax han-

dles, baseball bats, spiked clubs and tire irons, while white homeowners in Flushing torched a building which the city had leased to house black and Latino foster care infants.

The raw racist nightmare that defined New York was replicated in cities across the country. With the devastation of whole swaths of industrial plants, America's capitalist rulers came to see the residents of the inner-city ghettos which used to provide a reservoir of unskilled labor for the auto plants and steel mills—a "reserve army" of the unemployed to be tapped when the economy needed them—as a "surplus" population. The cold-blooded policy of starving black welfare mothers and their kids was augmented by a "war on crime" which snatches young men and women from the streets and throws them into prison hellholes. One statistic sums it up: As one million assembly line jobs were lost in the 1980s, one million people were added to the prison population. In the decade since, on the heels of what was hailed as U.S. capitalism's greatest economic expansion, ghetto conditions have only worsened and the prison population has continued to skyrocket.

An article in the *Boston Review* (April/May 2002) by Loïc Wacquant noted:

"The United States far outstrips all advanced nations in the international trend towards the penalization of social insecurity. And just as the dismantling of welfare programs was accelerated by a cultural and political conflation of blackness and underserviveness, so, too, the 'great confinement' of the rejects of market society—the poor, mentally ill, homeless, jobless, and useless—can be painted as a welcome 'crackdown' on *them*, those dark-skinned criminals from a pariah group still considered alien to the national body."

The Central Park jogger case played a critical role in feeding a climate where

ghetto youth are portrayed as inveterate criminals. From the moment the victim was taken to the hospital, the black and Latino youths were being lynched in the press. The obligatory "alleged" was not used when describing them as rapists. Even before they were coerced into giving their statements, the *New York Times* (21 April 1989) ran the headline, "Youths Rape and Beat Central Park Jogger," while the right-wing gutter rag *New York Post* the same day screamed, "Wolfpack Rapes Jogger." Liberal columnist Pete Hamill disgustingly added, "I think this is an insult to animals in general and wolves in particular" (*New York Post*, 25 April 1989). Even today, after their innocence has been proven, one of the lead cops on the case continues to refer to them as "mutts."

Citing Family Court chief prosecutor Peter Reinhartz as authority, the *Times* wrote of hundreds of "wolfpack" attacks a year. Of course, this didn't include the white mob that murdered Michael Griffith in 1986, who were always politely referred to as "Howard Beach residents."

The immediate aftermath of the Central Park attack was renewed calls to bring back capital punishment to New York State, which at one time had been the death penalty capital of the U.S. A *Post* (26 April 1989) editorial demanded, "Channel Your Outrage: Demand the Death Penalty." Donald Trump paid \$85,000 for full-page ads in the city's four major newspapers declaring: "Bring Back the Death Penalty, Bring Back Our Police." Trump demanded: "Let our politicians give back our police department's power to keep us safe. Unshackle them from the constant chant of 'police brutality' which every petty criminal hurls immediately at an officer who has just risked his or her life to save another's." Pataki's support to the death penalty played a large role in his 1994 election as

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governor over Democrat Mario Cuomo, who had repeatedly vetoed death penalty legislation. In 1995, the New York legislature voted to bring back capital punishment, a law enthusiastically signed by Pataki.

In a recent column in *Newsday* (22 October), Jimmy Breslin nailed Trump: "If the woman jogger had died and the young men were convicted of murder and executed, and the evidence of being not guilty suddenly came out now, it would be murder by the state and Trump would be as good as an accomplice. The most you'd get out of him would be a shrug. Calling for the police to be let loose meant exactly what it said. Louima, Diallo. Let's go. Break their heads. Slam 'em." In fact, dozens of death row inmates have been released in recent years after DNA evidence exonerated them.

Shortly after the rape, Family Court prosecutor Reinharz declared: "I think that kids like this, given what I would call their predatory nature, are people who, given the chance, would do something like this again. There really isn't any way to control them—at least we haven't found it in the juvenile justice system" (*New York Post*, 25 April 1989). He was echoed by Pete Hamill: "Jail does not cause them fear. They come from a world where jail is just another puberty rite. And in jail they will only continue the education that brought them to Central Park. And we know one more thing: atrocities like this will go on and on.... We know why. There aren't enough cops. There aren't enough jails. There aren't enough judges" (*New York Post*, 23 April 1989).

This view of black youth as inherently "predatory" has been the ideological cover for Democratic and Republican administrations putting tens of thousands of killer cops on the streets; for the passage of stiffer mandatory sentences and the vast expansion of prison construction; for the drastic reduction of funding for public defenders; for the gutting of *habeas corpus* appeals and the death row speedup. Largely due to the "war on drugs," the prison population has more than doubled over the past 20 years, with over two million behind bars, more than half of them black and Hispanic.

As the government continues to starve the ghettos and barrios, the Bush administration set up its Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in order to funnel government funds to church groups. John DiIulio was hand-picked by Bush last year as the first head of this office. As a Princeton professor, DiIulio, the exemplar of "compassionate conservatism," wrote in the *National Review*: "All that's left of the black commu-

nity in some pockets of urban America is deviant, delinquent and criminal adults surrounded by severely abused and neglected children, virtually all of whom were born out of wedlock." Together with right-wing ideologues William Bennett and John Walters, DiIulio warned in the 1996 book *Body Count* of a "rising tide of juvenile superpredators." Although the "rising tide" was actually plummeting, with youth crime in 1999 at its lowest level in 25 years, their rantings provided inspiration for "The Violent Youth Predator Act of 1996," under which juveniles are housed in prison with adults. Increasingly, children as young as 12 are being tried as adults.

The American Injustice System

The damage done to the lives of the five young men and their families is immeasurable. As Yusef Salaam's mother pointed out, "Every time he shows up someplace, he goes and he applies for a job, people can look on this list and see he's a felon and a sexual predator. Would you hire someone like that?" Speaking of her son Kharey, who is now 30 years old, Dolores Wise poignantly said: "He was raised in prison" (*Newsday*, 22 October). Her other son was attacked by a teacher upon learning he was Kharey's brother.

Among the fears city officials have in agreeing to overturn the frame-up convictions is opening themselves up to million-dollar lawsuits. No amount of money can mend what has been done to their young lives, or to their families. But we welcome any money the five can wrench out of the racist city fathers—selling off Trump Plaza and giving them the proceeds would be a start.

Frame-ups by the cops and prosecutors, whose role in society is to protect the class rule of the bourgeoisie, are endemic to the American capitalist justice system. In the typical case, the cops find a suspect, usually black or Latino, and suspend further investigation to pin the crime on him—coercing confessions, concealing evidence, intimidating witnesses, bribing finks. And then there are those cases in which the political ends served by a false conviction enormously magnify the duplicity of the cops and prosecutors. The jogger case is one example, used to whip up a climate of racist hysteria to further the ends of a ruling class that has condemned a whole generation of black youth to unemployment, poverty and prison.

The case of black death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal is another kind of example, an overt frame-up aimed at silencing a man feared by the state for his eloquent and outspoken defiance

of the capitalists' racist rule. A former spokesman for the Black Panther Party, a supporter of the MOVE organization, Jamal was railroaded to death row on charges of killing Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner in December 1981. One year before Matias Reyes came forward to absolve the Central Park defendants, Mumia's lawyers presented to the courts a sworn confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Jamal, shot and killed Faulkner. But to date the federal and state courts have refused to even consider Beverly's confession and Jamal remains under the shadow of death in Greene County, Pennsylvania. Another example is the frame-up of Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), a former Black Panther who spent 27 years in prison for a crime the government *knew he did not commit*. The murder he was accused of took place in Santa Monica, but the FBI had wiretaps showing that he was in Oakland at the time, 400 miles away.

The hysteria whipped up around the Central Park jogger case was a not-so-distant echo of the lynch mob "justice" of the Deep South. That this one played "up North" is simply a measure of the increasingly genocidal impulses of the rulers of this country toward the black population, whose segregation at the bottom of this society has always been a linchpin of American capitalism. Critical to maintaining this state of affairs has been the role played by black Democrats.

David Dinkins came to office in 1989 assuring Wall Street that the working people and minorities "will take it from me." At the time, admitted FBI fink and all-purpose hustler Al Sharpton was posturing as the voice of the increasingly destitute and desperate black masses of the city. Today, Sharpton opines that at the time of the Central Park jogger case, "All we had was our outrage. Now the feelings are the same but the expression is different. We have proven that we can take the system on and win." What Sharpton is saying is that he has made it as one of the main spokesmen for the Democratic Party in New York City, and in this role wants to contain any expression of outrage in the face of the demonstrative proof of the innocence of the five black and Latino youths who were vilified as "animals" and thrown behind bars.

The case of these youths illuminates the racist frame-up machine of American capitalist "justice." It will take a workers revolution to put the state's machinery of repression and death out of business once and for all and bring to justice the hired thugs who have committed untold crimes against the working class and minorities in the name of "law and order." ■

Affirmative Action Under Fire

For Free, Quality, Integrated Education for All!

Chanting “Jim Crow—hell, no!” thousands demonstrated outside the Supreme Court on April 1 as Bush administration lawyers argued that a University of Michigan admissions policy that takes the race of minority applicants into account is unconstitutional. If the Court agrees, it will spell the death of what remains of affirmative action programs for blacks and other minorities set up as a result of the mass struggles of the 1950s and ’60s for school integration. Noting that Bush’s vilification of affirmative action on Martin Luther King Jr. Day was followed by a modest increase in government funding for historically black colleges, a protester from one such institution, Hampton University, remarked, “It was his ‘go back to Africa’ statement.”

The drive to eliminate affirmative action is part of a continuing racist purge of higher education, from the gutting of open admissions and remedial programs at the City University of New York to massive tuition hikes there and at other public universities to the latest effort by right-wing forces to do away with minority scholarship programs. The doors to the best universities are not just being slammed shut, but bolted against all but the thinnest layer of black and Latino students. And those who remain have been subjected to a nightmarish hell in recent years: racist graffiti on a main sidewalk at the University of Michigan; a black mannequin hanging by a noose from a tree at liberal Antioch College; a “ghetto party” at a white fraternity at Dartmouth; simulated lynchings of black students by white frat boys dressed in KKK robes at Auburn.

Bush condemned affirmative action for giving preference to some applicants “not because of any academic achievement or life experience, but solely because they are African-American, Hispanic or Native American.” So preference is supposed to be based on “academic achievement” and “life experience”? This from a former



Washington, D.C., April 1: Thousands rally outside Supreme Court to protest attack on University of Michigan affirmative action program.

C-average student whose entire silver-spooned life, including his admission to Yale, was greased by having the surname Bush. Another “principled opponent of affirmative action” is the new Republican governor of Alaska, former Senator Frank Murkowski. When he was elected governor, it became his job to select his replacement as Senator. After deep thought and much research, he decided the best person for the job was...his daughter, Lisa Murkowski. “Your mother and I are very proud,” he beamed in announcing the appointment.

Higher education, like every bourgeois institution in American society, is shot through with race and class bias. As a *Wall Street Journal* (20 February) headline acknowledged, “At Many Colleges, the Rich Kids Get Affirmative Action.” Duke University, for example, allocates as many as 160 places for “applicants with rich or powerful parents who are not alumni,” above and beyond the sons and

daughters of rich or powerful alumni. As late as 1966, at the height of the civil rights movement, only 400 of the University of Michigan’s 32,000 students were black, this in a state where black school enrollment in Detroit alone was over 150,000. Even under the current Michigan plan, a white applicant from a rural high school with an honors program can get almost as many preference points, 16 compared to 20, as a black youth.

As part of our fight for full equality for black people and other minorities, the Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Clubs oppose the reactionary assault against affirmative action. However, unlike liberals and reformists who uncritically hailed these programs, we emphasized from the beginning that those who look to the American capitalist state to eliminate racial and sexual discrimination were living in a fool’s paradise. We seek to mobilize the working class in a fight for jobs and free, quality, integrated education for

all. To reach out to the masses of unemployed minority youth and women, we call for special union recruitment and training programs. To provide real access to higher education, we call for nationalizing the private universities and for open admissions and free tuition with a state-paid living stipend for students.

Supreme Court of Injustice

The assault on affirmative action began long before Bush Jr. entered the White House. In the 1978 Bakke decision, which is now presented as some kind of anti-racist beacon for at least allowing race to be a factor in university admissions, the Supreme Court outlawed quotas for black and other minority students at the University of California. As the Supreme Court prepared to hear the case, we warned: "Bakke has become the leading edge of a wave of racist reaction aimed at rolling back every gain made by blacks" ("Down With Bakke!" WV No. 177, 14 October 1977). In 1995, the UC Regents voted to eliminate affirmative action. In 1996, the grotesquely misnamed California Civil Rights Initiative (Proposition 209) passed, eliminating affirmative action in public education and government contracting and hiring. In the following five years, black undergraduate enrollment at UC Berkeley plunged 33 percent—on top of a drop of nearly a third over the previous five years largely due to skyrocketing tuition costs.

Yet it is to an even more right-wing

Supreme Court that the liberals and their left hangers-on look to as a bulwark of affirmative action today. The platform of the April 1 rally was chock-full of Democratic Party politicians like presidential hopeful Al Sharpton, who intoned, "We're not asking the court for favors. We're asking the court to make right what it made wrong." The demonstration organizers, the By Any Means Necessary coalition (BAMN) launched in 1995 by the Revolutionary Workers League, enthused in their protest call that "a victory at the Supreme Court will open up a new struggle for progress towards integration and equality in education and throughout American society." A BAMN petition posted on its Web site hailed affirmative action as "the only successful method for integrating all of this nation's universities."

To proclaim as a victory the retention of the miserable, racist status quo is truly a statement of bankruptcy. The stark truth is that there is no way to overcome entrenched racial oppression within the framework of capitalism, in the universities or elsewhere. Affirmative action programs were set up as a sop to defuse social struggle and in order to create and co-opt a "talented tenth" of black middle-class professionals. But these paltry, tokenistic efforts never made a dent in the deep-seated oppression of the black ghetto masses, whose condition has continued to deteriorate over the past few decades. Today, many liberal proponents

of affirmative action have abandoned even talk of black equality in favor of the rhetoric of "diversity"—an aim Bush himself deems "laudable"—as though the purpose is to prepare yuppies for the real world by sitting alongside a handful of black students in the classroom.

Typically, Boston University's Glenn Loury writes in an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* (29 March) that "in our racially stratified society, diversity is a necessary part of an effective college education" and that "a racially integrated elite" is essential. Scores of Fortune 500 corporations and former Pentagon bigwigs have filed *amicus* briefs on behalf of the University of Michigan. "Diversity creates stronger companies," says a vice president of the Merck pharmaceutical giant, an argument embraced even more emphatically by the military brass, who fear that a return to a Jim Crow officer caste would "hurt morale" among enlisted ranks drawn heavily—as high as 44 percent in the Army—from minorities.

At the April 1 rally, a speaker from the Detroit NAACP beat the drums for the imperialist war machine and its rape of Iraq, declaring: "If we can build democracy over there, we must also maintain democracy over here." The "democracy" U.S. imperialism has in store for the people of Iraq is a colonial version of the racist police-state terror and degradation daily meted out to black people in this country.

No decisive victory for black and working people was ever won in Congress or the courts. It took the Civil War to smash the slave system, in which teaching black people to read or write was a crime punishable by death, and to establish public education for black people in this country. It took a mass movement of millions on the streets, courageously defying Southern Democratic "Dixiecrat" governments and their truncheon-wielding cops and KKK mobs, to put an end to Jim Crow segregation in the schools. From Little Rock in 1957 to James Meredith's courageous stand as the first black student at the University of Mississippi five years later, the fight for school integration was the flashpoint of battle after battle for black equality.

But the black Democrats and reformists demobilized those struggles, straining to keep fighters against black oppression within the confines of Democratic Party electoralism, preaching reliance on the Supreme Court, on Congress, on the FBI and federal troops—on anything but the independent mobilization of the multiracial working class. The 1974 defeat, at the hands of howling mobs of racists, of a busing plan to integrate Boston's public schools opened the floodgates to a

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nationwide assault on school desegregation. And it was the liberals and reformists who helped set up busing for the kill, channeling the fight to defend busing into dead-end appeals for federal intervention. Barely four years after busing was smashed on the streets of Boston came the Bakke decision.

Disgustingly, some fake leftists like the Revolutionary Socialist League, the predecessor organization of Sy Landy's League for the Revolutionary Party, even joined with the racists in opposing busing and integration. As black schoolchildren were being terrorized on the streets of Boston for trying to enter an all-white school, Landy & Co. railed that integration "means the *subordination* of blacks to the dominant whites. It represents a strategy to *quell* the black struggle" (*Torch*, December 1974). Capitulating to black separatists who despaired of the possibility of integrated class struggle, these "separate-but-equal socialists" ended up in an objective bloc with outright racist scum.

We supported busing in Boston and elsewhere—demanding its extension to the overwhelmingly white, middle-class suburbs—and called on the unions to organize labor/black defense guards to repel the racists. Against the reactionary pipe dream of black separatism and the liberal integrationist lie that black people can achieve full equality within this racist capitalist system, we fight for *revolutionary integrationism*. We seek to mobilize labor's social power in defense of even such partial steps toward racial integration and equality as are possible under capitalism, understanding that full social and political equality for black people can only be achieved through workers revolution and the creation of an egalitarian socialist society.

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

The liberal-led civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s shattered the Jim Crow system of legalized segregation in the South, gaining formal equality for black people. But in refusing to challenge the capitalist profit system itself, it could do nothing to tackle the economic bedrock of racial oppression in jobs, education and housing. Writing of the landmark 1954 Supreme Court ruling that overturned "separate but equal" segregation, liberal journalist Jonathan Kozol stated in his book *Savage Inequalities* (1991): "In day-to-day fact, the 1954 *Brown* decision is now dead. Indeed, this nation has yet to live up to the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision. Our schools are still separate, but they're certainly not equal."



WV Photo

Washington, D.C. protest against racist Bakke lawsuit, April 1978.

Today, more than 70 percent of black students attend predominantly minority schools, and fully one-sixth attend so-called "apartheid schools," which are almost 100 percent nonwhite.

In a *Young Spartacus* review of Kozol's book headlined "Education U.S.A.—Separate and Unequal" (WV No. 544, 7 February 1992), we noted:

"The ruling class spends on educating those they exploit and oppress only what they can realize back in profit. Having taken the wrecking ball to the auto factories, gutted the steel mills and closed many of the mines, there are few jobs left for which to train the children of the working class and poor. And if educating the sons and daughters of white workers has increasingly become an expendable overhead for decaying American capitalism, the children of black workers and poor are deemed an *expendable population*. Once a reserve army of labor to be maintained, albeit minimally, today for the racist rulers the black ghetto poor are not worth 'wasting' money on even to keep alive, much less educate."

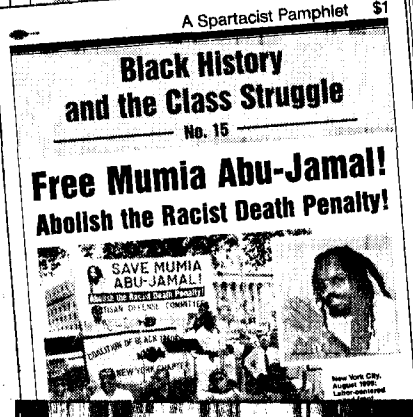
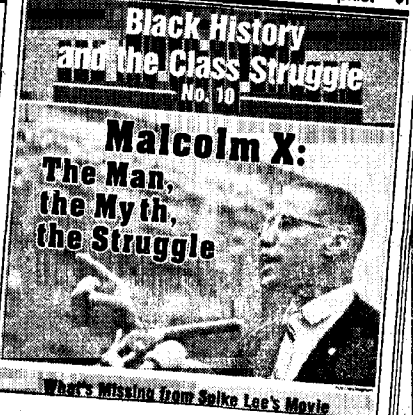
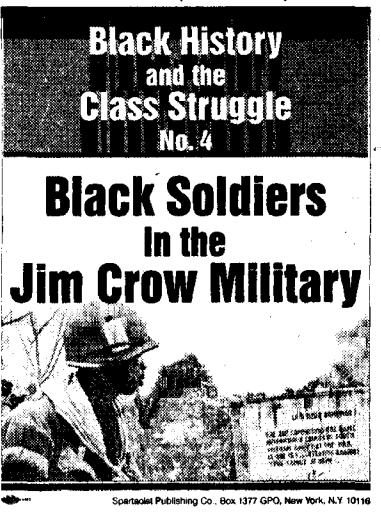
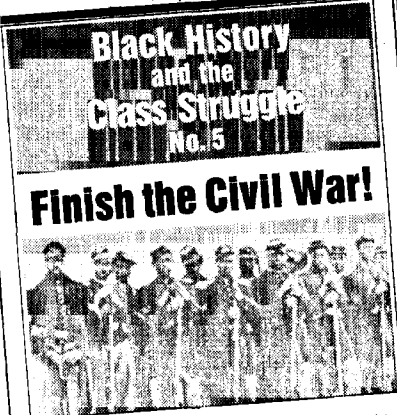
Black youth, particularly black men, are fast becoming "missing persons" from a society that's locked them into ghettos with no exit from poverty and a likely stretch in prison other than as cannon fodder for the imperialist military. The cynically named No Child Left Behind Act siphoned off scarce funds from public schools attended by the poor into voucher programs for parochial and other private schools. Bush's current budget would slash hundreds of millions more from public education, eliminating 47 government programs entirely. Ruling against a New York City suit demanding sufficient funding to prepare students for

"competitive employment" opportunities, a state appellate court recently asserted last year that learning to wrap Big Macs was just about all the "basic education" most inner-city kids needed. Lecturing that the majority of jobs "may well be low level," the judges warned that any higher standard of public education would pose a challenge "to the capitalist system in general!"

The fight for school integration and free, quality education for all must and can only be waged as part of the broader struggle for black liberation through socialist revolution. As the Spartacus Youth Club wrote in a leaflet addressed to an August 1995 protest at UC Berkeley in defense of affirmative action (WV No. 628, 8 September 1995):

"We need to fight for education to be the *right* of everyone—not a privilege for the wealthy and chosen few. The only way to cut through the 'savage inequalities' of education in racist America is to fight for OPEN ADMISSIONS—with no tuition and a state stipend for all who want to go to school. Nationalize the private universities—no more class privilege in education! Massively expand remedial programs so that students deprived of the right to an education in inner-city holding pens misnamed 'schools' can catch up with those who had the advantage of well-funded suburban and private schooling....

"For universities to really become public institutions of learning open to all requires a revolutionary struggle against the capitalist system itself. The Spartacus Youth Club is dedicated to building the revolutionary party, based on the multiracial working class, which is necessary to lead that struggle to victory in a socialist revolution." ■



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