

## Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!



AP



U.S. Air Force

APRIL 24—On May Day last year, hundreds of thousands of immigrants, overwhelmingly Latino, took to the streets in cities across the U.S. in protest against the proposed “Border Protection, Antiterrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act,” under which merely being in this country without papers would have meant being a felon.

It took no small amount of courage for these workers and their families, many of them already branded as “illegals,” to come out in the teeth of escalating attacks on immigrants. But while many saw the demonstrations and walkouts as part of a continuing struggle in defense of their rights, protest leaders ensured that they served the political shell game that is a pillar of capitalist rule in America—the notion that the Democratic Party is the “friend” of labor, blacks and immigrants.

Chants of “Today we march, tomorrow we vote!” were the chorus orchestrated by the Latino organizations, Democratic politicians and their allies in the trade-union bureaucracy. This paid off handsomely for the Democrats in the November midterm elections, where they captured 70 percent of the Latino vote. Meanwhile, the vicious government crackdown on immigrants continues, resulting last year alone in the deportation of some 190,000 people. Agents of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) have been unleashed in raids on workplaces, neighborhoods and homes around the country. Today some 150 people were detained when rifle-toting federal agents raided a mall in a predominantly Latino Chicago neighborhood. We demand that all detainees be released now! No deportations!

With their eyes on next year’s presidential elections, Rudolph Giuliani and other Republican politicians are increasingly playing the anti-immigrant card. But such nativist chauvinism is hardly just the Republicans’ domain. A number of Democratic Congressional candidates, particularly in the South and Midwest, attacked their Republican opponents as

## Break with the Democrats! For a Workers Party That Fights for a Workers Government!

**Left: Workers at Smithfield meatpacking plant in North Carolina walk off job last November to protest firings of immigrants. Right: Air National Guard personnel in Arizona install section of fence along Mexican border, October 2006.**

“soft on illegal immigration.” Even today’s liberal darling, Barack Obama, voted for the “Secure Fence Act” mandating the construction of a 700-mile wall on the U.S./Mexico border, as did Hillary Clinton. The crackdown on immigrants has been greatly intensified by the “war on terror,” through which the capitalist rulers have augmented an already vast machinery of state repression, with bipartisan support.

At bottom, divisions over immigration between and inside the Republican and Democratic parties reflect competing needs in the capitalist ruling class, part of which is dependent on low-cost immigrant labor. As other sectors of the economy absorb immigrant farm labor, agri-

business has howled about produce rotting for lack of pickers. Now the Colorado Corrections Department has begun a “pilot program” to provide farms with prison labor—a 21st-century version of the chain gang, at the cost of 60 cents per day per prisoner.

As a supposed “compromise,” a new anti-immigrant bill has been cooked up by Illinois Democrat Luis Gutierrez and Arizona Republican Jeff Flake which offers a tortuous process of legalization for some while everyone else is considered a criminal. Latino politicians, mainstream immigrant rights organizations and union bureaucrats from Andy Stern’s SEIU service workers union and the United Farm Workers have scandalously

given their support to this vicious legislation. For their part, other immigrant rights groups as well as a variety of reformist left organizations are trying to resuscitate the “Great American Boycott” May Day protests of 2006. An article in *Workers World* (15 April) by Javier Rodriguez, described as a “co-founder of the May 1st

National Movement,” argues that “the country’s progressive forces and allies are moving from traditional lobbying towards mass mobilization in an attempt to gain the upper hand and influence the national debate for a more inclusive pro-worker immigration reform.” Besides *Workers World*, backing this endeavor are the International Socialist Organization (ISO), the Revolutionary Communist Party and others.

But as Rodriguez himself makes clear, this is just the out-in-the-streets face of the lobby-the-Democrats game. Saluting the “historic” accomplishments of the 2006 protests, he numbers first among these “energizing the electorate and along with the anti-war sentiment changing the correlation of forces in Congress.” The reformists’ expectations in this new correlation of forces were put most baldly by the ISO, which in the aftermath of the

*continued on page 8*

## Mexico

### For Labor Mobilizations Against Starvation Policies, Repression!



**See Page 4**





# Rally in London to Free Mumia

Supporters in Britain of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal will join a May 5 rally, sponsored by the Partisan Defence Committee, to demand: “Mumia Abu-Jamal is an innocent man! Free Mumia now!” As the flyer for the rally emphasizes: “Mumia’s life is in danger—*mobilise now!*” Oral argument on Mumia’s *habeas corpus* legal appeal is due to be heard on May 17 in Philadelphia. With the U.S. capitalist state determined to execute this courageous fighter against racist oppression, what is urgently required is mass struggle—in the U.S., in Britain and internationally—centered on the social power of the unions.

Internationally, unions representing hundreds of thousands of workers have called to free Mumia. This month, the annual conference of the Scottish Trades Union Congress passed a motion, presented by the Aberdeen Trades Council, stating that Mumia “should be freed immediately from prison, as he is innocent, and the inherently racist death penalty should be abolished.” A show of strength by the integrated working class on behalf of Mumia Abu-Jamal would strike a blow for all of us against the racist warmongers in Washington—whether Republican or Democratic—as well as their loyal lapdog, Tony Blair’s Labour government.

Among the rally speakers will be renowned civil rights lawyer Gareth Peirce, known for defending some of the most prominent victims of racist capitalist injustice in Britain. Peirce was key in winning freedom for the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six, who spent many years in jail after being framed up during the anti-Irish witchhunts that followed pub bombings in the early 1970s. She has also represented British detainees held in the U.S. torture camp at Guantánamo Bay; the family of Jean Charles de Menezes, an innocent Brazilian electrician killed by police in the London Underground as a “terror suspect” in July 2005; and the victims of the June 2006 police “anti-terror” raid in Forest Gate.

Rachel Wolkenstein, staff counsel of the Partisan Defense Committee (U.S.) and a former member of Mumia’s legal team, will also speak. Wolkenstein was instrumental in first bringing Mumia’s case to international attention and in uncovering evidence of his innocence,

including securing the sworn confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. Also on the platform on May 5 will be barrister Matthew Ryder of Matrix Chambers; Paul Moffat, Eastern Region Secretary of the Communication Workers Union; Glenroy Watson, chair of the Finsbury Park London branch of the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union and general secretary of the Global Afrikan Congress; and Steve Hedley, also a member of the RMT

and a longtime supporter of Mumia.

Mumia was falsely convicted in 1982 of killing Faulkner and sentenced to death based on his political history and beliefs as a former Black Panther Party spokesman and supporter of the MOVE organization. His racist frame-up illustrates what the death penalty in the U.S. is all about—a legacy of chattel slavery, the lynch rope made legal. Freedom for Mumia will not be won by reliance on the same racist “justice” system that has kept him on death row for over 25 years. The London rally must be part of rebuilding the type of massive protest that stayed the executioner’s hand in 1995, when millions worldwide took up Mumia’s cause. Now more than ever that support must be mobilized to demand: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal now! Abolish the racist death penalty! ■

**Mumia Abu-Jamal Is an Innocent Man!**  
**Free Mumia Now!**  
**Mumia’s Life Is in Danger—*Mobilise Now!***

**Saturday 5 May, 1 p.m.**  
**University of London Union, Room 3C&D,**  
**Malet Street, London WC1**  
Nearest Tube: Russell Square or Goodge Street

We want to make it very clear that speakers at the rally initiated by the Partisan Defence Committee do not necessarily agree in any particular with any publicity for this rally printed by the Partisan Defence Committee.

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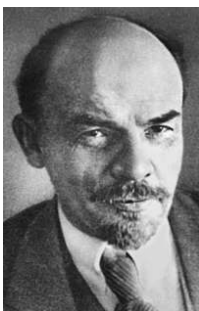
**Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!**



**TROTSKY**

## The Russian Revolution and the Fight for Black Freedom

*As Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon explained in a 1959 essay, Lenin and Trotsky’s Communist International won American Communists to the understanding that the fight against the special oppression of black people was of central importance to the proletarian revolutionary struggle.*



**LENIN**

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....

It is customary to attribute the progress of the Negro movement, and the shift of public opinion in favor of its claims, to the changes brought about by the First World War. But the biggest thing that came out of the First World War, the event that changed everything, including the prospects of the American Negro, was the Russian Revolution. The influence of Lenin and the Russian Revolution, even debased and distorted as it later was by Stalin, and then filtered through the activities of the Communist Party in the United States, contributed *more than any other influence from any source* to the recognition, and more or less general acceptance, of the Negro question as a *special* problem of American society—a problem which cannot be simply subsumed under the general heading of the conflict between capital and labor, as it was in the pre-communist radical movement....

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,” *The First Ten Years of American Communism* (1962)

## WORKERS VANGUARD

**Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League of the U.S.**

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*Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.*

The closing date for news in this issue is April 24.

**No. 891**

**27 April 2007**

# Protest F.O.P. Harassment of Mumia Supporters

*The following April 20 letter was sent to the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal by the Partisan Defense Committee after intimidation by the Fraternal Order of Police (F.O.P.) forced the relocation of an April 24 event celebrating Mumia’s birthday.*

We are writing to express our solidarity with you against vicious cop intimidation directed at you and others who speak out on Mumia’s behalf. We note that F.O.P. harassment and threats of terror have forced a change of venue for the birthday celebration you have planned for

next week in Philadelphia as well as the forced relocation of a scheduled hip-hop benefit for Mumia here in New York City last Sunday. Unfortunately we were not able to attend that event.

As you point out, this is not a new phenomenon for those who have sought to mobilize for Mumia’s freedom. The recent coordinated campaign to silence Mumia’s supporters is yet another example of the determination of the racist capitalist state to legally lynch this courageous and innocent man. We stand in defense of all efforts to publicize and organize for Mumia’s fight for freedom. ■

**New York Labor Black League and Spartacus Youth Club**

**Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now!**

**Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!**  
**There Is No Justice in the Capitalist Courts!**

**Video showing of *From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal* and update on Mumia’s case**

**Saturday, May 5, 4 p.m.**

For more information: (212) 267-1025

299 Broadway, Suite 318

(north of Chambers St.)

Our comrade Diana Kartsen died on April 12 from ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, better known as “Lou Gehrig’s disease”). Although increasingly paralyzed as the disease progressed, Diana fought with every ounce of strength to contribute to party work and discussion, and for the preservation and continuity of the Prometheus Research Library where she was Librarian.

Diana’s death is a painful blow to our comrades internationally, and to no one more than her companion and comrade Ed Kartsen. Our hearts go out to Ed, to Diana’s family and to others close to her. We are bitter that we were robbed of a comrade of Diana’s caliber, not least because backward religious elements at the helm of the U.S. imperialist ruling class have condemned millions to suffer hideously by blocking stem cell research that might lead to a cure for ALS and other diseases. Diana’s dedication to human emancipation was also a struggle to free science from subordination to reactionary obscurantism through international socialist revolution.

Comrades who had the privilege to know and work with Diana benefited from her camaraderie in multiple ways: as a political and military leader in demonstrations; as a department head who ensured that comrades were given a thorough political briefing and overview as the precondition to any assignment, no matter how pressing the tasks or short the time at hand; as a wry wit and sympathetic friend to share a drink with; as a moral person with a strong sense of right and wrong whom you could count on for good advice. In a letter to comrades on the day Diana died, Ed Kartsen succinctly conveyed her strengths:

“Diana has been correctly honored for her military command capabilities and as an inspiring leadership role model for many of the younger cadre. Of course she should also be honored for her lifelong work in the party to preserve the political history of our movement in her library work. This was an expression of her understanding of the importance of historic knowledge for the development of Marxist theory and program. She had a clear comprehension of the unity of mental and physical labor, that is, of theory with practice. She appreciated the value of maintenance, and the concept of systems.

“Her understanding of the value of knowledge included the understanding of the critical importance of acquiring new knowledge about the political and natural world. Diana’s pursuit of knowledge was driven with the same determination she showed on the battlefield and she took an active interest in learning the principles of dialectics. Diana combined organization and theory and understood both to be necessary in the fight for a socialist future of the human race.”

Diana was won to Marxism and the Spartacist League as a student at the University of Chicago during the tumultuous period of the Vietnam antiwar movement. One comrade recalled seeing “this striking young woman with red flowing hair and a visible hammer and sickle pin on her jacket striding across campus.” While a graduate student specializing in Islamic art, she was won from the orbit of the International Socialists to authentic Trotskyism—to the importance of defending the gains of the Russian Revolution and building a party capable of leading the fight for new Octobers.

After working for a period of time as a close supporter of our Revolutionary Marxist Caucus in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), in October 1971 she became a founding member of the Chicago branch of the Revolutionary Communist Youth, youth group of the Spartacist League. Shortly thereafter she went to live and study in India, where she functioned under the political direction of the party. She joined the Spartacist League in 1974 after her return.

That same year, a Perspectives and Tasks document passed at the SL/U.S. Fourth National Conference stated:

“One of the crucial tasks of the vanguard of the proletariat is the struggle to function as the memory of the working class. An important component of this struggle for continuity is the systematic assembling, propagation and critical assimilation of the primary documentary history of the workers movement. Given the passage of time and the accumulation of

# Diana Kartsen



WV Photo



## 1948-2007

distortions and vulgarizations, only the precise, verified reconstruction of past realities can serve as a true compass....

“We recognize that archival work constitutes an important party task and project the regular assignment of a qualified comrade to direct this work.”

Diana was the qualified comrade found to lead the work of the Prometheus Research Library, drawing on her experience as an assistant at the Tamiment Library at New York University. The Prometheus Research Library’s collection grew out of the 40-year accumulated and organized collection of SL National Chairman James Robertson. With Diana as Librarian and Jim as Director, the PRL accumulated over 6,000 books and periodical volumes. Particular emphasis is on minutes of leading committees and internal discussion materi-

als from our revolutionary forebears. She also led the Library through the painstaking archival research and other work involved in the publishing of two books on historic American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon (*James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism* and *Dog Days: James P. Cannon vs. Max Shachtman in the Communist League of America, 1931-1933*), a publication of Trotsky’s *Third International After Lenin* in the original Russian and six *Prometheus Research Series* bulletins.

There are few positions in top party leadership and administration where Diana did *not* serve. The delegates at the SL’s Sixth National Conference in 1980 elected Diana as a candidate member of the Central Committee. For a period of time she was department head for the International Secretariat while also holding down the Library. Elected a full member of the Central Committee in 1987, Diana was later elected to the SL/U.S. Political Bureau and to the office of National Secretary, paying particular attention to the often conflicting demands of central office departments and SL locals and to politically organizing the necessary discussion to prioritize our work. She also served for some years as Political Bureau secretary. Diana’s objectivity, fairness and integrity particularly suited her longtime role as the Central Committee representative to the party’s Central Control Commission.

Diana was also recognized as the party’s best general. In May 1981, she received a battlefield promotion from candidate to alternate member of the Central Committee and won a commendation from the Political Bureau for fighting to marshal our forces against a daisy-chain goon squad set up by the reformist Workers World Party to seal off a rally by our Anti-Imperialist Contingent at an El Salvador demonstration in Washington, D.C. While Workers World appealed to

Democratic Party “doves” to set a more “humane” policy for U.S. imperialism, our contingent drew the class line over the civil war raging in El Salvador with the slogans “Military Victory to Leftist Insurgents!” and “Defense of Cuba, USSR Begins in El Salvador!”

From that day forward, Diana was a central military and political leadership component of almost every mass labor/black mobilization initiated by the Spartacist League or Partisan Defense Committee to stop the KKK and Nazi fascists, and dozens of other demonstrations.

With pain and sadness, and determination to continue the struggle to which Diana dedicated her life, comrades worldwide give the party’s best general a last, strong comradely salute.



Diana leading our contingent at Philadelphia demonstration for Mumia Abu-Jamal, 12 August 1995.



# Mexico

## For Labor Mobilizations Against Starvation Policies, Repression!

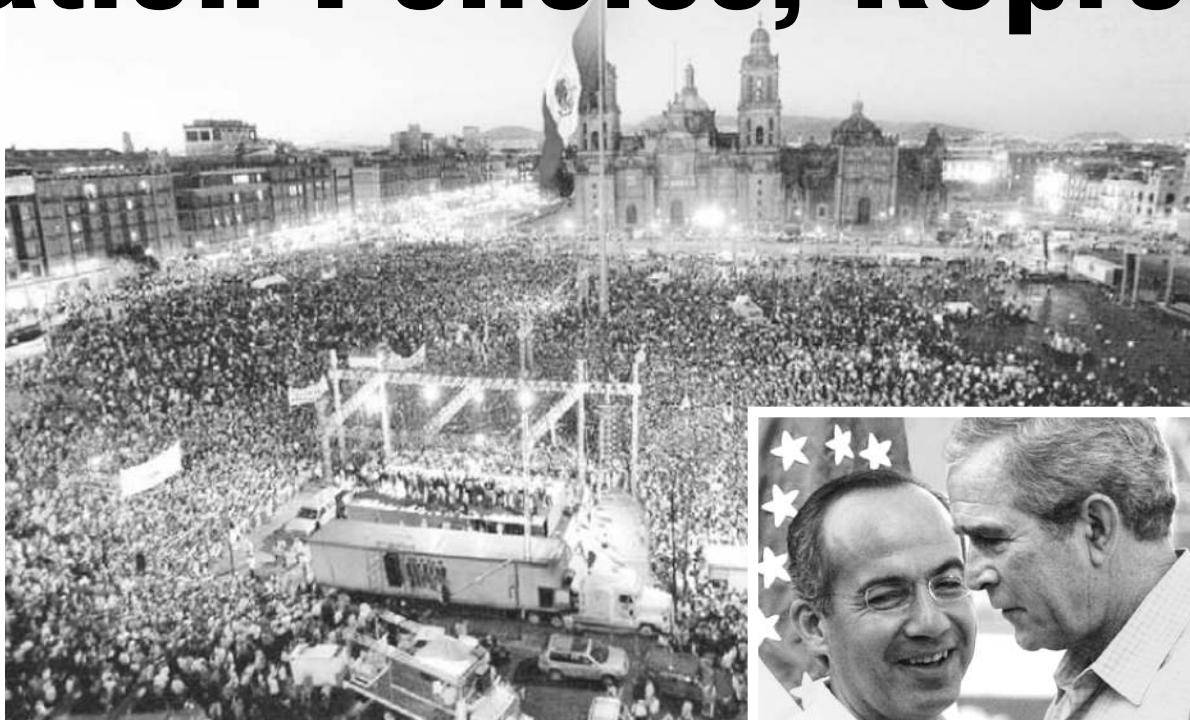
The following article, edited for publication in WV, is translated from *Espartaco* No. 27 (Spring 2007), newspaper of the *Grupo Espartaquista de México*, section of the *International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)*.

Mexico is an extremely explosive society. The divisions within the ruling class are now out in the open. The right-wing PAN [National Action Party] of Felipe Calderón seeks to continue and deepen the neoliberal and anti-working-class measures of the former regime of [Vicente] Fox, especially through privatization of the oil industry, the country's main source of revenue. The nationalist-populist PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution] worries both about massive unrest and the excessive demands of the imperialists.

These divisions have been evident since Fox launched the *desafuero* [stripping of immunity] campaign against [prospective PRD presidential candidate] Andrés

### ESPARTACO

Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) in 2004 and continued through the post-electoral polarization in 2006, with demonstrations of millions of people protesting the electoral fraud. In Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán, the miners and steel workers union waged the most powerful and combative labor strike in decades. Striking teachers and the oppressed masses of Oaxaca occupied the state capital. Out of fear of greater social explosions, the PAN rulers have pushed a growing militarization of the country, in some cases even threatening their bourgeois opponents in the PRD.



Cristina Rodríguez

**January 31: Massive Mexico City protest by union and peasant organizations against jump in tortilla prices and for emergency wage increase. Bush meets Mexican president Calderón in Yucatán in March (inset).**

In anticipation of a Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) strike announced for March 16, but called off just one hour before it was scheduled to begin, the government sent in the army to surround several facilities of Luz y Fuerza del Centro [regional electric company covering Mexico City] as a threat to the working class as a whole. The new president ordered massive military operations in coordination with the police in states like Michoacán, Guerrero and Baja California to terrorize the population, targeting in particular rural zones where guerrillas have a presence and the working-class concentrations near the northern border. In February, to ensure the loyalty of the troops, Calderón gave them a pay raise of over 45 percent—a slap in the face to the working masses who received less than 4 percent.

The old PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party] regime's economic base has been undermined by growing economic

subjugation to the U.S., symbolized and driven by the NAFTA treaty for the imperialist rape of Mexico. The corporatist union structure is in severe crisis, and the benefits that corporatism once offered to some unionized sectors—like cheap housing, food subsidies and job security—have become a thing of the past. The PAN, with the PRI, looks to the privatization of the oil industry, and pushes for “reforms” to the State Workers Social Security and Services Institute (ISSSTE), which are aimed against the retirement pension system of government workers and tantamount to its privatization. These reforms are similar to the ones approved in 2004 for the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS).

The PAN's most recent attack on the poor—which was met with massive demonstrations—was the increase in the price of tortillas, the main staple food for most Mexicans, by over 40 percent. The stage had been prepared by over a decade of

NAFTA and the more recent international rise in the price of corn. However, the immediate cause of the current crisis was speculation on the part of corn magnates, both domestic (especially GRUMA/Maseca) and American (like Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland) in collusion with the federal government. With nearly half the rural population living below the official poverty line and 20 percent in utter destitution, this price hike, together with the price increases for other basic products like milk and eggs, threatens the population with starvation. The convulsive struggles from Lázaro Cárdenas to Oaxaca to Atenco have found a unifying element in this crisis: the policies of Bush and his lackeys are uniting in struggle the workers, the peasants and other

sectors of the population.

In a 27 January leaflet (“Mobilize the Working Class Against Hunger and Repression!”) [reprinted in WV No. 886, 16 February] we demanded the expropriation of the corn magnates without compensation as a call for the working class to fight against the capitalist class as a whole. We called for “labor strikes that demand a subsidy for tortillas so everyone can have them” which, together with our call for “the distribution of food for all under control of the trade unions,” would ensure food distribution among the workers and the poor. We also called for opening the accounting books and the abolition of trade secrets.

Price watch committees, comprised of factory delegates, unions, cooperatives, peasant organizations and the urban poor, could be the nucleus of workers self-defense units against the repression accompanying the crisis. We fight for a sliding scale of wages that would ensure pay raises proportional to price increases, and for a sliding scale of working hours to divide up the available work, along with an extensive public works program to combat the massive chronic unemployment in the cities.

Our slogans—which underscore the irreconcilable contradiction between the capitalist mode of production and a system that would serve the interests of workers and the oppressed—aim at mobilizing the proletariat at the head of all the poor. Our program against the current crisis is centered on the working class which, due to its relationship to the means of production, is the only class with the historical interest and the social power to sweep away this system of economic exploitation once and for all. The bourgeoisie owns the means of production and therefore expropriates the fruits of the proletariat's labor. The fundamental task for Mexican revolutionaries today is to struggle for the *political independence of the proletariat*: to struggle against the

**Capitalist rule mires Mexico in bitter poverty: slum area in Mexico City (left); people searching through garbage in Matamoros, near U.S. border.**

Janet Jarman photos



## No Support to the Bourgeois PRD, PRI, PAN! For Socialist Revolution Throughout the Americas!

illusions in the PRD that permeate the working class and to oppose the bourgeois state’s interference in the labor movement, fighting to forge a revolutionary workers party.

**The Counterrevolutionary Destruction of the USSR and the “New World Order”**

The current price crisis is conditioned internationally by the capitalist counter-revolution in the deformed workers states of East Europe beginning in 1989 and in the Soviet Union in 1991-92. The destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state represented a world-historic defeat for the international proletariat, resulting in a general retrogression of working-class consciousness and opening a new period of the redivision of the world markets among the economic powers on a global scale. Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, is the economic system in which the national markets have been surpassed and the imperialist powers compete for control of the international markets, thus leading to wars. Without the military, ideological and economic counterweight of the first and largest workers state in the world, U.S. imperialism has emerged as the sole super-power, which today means such wars of colonial occupation as in Afghanistan and Iraq and the increased subjugation of the underdeveloped capitalist countries. In Mexico, the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in the indiscriminate opening of the domestic economy to imperialist monopoly finance capital, particularly through NAFTA and massive privatizations.

Uniquely among the left, we Spartacists fought for the unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union, the DDR (the East German deformed workers state), and the other deformed workers states against capitalist counterrevolution. We fought for proletarian political revolution to sweep away the Stalinist bureaucracies in power and establish the genuine workers democracy of soviets and factory councils. Today we do the same for the world’s remaining deformed workers states: China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam.

**Break with the PRD, Party of Capital!**

The PRD represents the political wing of the bourgeoisie that seeks to use concessions to defuse the discontent of the workers and oppressed, so as to perpetuate the system of capitalist exploitation. The differences between the PRD and the PAN boil down to the manner of administering capitalism—with the carrot or with the stick. However, large masses of workers, peasants and youth see in the bourgeois populism of López Obrador and the PRD a viable alternative to the clerical and neoliberal policies of the PAN. The PRD, which emerged out of the PRI (as did AMLO himself), is a party of capital, inherently anti-worker. Nationalist populism is not anti-capitalist; in fact, it reinforces capitalism by strengthening the ties binding the working class to its “own” national bourgeoisie.

Just like its bourgeois opponents, the PRD does not hesitate to unleash state forces against the struggles of the workers and the oppressed. This was shown in the murderous attack on the Lázaro Cárdenas strikers in April 2006 and in the police attacks against students in the UNAM [National Autonomous University of Mexico] strike of 1999-2000, as well as the recent brutal occupation of the [impoverished] Tepito neighborhood by the Mexico City police and the expulsion of hundreds of families.

Many workers see in AMLO a sort of reincarnation of General Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, who [in the 1930s] used democratic reforms and concessions to win the support of the workers and peasants. Cárdenas’ fundamental objective was to modernize the country for the benefit of the national bourgeoisie and never to call into question the bourgeoisie’s rule. This required the support of the working class against the bourgeois factions opposed to the reforms and against the imperial-



María Meléndrez

**Left: At March protest against “reforms” aimed at pension and health care benefits, riot police in Mexico City block demonstrators from entering Senate building. Right: Police under PRD administration attack protest during UNAM student strike, December 1999.**



Reuters

ists’ demands. Once this objective was achieved, he himself unleashed the repressive force of the state against the strikers at the Azcapotzalco refinery in 1940, for example. The consequence of working-class trust in Cárdenas was the chaining of the labor unions to the state by means of the corporatist straitjacket and seven decades of brutal PRI rule. In the context of Lázaro Cárdenas’ Mexico, Trotsky explained in 1940:

“Inasmuch as foreign capital does not import workers but proletarianizes the native population, the national proletariat soon begins playing the most important role in the life of the country. In these conditions the national government, to the extent that it tries to show resistance to foreign capital, is compelled to a greater or lesser degree to lean on the proletariat. On the other hand, the governments of those backward countries which consider it inescapable or more profitable for themselves to march shoulder to shoulder with foreign capital, destroy the labor organizations and institute a more or less totalitarian regime.”  
—“Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay”

Albeit under different historical circumstances (fundamentally conditioned by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR), Cárdenas and AMLO embody analogous phenomena: bonapartist, bourgeois *caudillos* interested in the development of national capitalism and in impeding the development of an independent labor movement.

Many youth identify with Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez and his “Bolivarian Revolution” as well as Bolivia’s Evo Morales. The nationalizations in Venezuela and Bolivia—measures of national self-defense that we Marxists defend—do not free industries from capitalist domination, and in the end what happens in these countries is decided on an international scale. Capitalists in Venezuela are taking their money out of the country and in some cases they are hoarding their products, causing high inflation rates and shortages of food in the market. The imperialists sabotage and pull out their investments. This shows that it is impossible to solve problems in the framework of a single country. Reforms and nationalizations of certain branches of industry by a bourgeois state—reversible under the pressure of imperialism—do not lead to socialism. The repetitive cycle of bourgeois nationalist demagoguery and neoliberal puppets has to be stopped. It is a task of the working class in the region to pull Latin America out of backwardness and imperialist subjugation. It is crucial to forge an international revolutionary workers party that can link the struggles of the impoverished masses to the powerful working class throughout the Americas.

**Permanent Revolution and Defense of the Nationalized Energy Industry**

Mexico is a country of combined and uneven capitalist development, where the most modern techniques of industrial production coexist side by side with the ancestral backwardness of the countryside. The bourgeoisies of the countries subjugated by imperialism are incapable of even carrying out the *bourgeois-democratic* tasks, such as national liberation, agrarian revolution and political democracy,

that were historically associated with bourgeois revolutions such as the French Revolution of 1789. The revolutionary Leon Trotsky described the weakness of this class:

“The pressure of foreign imperialism so alters and distorts the economic and political structure of these countries that the national bourgeoisie (even in the politically independent countries of South America) only partly reaches the height of a ruling class. The pressure of imperialism on backward countries does not, it is true, change their *basic* social character since the oppressor and oppressed represent only different levels of development in one and the same bourgeois society.... The bourgeoisie of colonial and semicolonial countries is a semiruling, semioppressed class.”  
—“Not a Workers’ and Not a Bourgeois State?” (1937)

We Spartacists base ourselves on the perspective of permanent revolution developed by Trotsky and vindicated in practice by the Russian Revolution of 1917. The full completion of the bourgeois-democratic tasks, in our time, is only possible under the rule of the proletariat. But once in power, the working class will not be able to limit itself to achieving these tasks; rather it would pass immediately to the *socialist*, collectivist tasks of the revolution. In so doing, the revolution acquires its *permanent* character. Thus the felt *bourgeois-democratic* demands of the population become a motor force for *socialist* revolution.

We oppose NAFTA and we defend the nationalized energy industry, especially but not only the oil industry, as basic measures of self-defense against the imperialists in a semicolonial country. The nationalizations in the energy sector were a crucial conquest for this country. As many layers of the population are perfectly aware, the privatization of oil will make for even greater subjugation to the imperialists, especially the U.S. imperialists.

Until March 1938 the Mexican oil industry belonged to the British, American and Dutch imperialists. Following the expropriation under Cárdenas, the oil magnates—especially the British, who had the support of “His Majesty”—imposed a boycott of Mexican crude oil and, in fact, provoked a rightist rebellion by General Cedillo against Cárdenas. Trotsky appealed to proletarian internationalism to mobilize British workers in

defense of the Mexican expropriation against their own imperialist rulers. As Trotsky wrote:

“The expropriation of oil is neither socialism nor communism. But it is a highly progressive measure of national self-defense....  
“Without giving up its own identity, every honest working class organization of the entire world, and first of all in Great Britain, is duty-bound to take an irreconcilable position against the imperialist robbers, their diplomacy, their press, and their fascist hirelings. The cause of Mexico, like the cause of Spain, like the cause of China, is the cause of the international working class. The struggle over Mexican oil is only one of the advance-line skirmishes of future battles between the oppressors and the oppressed.”  
—“Mexico and British Imperialism” (1938)

Today, it is the U.S. imperialists who circle like vultures over PEMEX [Mexico’s state oil company]. One of the main reasons for Bush’s recent visit to Mexico was to insist on opening the oil company to “private capital to expand Pemex production” (*La Jornada*, 11 March). U.S. workers have the internationalist duty to defend the Mexican nationalized oil industry against the predatory intentions of Bush and his imperialist cabal.

**For a Workers and Peasants Government!**

The peasantry is a heterogeneous layer of the petty bourgeoisie that is incapable of playing an independent political role as a class. Their productive activity is individual and based on the private ownership of a portion of land. Thus the peasants compete economically with each other. The peasantry does not have the objective class interest, cohesion or social power that the working class has to overthrow the bourgeoisie and establish its own government. Especially with the implementation of NAFTA, the Mexican countryside has largely been devastated with great masses of peasants thrown off their land, faced with the inability to compete with large U.S. and Mexican agribusinesses. The impoverished peasantry and the great mass of the urban poor are the main potential allies of the proletariat for socialist revolution.

The industrial working class must place itself at the head of the other oppressed sectors in society and fight alongside

*continued on page 6*

# Espartaco

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# Mexico...

(continued from page 5)

agricultural workers and peasants committees for subsidies in the form of machinery, tractors, irrigation systems, agricultural credits as well as quality seed. Well-paid jobs, quality bilingual education at all levels, a system of public works to supply basic services and health care in the more backward indigenous regions of the countryside must be elementary demands for the workers movement.

The demand for so-called “food sovereignty,” raised prominently by the UNT [National Union of Workers] and a host of peasant organizations, resonates everywhere. This demand has a defensive character as it is posed in the context of the devastation of the countryside by NAFTA and increased subjugation under the imperialists. Nonetheless, we do not raise this demand. According to the National Union of Autonomous Regional Peasant Organizations (UNORCA), food sovereignty means “the freedom of peoples to define their agricultural and forestry policies; fighting to take agriculture and food out of the World Trade Organization and any international trade agreement that weakens our sovereignty.” At the center of their demands is one to “promote balanced and sustainable rural development with the implementation of new public policies, institutional programs, tools and reforms that foment and protect the ability to produce, industrialize, distribute and market the strategic products for feeding Mexicans—based on small peasant producers—as a condition for food sovereignty.” Thus behind the demand for “food sovereignty” is a reactionary and utopian framework of returning to small-scale peasant agriculture within the bounds of national capitalism.

In contrast to the nationalist populists, we Marxists understand that hunger can only be eliminated in the context of an *international* division of labor in a socialist planned economy which requires the overthrow of capitalism worldwide. To perpetuate the existence of a miserable, culturally and technically backward peasantry is reactionary. Marxists fight for the *modernization* of the countryside. A workers and peasants government—the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the poor peasants, which together will direct the goals of the country through soviets (councils)—would struggle to attain these goals by expropriating all the modern agribusinesses of the north and the Bajío [central lowlands region] and transforming them into state farms. At the same time, it would seek to convince, through example, the poor peasants in the southern and central regions of the advantages of large-scale, mechanized, collective exploitation of land over small family plots. The fate of the poor peasantry, i.e., its disappearance in the midst of oppression and capitalist misery or its

**Spartacist League  
at November 2006  
L.A. protest in  
defense of Oaxaca  
militants. Signs read:  
“Free All Detainees  
Now! Drop All the  
Charges! PFP, Army  
Out of Oaxaca!” and  
“For Workers Strikes  
Against State  
Repression!  
No Illusions in the  
PRD, Party of Capital!”**

WV Photo



transformation into a class of agricultural proletarians in a modernized countryside, depends on the success of the proletarian revolution and its international extension.

## For Proletarian Internationalism!

Mexico, even after a proletarian revolution, could not on its own reach the living standards of a First World country. Modernization of the countryside, for example, would require a scientific and technological level much higher than Mexico currently has. *The immediate survival* itself of a workers Mexico would depend on the help of our class brothers and sisters in the U.S. At the same time, a socialist revolution in Mexico would reverberate through the Americas and galvanize the powerful multiracial proletariat in the U.S. Trotsky explains in his “Basic Postulates” in *The Permanent Revolution* (1930):

“10. The completion of the socialist revolution within national limits is unthinkable. One of the basic reasons for the crisis in bourgeois society is the fact that the productive forces created by it can no longer be reconciled with the framework of the national state. From this follow, on the one hand, imperialist wars, on the other, the utopia of a bourgeois United States of Europe. The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena. Thus, the socialist revolution becomes a permanent revolution in a newer and broader sense of the word; it attains completion only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet.”

Many in Mexico incorrectly view the U.S. as one homogenous reactionary and imperialist mass—a view based on the bourgeois nationalism prominently pushed by the PRD. But the U.S. is a class-divided society. The working classes and oppressed of Mexico and the United States have a common interest in a socialist revolution in “El Norte.” Our comrades in the U.S. struggle to mobilize the powerful multiracial U.S. working class in opposition to the designs of Yankee imperialism, sharply opposing the semicolonial occupation of Iraq, the presence of imperialist troops in the Near

East, and the U.S. imperialist threat against the Chinese and North Korean deformed workers states. Our comrades in the U.S. fight for full citizenship rights for immigrants as a concrete way to forge links of solidarity between both proletariats. All of this is within a perspective of class struggle independent of the bourgeois Republican and Democratic parties.

In 1991 the Spartacist League/U.S., Trotskyist League of Canada/Ligue Trotskyiste du Canada and the Grupo Espartaquista de México, sections of the ICL, issued a declaration titled “Stop U.S. ‘Free Trade’ Rape of Mexico.” We explained that “the fight for workers revolution in Mexico and the U.S. is directly linked, including by the human bridge of millions of Mexican and Central American workers who have ‘gone north.’” The declaration calls on “Mexican, U.S. and Canadian workers to join in opposing this anti-labor pact.” Down with NAFTA! For joint class struggle on both sides of the border! For socialist revolution in all the Americas!

## For a Class-Struggle Leadership! Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

It is clear that Mexican workers want to fight. But their current leaderships subordinate them to the bourgeoisie, whether through nationalist ideology or open repression. As an excuse for not mobilizing their supporters for the demonstration against starvation on January 31, a spokesman for the corporatist unions grouped in the CTM [Mexican Labor Federation] and historically affiliated to the PRI argued that they had to “give time” to Calderón to see if his economic measures “work.” The CTM and the CT [Congress of Labor] refused to participate as soon as AMLO confirmed that he was going to march, and then they proposed a system of “credit based on wages” [to lessen the impact of the crisis]. This measure would only make workers indebted to their bosses. What is necessary is to increase the buying power of the workers, not to chain them for life to their exploiters through bloodsucking loans.

For their part, the “independent” UNT and SME unions, politically aligned with the bourgeois PRD, demonstrated on January 31 under a set of nine demands codified in the “Declaration of the Zócalo,” which clearly reflect the bourgeois populist program of the PRD. Besides demanding aid to the countryside, emergency wage increases as well as the creation of formal jobs—demands we support that are directed toward elementary needs—the declaration calls to “renegotiate” and not to *end* NAFTA. It calls for a “great national agreement” on the basis of “social unity,” as if there were no class divisions in Mexico. The union bureaucracies want to unite the impoverished masses with the people that are trying to starve them to death. This is *bourgeois nationalism*: illusions in the false unity between exploited and exploiters on the basis of the supposedly common interest of advancing “the fatherland.”

We Spartacists fight to replace the pro-capitalist bureaucracies with a class-struggle leadership and to transform the trade unions into organs for the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. As Leon Trotsky explained in 1940, “The

primary slogan for this struggle is: *complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state.*”

This struggle and the struggle for union democracy cannot be separated from the struggle for a *revolutionary leadership*—a Leninist-Trotskyist revolutionary workers party, part of a reformed Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. A Bolshevik party is the fundamental instrument for bringing political consciousness to the proletariat, the principal, leading force through which the working class can achieve and consolidate the socialist revolution. As Trotsky explained, “Without a party, apart from a party, over the head of a party, or with a substitute for a party, the proletarian revolution cannot conquer” (*Lessons of October*, 1924).

The French utopian socialist Fourier noted that the level of emancipation of women is the natural measure of general emancipation. Bourgeois revolutions such as the French Revolution of 1789 swept away the feudal institutions that had blocked the development of capitalism. They replaced social relations based on obligations and privileges with those based on contractual equality, and thus had a profound effect on the family. The condition of women in the most advanced capitalist countries shows the limits of liberty and social progress under capitalism. On the other hand, the backward character of capitalist development in Mexico, its colonial past, and its subjugation to imperialism are reflected in deeply rooted manifestations of social backwardness. PRDers and representatives of other parties in the Mexico City Legislative Assembly have presented a proposal to decriminalize abortion up to the twelfth week of pregnancy when the woman claims poverty or argues to control how many children to have. In response, the arch-reactionary Catholic church is calling demonstrations to prevent its approval. We Spartacists support this partial reform and struggle for the right of free abortion on demand, for women’s liberation through socialist revolution and for full democratic rights for homosexuals.

Age-old anti-indigenous racist oppression is derived from colonial brutality, when the decadent Spanish crown kept itself going through the immense shipments of silver and gold obtained through the superexploitation of the indigenous population. *Machismo*, homophobia, anti-indigenous racism and anti-Semitism are bourgeois ideologies that serve to justify concrete oppression and divide the oppressed. A revolutionary party would be, in the words of Lenin, the “tribune of the people.” By fighting against all examples of oppression and social backwardness, the proletarian party embodies the Marxist revolutionary ideal: the emancipation of all humanity through the emancipation of the proletariat.

## The Petty-Bourgeois Radical Populism of the EZLN and the APPO

In the context of the horrible misery and brutal oppression that the indigenous population of the country faces, the EZLN [Zapatista Army of National Liberation] has been very attractive for some of those who oppose capitalist devastation. In addition, their criticisms of the PRD during the electoral circus were attractive to many youth. Thus the Zapatista Sixth Declaration says that “the problem of the country is not a party, but rather the capitalist system,” which “we must transform” (*La Jornada*, 15 January 2006). But there is nothing in the Sixth Declaration directed toward overthrowing capitalism; its demands are for democratic reforms such as, centrally, a new constitution “that would recognize the rights and liberties of the people, and defend the weak in the face of the powerful.” It is utopian to think that through new laws the capitalist state can be reformed and put at the service of the exploited and oppressed. What is necessary is a workers revolution that

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abolishes private property.

On the other hand, the militancy of the APPO [Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca], which emerged as the ally of the SNTE [National Educational Workers Union] Local 22 teachers who were on strike for over six months, also galvanized those who want to struggle against this vile and corrupt regime. Their barricades—which gave them control of an important part of the city of Oaxaca—and their ongoing battles with the police were a source of inspiration for many youth who want something more than fraudulent elections and parliamentary farces. But their struggle did not go beyond calling for the sacking of governor-hangman Ulises Ruiz. Thus, although at the beginning of their struggle they had called for boycotting the elections, the APPO and SNTE Local 22 leaders ended up calling for a vote to AMLO.

Populism denies the fundamental division of class society between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, substituting a simplistic division only between the rich and the poor, thus denying the central role of the working class as the fundamental agent for social change. In fact, the Zapatistas emerged in 1994 explicitly rejecting the struggle for proletarian revolution. Populists confine their program to democratic reforms within a capitalist and narrow nationalist framework. Regardless of their militancy and intentions, the “radical” populists such as the EZLN and the APPO end up orbiting around the PRD and trying to put pressure on it.

The Syphilitic Chain of Petty-Bourgeois Populism

Our revolutionary Marxist perspective is counterposed not only to all varieties of populism, but also to the self-proclaimed Marxist organizations that tail class forces alien to the proletariat and limit their program to the Mexican national terrain. Perhaps the most grotesque example is the Militant Tendency [Militante], which is in fact an *integral part* of the bourgeois PRD. Militante touchingly says that “AMLO must fight against capitalism” (Militante No. 154, second half of September 2006). This is tantamount to calling for the Pope to fight for the rights of gays. Militante only *strengthens* suicidal illusions in the bourgeois PRD, and its politics pave the way to bloody defeats for the working class.

The Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS) puts forth every kind of slogan against the high cost of living, such as “jobs for all,” “general emergency increase in wages” (Estrategia Obrera No. 58, 24 January), etc. But without even mentioning the fight for socialist revolution in their article, the LTS’s program is *reformist*, completely within the framework of capitalism. The LTS writes: “Unfortunately, the PRD, which claims to be a ‘democratic’ party and to be against repression, has endorsed this action,” that is, the recent huge federal police operations in Michoacán. The LTS doesn’t even mention the *direct* participation of the PRD in the bloody attack against the workers of Lázaro Cárdenas in April last year! Instead, the LTS calls on “all organizations that claim to be democratic (like those that make up the CND [National Democratic Convention])” to join them in forming a “National Coordinating Committee Against Repression.” In other words, the LTS calls for a political bloc with the bourgeois PRD.

The Internationalist Group (IG) was formed eleven years ago by demoralized former members of our organization. Incapable of dealing with the counter-revolutionary destruction of the USSR in 1991-92 and the retrogression of working-class consciousness that followed this world-historic defeat for the proletariat, they deserted Trotskyism to tail the forces of alien classes, embellishing existing consciousness and adapting to it.

The IG is incapable of dealing with the massive illusions in populism, and looks to invent its own reality. They make every kind of contortion to present AMLO as merely a “neo-liberal with a human face,”

minimizing the devastating effects of NAFTA and all of the neoliberal policies of the last four presidencies. They turn their back on the struggle in defense of elementary democratic rights and the most pressing needs of the poor.

In a recent article (“Against the *Tortillazo*, Impose Workers Control! Mexico’s Tortilla Crisis, Product of Capitalism,” *El Internacionalista*, January 2007), the IG essentially puts an equal sign between the former semi-bonapartist regime of the PRI and the current openly pro-imperialist, starvation policies of the PAN. Thus, while they make a passing reference to the “disaster” brought about by NAFTA, they argue that “neither the poverty of small peasants nor forced migration began 15 years ago,” minimizing the horrible misery and growing subjugation of Mexico to imperialism that this predatory treaty has produced. Finally, they write:

“Moreover, by keeping the cost of tortillas low and the price of corn high, it [the government] was subsidizing Mexican industrialists by lowering the cost of reproduction of ‘its’ workforce. In other words, they were using ‘food sovereignty’ to keep workers drowning in poverty due to low wages.”

The IG argues that you shouldn’t fight for cheap food because it means keeping

*tarlat*. But, to begin with, the industrial working class barely exists in Oaxaca! In reality, the Oaxaca struggle was based completely on unionized teachers and the impoverished petty-bourgeois masses. For genuine Trotskyists, the point is not to paint reality in prettier colors, but to fight to mobilize the *industrial urban proletariat* at the head of all the oppressed in the fight for socialist revolution.

One of the main lessons from the Paris Commune—which in the end was smashed by bourgeois reaction at the expense of 30,000 working-class lives—was that the proletariat cannot seize the existing state apparatus and wield it in its own interest. As Marx and Engels taught us, the bourgeois state is made up of bodies of armed men whose task is to defend the capitalist mode of production, which is based on private property and the exploitation of labor. Its core is the army, the police, the courts and the prisons. The working class must destroy the bourgeois state through socialist revolution and erect in its place a *workers* state to defend the proletariat as the new ruling class against the recalcitrant bourgeoisie. The lessons of the Paris Commune with respect to the Marxist understanding of the state—especially as codified in *The State and Revolution* by



International Women’s Day demonstration in Petrograd, 1917. Banner demands increase in rations for soldiers’ families.

wages low! This position is, plain and simple, *reactionary*.

The IG refuses to defend partial gains. With this logic, they should oppose the defense of the nationalized oil industry, and in fact all demands directed toward improving the conditions of the working class and oppressed before the socialist revolution. Every reform, every gain for the working class and oppressed will necessarily be partial and at any moment reversible while capitalism still exists. But that’s no reason for revolutionaries to drop the struggle for partial conquests; on the contrary, our purpose is to mobilize the working class at the head of all the poor and oppressed in the fight for their most pressing needs in preparation for the general overthrow of the entire capitalist class. As Lenin explained:

“Unlike the anarchists, the Marxists recognise struggle for reforms, i.e., for measures that improve the conditions of the working people without destroying the power of the ruling class. At the same time, however, the Marxists wage a most resolute struggle against the reformists, who, directly or indirectly, restrict the aims and activities of the working class to the winning of reforms. Reformism is bourgeois deception of the workers, who, despite individual improvements, will always remain wage-slaves, as long as there is the domination of capital.” —“Marxism and Reformism” (1913)

Lessons of the Paris Commune of 1871

The combative struggle of the Oaxacan masses has infatuated the supposed “Trotskyist” left, demonstrating in deeds its crass rejection of Trotsky’s permanent revolution. The LTS salutes this struggle as “the Oaxaca Commune,” comparing it to the Paris Commune of 1871. Nothing could be more false. The Paris Commune was a *social revolution*, the first example in history of the *dictatorship of the prole-*

them directly to glorifying left populism. An example is Oaxaca. Last year the IG affirmed that the Oaxacan teachers “know that the ‘PRI, PAN, and PRD are the same thing’” (*El Internacionalista/Edición México* No. 2, August 2006), a position that they had to abandon barely days later, when the teachers and APPO called for a “punishment vote” against the PRI and the PAN—i.e., for the PRD. More recently, they wrote that the APPO masses “lacked an explicit revolutionary political perspective” (*El Internacionalista*, January 2007), implying that they had an implicit one—and only the IG knows what that means! Now, in a desperate attempt to paint APPO red, they say that “APPO’s support to PRD presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador in the July 2 elections was seen by many Oaxaca strikers as a ‘tactical’ move against Ulises Ruiz Ortiz [URO]: a vote for AMLO against URO. But for the APPO leaders it was strategic.” The IG abandons the starting point for all revolutionary politics: political support to the bourgeoisie is not some astute “tactic” but a mortal illusion that can only lead to defeat.

Not very different from the LTS, the IG also abandons the Marxist understanding of the state. Thus, in a recent article they cite uncritically—and in such a moving way—the speech of a Oaxacan student directed at the police: “‘the condition of the country made you choose between leaving your fatherland or joining that force [the Federal Preventive Police] due to the lack of opportunity,’ but that ‘you should be on this side because you are the same as us. Look at your skin, your hands, you’re the same color as us. You are also Huicholes, Mixes, Tarahumaras [indigenous peoples]’” (*El Internacionalista*, November 2006). The IG in fact approves of such statements, adding: “Appealing to the police invaders not to repress can be a correct tactic under certain circumstances, and suicidal in others. It is a dangerous illusion to think that the police ‘are also part of the people’.” Presenting such liberal appeals to the police as, again, another type of astute “tactic” can only mean sowing deadly illusions in the bourgeois state.

For New October Revolutions!

Recurring economic crises and repression are endemic to the capitalist system. The only solution to put an end to both is the overthrow of capitalism through international workers revolution. The victory of the proletariat on a world scale would place unimagined material abundance at the service of human needs, lay the basis for the elimination of classes and the eradication of social inequality based on sex and the very abolition of the social significance of race, nation and ethnicity. For the first time mankind will grasp the reins of history and control its own creation, society, resulting in an undreamed-of emancipation of human potential, and a monumental forward surge of civilization. Only then will it be possible to realize the free development of each individual as the condition for the free development of all. Reforge the Fourth International of Trotsky, world party of socialist revolution!■

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7



# Immigration...

(continued from page 1)

elections opined: “Let’s take the opportunity to force the politicians—including those who pretend to be our ‘friends’—to act on our side’s agenda for a change” (*International Socialist Review*, January-February 2007). That will be a cold day in hell. But such pitches have long defined the reformists’ “politics of the possible,” which serves only to reinforce illusions in the inherent “justice” of capitalist “democracy.”

The hard truth is that the capitalist system is based on the brutal exploitation of all labor, with the ruling class inflaming racial and ethnic hostilities to keep the working class divided and thus ensure a greater extraction of profit. As we wrote in the International Communist League’s Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998):

“Modern capitalism, i.e., imperialism, reaching into all areas of the planet, in the course of the class struggle and as economic need demands, brings into the proletariat at its bottom new sources of cheaper labor, principally immigrants from poorer and less-developed regions of the world—workers with few rights who are deemed more disposable in times of economic contraction. Thus capitalism in ongoing fashion creates different strata among the workers, while simultaneously amalgamating workers of many different lands. Everywhere, the capitalists, abetted by aristocracy-of-labor opportunists, try to poison class consciousness and solidarity among the workers by fomenting religious, national and ethnic divisions. The struggle for the unity and integrity of the working class against chauvinism and racism is thus a vital task for the proletarian vanguard.”

Only the achievement of a world socialist order can eliminate the age-old problem of poverty, which is the main driving force for mass migrations throughout the world. We fight for **full citizenship rights for all immigrants** as part of our struggle to advance the class consciousness and solidarity of the multiracial working class and prepare it for the necessary revolutionary battle against capitalist class rule. We do not seek to tinker with the capitalist system by looking for an alternative immigration policy. While we would support a genuine amnesty for undocumented workers or any other reform in the interests of working people, our bottom line is that we will worry about the ebbs and flows of the world economy when the proletariat runs it.

A real fight for immigrant rights in this country will only begin when the workers—white, black, Latino and others—understand their *common interests as a class* in opposition to all political parties and state agencies of the capitalist class. Unlocking the social power of the multiracial working class means breaking the chains forged by the labor bureaucracy which have long shackled the working class to their exploiters through support for the Democratic Party, the party of the graveyard for countless movements of social protest.

## For a Class-Struggle Fight for Immigrant Rights!

Today, the bitter fruits of looking to the Democrats for redress are brought home in the savage provisions of the Gutierrez/Flake legislation. Called the “Security Through Regularized Immigration and a Vibrant Economy” (STRIVE) act, it would grant “conditional non-immigrant status” to those of the 12 million undocumented workers who can prove they have consistently held a job in the U.S. since at least June 2006. These workers must leave the country and pay a minimum \$2,000 fine as well as back taxes. The so-called “path to citizenship” follows a six-year waiting period, with the requirement that they learn fluent English and be able to prove that they were consistently employed throughout this time, a condition that essentially shackles these workers to the tender mercies of their employers.

Packaging yesterday’s “guest worker”



**Latino workers looking for construction work in New Orleans, January 2006. Much of the debris-clearing and rebuilding has been done by undocumented immigrants.**

programs as “new worker” programs, the bill would supposedly allow some 400,000 undocumented immigrants a year to work temporarily in the U.S. with some having to pay up to **\$15,000** in fines. So immigrants subsisting on pitifully low wages and no benefits are supposed to come up with such a sum (to say nothing of the more than \$64,000 that a Bush proposal would make a family of five pay before any of its members could get a green card). In fact, this is a recipe for maintaining an army of undocumented workers continuing to live in fear of *la migrá*. Workers who could pay the money can renew their three-year visa once. Then they may be allowed to enter the long and winding road of “conditional non-immigrant status.”

This would all be backed up by further reinforcing the power of the state, and not just on the border, where the arsenal of helicopters, unmanned Predator planes, radar coverage and border guards is to be further built up. Immigrants would be tracked through a biometric database and I.C.E. would receive funds for thousands of additional agents for “workplace enforcement.” Police forces could be used to assist the Feds in conducting operations within 100 miles of the border.

Unlike the old *bracero* program, which press-ganged labor from Mexico to toil in

Grupo Espartaquista de México distributed at the mass immigrant rights protests last year argued:

“Defense of immigrant rights is necessary not only to fight the exploitation of the most vulnerable layers of the population. It is also crucial to reversing the decades-long decline of the trade unions, by enlisting immigrant workers, many of whom have a history of militant struggle, in the front ranks of the labor movement. Mexican immigrant workers can serve as a human bridge linking the struggles of the North American and Latin American proletariat.”

—“Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!” WV No. 867, 31 March 2006

## Capitalism’s Labor Lieutenants

Much of the SEIU’s 1.8-million strong membership is composed of immigrants, many of whom have waged hard-fought, militant struggles to organize. But their interests are betrayed by their top union leaders. A statement by SEIU Executive Vice President Eliseo Medina welcomed the STRIVE legislation, declaring that it “addressed the need for smart enforcement strategies at the border and in the workplace, a path to earned citizenship, and reunification of families.” The statement supported the “framework” laid out by the legislation for “a more humane worker visa program that will help fill a



**April 7: Immigrant rights demonstration in Los Angeles**

the fields and then threw them out of the country, these workers are to be delivered to all sectors of the economy. Immigrant workers already number 1.4 million in construction, although many are being thrown out of work due to the bursting of the housing bubble. Another 1.7 million are employed in manufacturing, hotels, cleaning and maintenance work, landscaping, retail and wholesale and health services, as well as agriculture. While the agribusiness bosses have long justified their brutal degradation of immigrant labor by saying that they perform work that “Americans won’t do,” the labor of undocumented workers has become structural to the national economy.

The situation cries out for a class-struggle fight to organize immigrant workers and bring them into unions with full union wages, rights and protections. A joint declaration issued by the Spartacist League/U.S. and our comrades of the

growing pool of available jobs and protect the rights of all American workers.” It would be hard to find a more servile expression of the role of the trade-union bureaucracy as the labor police for the capitalist class.

Addressing the official support to “guest worker” programs by unions in the “Change to Win” federation that split from the AFL-CIO in 2005, a *Socialist Action* (April 2007) article perceptively noted that the tops of these unions “hope that their Democratic Party friends in the Congress will allow them to collect union dues from tens of thousands of guest workers.” Rather less perceptively, the same article ludicrously presented the outbreak of protests last year as having “overturned the legislative shell game of Democrats and Republicans.”

The article remarked, “Under this scenario, Stern & Co. represent a vile new breed of corporatist unionism who might

have needed to split from the parent federation in order to better enact their social compact with the bosses.” But while the AFL-CIO tops have opposed guest worker programs, they are no less part of the same “social compact.” Their “Immigrant Workers Freedom Rides” in 2003 were centrally aimed at building support for the Democratic Party. Their opposition to the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement, which has forced millions of Mexican peasants out of the countryside, many of whom are now among the undocumented in the U.S., was the thoroughly chauvinist appeal to “save American jobs.” They have presided over the wholesale devastation of the unions at the hands of the bosses, who have seized on the opportunity to vastly increase their profits by bringing in thousands of immigrant workers, at far less wages and under far more brutal conditions.

Just look at the meatpacking industry. As unionization fell by more than half, real wages plummeted from \$20 an hour in the 1970s to \$10.50 an hour in 2001. A 2005 Pew Hispanic Center report estimates that undocumented workers may now make up more than a quarter of the meatpacking workforce. But these workers have not docilely accepted the conditions meted out by the meatpacking bosses. From Iowa to Texas to North Carolina, they have fought against abusive treatment and to protest health and safety conditions in an industry with one of the highest injury rates. Five of the six Swift meatpacking plants raided by I.C.E. last December were unionized. Yet while the UFCW union tops challenged the legality of these roundups, they did not mobilize union power to stop them and to fight the deportations.

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

Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) in the Bay Area, as well as Local 19 in Seattle, have called for “stop work meetings” on May Day in order to “support and participate in the ‘Great American Boycott II’” (*Workers World* online, 8 April). For the ILWU to actually mobilize its power in the fight for immigrant rights would be an important breakthrough. Much was made of last year’s May Day protests as an example of labor’s power. There were certainly thousands of workers involved, and various plants, particularly in meatpacking, were shut down as many immigrants did not show up for work. But the workers were not mobilized *as a class*. Whatever the presence of organized union contingents or banners at the demonstrations, such labor presence was politically dissolved by the protest leaders into an undifferentiated mass. Their purpose was not to mobilize labor but to pressure the capitalist state through the agency of the Democrats.

According to *Workers World*, the Local 10 resolution calling for the stop work meeting notes that on May Day 2006, “90 percent of the container cargo at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach was halted as the result of immigrant truckers not going to work.” That was a brave action by these workers, who are lined up in the cross hairs not only of the anti-immigrant crackdown but of the so-called “war on terror.” But more than a salute to their militancy, the non-union, mainly immigrant port truckers need the unions to wage a serious fight to organize them. This is not simply a question





Minuteman Project

**Left: Rally by reactionary Minuteman outfit, Los Angeles, June 2006. Right: Spartacists join workers to stop provocation by anti-immigrant bigots at L.A. Labor Day picnic in 2006.**



WV Photo

# Fascistic Minutemen and Anti-Immigrant Bigotry

Among the more noxious products of the government's anti-immigrant crusade are the fascistic Minuteman Project and its offshoot, the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps. Drawing on support from outright fascists, the Minutemen have a paramilitary component akin to the 1977 Klan Border Watch, the brainchild of white-supremacist David Duke. They conduct armed vigilante patrols of the border with Mexico, serving as auxiliaries to state forces. One of these immigrant-bashers' current campaigns involves erecting fences along the border to make the case for having it entirely sealed off by walls and barbed wire.

Minuteman spokesmen have also toured various campuses to peddle their racist filth, often under the sponsorship of College Republicans. Various left groups, including the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), have co-sponsored anti-Minutemen protests with college Democratic Party clubs, for example at Columbia University last October. Naturally, these reformist "socialists," who function as "Anybody but Bush" shills for the Democratic Party, breathed not a word of criticism of their co-sponsors in their coverage of the protest. When the New York University (NYU) College Republicans hosted another Minuteman speaker

at an April 9 panel discussion, the reformist left groups protesting outside again steered away from denouncing the Democrats—the *other* party of American capitalist imperialism.

As a pseudo-militant cover for working in league with the Democrats, the PSL, among others, labels the Minutemen outright fascists. In contrast, we understand that these racist bigots are not, at this time, a fascist organization that advocates or carries out deadly physical assaults on the labor movement and the oppressed. Fascists like the neo-Nazis and Ku Klux Klan have a long history of speaking with the lynch rope and recruiting to a program of genocide. When such groups have raised their heads in urban centers, as in New York City in October 1999, the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee have initiated labor/black mobilizations, centered on the power of the organized working class, to stop their rallies for racist terror. Opposing this perspective, the ISO worked in league with black Democratic Party politician Al Sharpton in an attempt to derail the mobilization of labor/black power in New York.

Though consisting primarily of white racists, the Minutemen have sought to recruit blacks and Latino citizens who buy into anti-immigrant bigotry, with some modest success. A number of Minuteman

protests have been supported by Ted Hayes, a black activist for the homeless in Los Angeles, and Anthony Williams, a black preacher in Chicago. The California-based Latino Americans for Immigration Reform has joined with the Minutemen in carrying out patrols along the Mexican border. Minuteman Project co-founder Chris Simcox even hails the late Mexican American icon Cesar Chavez, longtime head of the United Farm Workers Union, as "the original border Minuteman" for his treacherous 1969 march to the border to protest "illegal" immigration. On their Web site, the Minutemen hypocritically distance themselves from neo-Nazis and other "extremists." But whenever the Minutemen call an action, just such fascist vermin crawl out to join them.

Our position on what action to take against the Minutemen depends on the concrete circumstances. When these racists engage in physical provocations directed at immigrants and their allies, we seek to mobilize workers and minorities to stop them. Last year in the Los Angeles area, a dozen Minuteman and other bigots tried to disrupt a Labor Day march and picnic. Trade unionists and members of immigrant rights groups, joined by our supporters, surrounded these sinister racists, and L.A. cops had to step in to escort them out (see "Racist Minuteman Provocation Spiked,"

WV No. 876, 15 September 2006).

But when the Minutemen appear as reactionary ideologues on campuses, we do not support the liberal/reformist position of disrupting their meetings or seeking to drive them off. Rather, as in the case of other right-wing ideologues like David Horowitz, we seek to refute their poisonous anti-immigrant politics through protest and exposure. When members of the ISO and PSL among others took the stage and unfurled banners as Minuteman founder Jim Gilchrist spoke at Columbia, his supporters violently attacked the protesters. This gave the Minutemen the pretext to shut down their event and scream that their free speech had been trampled.

A Spartacus Youth Club leaflet issued shortly after the protest noted: "Shutting them down in this context simply played into the hands of the reactionaries' false and absurd claim that the left is trampling free speech, when in fact it is the right-wing bigots that have been waging a massive campaign to purge the campuses of leftists, immigrants, blacks and any voice that is in opposition to the ruling-class agenda." The leaflet, reprinted in WV No. 879 (27 October 2006), denounced the investigation launched by the administration against the protesters, stating, "*Defend anti-Minutemen protesters! No administration reprisals!*" Outrageously, eight of the protesters have now received disciplinary warnings or censures from the Columbia administration.

An ISO speaker at the rally outside the Columbia event stated that the Minutemen "don't have a right to free speech because it's not free speech, it's hate speech." At bottom, this is a liberal call to suppress racist ideology, which leads logically to appeals to the campus administration and/or the bourgeois state to regulate what people can and cannot say. Thus following a grotesque College Republican "Find the Illegal Immigrant" event at NYU this February, the College Democrats and LUCHA (Latinos Unidos Con Honor y Amistad) called on the administration to revoke the College Republicans' charter. Calls on the administration to regulate speech will necessarily and overwhelmingly rebound against the left and defenders of the rights of the oppressed. While the reformist left pushes fealty to the Democratic Party of racism and war, our perspective is to defend immigrant rights through mobilizing working-class power against the racist capitalist system. ■

of their defense, but of the defense of the ILWU itself, which is increasingly isolated as a bastion of union power amid low-wage and non-union workers in the maritime and related transportation industries.

In 2002, the Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense and the Partisan Defense Committee issued a call for a united-front mobilization based on the power of the unions to fight against the government's anti-immigrant witchhunt and "war on terror" laws. Among these laws is the Maritime Security Act, which is aimed at the heart of the longshore and transport unions. Noting that the rulers had taken first aim at immigrants of Near Eastern descent, hundreds of whom were rounded up and thrown in jail following September 11, the call argued: "They've created the spectre of an 'enemy within' in order to strengthen the power of their own consummately violent state. But what America's racist rulers can get away with will be determined by the class struggle."

Some 300 unionists, immigrants, blacks and youth answered that call, marching in downtown Oakland on February 9. The internationalist spirit of this demonstration was underlined in the greetings from our Mexican comrades. Noting their own struggle against the nationalist lie that all Mexicans—exploiters and exploited alike—share the same interests up against the Yankee imperialist colossus, the GEM statement declared: "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."

A core of some 30 overwhelmingly black members of ILWU Local 10 was critical to this mobilization. The February 9 protest was an exemplary action that, on a small scale, illustrated the program of working-class revolutionary internationalism, which is vital not only to the defense of immigrant rights but to transforming the unions into organizations of class struggle. As the preamble to the program of the Labor Black Leagues states: "We fight to win the entire working class, including white workers as well as the growing number of Latino and other immigrants, to the fight for black liberation, strategic to the American revolution. Black and working-class militants must stand for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and in their defense against racist and chauvinist anti-immigrant attacks. An injury to one is an injury to all!"

## The Politics of the Possible

A central demand for the May 1 protests is "legalization for all immigrants now!" As an article by the ISO's Lee Sustar in *CounterPunch* (24 February) explains, this simply means opposition to any legislation that would deny "guest worker" status to all of the presently undocumented workers in the U.S.

The article lays out that this is the basis for preserving "unity" between "organizations that have accepted guest-worker proposals and more militant immigrant groups that oppose such measures as second-class citizenship." With this kind of "unity," why bother protesting at all since it is evidently OK if immigrant workers are indentured servants as long as it is "legal"?

Such grotesque reformism is taken to even greater depths in an article by Nativio Lopez, president of the Mexican American Political Association, in *Against the Current* (March-April 2007), in which he opines: "We can certainly reaffirm what unites us as a national alliance while we forge unity with all others who minimally agree that immigrants represent inherent value for America, and that the fair return for all that they contribute to the greatness of this country is a legal recognition of permanent status, and eventually U.S. citizenship." As U.S. imperialism rampages around the globe, devastating Afghanistan and Iraq, destroying the lives and livelihoods of millions in Mexico under NAFTA, immigrants here who are being ground under the heel of American capitalism are to be saluted for their contribution to the "greatness" of the U.S.A., and maybe even eventually allowed to become citizens.

The various coalitions of the Workers World Party and its spin off, the Party for Socialism and Liberation, provide a

more radical gloss to the May 1 protests with demands such as: protection of all workers' rights; money for human needs, not war; economic and social justice for Katrina survivors; and jobs for all now. What they don't tell you is that the fight for such demands means a revolutionary fight to get rid of the capitalist profit system. There's plenty of wealth in this society, created by the labor of workers and appropriated by the tiny class of capitalists who own the means of production. To get the money for jobs, schools and health care, to make life livable for blacks, immigrants, the poor and all working people means breaking the power of the bourgeoisie.

The reformists acquiesce to what is "possible" and practical under capitalism. Ours is a different purpose: to build a workers party that fights for a socialist revolution to expropriate the capitalist class and establish a workers state with a planned, collectivized economy. As the struggles in defense of immigrant rights and against the wars, neocolonial occupations and other depredations visited by U.S. imperialism around the globe make vividly clear, this must be an international fight. Our watchwords are those that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels inscribed on their banner more than 150 years ago in the *Communist Manifesto*: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!" ■

# From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal

## Of Nappy Heads and Hard Hearts



The recent flap over the whimsical words of radio's Don Imus have reminded us how raw are the feelings of people in an age we like to think of as that of a "new" century.

With one deft line, Imus was able to lob a verbal depth charge into the oceans of the heart, spreading wreckage for miles.

It spoke volumes of the tender tissues of which the nation's illusion of civility is composed; and the continuing power of racial and sexual stereotypes to send shock waves of pain far and wide.

Three words: "nappy-headed hos," did the damage; but it did damage precisely because our wounds are so raw, so close to the surface, with a thin scab of coverage.

It also worked because what society has become, has turned a throwaway joke into a searing reality. For within that poisonous epithet is an ancient antipathy toward Africans, merged with a long and deep history of misogyny (or hatred of women).

In America, who can debate whether Black women are the most disfavored of all the nation's women?

What did we learn from the horrors of Katrina, if not this?

Seen in this light, we see all too clearly, how easy it was, how available it was, for Imus to point at the most isolated sector of American life, and let it go. It was a freebie.

And what of Imus, a man approaching his 67th summer of life, who's still billed as a 'bad boy' of radio?

His radio-TV show is a monster of a moneymaker, with tens of millions of dollars spent on ads to reach his vast audience. And he has (had?) that audience because he aims his shtick at the lowest common denominator—racist, sexist, slur and ridicule—which warms the cockles of the White, Male, American heart. It plays because he hits a nerve, early and often, which resonates within the psyche of millions.

It was this national nerve which twitched with snickers when the I-Man pointed his tongue at the mostly Black women who carried Rutgers University to the brink of a national championship; who, by coming in second place, exceeded every expectation

of them, and assured them a kind of immortality in the evanescent pages of the sports record books. Until, that is, someone looked at them, and noticed that there was something not quite right (or was it white?) about them.

Dark, athletic, talented women—scholar-athletes—with their hair twisted into braids, and in their moment of near triumph, a public snicker, to remind them of who they *really* are in the good ole' U.S. of A.

Imus struck, goaded on by one of the boys....

His name, split in two—is I'm US—and, in a perverse way, he is (or maybe was).

For while Imus mouthed the words, the country lives the reality—daily.

In education, housing, health care, jobs, the legal system, on TV, in the papers—*every day*—this silent curse is launched at Black female life, screaming their view of their lack of worth.

Imus just gave this affirmation.

By so doing, he made millions.

And ain't that the American way?

11 April 2007

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**Send urgently needed contributions for Mumia's legal defense, made payable to "National Lawyers Guild Foundation" and earmarked for "Mumia," to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, P.O. Box 2012, New York, NY 10159.**

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

## Abortion...

(continued from page 12)

on demand as part of a program of free, quality health care for all. These are vital necessities for women and for working people as a whole, along with paid maternity and paternity leave and free 24-hour childcare. Every real gain won by working people and the oppressed has been the result of hard class and social struggle, not appeals to capitalist politicians and the courts.

With their eyes on the White House prize, Bush's bourgeois Democratic Party opponents were quick to seize on the Supreme Court ruling. Senator Dianne Feinstein said she was "truly shocked" by the decision, and presidential contender John Edwards called it "a stark reminder of why Democrats cannot afford to lose the 2008 election." But it was the Democratic Party politicians and bourgeois feminists who paved the way for the attacks on abortion rights, however "shocked" they now claim to be. Three decades of attacks on *Roe v. Wade* started with "born again" Democratic president

Jimmy Carter, who in 1977 sneered, "There are many things in life that are not fair" as he signed into law the Hyde Amendment eliminating abortion coverage from Medicaid.

The Reagan years and those of Bush Senior were dark ones for defenders of abortion rights, but the rollbacks continued under Bill Clinton. During his eight years in office, safe access to abortion was gutted in much of the country, as numerous state laws further restricted access and the number of abortion providers plummeted. Clinton ended "welfare as we know it," consigning millions of single mothers and others to desperate poverty. Bourgeois feminist groups such as NOW and NARAL *demobilized* protest in defense of abortion clinics by preaching reliance on the Democratic administration. Today, while paying lip service to abortion rights, the Democratic Party spouts the "family values" rhetoric of the Republicans, aiming to win over a section of their religious constituency. Pandering to religious backwardness, Hillary Clinton proclaimed in 2005 that "abortion in many ways represents a sad, even tragic choice." In fact, for many women abor-

tion is more a necessity than a "choice."

The Supreme Court ruling is a stark expression of how religion is used to further social reaction. The majority's "faith-based" decision reflects a confluence of reactionary Catholic and Protestant fundamentalist hostilities to women and modern medical science. Preaching about the "difficult and painful moral decision" involved in abortion, the Court's patronizing edict evokes biblical images of women as the weaker vessel who must be protected from deceitful doctors hiding from them the horrible "crime" they are about to commit. The decision borrows directly from the phrasebook of the Operation Rescue bigots in upholding the state's "legitimate interests" in promoting "respect for life, including life of the unborn."

The need for abortions in later stages of pregnancy is particularly an issue for women who are young and poor, many of them black and Hispanic, because they have virtually no access to health care, contraceptives or even sex education. What's actually painful and difficult in racist, capitalist America is being a single mother, desperately seeking nonexistent

day care or an affordable medical clinic or an apartment to live in. Or how about the anguish of a frightened teenager seeking a pharmacy that will sell her Plan B contraceptives? Or the difficulty of getting hold of a car and driving hundreds of miles to the only abortion clinic in Mississippi and sleeping overnight in the parking lot to fulfill the state-mandated waiting period—and then waking up to a gauntlet of protesters with five-foot posters of fetuses? Today **87 percent** of U.S. counties have no abortion provider.

The legal right to abortion was won as a result of the massive social struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, centrally the struggles for black rights and against the Vietnam War. But as the attacks on abortion rights show, reforms are always reversible when power is in the hands of the racist capitalist exploiters. It is only with the destruction of capitalism that humanity will be freed from state repression and religious bigotry interfering in the private affairs of people's lives. The liberation of women requires a socialist revolution that will uproot the private property system and bring women fully into social and political life. ■

## JOIN THE CAMPAIGN TO FREE MUMIA!

### Funds are urgently needed for legal defense!

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



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

**Spread the word!** Contact the PDC for copies of *The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal—Mumia Is Innocent!* This pamphlet arms activists in the struggle for Mumia's freedom by presenting the political basis of the state vendetta against Mumia and the explosive evidence which completely destroys the more than two-decades-long frame-up of this eloquent fighter for black freedom. It is available for \$1. Get the PDC button: "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!"—\$1 each. Order the PDC video, *From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal*—\$10 for DVD, \$15 for VHS. Bundles of the 4-page brochure, *Mumia Is an Innocent Man: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!*—\$2 for 25 copies. Order from/make checks payable to Partisan Defense Committee at our New York City address below.

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# Racism...

(continued from page 12)

mass incarceration of black and Latino youth. He has also acted as the bourgeoisie's fireman in dousing the flames of class struggle, demobilizing black workers, including from the ILA longshore union, who were marching in defense of school busing in the early 1980s in Norfolk, Virginia, and playing a key role in defusing the L.A. transit strike in 2000.

Then there's Al Sharpton, a demagogue and hustler who wore a wire for the Feds in the 1980s. In 1986, Sharpton led boycotts in Harlem against Arab shopkeepers. He further served the racist exploiters by pushing bankrupt police "reform" schemes in order to squelch struggle against the acquittal of the cops who pumped 41 bullets into unarmed black African immigrant Amadou Diallo. Sharpton even fronted for the Ku Klux Klan in October 1999 by going to court on their behalf in opposition to the Partisan Defense Committee-initiated labor/black mobilization against the Klan in New York City.

To our reformist opponents in the International Socialist Organization (ISO), the Imus affair "highlights how liberal journalists, supposedly committed to objectivity, nod and wink at the most outrageous, hateful and bigoted behavior, as long as it serves their careers—and how racism has been made respectable in the mainstream media" (*Socialist Worker* online, 20 April). No kidding! The ISO gloats that Imus's dumping shows "a shift in the political climate—reflected in, but going far beyond, the ouster of the Republican Congress last November and the ever-worsening crisis of the Bush administration."

Such liberal "Anybody but Bush" gushing only serves to obscure the reality that the Democrats are the other party of racist American capitalism. It was in the context of the horrific conditions for the black population today—conditions reinforced by the betrayals of the self-proclaimed (Democratic Party) black "leaders" and the (largely pro-Democratic Party) trade-union misleadership—that Imus's disgusting racial slurs hit a raw nerve. Enough has become more than enough, and this was one head that had to roll, with forces far more powerful than that of the Rutgers team clamoring for action, however token. But "cleaning up" the airwaves by getting rid of this particular bigot or adding a few more black executives—Jesse Jackson's timeworn refrain—won't bring about any amelioration in the condition of the black masses, much less the fundamental social overturn required to smash the racist oppression endemic to American capitalist society.

As Marxists, our interest is in changing material reality, in forever destroying the social basis for black oppression in this country by welding the anger of the ghetto poor to the power of labor and effecting a proletarian socialist revolution. We do not

hold that this can occur by sanitizing social reality through "politically correct" discourse or moral appeals to the "conscience" of the racist rulers, including their corporate media mouthpieces.

Black oppression is embedded in the foundation of American capitalism. The



**Six-year-old Desre'e Watson was handcuffed and jailed in Florida on felony charges for throwing a tantrum in kindergarten.**

chains of black chattel slavery were shattered only by iron and blood in the American Civil War, the second American revolution. Following emancipation and the betrayal of Radical Reconstruction through a compromise by the Northern capitalists and the former Southern slavery, the shackles of institutionalized Jim Crow segregation lasted well into the mid 20th century. While the struggles for civil rights resulted in the end of legal segregation in the South, under their liberal, pro-Democratic Party leadership they did not and could not address the fundamental material conditions of the

mass of the black population, North and South. The black population constitutes an oppressed race-color caste, segregated in the mass at the bottom of American society. At the same time, militant black workers have historically played, and continue to play, a leading role in the struggles of the labor movement.

The decades-long rollback of the gains wrested by the civil rights movement and other social struggles in the 1960s underlines the fact that it will take a third American Revolution—a socialist revolution—to bring about full social equality for black people. The college campuses have been the targets of a virtual racist purge as affirmative action programs are slashed and tuition skyrockets. Just in the last few years, infant mortality rates in Mississippi and other Southern states have jumped sharply, particularly in impoverished black households. In many ways today, conditions for the black masses are worse than at the time of the civil rights movement.

With a massive decrease in good union jobs, mainly as a result of the deindustrialization of the U.S. economy and the supine response of the pro-capitalist trade-union tops, generations of black youth have been thrown on the scrap heap. "By the time they reach their mid-thirties, a full 60 percent of black high school dropouts are now prisoners or ex-cons," according to an article on "The American Prison Nightmare" in the *New York Review of Books* (12 April). Even black children as young as six years old can be hauled away in handcuffs, as was the case in Avon Park, Florida, where Desre'e Watson was *charged with a felony* for a kindergarten tantrum and booked at the county jail, her fingerprints and mug shots duly taken. And this was no isolated event.

Grotesquely, some of Imus's defenders sought to equate his language with that of black rap musicians who routinely use the "N" word as well as gross anti-women and anti-gay lyrics. They do not equate.

Only the most "colorblind" could fail to see the difference between the use of racist epithets in rap lyrics and the spewings of Imus and his coterie of backward wise guys.

There is certainly an ugly side to the "message" rap conveys, reflecting widespread backward attitudes in the ghettos, where anti-Semitism, sexism, anti-gay prejudice and anti-immigrant bigotry are noxious by-products of oppression. We oppose the use of racist epithets by anyone, black, white or other. In our article "The 'N' Word in Racist America" (WV No. 807, 1 August 2003) we explained:

"Far from being a sign of a subversive assault on the language of oppression, the pervasive use of the slave masters' epithet by black youth reflects a profound, if unconscious, demoralization and self-hatred, an internalization of the demeaning view of black people propagated by the capitalist rulers and the mass media. Its use represents a *retreat* from the fight against racism and within the working class and can only offend and divide."

No tinkering with the present system, no amount of combat against "bad ideas," can accomplish the historic task of black emancipation. Our perspective is that of *revolutionary integrationism*, based on the understanding that black freedom requires smashing the capitalist system and constructing an egalitarian socialist society. Our inspiration and model is the Bolshevik Party of V. I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, which led the October Revolution of 1917, the greatest act of social liberation in all history. In placing the working class of Russia in power, it opened the door to the emancipation of women, the many oppressed nationalities and the long-suffering Jewish people. Our aim is to emulate the Bolsheviks by building a revolutionary party with a significant black leadership component that will lead the proletariat, at the head of all the oppressed, in the struggle for workers power. For black liberation through socialist revolution! ■

## Join the PDC Contingents at the Philadelphia and Bay Area Rallies!

# For Class-Struggle Defense to Free Mumia Now! There Is No Justice in the Capitalist Courts! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

The Partisan Defense Committee is mobilizing contingents for rallies called by supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal to coincide with oral arguments in his *habeas corpus* appeal scheduled for May 17.

## Thursday, May 17

**Philadelphia: 8:30 a.m.  
6th and Market Streets**

(Outside Third Circuit Court of Appeals)

For more information and round-trip transportation  
from New York City call the PDC: (212) 406-4252  
or e-mail: [partisandefense@earthlink.net](mailto:partisandefense@earthlink.net)

**San Francisco: 4-6 p.m.  
7th and Mission Streets**

(Outside U.S. Court of Appeals Bldg.)

For information on Bay Area contingent  
call: (510) 839-0852  
or e-mail: [pdcbayarea@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pdcbayarea@sbcglobal.net)

Visit the Partisan Defense Committee Web site: [www.partisandefense.org](http://www.partisandefense.org)

## Spartacist League/Labor Black League Forums

### The Road to Black Freedom: Revolutionary Marxism vs. Black Nationalism

### The Racist Rulers' Vendetta Against the Black Panther Party from COINTELPRO to the Frame-up of Mumia Abu-Jamal

With an update on the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal

#### LOS ANGELES

Saturday, May 5, 3 p.m.

Mt. Hollywood Congregational Church  
4607 Prospect Ave., Hollywood

(1 block east of Vermont, Vermont/Sunset Red-Line station)

For more information: (213) 380-8239  
or e-mail: [slsycla@sbcglobal.net](mailto:slsycla@sbcglobal.net)

#### BAY AREA

Saturday, May 12, 4:30 p.m.

Laney College  
Room D200

(1 block from Lake Merritt BART station)

For more information: (510) 839-0851  
or e-mail: [slbayarea@sbcglobal.net](mailto:slbayarea@sbcglobal.net)

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# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Free Abortion on Demand!

### Supreme Court Rolls Back Abortion Rights

On April 18, the Supreme Court upheld a 2003 law criminalizing a rarely used second-trimester abortion procedure, intact dilation and extraction. Doctors now face up to two years in prison for performing the procedure. As we wrote four years ago in “Fight Rollback of Abortion Rights!” (WV No. 800, 28 March 2003):

“This is nothing short of a major assault against legalized abortion established by the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* deci-

sion. If this bill becomes law, it would be the wedge for overturning *all* abortion rights, which the anti-woman bigots have sought for the last three decades through both legislative and judicial means and the unleashing of ‘god squads’ that have bombed abortion clinics, terrorized patients and even murdered doctors.”

Troy Newman, president of Operation Rescue, which has long spearheaded the drive against abortion rights, gloated: “The court has now said it’s OK

to ban procedures. We can do more than just put hurdles in front of women seeking abortions—we can put roadblocks in front of them” (BostonHerald.com, 18 April). In fact, the Bush gang wants to impose its reactionary “morality” on every aspect of everyone’s life. The onslaught against abortion is a spearhead for generalized social reaction—against women’s and gay rights, against black people and other minorities, against civil liberties.

What is urgently needed is militant struggle to defend and extend women’s rights, including the right to abortion. It is outrageous that the capitalist state—from state legislatures up to whatever nine people are appointed for life to the Supreme Court, an inherently reactionary institution—should have the life-and-death power to intervene in people’s most intimate, private decisions. We fight for free abortion and contraception

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# Don Imus and Racism U.S.A.

Don Imus, the foulmouthed multimillionaire “shock jock” who has talked racist, anti-woman, anti-gay, anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim trash for years on his “Imus in the Morning” show, was canned this month by both MSNBC and CBS. Public outcry over his nasty racist slur against the mainly black Rutgers University women’s basketball team sealed his fate, after initial attempts by Imus and his network bosses at damage control. We say good riddance to Imus and his swinish sidekicks. But for all the liberal angst that dominated the media for about a two-week news cycle, his firing does nothing to address the material reality of racist oppression in this country.

On April 6, two days after Imus and executive producer Bernard McGuirk (also subsequently canned) made their grotesquely racist and sexist comments, with Imus referring to the Rutgers team as “nappy-headed hos,” the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) led the attack, issuing a press statement demanding first an apology and then his firing. The NABJ was joined by others, including the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. When MSNBC finally pulled the plug on its simulcast of the Imus program, followed shortly thereafter by CBS radio broadcasters, it claimed that the pullout of sponsors such as American Express, Sprint, Staples, Procter & Gamble and General Motors was not the tipping point. Rather, pressure by MSNBC employees—black and white, men and women—had played the decisive role.

In a *Washington Post* (13 April) article, Eugene Robinson wrote: “Two of the network’s on-air stars—‘Today’ weatherman Al Roker and NBC correspondent Ron Allen—authored strong anti-Imus posts on NBC blogs.” He noted further that women and minorities who worked at NBC told management “they felt the sting of Imus’s attacks personally.” Alexander Cockburn, writing in *CounterPunch* (14 April), was to the point: “People finally got mad and the networks blinked. That’s good, even though it won’t change anything.”

The history of racist, sexist garbage spewed by Imus & Co. is long and well documented. (Imus is hardly unique; one could add the likes of Ann Coulter, Bill O’Reilly, Rush Limbaugh, to name but a few in a long list of reactionary, racist mouthpieces, offending all the way to the

**Right: Members of Rutgers women’s basketball team, target of racist rant by Don Imus (inset). Below: New Orleans in aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.**

AP



## Capitalist America: Hell for Black People



Rourke/American-Statesman

bank.) Imus’s nauseating and frequent use of such language—and the tolerance of it—reflects the reality of racist oppression in capitalist America, reflections flourishing in a retrograde political climate. The broadcast equivalent of the gutter press, the “shock jocks” promote open vile racism, all-sided bigotry and American chauvinism

on behalf of this country’s capitalist rulers.

The long list of political officeholders and aspirants of both capitalist parties and media and literary luminaries—mostly white and male, but not exclusively so—who appeared regularly on Imus’s program have made quite a nauseating spectacle themselves. They opined that the

incident had called forth a “national conversation” about race and sex, a claim laced with crocodile tears about their own respective roles as “enablers.” The networks, and not only Imus’s employers at CBS and MSNBC, suddenly discovered “disparity” in the situation of black and white people in the U.S. and quoted relevant statistics to that effect—at least for the duration of the news cycle.

One need only look at Hurricane Katrina for an indelible image of the reality of life for black people. The black and poor of New Orleans were left to suffer, left to die, through sheer ruling-class contempt and incompetence on the part of not only the Bush administration but the Democrats on the state and local level as well. Over Imus, however, Democrats, white and black, piled on with their practiced hypocrisy, their cynical posture as “friends” of the oppressed. Thus, Hillary Clinton promptly posted material about the scandal on her Web site and eventually made her way to Rutgers to speak. (The Clintons have an ax to grind, as Imus & Co. repeatedly referred to Hillary Clinton as “Satan.”) Barack Obama, who had appeared some years ago on Imus’s show to plug one of his books, announced that he would not be a guest in the future. Democrats Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton also latched onto the Imus affair in order to shore up their credentials as “black leaders.”

The real deal is that the Democrats, while occasionally mouthing something about “diversity” as they trawl for votes and to cash in on the enormous unpopularity of the demented Bush regime, are up to their necks in the oppression of the black masses. Democratic president Bill Clinton, who managed to conjure a reputation as a “friend” to the black population, implemented the ending of “welfare as we know it,” accelerated the use of the racist death penalty and carried out hideous imperialist attacks against Iraq and Serbia, among other crimes against the world’s oppressed and working masses. Such, of course, are the normal workings of capitalist “democracy.”

For his part, Jesse Jackson’s job has been and continues to be winning back to the fold blacks and other minorities who become discontented with the Democrats. Jackson egged on the racist “war on drugs,” the results of which are counted in the

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