

Break with the Democrats! For a Class-Struggle Workers Party!

The Obama Campaign and the “End of Racism” Myth



AFP

**For Black Liberation
Through Socialist Revolution!**

The candidates of the capitalist Democratic Party say their 2008 campaigns are all about “change.” After seven years of rule by the demented Bush gang (or what’s left of its inner circle), much of the American populace does indeed want change. The widely unpopular, bloody imperialist occupation of Iraq drags on, the economy teeters on recession, the wages and living conditions of those with jobs have taken a pounding, home foreclosures are soaring, civil liberties have been increasingly shredded. The racist atrocity in the face of Hurricane Katrina is the domestic signature of the Bush administration; millions watched angrily as the poor and black residents of New Orleans were left to die or suffer intolerable conditions. From Abu Ghraib to Guantánamo Bay, the lexicon of torture has become a matter of “civilized debate” in bourgeois circles.

The trade-union bureaucrats and the black bourgeois politicians, tailed by the reformist left, seize on social discontent to peddle the lie that support to the “lesser evil” Democratic Party will serve the interests of working people and the oppressed. But the policies pursued by the Bush regime are not simply the product of a particularly vicious admin-

istration. Imperialist war, racism and repression are endemic to the capitalist system. As Marxists, we fight to break workers and the oppressed from illusions in the Democrats, the other party of war and racism, and to forge a workers party that fights to overturn the capital-

ist system through workers revolution.

In the 2008 presidential race, the Democrats offer two front-runners who would have been unthinkable even a few years ago: a black man, U.S. Senator Barack Obama, and a woman, former first lady Hillary Clinton. Obama took the Iowa

caucuses; Clinton the New Hampshire primary. The third top candidate in the Democratic Party race, former vice presidential candidate Senator John Edwards, poses as a populist out to fight the “special interests” and “corporate greed.” In stump speeches, they’re all for “healing,” “hope” and “unity.” They’re “fired up and ready to go,” not least to restore the battered image of U.S. imperialism in the world, including with some belated nods to the popular demand to withdraw sooner rather than later from Iraq.

The Democrats’ rhetoric is meant to refurbish illusions that the shell game of *continued on page 8*



AP

New Orleans, September 2005: Hurricane Katrina survivors abandoned by racist capitalist rulers (left). Demonstrators from all over the U.S. rallied in Jena, Louisiana, on 20 September 2007 against Jim Crow persecution of six black youth.



Winter/NY Times

Down With U.S. Provocations Against Iran!

U.S. imperialism is again rattling its saber against Iran. Alleging that on January 6 Iranian patrol boats in the Strait of Hormuz threatened three U.S. warships—part of the vast, nuclear-armed U.S. armada off the coast of Iran—President Bush declared that “there will be serious consequences if they attack our ships, pure and simple” and warned that “all options are on the table to protect our assets.” The Bush administration has threatened Iran since 2002 as part of the “axis of evil,” listing

it along with several other countries as a potential target for a nuclear first strike. This latest imperialist provocation occurred as Bush set out on a tour of the Near East, in part to rally Arab states against the “Iranian threat.”

When the Pentagon released its video of the patrol boat “incident”—showing unarmed speedboats in the vicinity of the warships, with audio spliced in saying, “you will explode”—the Iranian government denounced it as a fabrication. Tehran then released its own video of the incident showing an Iranian patrol boat issuing a routine request for identification, with a routine response from the U.S. warship. The U.S. government’s story has increasingly unraveled, as even the Pentagon later admitted that it didn’t know where the audio “threat” came

from. Whatever the facts of the incident, the real provocation is that U.S. warships are patrolling off the coast of Iran and threatening the country. As our comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain stressed in a statement issued after Iran seized 15 British army and naval personnel near the Iranian coast: “We do not know what the British forces were up to at the time of their capture, but we do know that the imperialists are the aggressors and this semi-colonial country is in their crosshairs” (reprinted in WV No. 890, 13 April 2007).

Having overwhelmingly given the Bush administration the green light to carry out the brutal invasion and occupation of Iraq, the Democrats today join the Republicans in declaring Iran to be a “threat.” All the major Democratic presi-

dential candidates—Clinton, Obama and Edwards—have likewise made clear that “all options are on the table” against Iran. In fact, a common criticism of Bush by the Democrats is that the occupation of Iraq has been a distraction from effectively confronting Iran.

In the event of an attack by the U.S. imperialists or the nuclear-armed Israeli state, it is in the interest of the international working class, including working people in the U.S., to take a side for the military defense of Iran without giving an iota of political support to the reactionary Tehran regime. The pretext for the threats against Iran had been its supposed nuclear weapons program, which even U.S. intelligence agencies now say was abandoned in 2003. We *continued on page 10*



Union Tops Push Giveback Contract Democrats Put Chicago Transit Workers on the Chopping Block

We reprint below a Spartacist leaflet issued on January 7 in Chicago. The Illinois state government may be on the verge of approving long-term funding for Chicago mass transit that would avert the immediate threat of mass layoffs and service cuts. This funding would seal the rotten arbitration contract rammed through last summer.

CHICAGO—2,400 Chicago transit workers (almost a quarter of the entire workforce) face the new year with the threat of a January 20 mass layoff hanging over their heads. And Chicago's working population faces cuts of *over half* the city's bus routes, hitting poor, black and Latino neighborhoods especially hard. For over a year, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) heads, hand-picked by the Democratic mayor Richard M. Daley, have been threatening increasingly onerous "Doomsday" scenarios if they don't get more funding from the Democratic-controlled Illinois state government. Even if the funding comes through, the company has made clear that it is looking to slash union jobs through privatization and attrition. If they get away with these attacks, the city's bosses will be emboldened in their attacks on other city unions.

Dump Binding Arbitration!

A union job with the CTA has long been viewed as a "job for life" with decent wages, benefits and a good pension. The threatened "Doomsday" cuts and other attacks on this heavily black workforce come amid all-sided attacks on workers, black people and immigrants in "Segregation City." In recent years the bulk of the city's public housing projects have been razed to the ground. In the past year the Cook County health system has been crippled with hundreds of layoffs and the closure of 12 out of 26 public health clinics. And the racist killer cops have been running rampant, gunning down black youth in particular (see "Chicago Cops Keep on Killing—PDC Speaker: Mobilize Labor! Protest Racist Cop Terror!", *Workers Vanguard* No. 897, 31 August 2007). The transit system itself

is rotting and dysfunctional. Even aside from the current budget gap, the CTA estimates it would take another **\$6 billion** to bring the rail and bus system into the 21st century.

The Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) locals 241 (bus) and 308 (rail) are singularly positioned to stop the "Doomsday" cuts, with the social power to turn the Loop into a parking lot. A real labor fight against the layoffs and service cuts would find natural allies in the city's multiracial working population as a whole as well as the impoverished black and Latino masses who have a vital need for free, quality mass transit. But this potential power is continually kept in check by the ATU trade union tops' prostration before the Democrats and their embrace of binding arbitration. This flows from their pro-capitalist program and the lie that workers share common interests with the bosses. **Break with the Democrats! For a workers party!**

Last June, the ATU tops, in cahoots with the CTA brass, the Daley administration and Democratic governor Rod Blagojevich, agreed to a sellout contract. That contract, the rotten fruit of arbitration, is still dependent on the state providing more transit funding. The 5-year deal, unprecedented in length, jacks up the employee share of contributions for pension and retiree health care, canceling raises planned for the first two years of the contract. This deal robs transit workers of around \$30 million a year in order to help bail out the pension fund and to finance their own retirement health care plan.

To cram this rotten pact down the membership's throats, the union bureaucrats agreed to run it through "expedited" binding arbitration, preventing a union vote and writing off in advance any possibility to strike. Under Illinois law, it is **voluntary** for the transit unions to enter into arbitration! This makes the third contract in a row that the ATU 241 tops have turned to arbitration. Binding arbitration has long been a crucial weapon in the union-busting arsenal of the bosses, designed to **stop** strikes from happening and to gut the very purpose of unions. Binding arbitration takes a decision on the contract out of the hands of the workers and into the hands of supposedly "neutral" arbitrators who are in fact stacked against the union.

The bureaucrats' embrace of this class collaboration, which ties labor to the exploiters, goes hand in hand with their longstanding allegiance to the capitalist Democratic Party. Since the summer, the ATU misleaders have put everything into lobbying efforts in Springfield, and nothing into any real fight against the company's "Doomsday" threats, much less a better contract. In fact, if the CTA gets every penny the union tops are lobbying for, the transit workers will still be getting the same rotten arbitration deal.

In early December, the union tops called for a "job action" for Monday, December 17. Instead of mobilizing the union ranks in united action, they called for a voluntary one-day "sick out." This would have made it much easier for the company to victimize individual workers. Nevertheless, transit workers took the sick out seriously as a way to finally protest the dire threat to their livelihoods, perceiving it to be some kind of action against the bosses' attacks. Workers reported to *WV* salesmen how there had been lively discussions at work locations, and by phone between locations, to be sure support for the sick out was solid.

But the union bureaucracy called it off on December 14, making it clear that it was never a real threat but one more stunt to pressure the bourgeois politicians. "This is an action we never wanted to take in the first place," said ATU 308 president Rick Harris. "We were trying to be heard by the state legislators that we needed help." The same day a letter from the ATU International was mass distributed to workers at company expense, ordering the local union presidents to "cease and desist" any talk of a "job action." The letter also threatened the union locals with trusteeship or expulsion if they did not back down. The company has since threatened to seek a court injunction to block walkouts in the future.

To questions from workers as to what was gained by the threatened sick out, union leaders reportedly explained that the arbitration deal, which was set to expire at the end of the year, had been extended to January 20, the day of the mass layoffs! So while the workers face getting thrown in the streets, the union tops are just looking to preserve their arbitration deal.

In trying to excuse their inaction, ATU officials have reportedly pointed to the Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 strike in New York City in December 2005 as proof that illegal strikes don't work. In fact, transit workers **crippled the center of finance capitalism** by walking off the job in defiance of the state Taylor Law's ban on public workers strikes. But with strikers up against

continued on page 10



TROTSKY

For the Communism of Lenin, Luxemburg and Liebknecht!

This month, the International Communist League continues the communist tradition of honoring the "Three L's": Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin, who died in January 1924, and Marxist leaders Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Luxemburg and Liebknecht were assassinated in January 1919 by the reactionary Freikorps as part of the German Social Democratic government's suppression of the Spartakist uprising. We print below a 1930 appreciation of Rosa Luxemburg published in

the Militant, newspaper of the Communist League of America, the Trotskyists at the time.

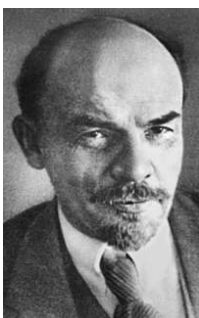
From the period of her first work in Poland to the day that the Communist Party in Germany was founded by her and Karl Liebknecht, her record can be searched in vain for any compromise in principle....

It was Rosa Luxemburg who published the first appeals to the German proletariat, to the German masses, to rise against the imperialist war and the socialist bellwethers who led them to the slaughter....

Rosa Luxemburg knew how to stand and fight as a minority, even a minority of one. Especially now should this characteristic of hers be recalled, when it is as necessary and difficult to swim against the current as it was in her time....

Despite their conflicting viewpoints on many questions, said Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg was an eagle. The modern Communist movement is as inseparable from the name and work of Rosa Luxemburg as it is from the name of Lenin. For both of them the International was the fatherland. To attempt to identify either of them with one particular nation is as meaningless as to say, for instance, that Marx was a German revolutionist. Both of them were single-mindedly consecrated to the triumph of the international proletariat. Both of them were teachers and soldiers in an epoch that makes them greater than those who illuminated the pages of history in the past. Both of them were devoted to the cause that is superior to all others because its victory opens an entirely new epoch for humanity. For that they are deathless.

—"Rosa Luxemburg—11 Years After," *Militant*, 18 January 1930



LENIN

WORKERS VANGUARD

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ATU Local 241 members at downtown Chicago contract rally, January 2003.

WORKERS VANGUARD

Germany: Anti-Communists Undermine Fight to Free Mumia

We reprint below a 27 December 2007 statement by the Committee for Social Defense (KfsV), a fraternal organization of the Partisan Defense Committee. The KfsV is associated with the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

The case of award-winning black journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, an innocent man who's been on death row in Pennsylvania for over 25 years now, falsely convicted of killing Police Officer Daniel Faulkner, has reached a decisive phase. With a decision by the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals anticipated any day, a media blitzkrieg has been launched against Mumia by those who want to see him dead. This campaign is centered on the release of the lying tract *Murdered by Mumia* by Maureen Faulkner, the widow of the police officer of whose killing Mumia was falsely convicted, and right-wing radio broadcaster Michael Smerconish.

The offensive by Faulkner and Smerconish once again lays bare what the Partisan Defense Committee and its fraternal organizations internationally—in Germany, the Committee for Social Defense—have repeatedly emphasized in our efforts to revitalize the international protest movement: Mumia's frame-up was *political*. Just like the racist, corrupt court that railroaded him to death row, Faulkner and Smerconish claim that Mumia's earlier membership in the Black Panther Party and his continuing support for the MOVE organization show that he had planned for years to kill a cop. A successful fight to free Mumia would be a huge victory for the struggle to abolish the racist death penalty, which in the U.S. is a legacy of chattel slavery. More broadly, winning Mumia's freedom would be a blow against racist, capitalist oppression internationally.

When Faulkner and Smerconish appeared on NBC's *Today* show on 6 December 2007, our comrades of the Partisan Defense Committee joined with other groups of Mumia's supporters to refute their lies, participating in a protest called by the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition (NYC). As Faulkner and Smerconish attempted to grease the skids for Mumia's legal lynching, a crowd of some 100 protesters outside the NBC building in New York chanted, "Mumia is innocent! Free him now!" Photos from the crime scene, which were recently unearthed by Michael Schiffmann and further expose and confirm the frame-up of Mumia, were shown by the *Today* show host, sending Smerconish into a fury. Following the protest, PDC counsel Rachel Wolkenstein stated, "There are two clearly defined sides: those who fight for Mumia's freedom based on his innocence and the forces of racist 'law and order' led by the Fraternal Order of Police who seek his execution."

It is in this context that a group called the Berliner Bündnis für Mumia [Berlin Coalition for Mumia], a coalition made up of the Berlin chapter of Rote Hilfe [Red Aid], the group Freiheit für Mumia Abu-Jamal [Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal], the Mumia Abu-Jamal Hörbuch-gruppe [Audiobook Group] associated with Michael Schiffmann, and others attack the KfsV. In November they issued a "Statement on the KfsV," an anti-communist tirade against our fight for a *class struggle movement* to free Mumia (www.mumia-hoerbuch.de/bundnis.htm). Just what is the "ongoing problem" that led the Berlin Coalition to an "unfortunately necessary distancing from the KfsV"? They denounce us for insisting on

Mumia's innocence, for asserting that he is the victim of a racist frame-up, and for our "iron insistence on the demand for Mumia's immediate release." We plead guilty as charged!

The Coalition complains in its "Statement" that KfsV supporters attended meetings in April 2007 to fight for a genuine united-front protest (i.e., united in action with freedom of political criticism for all participants) on May 12 **based on demands for Mumia's freedom:**

"Moreover they [the KfsV] demanded that the Coalition may only mobilize on the basis of these three slogans: Mumia Abu-Jamal is innocent! Freedom for Mumia! Down with the death penalty; that all participants in the coalition were obliged to recognize these three

not as the frame-up of an innocent man but as an isolated "miscarriage of justice." The Coalition thus works to confine Mumia's supporters to reliance on the capitalist courts and appeals to the liberal "mainstream," like Amnesty International. To make the demand for a "new, fair trial" a perspective for the movement for Mumia's freedom means reaching out to those liberals who question Mumia's innocence, who would be content if he were condemned to a living death, who just want the frame-up to gain the appearance of "fairness" and "due process." The Coalition seeks to appeal to those in the "mainstream" who see the legal hell that Mumia has been put through as a stain on the image of

The work of the KfsV, like that of our fraternal organizations internationally, stands in the class-struggle, non-sectarian tradition of communist defense work—of the International Red Aid of the early, revolutionary Comintern and especially of the International Labor Defense of the 1920s in the U.S., which was headed by James P. Cannon, founding member of the Communist Party and founder of American Trotskyism. As laid out by Cannon in the context of the fight for freedom for Italian anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti:

"One policy is the policy of class struggle. It puts the center of gravity in the protest movement of the workers of America and the world. It puts all faith in the power of the masses and no faith whatever in the justice of the courts. While favoring all possible legal proceedings, it calls for agitation, publicity, demonstrations—organized protest on a national and international scale. It calls for unity and solidarity of all workers on this burning issue, regardless of conflicting views on other questions."

—"Who Can Save Sacco and Vanzetti?" *Labor Defender*, January 1927

This is the understanding with which we of the PDC and KfsV seek to revive mass protests for Mumia. We fight to bring this understanding to Mumia's potential allies. The link between Mumia's struggle for freedom and the fight against capitalist oppression is the starting point for our efforts to make Mumia's case broadly known. In Germany over the past period, the KfsV has taken Mumia's case to the GDL train drivers' picket lines, as their strikes were the target of legal persecution from the bosses' courts. We have participated in protests by Kurdish organizations, together with Turkish and German leftists, against the Turkish state's offensive against the Kurds in northern Iraq. We made the link between Mumia's defense, opposition to the Turkish army and the U.S.-led imperialist occupation of Iraq and the defense of the PKK and other Kurdish organizations that are banned and terrorized by the German and other capitalist governments in Europe.

We brought Mumia's case to refugee groups protesting against racist terror and deportation and against the brutal conditions in the deportation jails of Berlin run by the capitalist SPD/Linkspartei [Social Democratic Party/Left Party] city government. We made a parallel with Mumia's case when we defended the Autonomes and other leftists

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Spartakist

KfsV banner at May 2007 Berlin rally reads: "Down With the Racist Death Penalty! Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal! Mumia Is Innocent!"

slogans; and that each group mobilize with its own leaflets and calls for the demonstration."

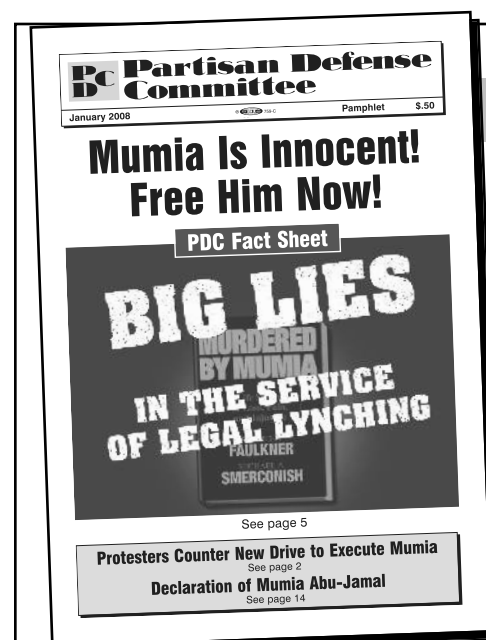
The slogans listed above were agreed to by the participants at the first meeting of 1 April as the basis for a demonstration. This was overturned by Sabine Schubert from Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal and representatives from the Audiobook Group at the next Coalition meeting on 10 April. According to Schubert, "Mumia is Innocent" was not acceptable to Amnesty International. The Coalition clearly states that the "main point of contention is the demand for a new, fair trial" which they uphold and we reject.

The call for a "new, fair trial" is shorthand for a program of reliance on the capitalist class, its politicians and its courts to grant justice to fighters for the oppressed. While it is necessary to utilize every legal avenue in Mumia's defense, the movement for his freedom cannot rely on the same capitalist "justice" system that sent him to death row. This has been clearly shown in the concrete in Mumia's case. In every legal action since Mumia's conviction, the courts have denied the evidence of his innocence and of the state frame-up. That includes three evidentiary hearings, plus three motions and two appeals to the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court, a federal *habeas corpus* petition filed in the U.S. District Court, as well as three petitions to the U.S. Supreme Court. The state wants Mumia dead or behind bars for the rest of his life because—as a former Black Panther, a MOVE supporter and an eloquent opponent of U.S. imperialism, the "voice of the voiceless"—he represents the spectre of black revolt.

At bottom, the "new trial" slogan is an appeal to those who see Mumia's case

American "justice" or a deviation from European "constitutional" democracy. Preaching that the next court is *the court* that will grant Mumia a new, fair trial also demoralizes those youth and workers who initially joined the fight for Mumia because in his fight, they saw their own fight against "the system" as they understood it and have experienced it firsthand.

Only the power of a mass movement with a central working-class component can force the capitalist courts to back down and grant Mumia's freedom. To build that movement we must wage and win a political battle against illusions in capitalist "justice."



The fact sheet was also published in German by the Komitee für soziale Verteidigung (KfsV, c/o Werner Brand, Postfach 21 07 50, 10507 Berlin), available on the PDC Web site: <http://www.partisandefense.org/pubs/deutsch/faktenblatt1231.html>

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22nd Annual Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners

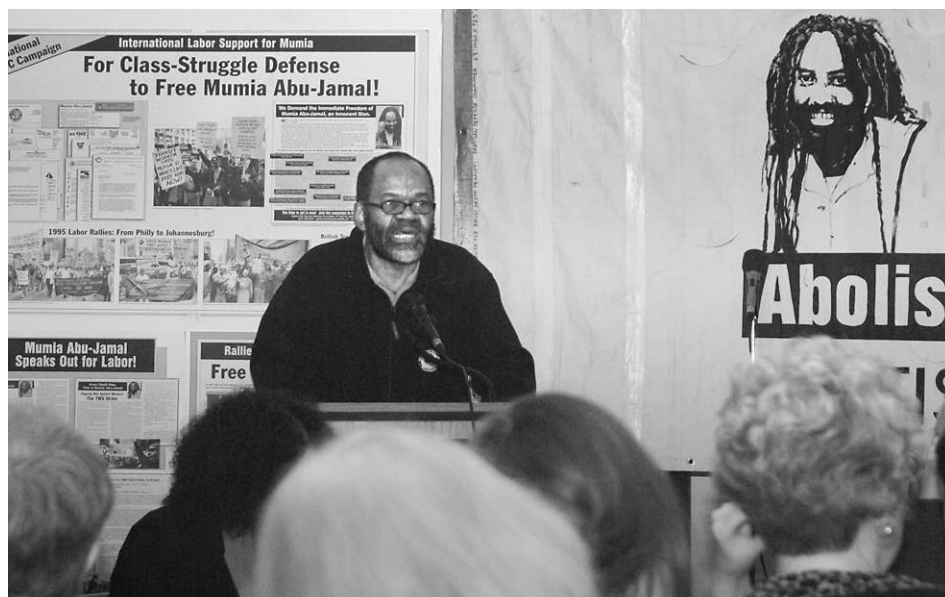
LBL Speaker: Mobilize Labor Power in Fight to Free Mumia!

The Partisan Defense Committee's 22nd annual Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners was held this December in New York City, Chicago, the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Toronto and Vancouver. The PDC, a class-struggle legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League, raised over \$11,000 after expenses for its program of monthly stipends to those imprisoned for standing up to racist capitalist repression—whose freedom is in the interest of the entire working class. The PDC revived this concrete expression of solidarity initiated by the early International Labor Defense under James P. Cannon, its founder and first secretary (1925-28), and currently sends money to 16 class-war prisoners. A central focus of this year's events was the urgent campaign to mobilize mass protest demanding freedom for death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Among the speakers in New York City was radical attorney Lynne Stewart, who was convicted along with Mohamed Yousry and Ahmed Abdel Sattar in 2005 on outrageous "war on terror" frame-up charges of conspiracy to provide material support to terrorism and to defraud the U.S. government. Stewart is free during appeal of her 28-month sentence, as is Yousry during appeal of his 20-month sentence. Oral arguments are scheduled for January 29 at 2 p.m. at the U.S. Court of Appeals, 500 Pearl Street in lower Manhattan. Rally in defense of Lynne Stewart on January 28 at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 521 West 126th Street at 7 p.m. Fighters for civil liberties and black and labor rights should pack the courtroom! Abdel Sattar is locked up in Colorado's infamous Supermax prison, sentenced to 24 years. Free Abdel Sattar! Overturn the convictions of Stewart and Yousry!

Monique Code also spoke at the NYC gathering on behalf of Mumia's son, Jamal Hart, who was targeted for his prominent activism in the campaign to free his father and sentenced in 1998 to 15½ years without parole on bogus firearms possession charges. Speaking in Toronto were Dave Bleakney, National Union Representative of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, and MacDonald Scott, an activist from the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and No One Is Illegal. In the Bay Area, Donna Wallach spoke on behalf of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee.

The fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal is at a critical juncture. On May 17, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments in Mumia's case, and there could be a decision at any time. Maureen Faulk-



LBL spokesman Ron Hinds, member of Transport Workers Union Local 100, at NYC Holiday Appeal.

ner, widow of Police Officer Daniel Faulkner, and right-wing radio broadcaster Michael Smerconish have recently come out with *Murdered by Mumia*, which rehashes vicious lies aiming at the legal lynching of Mumia (see the PDC Fact Sheet pamphlet, *Big Lies in the Service of Legal Lynching*). As support for capital punishment wanes, this tract serves as a rallying cry for the racist death penalty. If the court rules to uphold the death sentence or denies Mumia's appeals for a new trial or a new hearing, the PDC and Labor Black Leagues have called for protests the day after the decision. The PDC is also mobilizing a class-struggle contingent for the national demonstration called by the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal three Saturdays after the decision. Go to www.partisandefense.org for more information.

The following speech, edited for publication, by New York Labor Black League spokesman Ron Hinds, who is a member of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100, was delivered at the NYC Holiday Appeal on December 16.

* * *

We in the Labor Black League for Social Defense say: Mumia Abu-Jamal is an innocent man! Free him now! Abolish the racist death penalty! Free all class-war prisoners! The same capitalist state that has viciously sought to punish my union ever since we struck in New York City transit in December 2005 wants Mumia executed. This state has to be smashed through socialist revolution, and

it will take a revolutionary workers party to lead this—a party that will sweep away capitalism and usher in a socialist society where those who labor rule. The Labor Black Leagues are fraternally allied to the Spartacist League, a multiracial revolutionary Marxist organization that seeks to build that party. As Karl Marx wrote that labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded. Brothers and sisters, the road to black liberation is through socialist revolution!

In early 2006, Mumia wrote a column defending my union and the right to strike. The bourgeoisie saw the strike as akin to a slave insurrection by our heavily black and immigrant union. During the strike, the billionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg branded us as thugs. The LBL seeks to mobilize the multiracial labor movement in solid militant actions to defend workers and the oppressed. Our supporters have fought within the unions, where the social power lies, to mobilize to free Mumia. Imagine what it would have meant if the call to free Mumia had been a key demand of our strike.

Mumia's case resonates with workers in my union. We have long pushed the union to take up his fight. Reflecting our efforts, dozens of stewards and officers have added their names to those worldwide calling to free Mumia.

A whole range of organizations that call themselves socialist—including some

with supporters in my union—from the International Socialist Organization to Workers World Party, to ANSWER, to Socialist Action, base their protests for Mumia around the call for a new trial. What can that mean? Mumia is the victim of a racist frame-up by the capitalist justice system that has kept him in death row hell for a quarter of a century. Such calls serve to build illusions in the capitalist state. Mumia is *innocent*! Free him now!

It is the working class that creates the wealth in this capitalist society. TWU Local 100, which is made up of black, white, Latino, Asian workers and immigrant workers, crippled the financial capital of the world in December 2005 when we withheld our labor. Working-class people in the city and the oppressed and unemployed saw this struggle as their own. But that strike was cut short by a class-collaborationist union leadership that ties the union to the Democratic Party of Governor Eliot Spitzer. When he was the state attorney general, Spitzer led the state's efforts to punish the workers and the union with injunctions and fines and the jailing of Local 100 president Roger Toussaint.

What workers need is their own party, a workers party that fights for a workers government, a party that fights for their interests and the interests of black people, women, immigrants, gays and all the oppressed. A party that fights for socialist revolution to expropriate the tiny ruling class, armed to the teeth, that owns and controls everything worth having in this society.

We are facing an assault by the bosses. They care about nothing but their profits. The Democrats and Republicans are not our friends. The leaderships of the AFL-CIO and the Change to Win coalition tie the workers to these bourgeois parties, which both support the "war on terror" and the murderous occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, resulting in untold death and misery for the people of these countries. We in the LBL demand all imperialist troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan now!

Mumia's case is a microcosm of capitalist class rule and the black oppression that is intrinsic to it. In the U.S., the barbaric death penalty is the legacy of chattel slavery, the lynch rope made legal. We say finish the Civil War! The road to black freedom lies in the struggle for revolutionary integrationism—the full

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TWU workers on the picket line at Manhattan's Clara Hale bus barn during December 2005 NYC transit strike.

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TORONTO

Mondays, 7:30 p.m.

January 21: Iraq, Afghanistan: U.S., Canadian Troops Out Now!
February 4: The Revolution of 1949: Why China Is Not Capitalist

University of Toronto
Sid Smith Building, Room 2112
100 St. George Street
Information and readings: (416) 593-4138 or e-mail: spartcan@on.aibn.com

VANCOUVER

Wednesday, January 23, 6 p.m.

The Revolution Betrayed: Trotskyism vs. Stalinism
University of British Columbia
Student Union Building, Room 212
Information and readings:
(604) 687-0353, or e-mail:
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

We print below Spartacus Youth Club member Hal Salt's speech at the New York Holiday Appeal, slightly edited for publication.

My name is Hal. I'm with the Spartacus Youth Club, and I want to say a few things about what we do, who we are. We're the youth auxiliary of the Spartacist League, the American section of the International Communist League. We have been active in bringing Mumia's case to students and young activists across the country. We are here in solidarity with the class-war prisoners who are imprisoned for standing up to racist capitalist repression and imperialist depredation.

We intervene in the struggles of students and workers with a revolutionary Marxist perspective, in opposition to the capitalist class and its parties, whether Democrat, Republican or Green. We seek to mobilize youth behind the multiracial working class. The transit strike here in New York City in 2005 demonstrated the power the youth must look to. It is the working class that has the power to radically change society because it creates the wealth of society—it creates everything we have, everything we use—and it can bring that production to a halt at any time. It is the working class that has the social power and historic interest to end this wretched decaying system of capitalist exploitation once and for all. It was the success of the Russian Revolution of 1917 that proved this understanding. And this is our model today.

In 1917, the Bolshevik Party led the working class of Russia to seize state power, thereby establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, and expropriated the capitalists. The Bolshevik Party, a vanguard party that was the proven tribune of the people, fought against all aspects of social oppression—from fighting against women's oppression in the family and discrimination against gays, to freeing the oppressed peoples of the tsar's empire and stopping the pogroms of the Black Hundreds against the Jews. The estates of the landed nobility were abolished, the land nationalized and industry collectivized. The new workers state had taken its first steps in planning the economy in the interest of the toilers.

Despite the subsequent Stalinist degeneration of the October Revolution, the central gains of the revolution embodied in the establishment of a planned economy remained. We alone defended the Soviet Union until its final undoing in 1991-92. The rest of the so-called left, like the grossly misnamed International Socialist Organization (ISO) and the Revolutionary Communist Party, were firmly in the camp of U.S. imperialism, supporting counter-revolution. Today we fight in defense of the remaining deformed workers states of Cuba, China, North Korea and Vietnam. We fight for workers political revolutions there, to oust the anti-Marxist, anti-working-class Stalinist bureaucracies and establish workers democracy. Meanwhile the fake left continues to side with imperialism against those workers states.

Central to the defense of the remaining workers states is the struggle for socialist revolution here in the belly of the imperialist beast. And what is key to making socialist revolution in America is the fight for black liberation. Black oppression is the cornerstone, here in America, of capitalism. American capitalism was founded on black chattel slavery, and today black people remain an oppressed race-color caste forcibly segregated at the bottom of society, while at the same time composing a strategic layer of the working class. Contrary to what is prevalently pushed by liberals and fake socialists like the ISO and Workers World Party, that racism is the result of bad ideas and can simply be ended by changing those ideas, we understand that black oppression has a material basis in capitalism to this day, and can

Reformist Left: Traitors to the Working Class



Above: International Socialist Organization's *Socialist Worker* begs Democratic Party to do "what's right." Left: *New York Times* ad by Revolutionary Communist Party's World Can't Wait campaign to "drive out the Bush regime." Reformist left promotes capitalist Democratic Party as ally against capitalist barbarism.

only be ended through the forcible overthrow of capitalism. Being the party that acts as the tribune of the people means championing the fight to free all class-war prisoners. It means defending those in the cross hairs of the capitalist state despite political differences. It means championing the fight against black oppression, and Mumia's case is what black oppression in America is all about.

Here in New York we do a lot of work on Columbia's campus, where we are known as the revolutionary communists. We are known as those who fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, giving presentations to groups all over that are interested in his case—at SUNY Purchase, at Smith College, at the University of Maryland—where we explain how he is an innocent victim of a racist frame-up, railroaded to death row for his political beliefs.

But we don't just introduce students to the facts of Mumia's case—we present a strategy to win his freedom. Students, like workers, imbibe the false notion that the courts are neutral and that if you only present the truth to the courts, the truth will set Mumia free. But that bourgeois lie is exactly what reformists like the ISO and Workers World Party perpetuate in their calls for a new trial, in their groveling appeals to the liberals who are more concerned about the image of racist American "democracy" than they are about freeing an innocent black man. These reformists are the ones who have demobilized the masses who were out in the streets a decade ago on behalf of Mumia. We know that there is no equality between oppressor and oppressed in the capitalist court of law. We know that the death penalty that hangs over Mumia's head is the legacy of chattel slavery and the ultimate weapon in the ruling class' arsenal to stop modern-day slaves in revolt. We support every legal means to secure Mumia's freedom while placing no faith in the courts and all faith in the power of the working class. Our

communist understanding offers the strategy that is required to free Mumia.

Recently the hell that is capitalist America was shown clearly in the case of the Jena Six, who are six black high school students from Jena, Louisiana, who last year sat under the "white tree" on their campus. After months of racist harassment and threats, including the hanging of lynch ropes from the tree after they sat under it, they were charged with attempted murder after a white student hurled the "N" word at them and ended up mildly injured in a scuffle. Members of the Spartacus Youth Club went to Jena on September 20 to bring our revolutionary program to the tens of thousands of outraged protesters, including many black students. We took a side with the Jena Six, demanding that all charges be dropped.

Sweeping the country since then has been a rising tide of racist reaction. At Columbia a noose was found on a black professor's door after anti-Muslim, anti-communist graffiti was found in the bathrooms. Students furious with the racist incidents on campus protested outside the building where the professor's office is. We were front and center, with our

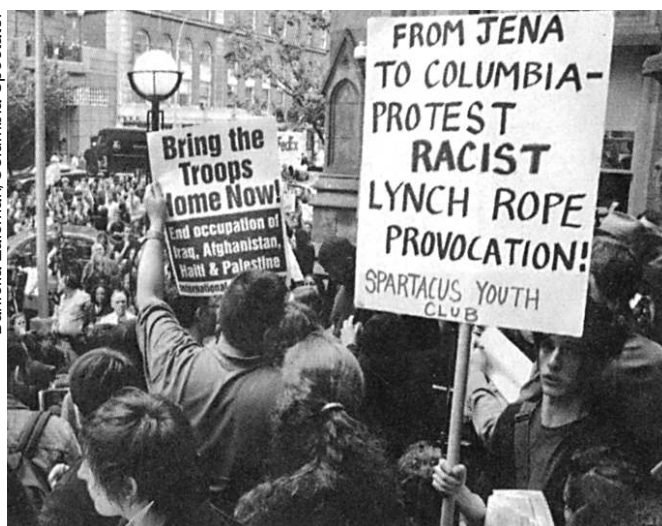
signs calling for black liberation through socialist revolution and for students to protest the lynch rope provocations. We argued with students that the climate at Columbia is not confined by the campus gates and that all over the country provocations like this have been occurring; that the solution is not faith in the administration or more cops on campus, but socialist revolution to smash the material basis for inequality and racism. We argue, much to the shock of some students, that the sons and daughters of Harlem should be allowed to go to Columbia. Trust me, when we get up and shout, "Nationalize Columbia! For open admissions and no tuition!" the reaction is shock that we would dare challenge Columbia as a bastion of race and class privilege.

Just recently I was quoted in Columbia's campus paper, the *Spectator*, for a speech I gave at a protest against David Horowitz when he came to campus. I said that America was founded on the ruthless exploitation of blacks and argued against illusions in the Democratic Party. In response to this, David Judd, a well-known member of the ISO at Columbia, grossly accused us of being "destructive." Well, what really bothers him is our revolutionary program and our exposure of his group's and other fake socialists' "Anybody but Bush" pressure politics, which in effect lead people to support the Democrats, chaining them to the class enemy. He went on to whine that all we do is "denounce everybody...as reformists who are selling out the working class." Well, everything has its name, so we might as well use the right one! What else do you call groups who side with the class enemy, who tell workers to have faith in capitalist so-called democracy, and even advise their own oppressors how best to advance their program of imperialist slaughter and conquest, like when they signed a petition calling on Bush and Cheney to disarm Iran! What else do you call a group that says that the so-called democratic capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, which returned Russia to capitalist enslavement, was "a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing"? Well, besides traitors to the working class, you call them reformists.

Youth must ally with the working class in the fight for the future of humanity—a socialist future of humanity. If you want to fight for a world free of imperialist slaughter from Iraq to Afghanistan, free of racist attacks, of mass incarceration, legal lynching, degrading exploitation and starvation, I encourage you to study history, to study Marxism and to get active with the Spartacus Youth Club! Youth must ally with the international working class to overthrow global capitalism because the fact remains that, despite the bourgeoisie's "death of communism" triumphalism, socialism is the only way out of a capitalist world condemned to imperialist wars and capitalist depredations. Free Mumia! An injury to one is an injury to all! Free all class-war prisoners! Finish the Civil War! For black liberation through socialist revolution! ■

Columbia University: Spartacus Youth Club at October 2007 protest after noose was hung outside office of black professor.

Daniella Zalzman/Columbia Spectator



Germany...

(continued from page 3)

who have been subject to government persecution before, during and after the anti-G8 protests in June. We are currently mobilizing for emergency protests internationally in case the Third Circuit Court of Appeals rules to uphold the death penalty or denies Mumia’s appeal for a new trial or a new hearing. In the past two years, since Mumia’s case went on the so-called “fast track,” which led to last May’s court hearing, we have gathered some 800 signatures internationally of prominent personalities and organizations, above all of trade unions representing hundreds of thousands of workers, for the statement, “We Demand the Immediate Freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal, an Innocent Man.”

You don’t have to be a Marxist to understand that Mumia is the victim of a racist frame-up, and in fact we actively seek to bring Mumia’s case to groups and individuals whose politics are very far from Marxism. That’s evident from the broad political spectrum represented by the signatories to the PDC protest statement mentioned above. But Mumia’s case demonstrates like no other today the racist, class character of the capitalist state. To prevent the development of a mass movement, in which blacks, immigrants, anti-racist youth and trade unionists are mobilized in struggle *against* this state, a host of liberals and reformists have latched on to Mumia’s case since the mid 1990s with the main aim of *obscuring* this fact. They are political obstacles to an effective movement for Mumia’s freedom, as shown by the demobilization since the late ’90s, a result of subordinating the fight for Mumia’s freedom to faith in the courts and the call for a “new, fair trial.” We seek to combat these political obstacles through forthright, open debate about the *strategy* needed to rebuild the movement for Mumia. This exposure of how the liberals and reformists have undermined the fight for Mumia’s freedom has earned us the wrath of those who are hostile to the perspective of a class-struggle movement for Mumia’s freedom.

That brings us back to the Coalition and their “ongoing problem” with us.



WV Photo

South African workers at June 1995 COSATU protest hold up flyers in defense of Mumia.

What this group really has a “problem” with, as is clear from a quick read of their statement, is that too many people evidently identify with the work that the KfsV has been doing for many years in the fight for Mumia’s freedom and agree with us that he is the victim of a racist frame-up who should never have spent a single day in prison. Thus a good portion of their anti-KfsV screed consists of whining about the fact that we mobilized *too many* people for a pro-Mumia rally that they called on April 24!

What sends the Coalition into a rage is that we insist on Mumia’s innocence and on the need to bring the evidence proving it and exposing the massive frame-up to the masses. The Coalition denigrates the sworn confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot Faulkner because it lays bare the character of the racist capitalist state. This “scares off potentially approachable people,” i.e., the liberal and social-democratic “mainstream.” The Coalition even claims that evidence of Mumia’s innocence contradicts his defense:

“Upholding the statement of the supposed contract killer Arnold Beverly, who confesses to the murder for which Mumia is accused, as well as the iron insistence on the demand for his immediate freedom, contradict not only Mumia’s own defense strategy, but is juridically and for any practical purposes completely hopeless.

“That gives us the impression that they

actually don’t care at all whether Mumia gets out of prison or not.”

They even go so far as to claim that evidence for Mumia’s innocence is “lethally dangerous for him”! This is the “Big Lie” par excellence, and is reminiscent of the Stalinist lie in the 1930s that Trotsky was an agent of the Gestapo because he fought for mobilizing the working class to smash the Nazis. As Trotsky remarked, even slander should make some sense!

To say that demanding Mumia’s immediate freedom and highlighting every piece of evidence demonstrating his innocence contradicts Mumia’s own wishes is truly breathtaking. Mumia himself declared, in a 3 May 2001 declaration describing what he saw in the early morning hours of 9 December 1981: “I did not shoot Police Officer Daniel Faulkner. I had nothing to do with the killing of Officer Faulkner. I am innocent.”

And on 12 July 1995, the date racist judge Albert Sabo denied a stay of Mumia’s death warrant, Mumia declared, “True justice requires more than a stay of execution—it requires a complete dismissal of this clearly political persecution! It requires more: it requires the committed mobilization of our communities to resist a system that is more repressive than South Africa’s—to abolish this racist death penalty! It requires *freedom*—for *all* MOVE prisoners, and *all* political prisoners of whatever persuasion! *Now!*”

What does the Coalition say about these statements by Mumia? Do they “contradict” his “own defense strategy”?

Why do we insist on the importance of the Beverly evidence, and why does the Coalition seek to discredit it? In an affidavit submitted in 2001, PDC counsel Rachel Wolkenstein detailed how Beverly’s confession fit together with the many other pieces of evidence exposing the frame-up:

“Beverly’s confession not only established Jamal’s innocence but also laid bare the extent and consciousness of police and prosecutorial misconduct in prosecuting and convicting Mumia Abu-Jamal and sentencing him to death for a

crime he did not commit. Beverly’s account of the shooting did not stand alone but was supported by a wealth of information in the record.... Beverly’s account of being hired to kill Officer Faulkner was consistent with the fact that there were at least three ongoing FBI investigations of police corruption in the Center City area where Faulkner worked at the time of his murder, and that at least one other informant in those investigations was murdered. Beverly’s account of the shooting was also more consistent with the available physical evidence than the prosecution scenario of the shooting (which was physically impossible). Moreover, the claim that police hired Beverly (along with police political bias against Jamal) helped to explain the gross police and prosecutorial misconduct permeating the case.”

—Printed in the July 2006 PDC pamphlet, *The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal—Mumia Is Innocent!*

At bottom, the Beverly evidence shows that Mumia was the victim not of a rogue cop, bad prosecutor, or racist judge, but of an entire “justice” system in which the cops, prosecutors and courts act to uphold the class interests of the capitalist rulers. For some this will not be hard to understand. Think of the treatment by the German bourgeois state inflicted on the prisoners of the RAF [Red Army Faction]; on the PKK and other Kurdish organizations; on the striking GDL train drivers; remember the case of African refugee Oury Jalloh, who was burned alive in a police cell in Dessau in January 2005, while his hands and feet were bound. The bourgeois state is *not neutral* but rather the *special instrument of the capitalist class to subjugate the working class and the oppressed*. This understanding is crucial for building a powerful movement to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. The role of the reformist and petty-bourgeois left à la Audiobook Group/ Berlin Coalition is to prevent Mumia’s supporters from gaining this understanding.

This leads them to denigrate the Beverly evidence and even wrongly claim that Mumia himself rejects it. Mumia submitted the Beverly evidence to both the Pennsylvania state court and to the U.S. federal court in 2001. It is the same courts that have rejected even hearing the Beverly evidence. Mumia is fully informed of all the work the PDC does and has no objection to it. He sent greetings to the forum for Mumia hosted by the KfsV in May 2007 in Berlin, where Rachel Wolkenstein spoke.

Audiobook Group/Berlin Coalition also slander the PDC and Wolkenstein, who, with PDC lawyer Jon Piper, originally tracked down Beverly and took his confession in 1999. In a radio interview on 10 October for Jugendradio in Berlin, a member of the Berlin Coalition claimed that Wolkenstein was fired by Mumia “in 2002, I think.” Wolkenstein and Jon Piper both worked on Mumia’s legal team from 1995 until 1999, when they withdrew from the team because lead counsel Leonard Weinglass refused to present the Beverly confession and other vital evidence of Mumia’s inno-

Join the Campaign to Free Mumia!

Funds are urgently needed for legal defense!

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

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

Spread the word! Contact the PDC for copies of *The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal—Mumia Is Innocent!* This pamphlet arms activists in the struggle for Mumia’s freedom by presenting the political basis of the state vendetta against Mumia and the explosive evidence which completely destroys the more than two-decades-long frame-up of this eloquent fighter for black freedom. It is available for \$1. Get the PDC button: “Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!”—\$1 each. Order the PDC video, *From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal*—\$10 for DVD, \$15 for VHS.



Bundles of the 4-page brochure, *Mumia Is an Innocent Man: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!*—\$2 for 25 copies. Order from/make checks payable to Partisan Defense Committee at our New York City address below.



Partisan Defense Committee

e-mail: partisandefense@earthlink.net • Web site: www.partisandefense.org
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c/o Box 29574, Los Feliz Station, Los Angeles, CA 90029 • (213) 380-8897
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Prepare Now for Emergency Protests!

On May 17, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments in Mumia’s case, and there could be a decision at any time.

If the Court rules to uphold the death sentence or denies Mumia’s appeals for a new trial or a new hearing, the Partisan Defense Committee and the Labor Black Leagues have called for protests the day after the decision. Others have also called for protests.

For more information see the PDC Web site, www.partisandefense.org



Jennifer Beach

**Mumia Abu-Jamal Is an Innocent Man!
FREE MUMIA NOW!
Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!**

cence to the court. Mumia never fired Wolkenstein. He *did* fire Weinglass and Dan Williams in 2001 after learning of the publication by Williams of the book *Executing Justice*. The book was an unauthorized and lying account of the legal defense, calling the Beverly confession “insane” and any effort to use it “bona fide lunacy.” Williams’ book provided the sole basis of *prosecution* arguments for excluding this evidence from court! Today, Maureen Faulkner and Michael Smerconish rely heavily on this same book in order to scream for Mumia’s blood.

It is clear that the Audiobook Group and the Berlin Coalition are having some trouble selling the line of a “new, fair trial” for Mumia. This explains the shrill tone of their statement and their complaints that our arguments against the strategy of reliance on the capitalist courts have caused “confusion” among leftists. Furthermore, the denunciation of our “iron insistence on the demand for his immediate freedom” sounds all the stranger given the fact that the call for a pro-Mumia rally on 8 December 2007 by the Berlin Coalition itself demands that “Mumia be freed immediately.” Moreover on 8 December, a speaker from a Leonard Peltier solidarity group pointed out that Peltier fled the U.S. knowing that he would never get a fair trial. Indeed, he still languishes, seriously ill, in prison to this day—*Free Leonard Peltier!*

In order to assuage the doubts of many Mumia supporters who don't like the "new trial" demand, Audiobook Group/Berlin Coalition purposely confuse *legal procedures* with *the mobilization of a mass protest movement*. But even on a strictly legal level it is simply false that Mumia's only option to be freed is through a new trial. As Wolkenstein pointed out at the KfsV forum on 12 May 2007, Mumia's case is so full of prosecutorial misconduct, suppression of evidence of his innocence, etc., that from a purely judicial standpoint, there is ample legal precedent for a dismissal of the charges. And even in prior legal petitions when Wolkenstein was co-counsel with Leonard Weinglass, Mumia's legal filings contained the demand for dismissal of charges. Former Black Panther Geronimo

Pratt walked out a free man in 1997 after 27 years in prison hell when the court reversed his frame-up conviction on the grounds that the prosecution had concealed evidence. Rubin “Hurricane” Carter got a “new trial” in 1976, and was convicted a second time on the basis of the lying testimony of two petty crooks by a care-

parties administer the capitalist state machinery. Even when the racist terror against refugees and their deportation is described, as in a speech presenting the anti-racist campaign DE*FENCE at the Berlin Coalition rally on 8 December, the SPD/Linkspartei government—which gives the commands and has just



Spartakist

International Communist League fought against capitalist reunification of Germany in 1989-90. Spartakist banner at 30 December 1989 anti-fascist demonstration in Treptow Park, East Berlin, declares: "For the Communism of Lenin, Liebknecht and Luxemburg! For a Leninist-Egalitarian Party!"

fully selected jury of ten whites and two blacks. If bourgeois justice were not class-biased, race-biased, if bourgeois justice were “fair” and “impartial,” Mumia would have long ago been released from prison. He would never have spent a day in jail.

The alternative to reliance on the capitalist courts is class-struggle defense. The only way that Mumia will get justice is if the courts fear the power of a mass movement, and especially the power of labor to strike for Mumia's freedom. To get there, what is necessary is above all a political struggle against the very illusions in the capitalist "justice" system represented by the call for a "new, fair trial." The call for a new trial is the politics of selling out, a betrayal of everything that Mumia's case represents.

In Berlin, subordinating the fight for Mumia's freedom to the "mainstream" means subordinating it to the SPD and Linkspartei tops, who as the government

passed the most draconian police laws in the country, banned Kurdish demonstrations, etc.—is not mentioned by name. The strategy of reliance on the capitalist courts is counterposed to mobilizing the Turkish, Arab and Kurdish youth who are subject to the daily racist persecution of the Berlin Senate's police, or the workers in public services who've had their contracts shredded by this government, with the understanding that Mumia's fight for freedom is linked to fighting against their *own* oppression.

The Coalition discounts “class struggle” as something passé and utopian and reviles the very mention of “classes.” For them, an orientation to the “working class, which [can] stop the hangman” is almost communist. In chiming in with the “death of communism” choir that class struggle is utopian, that history is over, they are just reflecting the prevalent bourgeois ideology which is on the upsurge since the counterrevolutionary

destruction of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states. This is also what they're playing on with their red-baiting insinuations that the KfsV's "'background' appears to be unknown in parts of the left and/or they seek to conceal it." This obviously refers to the fact that the KfsV's purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartakist Workers Party—a fact which is "concealed," i.e., explicitly stated in print, in everything the KfsV publishes! This is reminiscent of the witchhunt by the CDU/CSU [Christian Democratic Union/Christian Socialist Union], members of the SPD and the Springer press against newly anointed Juso [youth group of SPD] chief Franziska Drohsel for her membership in the "left-extremist" organization Rote Hilfe. Drohsel solved her problem by quitting the Rote Hilfe. Where does Rote Hilfe stand on anti-communism in the Berlin Coalition?

Since they are worried about it, we are happy to recount some high points of our “background,” all of which can be found in our publications for those interested. The KfsV originated from an international campaign in the late ’80s, begun by the PDC in the U.S., for aid to the besieged fighters of Jalalabad in Afghanistan who were holding out against the *mujahedin* cutthroats which the CIA and other imperialist agents armed and funded as part of the Cold War II drive to destroy the Soviet Union. Later, in the ’90s, the KfsV defended former SED [ruling East German Communist Party] and PDS [Party of Democratic Socialism] members and other victims of the anti-Communist witchhunt following capitalist reunification. And of course, the KfsV is aligned with the Spartakists and the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), who fought in 1989-90 against the capitalist sellout of the DDR and for a red Germany of workers councils. And we brought Mumia’s case to the DDR as part of the fight against capitalist reunification. Since 1987, we’ve taken up the fight internationally for Mumia’s freedom as part of the fight for united, class-struggle defense of all the working people. ***Mumia is innocent! Free him now! Abolish the racist death penalty! ■***

Free Mumia...

(continued from page 4)

integration of black people into an egalitarian, socialist America. The fight for black freedom is the strategic question of the American proletarian revolution. There can be no socialist revolution in the U.S. unless the working class takes up the fight for black freedom—opposing every manifestation of racist repression and discrimination—and there can be no liberation of black people without the overthrow of this capitalist system.

Union members were among the 50,000 people in Jena, Louisiana, on September 20 to protest the Jim Crow persecution of six black high school students for sitting under a “white tree” and defending themselves against racist attack. This protest demonstrated widespread anger over the conditions of black life in racist America but was misled by liberals and Democrats, foremost among them Jesse Jackson and Democratic Party hustler and FBI fink Al Sharpton. Presidential hopeful Barack Obama just stayed away. The outrage over Jena was answered with a nationwide epidemic of racist provocations in which lynch rope nooses were hung in workplaces, schools and homes to terrorize black people. This threat of lynch rope terror supplements the daily terror of the capitalist state, which at bottom consists of the cops, courts, prisons and the military. At the pinnacle lie the legal lynchings of the racist death penalty. We in the Labor Black League say: Abolish the racist death penalty!

Some ask us what does Mumia have to do with labor issues and the labor movement? Everything! An injury to one is an injury to all! The case of Mumia Abu-

Jamal symbolizes what the death penalty is all about. Mumia in his youth was an eloquent spokesman for the Black Panther Party. He quickly came into the cross hairs of the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover's COINTELPRO. He is a supporter of the back-to-nature MOVE organization, which was a target of brutal police terror. The railroading of Mumia to the gallows continues to this day in the lying book and media blitz by Maureen Faulkner. Mumia remains on death row despite mountains of evidence of his innocence, including the confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot Police Officer Daniel Faulkner. The state sees in Mumia the spectre of black revolt, and *that* is why it wants to execute him.

The great revolutionary V.I. Lenin, whose Bolshevik Party led the working class to power at the head of all the oppressed in the Russian Revolution of 1917, wrote that the socialist's "ideal should not be the trade-union secretary, but *the tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression." We will never forget the unbroken chain of racist cop killings, like the brutal slaying of bridegroom Sean Bell in a hail of 50 cop bullets or the killing of 18-year-old Khil Coppin. In the summer of 2002, a young black man named Jamil Moore was gunned down in his home in Canarsie, Brooklyn. His mother is a member of TWU Local 100. As long as capitalism stays in place in the U.S., such racist police killings will never go away.

Lynch mob terror is alive and well in racist America, as in the case of John White, a black man who is on trial right now for manslaughter for defending his son and his house last year in Long Island against a racist youth mob [see “John White Must Go Free!” WV No. 905,

4 January]. The LBL says: No to gun control! Gun control kills blacks! Last year, a young black gay man, Michael Sandy, was lured to Plumb Beach near Sheepshead Bay by racist killers. He died trying to escape them in expressway traffic. Only last week, young Jewish subway riders were attacked by racist thugs, one of whom is about to serve time for a previous racist attack against blacks in Gerritsen Beach.

What's needed is labor-centered mobilizations to sweep these racist scum off the street. November 27 marked the 25th anniversary of one of several mass labor/black mobilization victories initiated by the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee, including on October 23, 1999, right here in New York City. On November 27, 1982 the race-terrorist KKK was swept off the streets of Washington, D.C. The Klan had announced a march against "illegal" immigrants, posing a direct threat also to blacks, trade unionists, leftists and all that are in the sights of the fascists. They were stopped cold when more than 5,000 union members, black youth and anti-racist militants turned out and took the streets instead. These victories demonstrated communist-led, integrated working-class power and the way forward in the struggle for black liberation. It was the victory in D.C. that launched the Labor Black Leagues in this country.

We fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. Thousands are rounded up in I.C.E. (formerly INS) raids every year and deported. We in the LBL call for labor action to stop deportations! We fight for jobs for all, for free quality medical care, free quality childcare, and free quality education for all. We say: Organize the unorganized here in New York City at FreshDirect and every-

where, at Wal-Mart and across the “right to starve” South, where the fight against racial oppression is key. The entire capitalist state apparatus exists to suppress the multiracial working class and to smash effective working-class struggle.

If you are interested in our struggle for a socialist future, check out our LBI literature table. Read and subscribe to *Workers Vanguard* and come to our next readers' circle. Get involved and join us. Join us at the emergency demo after the decision of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals and three weeks later for a demo in Philly. Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Free all class-war prisoners! ■



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Obama...

(continued from page 1)

bourgeois electoral politics can work in the interests of the working masses. The Republicans revel in inflicting suffering on working people and the oppressed. Just look at the Republican debates where the candidates were competing over who could be the most racist and anti-immigrant bigot. For their part, the Democrats put on a more kindly face, the better to deceive the working people and give a more popular facade to the racist capitalist status quo. As Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin captured it in his 1917 work, *The State and Revolution*, “To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism.”

We revolutionary Marxists do not extend any support to any capitalist politician. Nor would we run for executive office—such as mayor, governor or president—ourselves, although Marxists have and can run for parliamentary office as a tactic to propagate our revolutionary program. As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels taught long ago, the capitalist government is the executive committee that manages the affairs of the capitalist class as a whole. In the U.S., the president is the chief executive responsible for the most massive military power in history and for the domestic machinery of repression that maintains social oppression and exploitation. To run for executive office means to aspire to be the next Commander-in-Chief who decides who gets tortured, who gets bombed, who gets invaded (see *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 60, Autumn 2007).

At the time of the 2006 midterm elections, we wrote in “For a Class-Struggle Workers Party!” (WV No. 881, 24 November 2006):

“Our task in analyzing social discontents, including as revealed through the distorted prism of the elections, is to lay bare the irreconcilable class antagonisms at the base of this society. It is the working class, with its strategic black component, that produces the wealth of society. This is the only social force with the objective interest and potential social power to smash the capitalist system and lay the basis for the construction of an egalitarian socialist society. We stand for the *complete political independence of the proletariat from all capitalist parties—Democrat, Republican and Green.*”

Democratic Party vs. Black Liberation

Barack Obama, the son of a Kenyan father and a white American mother, is perceived as a charismatic, honest politician, above the mudslinging and corruption that define American politics. He is particularly popular among college youth. And in the face of the history of black oppression in this country, the possibility of the election of the first black president,

whatever his actual policies, will likely propel many even previously skeptical black people to support him. If this deeply racist country, where religious obscurantism and anti-woman bigotry are pervasive, ever sees a black or female president, it would certainly be a significant development. But it would do nothing to change the oppression of women, which is rooted in the institution of the family in class society, or of black people, which forms the cornerstone of American capitalism. Simply put, the liberation of black people

echoed by no less a capitalist mouthpiece than the *Wall Street Journal* (10 November 2007) which headlined: “Whites’ Great Hope? Barack Obama and the Dream of a Color-Blind America.”

Dream on. A year after Obama’s speech to the DNC, the horror of Katrina would expose (again) this present-day liberal lie for what it is. In response to this glaring racist atrocity, Obama declared that “the incompetence was color-blind.” What’s “color blind” about the ongoing purge of black people from New Orleans?



WV Photo

Demonstrators at Spartacist League-initiated labor/black mobilization that stopped KKK in Washington, D.C., November 1982.

and women will not happen short of the destruction of the capitalist system through socialist revolution.

In the eyes of the capitalist rulers, Obama is potentially acceptable as chief executive because his entire campaign is based on the “end of racism” lie, the claim that black oppression has been overcome. Columnist Gary Younge commented in the *Nation* (31 December 2007) that the value of black leadership “is, it seems, directly proportional to its distance from the black community and its experiences. Its cheerleaders desire not so much to refashion black politics as to eliminate it altogether, not so much to eliminate racism as to eradicate discussion of it.” The article quotes black radical-liberal writer and former Communist Party spokesman Angela Davis aptly noting that Obama “is being consumed as the embodiment of color blindness.”

In his speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, Obama declared: “There is not a Black America and a White America and Latino America and Asian America—there’s the United States of America.” This message was recently

Then when some 50,000 overwhelmingly black people converged upon Jena, Louisiana, in September to protest Jim Crow justice against six black youth, Obama said he just wanted “fairness” and claimed it “isn’t a matter of black and white.” Tell that to the black people outraged over the proliferation of hangman’s nooses around the country after the Jena protest. Those who came out to Jena were mobilized by black Democrats Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson with the aim of funneling anger into the Democratic Party and appeals for “justice” to the federal government. Obama did not even bother to show up.

The daily reality of racist oppression can be measured in astronomical unemployment rates for blacks and decrepit ghetto housing; rampant police terror and the consignment of nearly one million black men and women to America’s hell-hole prisons, mainly due to the “war on drugs”; prison-like inner-city schools and the purge of black youth from higher education. Obama looks upon all this and claims, as he did in his speech in Selma last year, that the civil rights movement brought America “90 percent of the way” toward racial equality!

Certainly such a position serves Oba-

ma’s career. It means blaming the oppressed for their oppression. In his 2006 book, *The Audacity of Hope*, he declares that “minorities, individually and collectively, have responsibilities as well” for their own condition. They suffer from “too much television,” “lack of emphasis on educational achievement” and “the collapse of the two-parent black household.” Obama lectures that black people should acknowledge that “perhaps the single biggest thing we could do to reduce such poverty is to encourage teenage girls to finish high school and avoid having children out of wedlock.” And “we should also acknowledge that conservatives—and Bill Clinton—were right about welfare,” a reference to Clinton’s ending of welfare “as we know it,” which consigned millions of poor and black people, especially women, to the scrap heap. Such is Obama’s program for “change.”

Contrary to the myth promoted by Obama and other liberals, black oppression continues to be the central defining feature of U.S. society. It is *materially rooted* in and central to American capitalism. As against both liberal integrationists and black nationalists, our struggle for black liberation is based on the program of *revolutionary integrationism*. While opposing every manifestation of racist oppression, fighting in particular to mobilize the social power of the multiracial labor movement, we underline that full equality for the black masses requires that the working class rip the economy out of the hands of the capitalist rulers and reorganize it on a socialist basis. Only then will it be possible to eliminate the material roots of black oppression through the integration of black people into an egalitarian socialist society based on a collectivized economy with jobs and quality housing, health care and education for all.

As we elaborated in “Black and Red,” a key document adopted at the founding conference of the Spartacist League in 1966:

“The struggle of the black people of this country for freedom, while part of the struggle of the working class as a whole, is more than that struggle. The Negro people are an oppressed race-color caste, in the main comprising the most exploited layer of the American working class.... Because of their position as both the most oppressed and also the most conscious and experienced section, revolutionary black workers are slated to play an exceptional role in the coming American revolution.”

Black Oppression and American Capitalism

The roots of black oppression lie in chattel slavery, smashed only by blood and iron in the Civil War, the Second American Revolution. In this “conflict between the system of slavery and the system of free labor,” as Karl Marx described it, some 200,000 black troops entered the fight and helped turn the tide for the Northern Union Army.

Despite the victory over the slavocracy and installation of the most democratic period for black people in American

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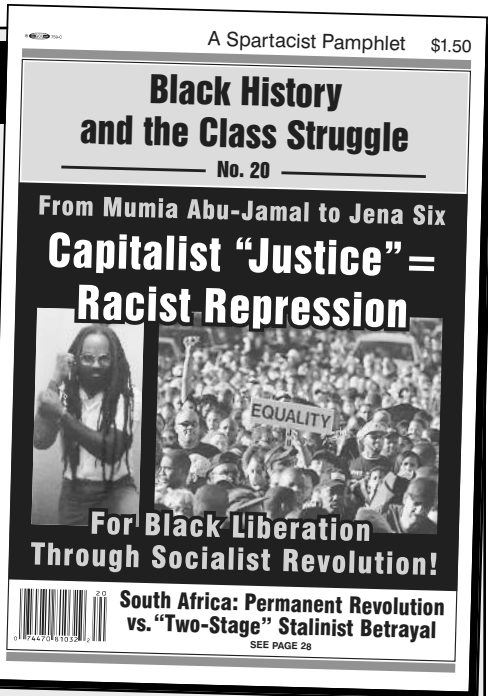
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history under Radical Reconstruction, the promise of black freedom was betrayed as Northern capitalists looked at the devastated South and saw an opportunity not for building a radical democracy but for exploiting Southern resources, and the freedmen. The Compromise of 1877 sealed this betrayal and, with the withdrawal of the remaining troops of the Union Army from the South, a new system of racist exploitation was established through the systematic repression of black people's fight for land, education and civil rights. The former slaves became tenants and sharecroppers toiling on land owned by the white propertied class, consisting of elements of the old slavocracy and a new Southern bourgeoisie with strong ties to Northern capital. Jim Crow segregation became entrenched, enforced and maintained by Klan terror and police-state repression. Black people were effectively completely disenfranchised.

The Southern Jim Crow system made an imprint on the entire country. The capitalist rulers have long fomented ethnic and religious hatred. Well into the 20th century, the central dividing line was one which pitted "native" Protestants against mainly Catholic German, Irish, Italian and other immigrant workers. With the mass migration of blacks from the South to the industrial cities of the North, particularly during World Wars I and II, the bourgeoisie promoted anti-black racism, making the color bar a fundamental dividing line that has served to obscure the irreconcilable *class* divide. All this has served to retard the political consciousness of the American proletariat. The U.S. is the only industrial country where the workers have not historically had their own independent political party, even a reformist one, reflecting the interests of labor, which are counterposed to the interests of capital.

The courageous struggles of the black and white foot soldiers of the civil rights movement in the 1950s-'60s played an instrumental role in overturning Jim Crow. The creation of a Southern black proletariat fundamentally eroded the Jim Crow system of segregation. The bourgeoisie eventually acquiesced to legal equality in the South, in part because Jim Crow had become an embarrassment to U.S. imperialism's posture as the defender of "democracy" and "human rights" in the Cold War against the Soviet Union, the industrial and military powerhouse of the non-capitalist world.

The struggle for black equality intersected growing discontent and opposition to U.S. imperialism's losing counterrevolutionary war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants. The potential for an explosive and revolutionary transformation of American society was evident. But from its onset, the civil rights movement was dominated by a black middle-class leadership allied to the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. The aim of liberal-pacifist leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. was to pressure the Democratic administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson to grant formal, legal equality. In the context of the current spat between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama over her claim that Johnson did more than King for black rights, it is worth recalling that King supported the suppression of the 1965 Watts ghetto revolt while Johnson dispatched federal troops to crush the 1967 Detroit upheaval.

In the 1960s, the Spartacist League, despite our small forces, put forward the perspective of a class-struggle fight for black freedom. As we stated in our Programmatic Statement, "For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism":

"In our intervention into the civil rights movement, the Spartacist League raised the call for a South-wide Freedom Labor Party as an expression of working-class political independence and the need to mobilize the labor movement to fight for black emancipation. This was linked to a series of other transitional demands aimed at uniting black and white workers in struggle against the capitalist class enemy, like organizing the unorganized and a sliding scale of wages and hours to combat inflation and unemployment. We called for armed self-defense against racist

terror and for a workers united front against government intervention, both in the labor movement and in the use of federal troops to suppress black plebeian struggles. This program is no less urgent today."

The bankruptcy of the liberal program of the civil rights movement's leadership was quickly revealed when the movement swept out of the South and into the North, where black people already had formal legal equality. The struggle for a fundamental change in conditions of life in the ghettos—for real equality, for jobs, decent housing and adequate schools—collided head-on with the realities of American capitalism. Many black militants, frustrated with and opposed to liberal conciliationism, turned to black nationalism, which rejects the multiracial working class as the motor force for revolutionary struggle against this racist capitalist system.

The bourgeoisie responded to growing black militancy—represented by Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party and others—with vicious repression, killing 38 Panthers and imprisoning hundreds more through COINTELPRO. Police repression along with cop riots in major U.S. cities resulted in the spontaneous eruption of ghetto rebellions across the country. At the same time, the bourgeoisie sought to and did co-opt a layer of the liberal black misleaders into the Democratic Party, reflected in the election of a number of black mayors in major American cities over the next couple of decades.

By the late 1960s, a racist backlash was already beginning, and in succeeding decades many of the gains of the civil rights period were reversed or eroded. A key turning point was the defeat of busing in Boston in 1974-75 on the streets by



UPI

June 1963: Martin Luther King Jr. with Attorney General Robert Kennedy, NAACP head Roy Wilkins and Vice President Lyndon Johnson after White House meeting.

racist mobs and in government halls by liberal politicians. Last year's Supreme Court decision overturning school desegregation plans in Seattle and Louisville eviscerates the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that banned school segregation. The racist backlash was soon followed by an onslaught against the labor movement, exemplified by the 1981 smashing of the PATCO air traffic controllers union by the Reagan administration using plans drawn up by the Democratic Carter administration.

Barack Obama is a beneficiary of the civil rights movement. He also embodies the utter failure of bourgeois liberalism to address the needs of the black masses. A graduate of Harvard Law School, and the first black president of the *Harvard Law Review*, Obama's rise to political prominence was meteoric, an effort helped in no small part by elements within the Chicago Democratic Party Daley machine. Twenty years earlier, during Jesse Jackson's 1988 presidential campaign, in which he won 13 primaries and caucuses and got over seven million votes, we pointed out in "Jesse Jackson, Racism and the Democratic Party" (WV No. 451, 22 April 1988): "*Class* divisions are sharpening within the black population, marked by the gulf between a thin layer of black professionals, who poured through the gates forced open by the civil rights movement, and the massive 'black underclass' of the permanently unemployed, swollen through the devastation of American industry in the '70s and '80s."

When Jesse Jackson ran for the Democratic nomination in 1984 as part of

Students listen as Barack Obama speaks at George Mason University, Virginia, February 2007.



forming his Rainbow Coalition and again in 1988, he was attempting to exert pressure on the party, including through bringing in more voters, but had no chance of nomination. Obama's campaign today, however, poses the possibility of the election of the first black president. And he may well face attack from racist vigilantes and terrorists; threats along those lines have led to the early assignment of Secret Service protection. As a black worker in North Carolina bluntly put it: "I think he will certainly need to beef up his security, because I think there's these wackos that will go to any extent to make sure he doesn't win" (*Washington Post*, 5 January).

When black Democrat Harold Washington was elected mayor of Chicago in 1983 and faced a vicious racist backlash, we underlined that "Washington has the right to take office with all the normal prerogatives. Blacks have a right to elect whoever they want to office" (WV No.

326, 25 March 1983). But as opposed to many on the reformist left, we refused to give one ounce of political support to this longtime machine Democrat and warned, "Harold Washington Will Betray Black Chicago" (WV No. 328, 22 April 1983). And, indeed, he did, slashing jobs, services and overseeing Chicago's murderous police department.

It is the role of black elected officials to keep a lid on social struggle and administer racist capitalist rule. As former New York City Democratic mayor

David Dinkins quipped when he was running for office in 1989, "They'll take it from me." A grotesque example was the 1985 bombing of the MOVE commune in Philadelphia, which slaughtered eleven black men, women and children and destroyed an entire black neighborhood. This was carried out by black Democratic mayor Wilson Goode in collusion with the Feds.

Obama and the Fake Left

The way forward in the struggle against this deeply racist capitalist system is to break the political chains that bind workers, blacks, immigrants and the oppressed to their class enemy, particularly through support to the Democratic Party. This means waging a political struggle not only against the labor tops, many of whom are leading lights within the Democratic Party, but also against the reformist left. Today, as Obama's popularity mounts especially among blacks and youth, the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO) paints him as a symbol for "those who want a break with the stale right-wing orthodoxy that has dominated mainstream politics for a generation" (*Socialist Worker*, 11 January).

Despite various criticisms of Obama, the ISO made clear its stand when at an 11 February 2007 rally at the University of Illinois at Chicago campus ISO-led protesters unfurled a banner pleading: "Obama: Stand Up! Cut the funding!" (for the Iraq war). This is part of their fight to give the Democrats "a backbone," which is supposed to be provided by "a grassroots antiwar movement that can pressure politicians from outside the established party system" (*Socialist Worker*, 2 March 2007). Of course, no less an establishment Democrat than John Kerry has endorsed Obama, who has also received significant support from Wall Street financiers.

The Workers World Party (WWP) is more blatant; the conclusion of its editorial "Behind the Votes for Obama & Rodham Clinton" (*Workers World*, 9 January) unmistakably leaves open the possibility of support to this capitalist politician:

"With an Obama candidacy, working-class and revolutionary organizations will have to stay sensitive to the impact

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Obama...

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of racism on the electoral campaign, even as the left differentiates itself from Obama as well as the Republican [sic]. The left will also have to adjust its approach should there be an active intervention of the population in the electoral process, especially if an economic or war crisis arises during the election.”

Indeed, WWP supported Jackson in 1988 and other black Democrats such as Congressional candidate Cynthia McKinney in 2004 and New York City Council member Charles Barron in 2006. For his part, Barron raised the slogan: “Let’s get back to Black and vote for Barack” (*Amsterdam News*, 15 November 2007).

Obama is, in fact, to the right of both Clinton and Edwards on many domestic issues. He is at one with the Clintonian “center” in support of the racist, barbaric death penalty. In the context of vicious attacks on immigrants, he wrote in *The Audacity of Hope*: “I’m not entirely immune to such nativist sentiments. When I see Mexican flags waved at pro-immigration demonstrations, I sometimes feel a flush of patriotic resentment.” Along with Clinton, Obama’s “patriotism” led him to support the “Secure Fence Act,” mandating the construction of a 700-mile wall along the U.S.-Mexican border.

As for his international policy, in addition to a cautious and uneven opposition to the Iraq war and occupation, Obama’s article on “Renewing American Leadership” in *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2007) is instructive. He makes clear that he wants to bring the occupation of Iraq to a “responsible end” in order to redeploy and *significantly escalate* American

military forces and operations around the world. Like the other Democrats, Obama is foursquare behind the murderous occupation of Afghanistan. He is belligerent against Pakistan, as well as Iran and the North Korean deformed workers state, writing: “We must develop a strong international coalition to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and eliminate North Korea’s nuclear weapons program.... In confronting these threats, I will not take the military option off the table.”

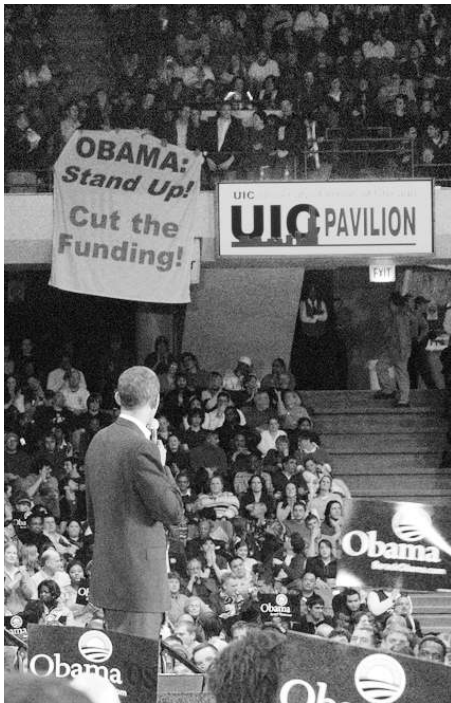
He goes on to proclaim: “To defeat al Qaeda, I will build a twenty-first-century military and twenty-first-century partnerships as strong as the anticommunist alliance that won the Cold War to stay on the offense everywhere from Djibouti to Kandahar.” It is no accident that Obama’s foreign policy consigliere is one Zbigniew Brzezinski, the veteran of Cold War II who, as part of Jimmy Carter’s Democratic administration, worked to militarily and ideologically rearm U.S. imperialism after its humiliating defeat at the hands of the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants. The Carter administration launched an anti-Communist “human rights” campaign against the Soviet Union, including massive support to Islamic reactionaries in Afghanistan against the Soviet Red Army’s intervention on the side of elementary human progress.

For the most part, the reformists marched in lockstep with the imperialists during Cold War II. Today, in the wake of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, they have given up even lip service to the struggle for proletarian revolution. As revolutionary Trotskyists, we stood for the unconditional military defense of the Soviet degenerated work-

ers state and the deformed workers states of East and Central Europe while fighting for political revolution to oust the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies and install regimes based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism. Today, we apply this same program to the remaining deformed workers states of China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba.

The restoration of capitalism in the USSR was a world-historic defeat for the international proletariat. Today, rapacious U.S. imperialism declares itself the superpower of a “one superpower” world, and the capitalists internationally are intensifying their class war against working people, immigrants and the oppressed. Retrograde “death of communism” consciousness has led to a number of backward offspring, from the mythology of the “end of racism” to widespread despair among working people over their ability to fundamentally ameliorate their conditions. It is a telling statement of the decomposition of the left that radical-liberal writer Alexander Cockburn is now promoting right-wing libertarian Republican Ron Paul—a fanatical proponent of “free market” capitalism—as a “principled fellow” and “a candidate leftists can and should support” (*Nation*, 21 January).

There will be no effective resistance to the immiseration of American working people without the unity in struggle between the trade unions and the black and Latino poor. It is necessary to fight for a new, class-struggle leadership in the labor movement that fights to mobilize and extend union power not only in defense of workers’ livelihoods but also to combat racist discrimination and anti-immigrant attacks. Such a class-struggle leadership would fight against deportations and to organize immigrant workers,



Chicagoist
ISO-led protesters at University of Illinois-Chicago unfurl banner pleading with Obama to cut war funding, February 2007.

demanding full citizenship rights for all immigrants. As we wrote in our Programmatic Statement:

“Despite the destruction of industrial jobs and erosion of union strength, black workers, who have a significantly higher rate of trade-union membership than do white workers, continue to be integrated into strategic sectors of the industrial proletariat, which alone has the power to shatter this racist, capitalist system. Won to a revolutionary program, black workers will be the living link fusing the anger of the dispossessed ghetto masses with the social power of the multiracial proletariat under the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party.” ■

Chicago...

(continued from page 2)

both the transit bosses and the courts and cops of the capitalist state, the TWU International stabbed them in the back, telling workers “to report to work” during the strike, while the city labor tops refused to support it. And just as the strikers were feeling their power, the Local 100 leaders demobilized the strike and sent workers back without a contract (“NYC Transit Strike: Union Power vs. Class Collaboration,” WV No. 861, 6 January 2006).

The current attacks on the ATU are the fruit of years of reliance on the Democratic Party politicians, black and white. While the Republicans openly spit in the face of workers, black people and the mass of immigrants, the Democrats posture as “friends” of labor and minorities while carrying out the very same attacks against working people and the poor. Whether it is run by Democrats or Republicans the capitalist state is an instrument for the subjugation of the working class to the interests of the capitalists. Boss Daley has not been shy in his praise of the ATU tops, commenting that it “took a lot of courage” to accept the concessions. No, what it took was union misleaders



James/Chicago Tribune
Angry residents of Chicago’s West Side protest against cop killing of black youth Aaron Harrison, August 2007.

willing to offer up the interests of their members to the mercies of the capitalist state helping make Chicago the “city that works” for Boss Daley’s racist Democratic Party machine.

Another example is the Democrat Harold Washington, Chicago’s first black mayor, whose 1983 election was seen by most

black people in Chicago as a chance to get some of their share of housing, jobs and schools through Democratic Party patronage. But Washington quickly used his influence to help pass the notorious Illinois legislature House Bill 1805, which massively looted the transit pension fund, outlawed the cost-of-living allowance

(COLA) and imposed the hated part-time system. While the late Washington is often held in iconic status, especially for many black people in racist Chicago, the reality is that when Washington tried to justify his anti-union attacks to transit workers at a union meeting in January 1984, he was hooted off the stage by angry black bus drivers and forced to flee out the back door!

We in the Spartacist League and Labor Black Struggle League seek to win workers to a revolutionary program that is based on the understanding that the power of the working class can and must be used to fight for all of the oppressed as part of the fight for a socialist revolution. Those who labor must rule! As the speaker for the LBSL, who is also a Chicago transit worker, explained at the Annual Holiday Appeal for Class War Prisoners held in Chicago on December 9: “The present situation in transit is the bitter fruit of years of the union strategy of supporting the capitalist Democrats and supporting arbitration instead of organizing the workers independently from the bosses and their parties. Labor must break from the Democrats! No to the policy of surrender that is arbitration. We need a workers party to fight to defend black rights, to defend immigrants and all the oppressed.” ■

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Iran...

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say, in the context of U.S. threats, Iran *needs* nuclear weapons to deter an imperialist attack. *U.S. hands off Iran! All U.S. troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan now!*

It is the task of the multinational working class in Iran, leading behind it all the oppressed, to overthrow the Persian-chauvinist, clericalist regime through socialist revolution. Key to this perspective is the forging of a Leninist-Trotskyist workers party. Such parties must be built throughout the Near East—forged in struggle against all forms of fundamentalism and nationalism—to unite the proletariat in struggle against the imperialists as well as the region’s capitalist rulers. *For a*

socialist federation of the Near East!

In the U.S. and other advanced capitalist countries, the rapacious imperialist rulers must be swept away through workers revolutions. The true enemy of working people, minorities and the oppressed in the U.S. is the U.S. bourgeoisie. The ruling class that is today threatening Iran is the same capitalist class that has slashed the pensions, health care and jobs of America’s working people while shredding democratic rights through the reactionary “war on terror.” The struggle against imperialist war must be part and parcel of a struggle against the entire system of capitalist exploitation and oppression. The Spartacist League is committed to forging the workers party needed to lead the struggle for workers revolution in the heartland of world imperialism. ■

ILWU...

(continued from page 12)

Greens) is defense of capitalist interests, at home and abroad.

There must be a fight for a class-struggle leadership of the unions committed to breaking the political chains binding workers to the bosses and their government. The working class needs its *own* party, one that would mobilize labor's power—at the point of production and on the streets—against the class enemy. In racist America, where black oppression is central to the capitalist profit system, such a party would champion the cause of black freedom. To cut through the poisonous chauvinism that ties workers to their exploiters, it would raise the banner of international labor solidarity and fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. We fight to forge the workers party that is necessary to lead all the exploited and oppressed in socialist revolution, ushering in a society where those who labor rule.

On a small scale, the way forward was shown by the February 2002 united-front demonstration in Oakland initiated by the Labor Black League and Partisan Defense Committee demanding: "Down with the Anti-Immigrant Witchhunt! No to the USA-Patriot Act and the Maritime Security Act!" Endorsed by ILWU Local 10 and AFSCME Local 444 among others, the rally brought out some 300 trade unionists, socialists and youth who chanted, "National Unity is a lie—Bosses profit, workers die!" A determined core of 30 mainly black ILWUers joined the Filipino Workers Association and the largely Latino immigrants of the San Francisco Day Labor Program in a break with the widespread sentiment, fostered by the capitalist rulers, that blacks and immigrants are competitors for crumbs at the bottom of this society.

TWIC Threatens Racist Purge

The ILWU was an early target of the government's drive for "national unity" following September 11. During the 2002 contract negotiations, then "Homeland Security" chief Tom Ridge phoned the ILWU International president to warn that a strike would "threaten national security." A recent video produced by the ILWU, *Eye of the Storm*, reveals that the White House established a special task force to deal with the negotiations. Worried that a disruption of cargo movement would hamper the imminent invasion of Iraq, Bush threatened to use federal troops in the event of a strike.

Yet the ILWU International—with Local 10 officials trailing closely behind—signed on to the national security campaign. Then ILWU president James Spinosa bragged in his March 2006 *Dispatcher* column, "We have established the ILWU as a major player in the national debate on port security and will continue to press our position to protect our jobs, ourselves and our communities." When the Democrats scream for the inspection of all shipping containers entering the U.S., the ILWU's *Dispatcher* is right behind them.

That "port security" means attacks on workers and blacks is demonstrated by the case of Aaron Harrison and Jason Ruffin. In August, these two black Local 10 longshoremen were beaten and arrested for contacting their union after port security guards invoked maritime security regulations in demanding to search their car (see "ILWU Rally: 'Drop the Bogus Charges Now!,'" WV No. 900, 12 October 2007). The ILWU must continue to rally in defense of Harrison and Ruffin, who still face charges of obstructing a police officer.

The implementation of the Transportation Worker Identification Credential program vastly increases the government's ability to police the workforce on the docks. TWIC ID cards, with encoded biometric data, were mandated by the 2002 Maritime Transportation Security



Above: Port truckers demanding more pay per load shut down much of the Port of Oakland on 30 April 2004.
Right: Customs agents check trucker's documents at Oakland port in October 2001.
ILWU: help organize the port truckers!



Macor/SF Chronicle photos

Act. After years of delay, the Transportation Security Administration announced in the fall that it would begin screening workers, who by September 25 will be required to have a card to enter port facilities. The government does not yet have a prototype for a machine that can read the biometric data (fingerprints). But the criminal background checks required for the card are being implemented now and will be ongoing during the ILWU's contract negotiations, acting to intimidate the workforce.

The ILWU leadership's "opposition" to criminal background checks has amounted to negotiating with the government over the terms and limits of the TWIC program. The *Dispatcher* (October 2006) brags that the union won "major gains" by lobbying their Democratic friends in Congress. Who are they trying to fool? Under TWIC, workers who have been convicted within the last seven years (or released from prison in the last five years) for "interim disqualifying criminal offenses" will be denied cards, and therefore the right to their livelihoods, until those periods elapse. The offenses include possession with intent to distribute controlled substances, identity fraud, robbery and unlawful possession of firearms.

Black and Latino workers who have been victimized by the racist cops and courts, especially through the "war on drugs," will be disproportionately purged. In late 2006, some 70 mostly black Chicago rail workers were fired under Homeland Security regulations barring ex-felons from such jobs (see "Protest 'War on Terror' Firing of Rail Workers!," WV No. 884, 19 January 2007). We call for the decriminalization of drugs and defend the right of the people to bear arms. No to gun control!

Roughly 750,000 maritime and port workers are eventually supposed to be covered by TWIC. According to initial government papers, TWIC is a prototype for a broader program. This could be a step toward a national identity card, which the government would use as a means of control and regimentation of the entire population.

ILWU officials have already turned over the union's membership list to the government to check immigration status and whether anyone is on its "terrorism" database. The non-union, heavily immigrant port truckers are going to be especially hit by TWIC's requirement that they prove citizenship or legal immigra-

tion status. The ILWU tops have despicably pointed the finger at the truckers as the "real" security threat. What the union should be doing is helping to *organize* the port truckers and mobilizing its power to fight anti-immigrant attacks.

Now the chickens are coming home to roost as longshoremen are being subject to background checks right along with port truckers. Involvement in a "transportation security incident"—defined as "a security incident resulting in a significant loss of life, environmental damage, transportation system disruption or economic disruption in a specific area"—is grounds for *permanent* TWIC disqualification. According to the *Dispatcher*, the ILWU was responsible for language ensuring that a "work stoppage, or other nonviolent employee-related action" not be included in this category. The *Dispatcher* fails to mention that the history of the labor movement is filled with cops and company goons busting strikers' heads while workers are called "violent" and railroaded through the courts for defending their union. TWIC cards will have to be periodically renewed, threatening workers who defend their picket lines with being barred from working on the waterfront.

ILWU Tops' Tradition of Class Collaboration

Today's "war on terror" is not the first time the government has trumpeted "national security" in order to purge the ILWU and other unions. In 1948, at the outset of the imperialists' Cold War against the Soviet Union, the West Coast waterfront bosses insisted on the eve of a strike that ILWU president Harry Bridges sign an anti-Communist affidavit or give up leadership of the union, as mandated by the Taft-Hartley Act. Bridges, who led the 1934 strike battles that forged the union, refused, and longshoremen backed him in a referendum by 20 to 1. The bitter strike lasted 98 days. Although the companies were forced to settle with the union and Bridges kept his post, the bosses won a major concession—a "no strike pledge" and binding arbitration clause in the contract.

Two years later, the government instituted a port security program seeking to drive Communists, Trotskyists, Socialists and other labor militants and leaders out of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) unions. By the end of 1956, Coast Guard screening had denied secu-

rity clearances to 3,783 waterfront and maritime workers; 243 of them were members of ILWU Local 10, and two-thirds of those were black. Of the eleven unions expelled from the CIO in 1949-50, only the ILWU and UE electrical workers survived intact, although UE was severely weakened by an anti-Communist split. In December 1953, Local 10 members shut down the waterfront to protest the witchhunting House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), which was holding hearings in San Francisco. This was a significant action against the stultifying hold of McCarthyism on U.S. society.

While Harry Bridges was a prominent target of the red purges, he was in fact a labor bureaucrat whose tradition is overwhelmingly one of class collaboration, not class struggle. Loyal to the Communist Party's Stalinist policy of support to a "progressive" wing of the ruling class, Bridges accepted the framework of the capitalist system and generally supported the Democratic Party. The 1948 contract he negotiated ushered in more than two decades of labor peace on the West Coast waterfront. He negotiated the Mechanization and Modernization contracts of the 1960s that allowed the PMA to slash longshore jobs by more than half (see "Harry Bridges and the Communist Party," WV No. 66, 11 April 1975). Despite the union's many paper resolutions against the Vietnam War, Bridges ensured that military goods continued to flow to the U.S. imperialist war machine even during the ILWU's 1971 strike.

It is this tradition of class peace that runs deep in the Local 10 bureaucracy. In his *Maritime Worker Monitor* (12 November 2007), Jack Heyman, a member of the Local 10 executive board, correctly opposed the Labor Department intervention. Citing the "militant" and "democratic" practices of the ILWU "back in the day," Heyman aptly claims the Bridges tradition, a method that has long served Heyman and the ILWU tops by providing a "militant" cover for class collaboration. Thus Heyman spouts "anti-imperialist" verbiage as a cover for his treacherous support to the drive for port security, writing in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (5 March 2006): "Real port security means inspecting all containers offloaded and ending imperialist wars abroad that spawn terrorists, not stifling the free-speech rights of those who work in the ports."

The road forward for those militants who want to fight to turn around the ILWU lies not in reclaiming the Bridges tradition. As we wrote in "Government Hands Off ILWU Local 10!" (WV No. 903, 23 November 2007): "The anger of Local 10 members at the government's takeover of their union elections should be directed into a fight for the political independence of the working class from the exploiters, their political parties and the capitalist state. That means a struggle to build a workers party that fights for a workers government." ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Government Hands Off the Unions!

As 2008 Contract Negotiations Loom

Feds Target ILWU



Corbis

Port of Long Beach. West Coast ports are among busiest in U.S. and a gateway for Pacific Rim trade.

In an ominous attack on the labor movement, the federal Department of Labor (DOL) took over recent elections in the San Francisco Bay Area's International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10. The DOL intervened into Local 10 just as the West Coast ILWU's contract negotiations with the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) are due to begin. There can be no mistaking the government's aim: to weaken the ability of this powerful union to defend itself against the employers.

At the same time, the government is ratcheting up "anti-terror" measures against longshore and maritime workers through the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) program. With its mandatory immigration and criminal background checks, TWIC will victimize workers in the name of "securing" the nation's ports. The Feds are also seeking to get their mitts on the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), which covers the East and Gulf coasts. In December, the U.S. Attorney's office in New York filed a revamped lawsuit alleging a conspiracy between the Mafia and the ILA, the latest installment of a decades-long attempt to bust the union through "anti-corruption" suits. This time around, the Feds demand control of union benefit funds and the removal of four ILA officials.

In unleashing its agencies against the ILWU and ILA, the capitalist government is going after workers who have tremendous potential social power. Due to the massive increase in foreign trade and the dependence of most U.S. manufacturing on "just in time delivery," any dock strike by workers fighting to defend themselves against the bosses' attacks would have a huge effect on the entire economy. Trade through the West Coast ports alone has increased fourfold in the last two decades; some 10 percent of the country's gross domestic product is tied to the loading and unloading of goods at these ports. The entire labor movement must demand: Government hands off the ILWU and ILA!

Workers must oppose any intervention by the capitalist government into the unions on principle. The state, as Marxists have argued and as history has shown, is not a neutral body standing above classes

and the class struggle. From its battery of anti-union laws to its strikebreaking cops and courts, the capitalist state is a repressive apparatus that protects the rule and profits of the bourgeoisie *against* the working class and the oppressed. Key to unleashing labor's power to struggle in its own interests is the fight for the *independence* of the working class and its organizations from the capitalist state. That requires combatting the union bureaucracy's program of class collaboration, which is based on the falsehood that the interests of labor and capital can be reconciled. This outlook is expressed politically in the union tops' support to the Democratic Party and the "national interests" of U.S. imperialism.

In the Los Angeles area, the ILWU misleaders' class collaborationism is undermining the ability of the union to fight against the recent proliferation on the docks of hangman's nooses—the symbol of lynch mobs that killed thousands of black people in the century after the Civil War. As we wrote in "ILWU: Fight Racist Noose Provocations at L.A.

Ports!" (WV No. 905, 4 January), it is the PMA bosses "who stand to gain from the fostering of poisonous racial and ethnic divisions within the workforce, especially with the union heading into negotiations for a new contract." Instead of mobilizing the membership in action to halt the racist provocations, the ILWU bureaucrats have encouraged workers to pressure the PMA to take action. The PMA will only intervene to the extent it can weaken the union. The union must clean its own house!

Feds Run Local 10 Elections

The Labor Department's pretext for intervening into Local 10 was so flimsy as to smack of provocation. It was based on the complaints of Local 10 members Trevyn McCoy, who went to the DOL after being disqualified from running for office in the 2005 election, and Odra Dunn, who filed a complaint after he was refused a position on the ballot in 2006. Whether or not they were bureaucratically barred by the union leadership, running to the bosses' government is an act

of class treason. Upheld by an October decision by the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court, the Feds took over the union elections on the grounds that the rules under which the two were disqualified were not at that time explicitly laid out in Local 10's constitution. McCoy's suit was filed in August 2006; it can hardly be an accident that the court decision came down in late fall 2007, on the eve of the 2008 contract year.

The court order in favor of the DOL was met with surprise and outrage by many Local 10 members. The two Local 10 members who opened up the ILWU to the class enemy deserve the scorn and contempt of every defender of the union. It is a damning indictment of the local leadership under outgoing President Tommy Clark that the only course it offered the membership was collaboration with the Labor Department. The union tops complied with the Feds' demand that the *Local 10 Longshore Bulletin* be opened up so that McCoy and Dunn could justify their actions to the membership. In the upshot, McCoy won election to the 35-member Local 10 executive board, while Dunn came in 36th, which means he could be drafted as an alternate.

The danger of government intervention over "union democracy" and "fighting corruption" is seen in the decades-long vendetta against the powerful Teamsters union, which included imprisoning Jimmy Hoffa after he negotiated a national Master Freight Agreement in the 1960s. In 1987, the Teamsters were sued under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act. Two years later, the Teamsters brass signed onto a consent decree that laid the basis for government administrators to run the union. Ron Carey, who was installed as union president under government auspices in 1991, had his re-election voided by the government immediately after leading the widely popular 1997 UPS strike.

Carey was backed by the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), a "rank-and-file" opposition that openly collaborated with the government. The Spartacist League denounced the traitorous machinations of the TDU, which provided the legal brief inviting the government into the union. In stark contrast, the International Socialist Organization, Socialist Action and other reformist groups have acted as cheerleaders for the TDU and other union-suing outfits, promoting out-bureaucrats and opposing the program of class struggle.

The labor bureaucracy, abetted by the reformist left, fosters the illusion that the "democratic" capitalist state can be pressured to serve the interests of workers. Especially criminal is the ILWU and ILA tops' embrace of the "war on terror," the rulers' rationale for the brutal occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and for a series of repressive laws targeting immigrants, blacks, the trade unions and the rights of the populace as a whole. In their current bid for the White House, the Democrats have been trying to outdo Bush in the "war on terror," especially when it comes to port security.

Notably, the ILWU International leadership agreed last year to early "good faith" negotiations with the PMA for the 2008 contract, no doubt aiming to save Democratic presidential candidates the problem of labor turmoil on the waterfront. The Republicans are the in-your-face enemies of labor, black people, immigrants and the poor. The Democrats try to fool working people and the oppressed with soothing words while keeping their hands on the same big stick. The bottom line for both parties (as well as for the small-time bourgeois

continued on page 11



WV Photo

9 February 2002: Bay Area longshoremen were at core of united-front, labor-centered mobilization initiated by Partisan Defense Committee and Labor Black League in defense of immigrant rights and against government's "war on terror."