

All U.S./NATO Troops Out of Afghanistan, Iraq!

Down With Obama's War in Afghanistan!



Getty



AFP

President Barack Obama, shown addressing troops at North Carolina's Camp Lejeune this February, vows to reinforce imperialist occupation of Afghanistan. Right: Afghan security forces at site of September 4 U.S./NATO airstrike near Kunduz that killed some 90 people.

SEPTEMBER 6—The Afghan presidential elections held on August 20 were never meant to be anything but a “democratic” veneer for the American-led imperialist occupation of Afghanistan. But within days of the elections, even the veneer disappeared amid a welter of charges and countercharges of ballot stuffing and vote rigging. Whether current president Hamid Karzai manages to steal the elections outright or there is a runoff with his main challenger Abdullah Abdullah, the real rulers are the mass murderers in the White House and Pentagon. On September 4, a U.S./NATO airstrike near Kunduz killed some 90 people, the latest in ongoing airstrikes that have slaughtered thousands in Afghanistan and across the border in Pakistan.

The more significant fact overshadowing the elections is that the U.S./NATO occupiers have been losing ground militarily. The Pashtun-based Taliban insurgency now covers an estimated 40 percent of the country's districts. Southern Afghanistan is now largely outside government control, while major cities like Kabul and Jalalabad are being squeezed. Obama's troop “surge” has increased the fighting in southern Helmand province, a Taliban stronghold, with U.S. military casualties in July-August at their highest levels in eight years of war and occupation.

The brutal military occupation by U.S., British and other NATO forces, with its attendant atrocities, has fueled bitter resentment especially among the Pashtun

peoples, the largest ethnic grouping, which makes up about 42 percent of the population. Days after a sustained U.S. bombing attack on three villages in the western province of Farah on May 4-5 killed over 100 civilians, thousands of local villagers brought 15 newly discovered bodies to the house of the provincial governor, chanting, “Death to America” and “Death to the government.” Not surprisingly, many Pashtuns have increasingly joined forces with the re-emergent Taliban and others, both in Afghanistan and on the other side of the Pakistan border, an artificial boundary that carves up ethnic groups. U.S. air attacks in Pakistan have increased markedly under the Obama administration.

Now the Obama administration is preparing for massive reinforcements, up to 45,000 more troops on top of the 68,000 already committed. Obama recently assigned Lt. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, a “special ops” commander, to lead the U.S./NATO forces in Afghanistan. A 13 May *Washington Post* article described his “manhunter” credentials from commando operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan: “As commander of the military's secretive Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) for nearly five years starting in 2003, McChrystal masterminded a campaign to perfect the art of tracking down enemies, and then capturing or killing them.” For the captured, the JSOC oversaw a special forces torture center named Camp Nama near the Baghdad airport.

With opposition to the Afghanistan occupation growing, Obama, echoing his predecessor George W. Bush, invokes the “war on terror,” “national unity” and fear. Speaking to an audience of veterans on August 17, he declared: “This is not a war of choice. This is a war of necessity.

Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which al-Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans.”

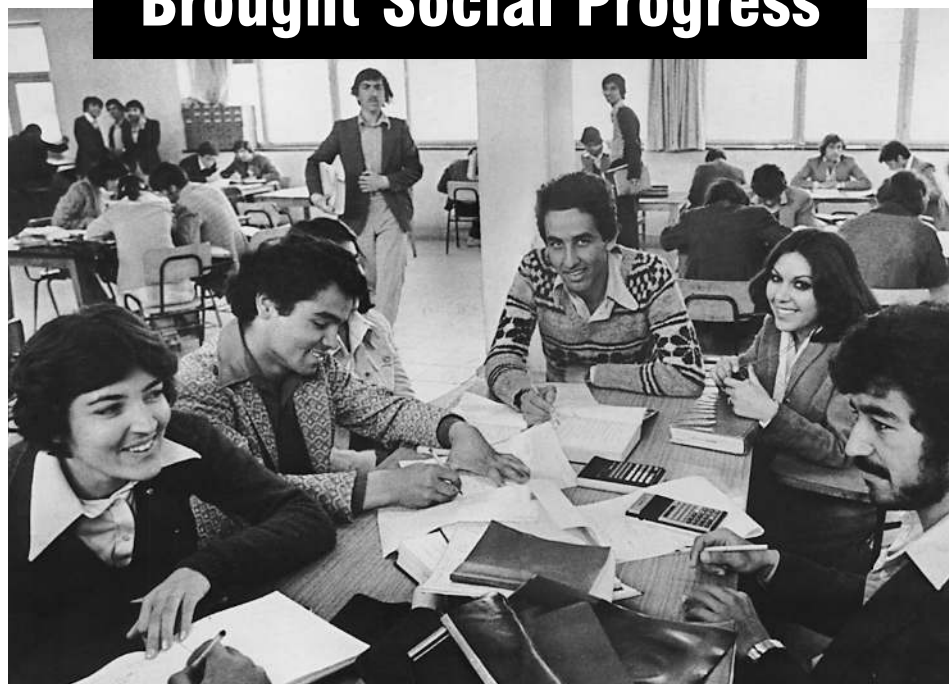
Obama's speech had little effect on public sentiment, as recent polls show that a majority of Americans disapprove of the war. Indeed, with support for the Afghan war among his Democratic base dwindling, Obama has increasingly turned to Congressional Republicans for support.

As we warned during the election cam-

paign, the Afghanistan occupation was “Obama's preferred theatre of imperialist carnage” (“Fight for a Revolutionary Workers Party!” *WV* No. 924, 7 November 2008). Obama repeatedly said as a candidate that he would divert (not eliminate) troops from Iraq to pursue the “good” war in Afghanistan. And he's kept his campaign promise. Unlike the reformist “socialists,” who gave open or backhanded support to Obama, we oppose *on principle* any political support to bourgeois

continued on page 11

1979 Soviet Intervention Brought Social Progress



Planeta

Kabul University in 1980s: more than half of students were women.



Der Spiegel: Lynch Rope Journalism

Free Mumia Now!

We print below an article translated from Spartakist No. 179 (September 2009) published by our comrades of the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands.



Mumia Abu-Jamal, an innocent man, is a former Black Panther Party spokesman and a supporter of the Philadelphia

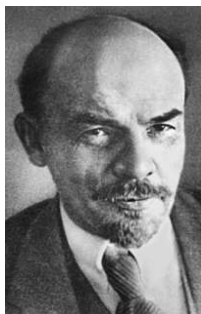
MOVE organization. He was framed up, convicted and sentenced to death on false charges of killing Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner in December 1981. Mumia's life is in increased danger. On April 6 the U.S. Supreme Court summarily turned down his petition to overturn the frame-up conviction. And the court has yet to rule on the Philadelphia district attorney's appeal to reinstate the death sentence, which was overturned by

Slavery and the Origin of the Race Ideology

Veteran American Trotskyist Richard Fraser developed the materialist approach to the black question in the 1950s in a series of articles and lectures for internal discussion in the then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party. The ideology of race is a socially derived category used to justify the system of black chattel slavery in the American South, and black oppression continued as a bedrock of American capitalism even after the Civil War smashed the slavocracy. Fraser



TROTSKY



LENIN

advanced the program of revolutionary integrationism: a proletarian-centered struggle against every manifestation of racial oppression based on the understanding that the complete integration and equality of black people can be realized only in an egalitarian socialist society. This means not liberal nostrums of reform, but proletarian socialist revolution to overthrow the capitalist system and eliminate the basis of racial and class oppression. The excerpts below are from an unpublished manuscript in the collection of the Prometheus Research Library that Fraser was working on at the time of his death in 1988.

Race is a social relationship between people recognizably different in skin color. Recognizability is a necessary element of the relation, but the social aspects of prejudice, exploitation and segregation are the things race is really about. Race has no legitimacy as a biological division of mankind.

Race relations today are a residue of relations between white masters and black slaves. The fact that slaves were black and masters were white was an accident of history. Light skinned Europeans enslaved dark skinned Africans. Europeans had learned about gunpowder from the Chinese and had guns. The Africans didn't. Skin color was a fact of life that differed between these people. That difference had an ancient and interesting origin, but did not have anything to do with the ability of Europeans to enslave Africans....

The basic change in race ideology that took place at the end of the eighteenth century was to transform the slave who was socially inferior by virtue of enslavement, and was incidentally black, into a person who was inferior because he was black and hence only fitted for slavery....

Why, after three hundred years of slavery did a race theory finally appear? Several things came together. The French Revolution did not just declare that people had personal rights by nature, but that reason ought to hold sway over blind faith. The Age of Reason had been born, and a scientific, and secular, rationale was needed to justify the enslavement of people.

Furthermore, opposition to slavery was beginning to occur. Slave revolts began to give slave masters cause for concern, not to speak of the nascent abolitionist movement. The hypocrisy of the U.S. Constitution which was based on the ideal of human liberty, but recognized the legitimacy of slavery, could be counteracted by the contention that slaves were not quite human, but some sort of inferior race. This was the social basis for the appearance of race ideology as a scientific discipline.

—Richard Fraser, *The Struggle Against Slavery in the United States*

KfsV, PDC's fraternal organization in Germany, during protest against visit by then-president Bush, July 2006. Banner reads: "Mobilize the Power of the Working Class: Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, Now!"



U.S. District Court Judge William Yohn in 2001. Should the Supreme Court rule in favor of the D.A.'s appeal, it would place Mumia a big step closer to the death chamber.

Helping to soap the hangman's noose is *Der Spiegel*, whose 24 August issue includes the article "The Fires of Hell," a piece of smear job journalism aimed at preparing European "public opinion" for a death sentence. The article was promptly applauded by right-wing Philadelphia radio broadcaster Michael Smerconish as a potential "turning point" for the campaign to kill Mumia: "After almost three decades, Abu-Jamal is finally in danger of exhausting his time in the U.S. courts. Here's hoping a usually captive European audience has finished accommodating a police officer's murderer as well" (www.philly.com, 27 August).

Small wonder, since the *Spiegel* article retails a host of lies lifted from the pages of *Murdered by Mumia*, a book co-authored by Smerconish with Faulkner's widow Maureen. The Partisan Defense Committee Fact Sheet pamphlet *Murdered by Mumia: Big Lies in the Service of Legal Lynching*, is a detailed refutation of this tract. The PDC Fact Sheet exposes as myth the claims which *Spiegel* regurgitates as "evidence" to paint Mumia as a "cop killer." Thus the *Spiegel* smear job cites as irrefutable evidence the testimony of prosecution "eyewitness" Robert Chobert, who testified that he saw Mumia shoot Faulkner. But as exposed in the Fact Sheet, in 1995 Chobert admitted that he never saw the shooting. Additionally, he had not parked his taxi behind Faulkner's police car, as he claimed: photos of the scene taken that night demonstrate this. Chobert, who had been driving with a suspended license for having been hired to throw a Molotov cocktail into a school, later changed his story several times, admitting in 1995 that he was secretly granted favors by the prosecution in exchange for his testimony during the 1982 trial.

Our comrades of the PDC have been fighting for more than 20 years on Mumia's behalf, including by uncovering evidence of his innocence that refutes the police and prosecution lies and exposes the depth of this racist frame-up. The pamphlet *The*

Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, published in German by the Komitee für soziale Verteidigung, is a comprehensive exposure of the frame-up. It includes sworn statements by Mumia and his brother William Cook exposing as a lie *Spiegel's* claim that Mumia "never told the judges what happened in that night." In fact, one judge after another has refused to even consider these statements or the mountain of evidence of Mumia's innocence, including the confession of Arnold Beverly that he and not Mumia killed Officer Faulkner.

For years, reformists and liberals have subordinated the fight for Mumia's freedom to faith in the capitalist courts and appeals for a "new," "fair" trial, downplaying or rejecting outright the massive, overwhelming evidence of the state frame-up. They raised the banner "Obama & Holder/We Need You Now!/Free Mumia" at the July convention of the black civil rights organization NAACP in a shameless appeal to the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism. A petition to Obama's top cop, Attorney General Eric Holder, was issued by the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and others in the U.S. Appeals to Obama are all the more grotesque in the face of Obama's support of the death penalty. Smerconish regards Obama as an ally in his campaign against Mumia. Following an interview in which Smerconish questioned Obama about Mumia's case, Smerconish became one of many Republicans who endorsed the Obama campaign. As recounted in Smerconish's 20 August *Philadelphia Daily News* op-ed article, Obama said he wasn't familiar with the details: "'So let me just lay out a very clear principle: In my mind, if somebody killed a police officer, they deserve the death penalty or life in prison,' he told me. Amen to that."

Mumia's case goes to the core of the racist subjugation of black people, which is fundamental to the maintenance of American capitalism. The whole frame-up underlines that the fight for Mumia's freedom must be based on a class-struggle opposition to the racist U.S. capitalist system. **Free Mumia now! Down with the racist death penalty!** ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

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

DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Bonnie Brodie

EDITOR: Alan Wilde

EDITOR, YOUNG SPARTACUS PAGES: Elizabeth Johnson

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

EDITORIAL BOARD: Barry James (managing editor), François Donau (production manager), Blandine Hauser (letters editor), Bruce André, Ray Bishop, Jon Brule, Helen Cantor, Ed Clarkson, Paul Cone, Michael Davison, George Foster, Liz Gordon, Walter Jennings, Jane Kerrigan, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour

The Spartacist League is the U.S. Section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Workers Vanguard (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and skipping the last issue in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116. E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net. Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

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

The closing date for news in this issue is September 8.

No. 942

11 September 2009

BC Partisan Defense Committee
January 2008 Pamphlet \$5.50

**Mumia Is Innocent!
Free Him Now!**

PDC Fact Sheet

BIG LIES
MURDERED BY MUMIA
IN THE SERVICE
OF LEGAL LYNCHING

See page 5

Protesters Counter New Drive to Execute Mumia
Declaration of Mumia Abu-Jamal

\$10 (16 pages)
\$10 for bundle of 30

BC Partisan Defense Committee
July 2006 Pamphlet \$1

The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal

Mumia Is Innocent!

Anatomy of a Frame-Up

Presentation by Rachel Wolkstein 5
Affidavit of Rachel Wolkstein 29
Affidavit of Arnold R. Beverly 38
Declaration of Mumia Abu-Jamal 39
Declarations of Yvette Williams 46
Declarations of William Cook 39
Declaration of Kenneth Pale 47

\$1 (48 pages)
\$10 for bundle of 15

Order from/make checks payable to: Partisan Defense Committee
P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013

Remember Hurricane Katrina, Racist Atrocity

Hurricane Katrina in August/September 2005 was a natural disaster. But the government’s response was a man-made disaster, leaving in its wake a catastrophic human toll. Who can forget the television images of desperate survivors on the roofs of their homes; of hungry, thirsty and frightened people pleading for help at the squalid, sweltering Superdome; of the armed forces of the state mobilized to terrorize the population; of the criminal actions (and inaction) by all levels of government, by both parties of capitalism—the Republicans in the White House, the Democrats at the state and local levels.

Four years on, Panglossian reportage in the bourgeois press abounds, with headlines like that of the *New York Times* (14 July): “A Sustainable New Orleans Slowly Rises in Katrina’s Wake.” For some privileged layers of that city, this rings true; for the black, poor and working-class victims reality is something else altogether. To take one example, public housing projects, which served a largely black population, have been closed. A recent letter by a longtime *Workers Vanguard* reader in New Orleans reports:

“There is still a repopulation curve of the richest and the whitest returning first, the poorest and blackest last. The housing project residents never made it back at all. After the storm, all the projects were barricaded and barred at great expense to keep the residents from returning, even projects that never flooded. HANO [Housing Authority of New Orleans], HUD, and a unanimous City Council coluded to demolish 4,500 units.... ‘Urban renewal is Negro removal,’ an aphorism from the ’60s, is writ large in New Orleans today....

“Beyond the Industrial Canal stretches the vast expanse of the mostly black



Desperate Katrina victims trying to escape hellish conditions in Superdome in New Orleans, September 2005.

New Orleans East and the entirely black Ninth Ward. Repopulation there is small and is discouraged by official neglect. There are virtually no hospitals, police or fire stations, post offices, grocery stores, schools, libraries, playgrounds, and none are planned....

“The national press has painted a cheerful picture about New Orleans’ recovery. One reason is the current demolition-and-construction boomlet, which is due to federal disaster dollars finally coming through the pipeline—four years down the road. The big construction companies subcontract out to many small-company

bosses who in turn pick up mostly Hispanic day laborers at Home Depot or Lowe’s. The laborers have no union, no benefits, no health insurance, often no place to stay, and no protection from rampant wage theft. The New Orleans City Council recently defeated a proposal to make wage theft by contractors a crime. A north shore cop was arrested for repeatedly stopping Hispanic laborers on the Interstate and robbing them of their cash at gunpoint and in uniform. He was fired but received no jail time and made no restitution to the victims. A New Orleans cop was busted for the same thing.

“Another reason for the cheery accounts in the national press about the city’s recovery is that New Orleans now ‘leads the nation in charter schools’...which means leading the nation in union-busting. After the longshoremen, the majority black teachers union was the largest local labor union. The first thing black Democratic mayor Ray Nagin did when the flood waters were drained was to fire all 8,000 school employees and declare the public schools closed for two academic years. Charter schools soon filled the void as families returned. The charters cherry-picked the healthiest, highest performing children, turning away those with poor test scores, ‘behavior problems’ or disabilities. They hired the whitest, youngest teachers who would work for the least money, and ‘Teach for America’ was right there with a ready supply. The charter schools are now mainly staffed by 22-year-olds who stay for exactly two years and leave. They make so little that craigslist.org is full of housing-wanted ads from them saying they can’t pay over \$400 per person in rent. They also have pitiful benefits. One young teacher was shot attempting to stop a carjacking. After reaching the \$100,000

limit to his health insurance—that’s a few days in the hospital today—his fellow teachers held a benefit to raise money for his hospital bill.”

This is but a snapshot of the devastation wrought against the working people of this city. And it continues under the Democratic Party administration of Barack Obama. In keeping with his myth of a “post-racial” America, Obama declared about Hurricane Katrina that the government’s “incompetence was color-blind.” After Obama came into office, FEMA threatened to evict the thousands of Katrina victims who are still holed up in stultifying trailers with dangerously high levels of formaldehyde, which poses an increased risk of cancer. This summer, the administration announced a “turn-around,” offering to sell the trailers for \$5. Far from being an act of magnanimity, this allows the government to wash its hands of any responsibility for the desperately poor residents, leaving them to foot the bill for all upkeep and repairs, including even the removal of the trailers if they are ever able to move back into their original homes.

Justice for the victims of Katrina will come only with the destruction of this racist capitalist system and the establishment of the rule of the working class. *The workers movement should never forget this racist atrocity.* Toward this end, we print below excerpts from “New Orleans: Racist Atrocity,” published in *WV* No. 854, 16 September 2005.

* * *

New Orleans, one of the oldest, most cultured, most complex of American cities, remains devastated, its residents dispersed, its dead still uncounted and unburied. Whole communities along the Gulf Coast have simply disappeared. Hurricane Katrina has ripped away the tattered facade of the U.S. government as “of the people, by the people, for the people,” exposing the racism, venality, ruling-class arrogance and utter ineptitude of the White House gang. A wave of revulsion has swept the country at the government’s response to the disaster, undercutting the post-September 11 “national unity” hysteria that had already taken a beating over the debacle in Iraq. Sections of the ruling class itself are hammering at Bush, not least for damaging the image of the “world’s only superpower” internationally.

Now they are even trying to forbid news media from showing the dead, who are still shamefully left to lie in the open while troops patrol the streets....

They want to hide the evidence of their crimes against the people of New Orleans. But what is starkly exposed is the raw reality of race and class in capitalist America....

But it’s not just Bush and the Republicans. The other capitalist party, the Democrats, is also directly responsible for

continued on page 6



Demonstrators push past security guards to reclaim their homes at St. Bernard public housing project, April 2006.

Workers Vanguard Subscription Drive

August 20 to October 7			
Local	Quota (in points)	Week 1 (Aug. 27-Sept. 2)	%
Bay Area	550	189	34%
Chicago	425	150	35%
Los Angeles	350	73.5	21%
New York	900	258	29%
At Large	200	27	14%
National Total	2,425	697.5	29%

WORKERS VANGUARD 50c
No. 941 20 August 2009

For a Workers Party to Fight for a Workers Government!

The California Budget Crisis and the Bankruptcy of American Capitalism

Deadly Cuts Starve the Poor, Kill the Sick, Gut the Unions

Subscribe Now!

☐ \$10/22 issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist* and *Black History and the Class Struggle*) international rates: \$25/22 issues—Airmail \$10/22 issues—Seamail

☐ \$2/6 introductory issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist*)

☐ \$2/4 issues of *Espartaco* (en español) (includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)

☐ I would like to contribute \$_____ to the production of *Workers Vanguard*.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____ E-mail _____

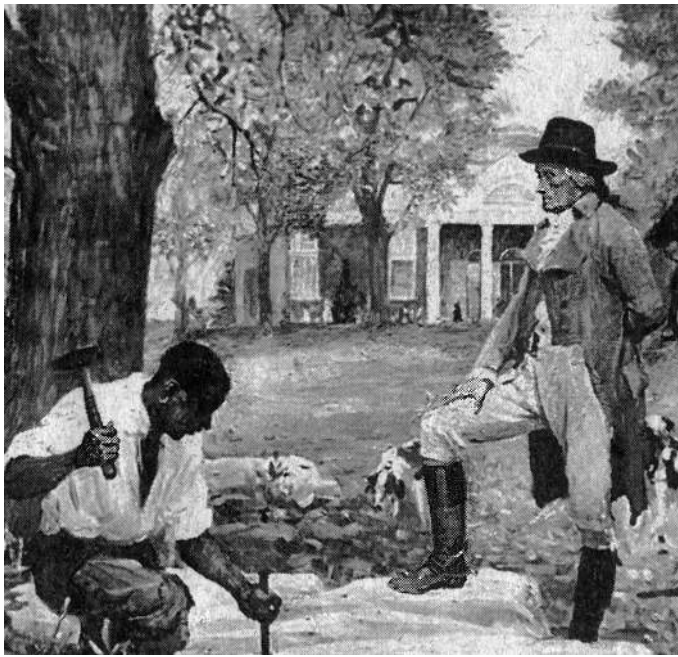
942

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



John Trumbull

Painting depicts Thomas Jefferson and others signing Declaration of Independence, 1776. Ideals of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” were belied by institution of slavery. Right: Jefferson with slave at Monticello.



Stanley M. Arhurs

SLAVERY AND THE ORIGINS OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM

We print below, in slightly edited form, a presentation by Jacob Zorn to a Spartacist League educational in New York on 30 March 2008, the first of several classes on black history and the development of the American labor movement.

This is not going to be a history class of everything that happened from 1492 to 1860; the material is too immense. I want to focus on the salient political points for this period, and also to try to set up the next class, on the Civil War. We are historical materialists, and as such we say that black oppression—and we say this

from the colonial period, through the American war of independence, to the Constitution, and then culminating in the struggle that led up to the Civil War.

Marx and Primitive Capitalist Accumulation

I want to begin with what Marx calls the primitive accumulation of capital, which was discussed in one of the readings for this class, in the first volume of *Capital*. Marx has a very powerful quote in there: “In actual history, it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the great part.” And that’s kind of a summary of what I’m going to be talking about: enslavement, robbery and murder.

I’m not going to go over much of the European background, although it’s worth reviewing our pamphlet, *Enlightenment Rationalism and the Origins of Marxism* (1998), and also some of the articles we’ve written on the English Civil War, in addition to the *Capital* reading. Marx talks about the bloody origins of capitalism, and one of the key events was the enclosure acts that threw the peasantry off the land in England and Scotland in order to kind of kick-start capitalism. As Marx describes, in Europe this resulted both in a class that owned the means of production (because land became necessary as a means of production, for wool and other things) and also a class that owned nothing but its

labor power. One result, necessary for the British colonization of North America, is that it created a large surplus of people in England who were subject to incredibly harsh punishment for very small crimes and for whom even colonial Virginia looked like a good escape.

Marx also talks about how the conquest of America, both North and South America and the Caribbean, was also key in the development of world capitalism. A key element of this was the dispossession of the indigenous population, a dispossession that was extremely violent and genocidal. If you want a taste of what this was like, you should read the writings of a Spanish priest by the name of Bartolomé de las Casas, which go into a lot of the gratuitous violence: about 95 percent of the pre-Colombian indigenous population was killed, perhaps 90 million people. But this early Spanish colonization, which was largely based on extracting gold and silver, fueled the development not only of Spanish but also of Dutch and English capitalism.

In North America, primitive capitalist accumulation meant not only dispossessing the indigenous population of the land, but also finding somebody to do the work, since in North America the English really didn’t use the Indians as a labor force. A comrade brought to my attention a really good article in *WV* No. 581 (30 July 1993), “Genocide ‘Made in USA,’” that shows how the destruction of millions of people was key in the building of the American nation and the laying of the basis for the development of North American capitalism, and how it left a birthmark of racism on American capitalism from the get-go. But fundamentally the colonists in North America had the opposite problem from what the ruling class in Britain had: that is, there was an abundance of land but a shortage of people to work on it.

I want to make the point that a lot of the history of the Americas, especially here in the United States, tends to be focused on North America. But in the early years of colonization, the most desired area of the Americas was really the Caribbean, and it was much later that North America was colonized—and not only by the English: there were Spanish outposts (for example, St. Augustine, Florida, is the longest continuously settled city founded by Europeans in the current U.S.); there was French fur trading in Quebec and plantation agriculture in Louisiana; and also obviously the Dutch in New Jersey and New York, as well as the British in Virginia. There was a lot of

competition among these different European powers, and we’ll look especially at the rivalry of the Dutch and the English in terms of mercantilism.

Capitalism and Slavery

The readings talk about “chattel slavery.” So what exactly is a chattel slave? It’s not a concept that is used much today. “Chattel” means personal property. It’s related to the word “cattle.” And that is what slaves were: they were legally property that was sold and sometimes killed.

In the abstract, capitalism and slavery are fundamentally *counterposed* systems. One is based on free labor, and the other, on slave labor. Many of the advocates of capitalism opposed chattel slavery not only because they thought it was morally wrong, but also because they thought it was retrogressive. In *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Adam Smith wrote: “From the experience of all ages and nations, I believe, that the work done by freemen comes cheaper in the end than that performed by slaves” and “Whatever work he does beyond what is sufficient to purchase his own maintenance can be squeezed out of him by violence only, and not by any interest of his own.”

Likewise, Alexander Hamilton, about whom we will be talking in a bit, said that slavery “relaxes the sinews of industry, clips the wings of commerce, and introduces misery and indigence in every shape” (quoted in James Oliver Horton, “Alexander Hamilton: Slavery and Race in a Revolutionary Generation,” *New-York Journal of American History* [Spring 2004]). The piece that comrades read from Eugene Genovese, “The Slave South: An Interpretation,” in *The Political Economy of Slavery* (1965) shows how, as a system, slavery was not capitalist; the slavocracy in the American South had its own productive system, its own values—or, to use Genovese’s phrase, its own “civilization”—that derived from this non-bourgeois system. Slavery was fundamentally different from capitalism.

However, capitalism did not evolve in the abstract, but in the concrete, and slavery was fundamental to this development. Even though the slave system itself was not capitalist, slavery was central to the development of capitalism, both in the U.S. and internationally. Slavery was also a very profitable “industry”—for lack of a better term—in its own right, and international and American capitalists are indelibly stained with slavery.

Slavery, of course, is not only a precapitalist, but also a prefeudal system of production. There is a brilliant book by Karl

PART ONE

often in *WV*—is not just a bunch of bad ideas but has a material, that is to say, a historical and class, basis. What I want to do in the class is explain the origins of this material basis. In the second class and in subsequent classes, this will be developed further. These are the three things I specifically want to drive home:

1. How slavery in the Americas was central to the development of capitalism, both on an international level and also here in the United States.
2. How elements of the contemporary black question, including the very concept of race, have their roots in the system of slavery.
3. How throughout every step of the development of the United States up through 1860 slavery was integral,



Doubleday & Company

Slaughter of Pequot Indians, 1637. Of some 400 men, women and children, only four escaped alive.

Kautsky called the *Foundations of Christianity* (1908) that, among other things, analyzes the importance of slavery in ancient Rome. Many of the elements of slavery in America are actually discussed by Kautsky in his treatment of plantation or mining slavery in Rome. He distinguishes, for example, between slavery for domestic use and slavery for profit, or commodity slavery. Obviously, commodity production in ancient Rome did not reach the level that it does under capitalism, but he made the point that when slaves make commodities that are then sold for the profit of their masters, the masters increase the exploitation of the slaves, which can only be done through immense oppression and brutality. Kautsky describes in detail a lot of the very brutal nature of Roman slavery, and he traces the decline of Rome to the contradictions in its slave system. For our purposes, one of the key elements, however, that is missing in Kautsky's piece is race. This is not an accident, because, as we'll see, Roman slavery was not a racial form of slavery.

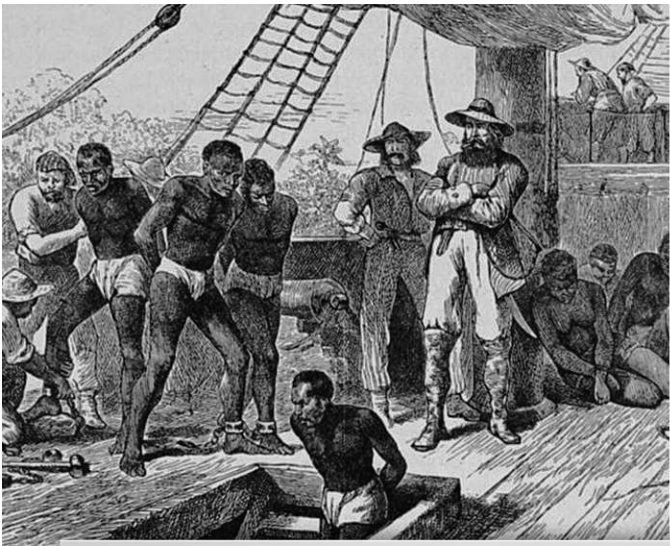
With the destruction of the centralized Roman state in West Europe and the development of feudalism, slavery largely died out in medieval Europe. In 1086, for example, about 10 percent of the English population were slaves, but slavery was not central to medieval society. It was still practiced in the Mediterranean and parts of the Arab world, but in West Europe, feudalism was the dominant system, with serfdom the main productive form of labor.

The development of the English colonies in the Americas was concurrent with the development of capitalism in Britain—it was going on at the same time as the English Civil War, and there were various political intrigues over whom the colonies would support; there are cities in the United States named after both King Charles I and Cromwell, for example. Yet, the contradiction is that the rise of capitalism was accompanied with a new rise of slavery. Particularly in the English case, this was accompanied by the creation of the world sugar market. Eating sugar is not based on slavery, but the creation of the sugar market was.

I want to make some points about the development of slavery in the Americas. The first is that there is a prehistory: before the Spanish arrived in America, the Portuguese had begun using slave labor on plantations in their island colonies off Africa, such as Madeira and the Azores. By 1452, the Pope had given the Portuguese the right to trade slaves, and in 1479 the Spanish crown gave Portugal a monopoly over the slave trade. By 1502, there is evidence of black slaves in the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo—that is to say 130 years before the English planters really began using slaves in the Caribbean and almost 200 years before slavery became entrenched in what would become the United States, in Virginia.

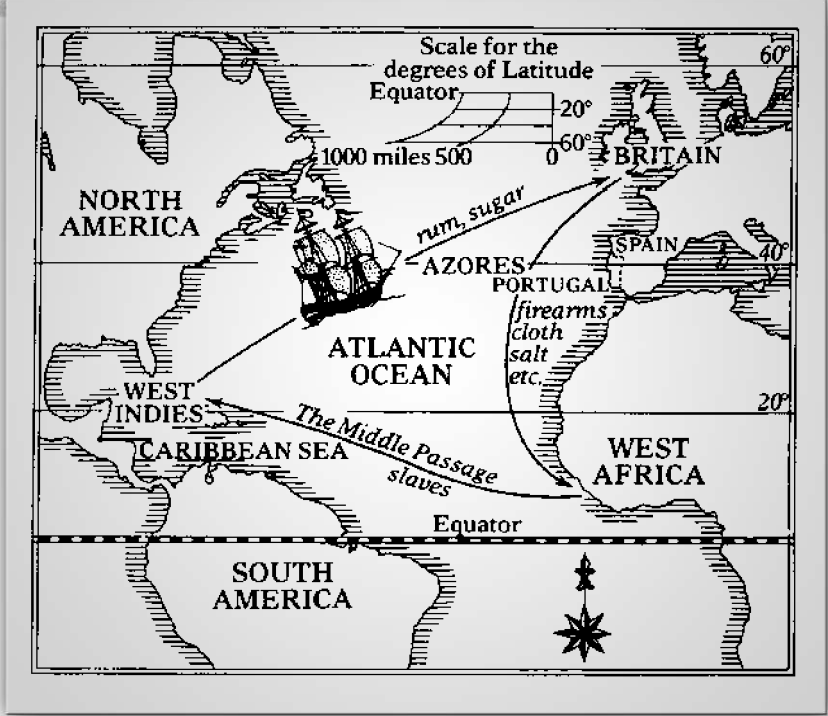
Slavery was crucial in almost every European colony throughout the Americas, and from the 16th century through the mid 19th century between 10 and 12 million Africans were "traded" as slaves. And it was extremely violent: depending on what century you're looking at, between 10 and 40 percent of the slaves died in transit. Ninety-five percent of these African slaves ended up in either the Caribbean or Latin America. North America received a relatively small fraction of all the African slaves, and this would have important ramifications on how slavery developed here.

Although the first slaves arrived in Virginia in 1619, for most of the 17th century the dominant labor system in Virginia was indentured servitude, which was a really nasty and brutal system. If it weren't for the slave system that came after, we would probably label indentured servitude one of the most brutal systems known. Indentured servants agreed to work for a period of years, usually between five and seven, in exchange for transportation to America. They might be promised land at the end of their terms.



Schomburg Library

Left: Depiction of slave ship being loaded off coast of West Africa. Triangle Trade (below) was key to early development of capitalism.



Harper & Row

But to begin with, many indentured servants did not live to the end of their terms of service. While they were servants, they were subjected to extremely harsh discipline and punishment. They could be whipped, they could be beaten, they could be sold for the duration of their terms of service. They worked a lot harder than English peasants worked, and a lot of what we think of as unique to slavery was also present in various ways in indentured servitude. Many servants ran away.

By the mid-to-late 1600s, from the point of view of the planters, there developed several problems with indentured servitude. Servants were living longer. (Incidentally, one of the reasons that they began to live longer is that they began to drink more alcohol and not drink polluted water.) This meant that there began to develop a layer of unruly and dissatisfied ex-indentured servants, making Virginia more and more unstable. The danger of this was highlighted in 1676 with Bacon's Rebellion, when poor whites, mostly former indentured servants, and blacks united against the colonial government—in this case, to demand that the colonial government, among other things, drive out the Indians. But at the same time, fewer and fewer Europeans were willing to come to America as servants, partly because England was developing economically and partly because news got around England of what servitude was like, and it did not seem so attractive as it might have before.

So the fact that servants were living longer at the end of the 17th century made slavery (which was for life) more attractive, from the point of view of the planters, than servitude (which was usually for less than a decade). The planters in Virginia began to import slaves in larger and larger numbers. By the first decade of the 18th century, Virginia had been transformed from a society in which slaves were present into a society in which slavery was the central productive relationship, a slave society. This was not the only slave society in the Americas, but it was quite different from the slave societies in the Caribbean or Brazil.

When I was preparing this class, comrade Foster raised the interesting question: why did it take a revolution—the

Civil War—to get rid of slavery in the United States, whereas in many other countries (not all of them, Haiti also obviously had a revolution) it did not take a revolution to get rid of slavery. There are various reasons, but one is that in the American South there were more slaveowners, many owning relatively few slaves, so that slavery was much more entrenched in colonial society and in later U.S. society. But importantly, from the point of view of the planters, slavery not only offered a source of labor, but also it offered a source of social stability, because with slavery came what veteran American Trotskyist Richard S. Fraser calls the concept of race.

The Race Concept

I'm not going to talk a lot about it because comrades are familiar, but there is no scientific basis for this concept of race. At the same time, various academics like to talk about race being "socially constructed." But even though race is not scientifically real, it is very, very real. It affects almost every aspect of one's life in this country, as we are reminded when we look at the newspaper every day. Marx, dealing with religion, wrote in *The German Ideology* (1846) that religion has no history—that is to say, no history independent of the social conditions that created it. So as Marxists, we understand that race is not just a bad idea, but one that developed out of a social system of production, a system of social relations, chattel slavery. This is explained very well in Fraser's "The Negro Struggle and the Proletarian Revolution" [in *Prometheus Research Series* No. 3, August 1990, "In Memoriam: Richard S. Fraser"]. And for comrades who are interested in a more in-depth look at it, there is also a very good book on the creation of the idea of race in America by Winthrop Jordan, called *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (1968), that goes back to the 16th century.

Chattel slavery is an inherently *inhuman* system. It involves degrading an entire group of people, putting them by definition outside the realm of both legal and moral protection. Chattel slaves are not legally human. As John Locke said in *Two Treatises of Government*, in 1690, slaves "are by the Right of Nature sub-

jected to the Absolute Dominion and Arbitrary Power of their masters. These Men cannot in that state be considered as any part of *Civil Society*...." This would later be paraphrased in the Dred Scott decision that the black man had no rights that the white man was bound to respect. The concept of race served as a justification for slavery, conflating class status—slavery—with physical features: skin color. While there were some free blacks, even in the South, being black became equated with being a slave, that is, outside of the norms of human society. It's also useful to keep in mind that, of course, Africans at the time of slavery were not all of the same "race," either: there were very different societies in Africa, and if we could borrow a term, we could talk about "how Africans became black." Frederick Douglass has an important statement from when slavery was still in existence:

"We are then a persecuted people, not because we are *colored*, but simply because that color has for a series of years been coupled in the public mind with the degradation of slavery and servitude."

—"Prejudice Against Color" (1850), in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Vol. 2, ed. Philip S. Foner (1950)

This is the beginning of the *material* basis for the creation of a race-color caste in North America. And it's not an accident that laws banning interracial sex and marriage were passed in Virginia and Maryland at the same time that slavery became consolidated in the late 1600s and early 1700s.

The idea of race was defended using the so-called "Curse of Ham" from the Bible, which is the idea that blackness was a curse from God, going back to Noah. And there was in fact slavery in biblical times, and you can find lots of passages in the Bible about slavery, and these were used to justify American slavery. I don't want to defend the honor of the Old Testament, but nowhere is *racial* slavery mentioned in the Bible because it did not exist. Comrade Don pointed out a very interesting article by George Breitman that was published in the Spring 1954 issue of *Fourth International*, called "When Anti-Negro Prejudice Began," that looks at the development of racism. And he shows that in the ancient world, there was no one group of people that was by definition enslaved, nor was slavery confined to one particular group. This idea of race did not make sense—it didn't exist. So, *racial slavery* did not exist.

I also want to make an aside that race in the U.S. is different than race in other places, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, which had different types of slavery. There's a myth in Brazil called "racial democracy," which is that there's really no such thing as race in Brazil; everybody's Brazilian. This is obviously untrue, but it does reflect the fact that there was a different expression of slavery there. A lot of the difference has to do with how slavery developed in North

continued on page 6

PROMETHEUS RESEARCH SERIES 3

In Memoriam
Richard S. Fraser

An Appreciation and Selection
of His Work

Prometheus Research Series No. 3
A memorial to comrade Richard S. Fraser (1913-1988), who pioneered the Trotskyist understanding of black oppression in the United States, fighting for the perspective of revolutionary integration.

\$7 (includes postage) 110 pages
Make checks payable/mail to:
Spartacist Pub. Co., Box 1377 GPO
New York, NY 10116

Slavery...

(continued from page 5)

America and the nature of British mercantilism. At the time the Virginian planters began to use slaves, the Dutch had already taken over the slave trade from the Portuguese, and because of Dutch-English rivalries, in 1651 Navigation Acts were passed, making it illegal for British colonists to buy products from other countries. Slaves were included as “products,” obviously. This had an important ramification on the importation of slaves. In fact, many of the early slaves in Virginia were not actually from Africa, but from Barbados. It’s also important to keep in mind that from the British perspective, the center of the slave trade was not in North America but in the Caribbean.

Therefore, the slave population in North America became a lot more stable, tended to live a lot longer and have more children. The details, for example, of slavery in Jamaica are horrid. The average slave tended to die within seven years of arriving in Jamaica. Therefore, although the slave trade provided only half a million African slaves to North America, by the time of the Civil War, the slave population in the United States had grown to four million people. A lot of this has to do with the demographics. In the British Caribbean, many plantations were left in the hands of overseers, while their absentee owners were content to stay in Britain. Eric Williams talks about this in his book, *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944). In North America, the planters became more Americanized, and they tended to stay in North America. For example, the Lee family of Virginia arrived around 1639; the Washingtons arrived around the same time.

In the Caribbean, the plantations were much larger, and slaveowners there had more slaves than in North America. One result of this is that African culture was destroyed through the experience of slav-

ery to a much larger degree in North America than in the Caribbean or Brazil. As Fraser put it in “The Negro Struggle and the Proletarian Revolution,” in the United States “the Negro people are among the oldest of all the immigrant



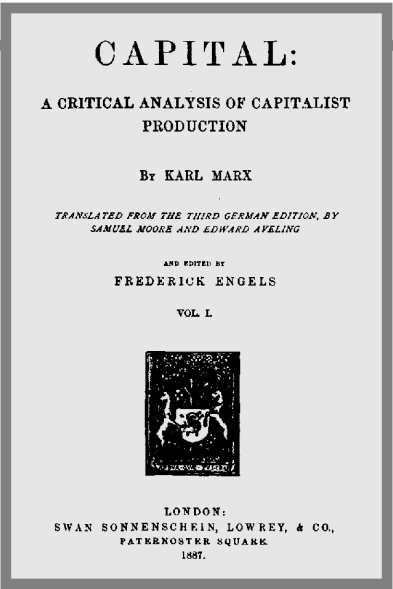
Progress

In his seminal 1867 work *Capital*, Karl Marx outlined the bloody nature of primitive capitalist accumulation.

groups. They are essentially American.” And this is also shown in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, in which Douglass pointedly calls himself *An American Slave* in the title. He illustrates that slaves in the U.S. spoke English, were largely Christian (he’s very powerful on the role of Christianity in supporting slavery), and were an organic part of American society. This is different than in Haiti, for example, where at the time of the Haitian Revolution, two-thirds of the black population were born in Africa. Or in Cuba. There’s a book by Miguel Barnet, *The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave* (1966), based on interviews with a former slave who was born 50 years after Douglass, Esteban Montejo, that talks

about how even in the late 19th century there were lots of aspects of African culture that survived in Cuba.

So that’s an important part of understanding the integral and unique nature of slavery in the U.S., which has pro-



grammatic implications today: there’s no separate black nation, and our program is one of revolutionary integrationism.

Slavery and the Development of Capitalism

One of the strengths of the Williams book is that he shows how the development of British industrial capitalism was to a large degree based upon slavery. The bourgeoisie in Liverpool, Manchester and the City of London became rich through the slave trade, later through sugar trading, and then with textile production that used slave-produced cotton. Of course slavery was not what provided the labor *in* England in the development of English capitalism or the industrial revolution.

But after the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, and then slavery itself in the British Caribbean in the 1830s, British capitalism still depended on slavery because the textile mills of Manchester, for example, needed cotton. In 1860, about 75 percent of all British cotton came from the American South. This is part of the reason, as Marx wrote at the time, that a section of the British bourgeoisie supported the South during the American Civil War.

Also, throughout the late 18th century, there was slavery in much of the North (comrades might remember the very good “Slavery in New York” exhibit at the New York Historical Society), even though it was not the central method of production. By the early 19th century, slavery as a social relationship had mostly disappeared from the North (the last Northern state to free its slaves was New Jersey, in 1846). But the main connection between the nascent bourgeoisie and slavery was not that they owned slaves.

There is a very interesting book called *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery* (2005), written by three reporters for the *Hartford Courant*. It shows how the Northern bourgeoisie was connected to the slave system by a million threads: they bought molasses, which was made with slave labor, and sold rum as part of the Triangle Trade; they lent money to Southern planters; and most of the cotton that was sold to Britain was shipped through Northern ports, including here in New York City. They financed the slave trade, and even after it became illegal, there were still ships leaving from New York that were involved in slave trading. And they sold manufactured goods to the South. This is the background to the relationship between Northern capitalism and slavery. Capitalism is very different from slavery, but at the same time they are very historically connected.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Katrina...

(continued from page 3)

deaths that likely number in the thousands. The black Democratic Party New Orleans mayor, Ray Nagin, ordered an evacuation but provided no resources for anyone without a car to get out. Former president Bill Clinton publicly solidarized with Bush Junior and also Senior, seeking to restore the spirit of “national unity.” Nationally, Democratic politicians are clamoring that the administration’s inaction over New Orleans shows its incapacity to respond to “terrorist” threats. They aim to present themselves as the party best able to wage the “war on terror,” a code word for ripping up the rights of immigrants, black people, the labor movement and most everyone else.

Despite differences over particular policies, the Republicans and Democrats are united in defending capitalism—an

anarchic, irrational profit-driven system that cannot even provide for the safety and welfare of the population. The situation cries out for a socialist planned economy, in which natural resources and the technological and productive forces of society would be marshaled *on behalf of human needs*, not profit. What is urgently required is to build a workers party that can lead a workers revolution to rip power from the hands of the capitalist class and its political agents, right-wing Republican and liberal Democrat alike....

The fatal undermining of the flood control system around New Orleans did not begin the day that George W. Bush entered the White House in January 2001. Far from it! Over two decades of neglect include the eight years of the Democratic Clinton administration in the 1990s, during which the U.S. experienced an economic boom and the federal government managed to run a sizable budget surplus.

But the pork barrel triumphed as usual, as politicians of both parties diverted the Army Corps of Engineers’ money to far less important projects, as right-wing *New York Times* columnist John Tierney pointed out in “The Case for a Cover-Up” (10 September). Thus the Louisiana Congressional delegation and Democratic Senator Mary Landrieu, who now attacks Bush for not anticipating the breach of the levees, “have been shortchanging the levees themselves” and have “directed large sums to dubious Corps projects aimed at increasing barge traffic, not preventing floods.”...

Some 40 years after the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts, the Gulf Coast disaster demonstrates that the basic condition of blacks as an oppressed color-caste forcibly segregated at the bottom of American society has not changed. Black and white liberals have long hailed the civil rights movement of the late 1950s-early 1960s as a historic triumph in the struggle for racial equality. Certainly, the end of legalized segregation in the South was a genuine and important democratic gain. But black oppression is rooted in the very structure of American capitalism, as the catastrophe in New Orleans has so graphically demonstrated. As we wrote in an early, basic document of the Spartacist League:

“The vast majority of Black people—both North and South—are today workers who, along with the rest of the American working class, must sell their labor power in order to secure the necessities of life to those who buy labor power in order to make profit. The buyers of labor power, the capitalists, are a small minority whose rule is maintained only by keeping the majority who labor for them divided and misled. The fundamental division created deliberately along racial lines has kept the Negro workers who entered American capitalism at the bottom, still at the bottom. Ultimately their road to freedom lies only through the struggle with the rest of the working class to abolish capitalism and establish in its place an egalitarian, socialist society.

“Yet 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 and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom,” *Spartacist* special supplement, May-June 1967

...Black people are not just victims of American capitalism. Despite the destruction of industrial jobs and erosion of union strength, black workers, whose rate of union membership is 32 percent higher than that of white workers, continue to be integrated into strategic sectors of the industrial proletariat—in urban transit, longshore, steel and auto. The proletariat 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. ■

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.

Local Directory and Public Offices

Web site: www.icl-fi.org • E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net

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

Chicago Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680, (312) 563-0441
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: Sat. 2-5 p.m., 222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)

Los Angeles Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta., Los Angeles, CA 90029, (213) 380-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: Sat. 2-5 p.m., 3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

New York Box 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008, (212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net
Public Office: 1st and 3rd Sat. of every month, 1-4 p.m., and by appointment, 299 Broadway, Suite 318

Oakland Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604, (510) 839-0851
slbayarea@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: Sat. 1-5 p.m., 1634 Telegraph, 3rd Floor

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

Toronto Box 7198, Station A, Toronto, ON M5W 1X8, (416) 593-4138
spartcan@on.aibn.com

Vancouver Box 2717, Main P.O., Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2, (604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

A Spartacist Pamphlet \$1

Black History and the Class Struggle
No. 19

New Orleans: Racist Atrocity

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

NYC Transit Strike: Union Power vs. Class Collaboration...14

No. 19 \$1 (48 pages)

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

Canada, Australia Swine Flu Ravages Aboriginal Population

We reprint below an article from Spartacist Canada No. 162 (Fall 2009), newspaper of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League.

SPARTACIST CANADA

As of August 23, “Novel H1N1 Influenza A Virus” (swine flu) has killed more than 2,100 people worldwide and infected more than 200,000. These figures underestimate the sweep of the virus so far, as individual cases are no longer reported. Swine flu has already affected large numbers of otherwise healthy young people, but it is especially dangerous, and often fatal, to those with compromised immune systems, pregnant women and the poor. Aboriginal populations in Canada and Australia have been hit especially hard.

The epicentre of the initial outbreak in Canada was found in remote areas of northern Manitoba, where the infection rate among aboriginal people in July was 135 per 100,000—as opposed to about 20 per 100,000 for the general population. While Native people make up only 13.6 percent of the province’s inhabitants, they account for two-thirds of those needing intensive care for treatment of swine flu.

On the other side of the world, Australian Aborigines in the remote Northern Territory were also dramatically impacted by the first wave of infections. This grotesque symmetry is no accident of genetics. The ravaging effects of swine flu are a symptom of the profound racism of this capitalist society, and the cumulative effect of centuries of social destruction, desperate poverty and brutal state repression visited on aboriginal peoples in both countries.

Capitalism Fuels Pandemic

Swine flu is a relatively new strain of the H1N1 virus containing a mixture of genetic material from human, pig and bird flu. The virus first appeared in Mexico, and some scientists believe its appearance is linked to the vast, low-wage hog production industry there. Workers on these factory farms face brutal conditions, including “lagoons” of untreated waste.



Wadden/TheTee.ca

Capitalism enforces brutal marginalization and poverty for aboriginal peoples. Above: Native youth at Grassy Narrows, Ontario, Canada. Right: Aboriginal parents grieve over death from swine flu of their four-year-old daughter in Queensland, Australia.



Lyndon Mechielsen

Racism, Capitalism and Public Health

Little is “natural” about this pandemic, any more than the disproportionate death rates blossoming among populations that the capitalist rulers have deemed “expendable.” As with AIDS, which continues to ravage sub-Saharan Africa, or, on a much smaller scale, the SARS epidemic which claimed hundreds of lives in 2003, the inhuman incapacity of the system of production for private profit to rationally contend with pandemic illness is a modern manifestation of what revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky in 1938 already termed “the death agony of capitalism.”

As the World Health Organization issued warnings over rising pandemic levels during the spring and new cases appeared everywhere, several governments slapped irrational bans on imports of live pigs, or—as in Egypt—slaughtered entire herds en masse. But as the initial outbreaks passed and it was determined that the effects of H1N1 were relatively mild for most people, official panic promptly gave way to the dictates of medicine-for-profit. Ottawa awarded its huge contract for 50 million doses of vaccines to a single company, pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline. Citing “packaging” issues, GSK wouldn’t commit to begin deliveries until November, long after the predicted onset of a second wave

of infections, which may hit as early as September.

As drug companies look to “make a killing” from this worldwide pandemic, the sheer irrationality of the bourgeois order stands starkly exposed. As we noted in “SARS: Capitalism, Racism and Public Health” (SC No. 137, Summer 2003) [reprinted in WV No. 806, 4 July 2003]:

“With its technological development, capitalism has knit all of the globe together by creating a world market. Yet this system, based on competition and production for profit, produces war, poverty and massive inequality, especially in the countries subjugated by imperialism. Even eminently practicable public health measures such as vaccines and clean water are unavailable to hundreds of millions.

“An international planned economy would take immediate steps to direct the necessary resources to areas affected by dangerous viruses like SARS, not to mention AIDS, which is killing tens of millions. Free, quality health care for all is within the bounds of material possibility, but not under capitalism, where the availability and quality of health care for the masses of working people is subordinate to the drive for profit.”

Racist Canadian State Obstructs Anti-Flu Measures

In July, a photographer in Nunavut caught the image of two young Inuit

children sleeping amid refuse on a street in the capital, Iqaluit. Picked up by major news media covering an official visit by prime minister Stephen Harper, the picture sparked outrage, much of it hypocritical. It was soon revealed that the mother of one of the boys had been ill with flu for several weeks, while at the same time having to care alone for five children.

Only rarely do the grotesque conditions endured by aboriginal peoples in Canada’s far north make headlines: contaminated water, extreme poverty, crowding in inadequate unsafe housing, lack of access to decent food. Aboriginal households suffer rates of “severe food insecurity” over five times higher than non-aboriginal households. Such conditions, magnified by a serious lack of medical services, are a perfect vector for the spread of communicable diseases.

In every part of the country, the daily experience of life for aboriginal people is raw racism, homelessness, sky-high incarceration rates and police terror. Now the media are reporting a wave of murders of Native women in Manitoba, recalling the grisly killings of dozens of mainly aboriginal women in British Columbia several years ago. Suicide rates among Native youth are five to seven times higher than for the rest of the population. The very real social pathologies of domestic violence, abuse of children and drug addiction affect all capitalist societies, but are exacerbated by the brutal enforced marginalization and poverty of aboriginal people.

Outrageously, since the initial outbreaks of swine flu in May, Ottawa has time and again refused increasingly desperate appeals for help from Manitoba aboriginal leaders. Although at least 20 people had to be airlifted from Manitoba’s remote St. Theresa Point First Nation 500 kilometres south to Winnipeg for treatment of the swine flu virus, the feds turned down Native leaders’ requests for a field hospital to combat the infection. Health Canada officials instead announced they might have to *close* several nursing stations and medical centres in northern Manitoba due to lack of personnel.

Manitoba chiefs sounded the alarm by declaring a state of emergency in their communities and began a desperate effort to raise funds on their own for basic medical supplies and sanitary equipment for isolated communities ravaged by the first round of infections. Their efforts were met with bald-faced racism—even shipments of urgently needed hand sanitizer were held up by Health Canada, which professed “concerns” that these could be consumed for their alcohol content by the inhabitants of the flu-ravaged reserves! Residents of the St. Theresa Point First Nation visiting their sick relatives in Winnipeg hospitals were forced, on orders from Health Canada, to leave the St. Regis Hotel because they “could have been infected” with the virus.

On August 20, David Butler-Jones, who heads the Public Health Agency of Canada, declined to help fund 15,000 emergency flu kits being organized by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. The kits include such items as thermometers, gloves, masks and Tylenol which are either unavailable or prohibitively expensive in

continued on page 9



**Subscription: 4 Issues
C\$3 US\$5**

Order from/pay to:

Spartacist Canada Publishing
Box 6867, Station A, Toronto ON
M5W 1X6

Spartacist Publishing Co.
Box 1377 GPO
New York, NY 10116

Overhill...

(continued from page 12)

Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) announced that it was initiating audits of an additional 652 businesses nationwide. We demand: Re-instate the fired workers now with full back pay and benefits! Down with the I.C.E. raids!

Where the Bush regime reveled in raw terror as it unleashed I.C.E. agents on workplaces to round up and deport immigrant workers, the Obama administration puts a premium on “efficiency.” In a major speech on August 11, Homeland Security head Janet Napolitano bragged of arresting 181,000 immigrants and deporting 215,000 people so far this year, both numbers greater than for the same period two years ago under Bush. The Obama strategy is also better tailored to the profit needs of the companies involved. Workplace raids disrupt production for days at a time as the bosses scramble to replace detained workers, but the I-9 audits allow employers the opportunity to find lower-pay new hires in advance and are an open invitation to get rid of union activists and other “trouble-makers.” At Overhill Farms, the company hired part-time replacements for its dismissed union workers, who were full-time, mostly high-seniority employees.

The fired workers, members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)



Reuters

Immigrants deported from U.S. land in Guatemala City, July 10.

Local 770, have shown courage in the face of a vindictive employer. After the “no match” letters from the company were received, a protest was organized in front of the plant on May 1. The next day, the company stopped the lines, accusing four people of “terrorism” for supposedly tampering with production. The 254 workers who were to be fired on May 31 were sent home after the protest and never called back to work for their final 30 days at the company. When the protests outside the plant continued, the company responded by firing three more workers, including UFCW shop steward Marcelino Arteaga, on June 26.

The following week, Overhill Farms filed a lawsuit against Nativio Lopez, the



Ferazzi/L.A. Times

Pickets at Vons distribution center in El Monte, California, during 2003-04 UFCW supermarket workers strike.

head of Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana (HMLA), an immigrant rights organization helping to organize the protests, and six UFCW workers, among them Arteaga. It charges “an unlawful campaign aimed at coercing the company to violate federal law by rehiring former employees who have no legal right to work in the United States.” If the company gets its way, this will set a dangerous precedent, equating protest of the mass firing of immigrant workers with attempted extortion. This lawsuit is part and parcel of the anti-immigrant witch-hunt, partaking of earlier attempts by the capitalist state to go after Lopez and the HMLA for assisting immigrant workers in gaining citizenship. It is an attack on the labor movement as a whole and must be defeated!

Labor Lieutenants of Capital

In response to the firings at Overhill Farms, the UFCW leaders have done next to nothing except file a few grievances. What’s needed is a concerted effort by the whole union, backed by all labor, to beat back company/government victimizations. The potential to fight and win was shown in the campaign for union recognition by the workers at Smithfield’s Tar Heel, North Carolina, pork processing plant. When the Smithfield bosses tried to fire 75 “no match” workers in November 2006, a two-day walk-out that included black and white workers as well as Latinos forced the company to rehire everyone. However, by the time workers won their union in late 2008, I.C.E. workplace raids had driven out a significant number of immigrant workers. The battle at Smithfield underlines the need for a mass, militant union organizing drive throughout the country and particularly in the open shop South.

It will take the fighting unity of Latino, black and white workers against the bosses and their government to defeat the anti-immigrant, anti-union attacks. But this necessity runs straight up against the pro-capitalist program of the labor bureaucracy, which sees allies in bourgeois politicians, especially the Democrats, the government and the courts. Embracing national chauvinism, the union tops sacrifice the membership on the altar of maintaining the competitive edge and

profitability of American capitalism.

As a domestic reflection of this chauvinism, these labor traitors *accept* the government’s campaign against undocumented immigrants, seeking only to tinker with its methods of repression. The “unified framework” put forward by the AFL-CIO and Change to Win union federations in April is indicative. Its starting point is that immigration must be controlled in order to “build a stronger American economy.” To regulate immigration the union tops urge an “independent commission that can assess labor market needs on an ongoing basis,” leaving open the possibility of their own participation on such a commission as labor police for the capitalist state. The union bureaucrats dream of working together with the Obama White House to implement an “effective worker authorization mechanism” and “improve” the existing guest worker programs, which are the modern equivalent of indentured servitude, tying a worker’s right to stay in the country directly to an individual employer.

As the last two decades of labor battles in L.A. in particular have demonstrated, immigrant workers form a key and vibrant component of the U.S. working class. Enlisting immigrant workers, many of whom have a history of militant struggle, in the front ranks of the labor movement is an urgent task both to fight the exploitation of the most vulnerable layers of the population and to reverse the decades-long decline of the trade unions. Labor must use its power to fight deportations and organize immigrant workers, demanding *full citizenship rights for everyone who makes it into this country*. If the unions are to be organizations of struggle by the working class, there must be a political fight against the labor bureaucrats who subordinate the class interests of the proletariat to those of the class enemy and their political parties.

Class Struggle vs. Liberal Pressure Politics

At a protest against the mass terminations of immigrant workers in downtown L.A. on August 1, fired Overhill Farms workers expressed to *Workers Vanguard* salesmen their anger at the inaction of the union. Spurned by Local 770, workers turned to the HMLA and the Hermandad

General de Trabajadores Union Internacional (HGTUI), a “union” being formed by Nativio Lopez. According to a 20 June article on Overhill in the Web publication *truthout* by journalist David Bacon, “That new organization [HGTUI], which will organize workers on a community basis, opposes employer sanctions and advocates helping workers to resist them.... What attracts the fired workers to the Hermandad is that it goes beyond the legal machinery of the grievance procedure, and organizes an active resistance.”

Despite Lopez’s activism, all this Obama supporter has to offer is the same pressure politics practiced by the UFCW and other union tops to channel working-class unrest into support for the Democrats. One example was the large immigrant rights demonstrations in 2006. On May Day, plants nationwide were idled when hundreds of thousands of overwhelmingly Latino immigrants took to the streets in cities across the country to protest anti-immigrant repression. At the same time, the main slogan of these protests, organized by Latino groups, the Catholic church, Democratic politicians and their allies in the trade-union bureaucracy, was “Today we march, tomorrow we vote.”

Since then the vote has taken place and Obama was elected—and the situation for immigrants in this country is more precarious than it was under Bush. Amid the capitalist economic meltdown, jobs for immigrant workers, from construction to the sweatshops of the L.A. area, have increasingly dried up. At the same time, government repression is intensifying. In addition to aggressively pursuing the I-9 audits, the Obama administration has recently doubled the number of border agents, expanded the 287(g) program, which deputizes local and state law enforcement agencies to carry out anti-immigrant sweeps, and announced plans to revamp the immigrant detention system to accelerate the processing and deportation of undocumented immigrants. All the while, I.C.E. officials have promised to continue to detain workers in workplace raids.

As a signatory to a “Call for Immediate Action” on Labor Day and October 12, the HGTUI appeals to everyone from unions and churches to state and federal legislators to “honest employers that depend on immigrant labor” to join the “movement” for “fair and humane immigration reform.” One widely touted “honest employer” is American Apparel CEO Dov Charney. The “progressive” gloss provided by his “Legalize L.A.” ads advocating immigration reform makes it all the easier for Charney to exploit his workers and keep the union out. Despite the fact that he fired close to one-third of his manufacturing workforce, mirroring the recent drop in American Apparel’s earnings, he has been welcomed, not targeted, at the protests. In 2003, this “honest employer” engaged in the tactics of fear and intimidation to defeat a UNITE garment workers organizing drive. The interests of labor and capital are diametrically opposed. The class collaboration promoted by the “Call for Immediate Action” is a recipe for defeat.

The main form of “active resistance” now pursued by Lopez is to call for a national consumer boycott against Overhill Farms and its products. This losing strategy seeks to pressure the bosses by building a public outcry based on moral indignation at the company’s anti-labor practices. While sometimes a useful auxiliary tactic to a strike, a consumer boycott cannot substitute for getting Overhill Farms where it hurts: by shutting down production and stopping profits. Local 770 is the largest in the UFCW and includes veterans of the hard-fought UFCW supermarket workers strike of 2003-04, during which whites, blacks, Latinos and Asians joined together on the picket lines. That strike was knifed and defeated by the labor tops, who prevented it from being extended nationally out of deference to the bosses.

The problem is not the union but its leadership. It is the class-collaborationist program of the union bureaucracy that



Spartacus Youth Club Events

LOS ANGELES

Wednesday, October 7, 6 p.m.

Meet the Marxists

UCLA, Haines Hall A78

For more information: (213) 380-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net

Visit the ICL Web Site:
www.icl-fi.org

VANCOUVER

Thursday, September 17, 6:30 p.m.

The Marxist Perspective: The History of Class Struggles

University of British Columbia
SUB Room 42T

Thursday, October 8, 6:30 p.m.

Financial Crisis: Bankruptcy of Capitalism

University of British Columbia
SUB Room 42V

Information and readings: (604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

TORONTO

Wednesday, September 16, 6 p.m.

The Communist Manifesto: A Guide to Action

University of Toronto
Sidney Smith Hall, Room 1080
100 St. George Street

Wednesday, September 30, 6 p.m.

Capitalist Economic Crisis: Karl Marx Was Right

University of Toronto
Sidney Smith Hall, Room 2119
100 St. George Street

Information and readings: (416) 593-4138
spartacan@on.aibn.com

Swine Flu...

(continued from page 7)

remote communities. Offering nothing, Butler-Jones sneered that such measures were “unwarranted” and would create “a false sense of protection.” Health Canada’s website meanwhile advises to “wash hands frequently with soap and warm water”—a sick joke for people living in overcrowded, deteriorating homes on dirt-poor reserves without clean water or toilets.

Racist contempt for the rights, health and lives of Native peoples is not an aberration of this or that official or governing party, but is woven into the very fabric of the bourgeois state. Beginning with the smallpox, measles and typhus that exterminated up to 90 percent of the New World’s indigenous inhabitants, disease has always been the handmaiden of fraud and brute force in the ruling class’s theft of aboriginal lands and resources. The last great plague to decimate Canada’s aboriginal peoples occurred with the 1918 Spanish flu epidemic, which wiped out entire villages. The death toll among aboriginal people during that outbreak was more than five times greater than the national average.

Canadian capitalism was founded on the destruction of the pre-existing aboriginal societies, beginning under French and later English colonialism. The survivors were thrown into reserves established to formalize their dispossession at the hands of a virulently bigoted Anglo-chauvinist ruling class. From the hanging of Métis [people of mixed Native-European descent] leader Louis Riel nearly 125 years ago, to the assassination of Dudley George at Ipperwash, Ontario, to the military as-

saults at Gustafsen Lake, B.C., and Oka, Quebec, the price of resistance to this arrangement has been state violence and murder. Only a social revolution by the multiethnic working class, leading all oppressed minorities in the struggle to sweep away capitalist barbarism, will be able to redress the centuries of crimes inflicted on aboriginal societies by capitalist plunder and oppression.

Australia—Racist Hellhole for Aborigines

Substitute searing heat for bitter cold and the pictures of state-sponsored anti-aboriginal racism, grinding poverty and exclusion in Australia and Canada become nearly identical. Aborigines, who make up only 2.5 percent of the Australian population, have been hospitalized and are dying from swine flu at five times the national rate. Among the tiny and remote indigenous community of Palm Island, where unemployment is 90 percent and life expectancy only 50 years, one in ten residents were feared to have caught the virus. Elementary measures like quarantining patients are impossible on the island, where an average of 16 people are crowded into each house!

Palm Island epitomizes the brutal racism and social degradation imposed by the Australian rulers on Aboriginal people. It is also notorious for the brutal killing in 2004 of Mulrunji Doomadgee by the cop Chris Hurley. Hurley—the first cop *ever* to be charged for an Aboriginal death in police custody in Australia—was eventually exonerated, rewarded and promoted, while the leader of the Aboriginal protests over the murder, Lex Wotton, was sentenced to six years in jail.

On top of the permanent state of endemic poverty, malnutrition and chronic

disease in Australia’s “deep north,” the current epidemic is hitting Aboriginal communities already besieged by a brutal police/military occupation. In 2007, the then Liberal/National government of John Howard sent cops and army personnel to invade and occupy 73 Aboriginal townships and communities on the pretext of stopping “child abuse,” hypocritically banning alcohol and pornography. This occupation, a naked land grab, has been intensified by the current Labor government. When the state first launched this assault two years ago, our comrades of the Spartacist League of Australia immediately issued a protest statement, declaring:

“The working class has a direct interest in taking up the fight to defend Aboriginal people and all the oppressed. *For working class protests against racist state repression! Down with Howard’s martial law! No to cop/military occupations of Northern Territory Aboriginal communities!*”

—“Australia: Racist War on Aborigines,” SC No. 154, Fall 2007 [reprinted in WV No. 895, 6 July 2007]

A further anti-Aboriginal atrocity sparked outrage this June, with the release of a coroner’s report from Western Australia. It described the death in police custody of an Aboriginal elder who effectively “cooked to death” for hours in the back of a prison van without air conditioning as he was being transported. Guards who opened the van to find him near death, lying with third-degree burns on the burning-hot metal floor, would not even enter the van to help him, merely flicking water on him before driving on to a hospital.

Gruesome deaths in “police custody” are an all-too-familiar occurrence for Native people in both Canada and Austra-

lia, who know from daily experience that the greatest instigators of violence are the armed, uniformed gangs of the capitalist state.

Labour Must Defend Native Rights!

Native people need jobs at union wages and massive education, health and housing programs, including the provision of clean water and electricity. For free quality health care and education for all! But basic justice for aboriginal people and all the oppressed and exploited will not come through any amount of pressuring the capitalist state for a few limited and ultimately reversible concessions, but by the expropriation of the capitalist class under a workers state.

To achieve this will require a revolutionary party of working people forged on an authentic Marxist program, a party of the Bolshevik type, fundamentally different from the parties of capital or the pro-capitalist social democrats of the NDP [New Democratic Party]. Creating the nucleus of such a party, as part of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), is the purpose of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste. As we state in our “Programmatic Theses”:

“Only the destruction of capitalism can hold out the possibility of voluntary integration, on the basis of full equality, for those aboriginal peoples who desire it, and the fullest possible regional autonomy for those who do not....

“The unremitting proletarian defense of Native people’s lives and rights as equal citizens is part of the fight of the multiracial working class to overturn this whole brutal and violent capitalist system. Only an egalitarian-socialist society under workers rule will be able to redress three centuries of abuse and degradation.”

—*Who We Are, and What We Fight For* (August 1998)■

impedes militant struggle to defend immigrants and the unions. The way forward is to oust the bureaucrats and replace them with a class-struggle leadership that will mobilize workers independently of and in opposition to the capitalist rulers and their political agents.

John Grant, director of Packinghouse, Manufacturing and Food Processing Division for Local 770, told WV that workers at the UFCW-organized Farmer John meatpacking plant in Vernon, the industrial city in L.A. County where Overhill Farms is located, have also received “no match” letters. A group of workers from Overhill Farms, American Apparel and Farmer John distributed an “Open Letter” at rallies on July 29 and August 1 in downtown L.A. that said: “This is certainly not the change we voted for, and not the immigration reform promised by President Barack Obama.” In fact, it was. During his campaign, Obama pledged to “remove incentives to enter the country illegally by cracking down on employers who hire undocumented immigrants”—i.e., the desktop raids.

Advancing the class struggle in this country goes hand in hand with the fight to break workers and minorities from illusions in Obama and the Democratic Party and to forge a multiracial revolutionary workers party. Only through a socialist revolution that smashes the capitalist state and erects in its place a workers state based on the expropriation of industry and the banks can there be an end to the destructive boom-bust cycle of capitalism and all manner of racial, sexual and national dis-

crimination. This ABC of Marxism is rejected by the various phony socialists who join the labor bureaucrats in fostering illusions in the Democratic Party.

Among the organizations that sponsored the rallies is the liberal Southern California Immigration Coalition (SCIC), which includes the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO) and Freedom Socialist Party. In March, SCIC held a demonstration in L.A. under the slogans “Ayer Votamos y Hoy Marchamos [Yesterday We Voted and Today We March]! Full legalization NOW! Stop the I.C.E. Raids! YES WE CAN!” The self-proclaimed socialists of the ISO are past masters of the political shell game that is a pillar of capitalist rule in America—the notion that the Democratic Party is the “friend” of labor, blacks and immigrants. In a 25 August article posted on socialist-worker.org, the ISO hails Obama’s campaign promises “to end the scapegoating of immigrants” and concludes by advising the imperialist Commander-in-Chief: “The idea of accepting concessions—in this case, more arrests, detentions and deportations for immigrant workers—before Congress even considers a carrot to match the stick gives away far too [sic] ground.”

The agenda of the reformist ISO is to prettify the ugly face of U.S. imperialist capitalism. We understand that there cannot be a just immigration policy under capitalism, an inherently unjust system rooted in the exploitation of the many by the few. As we explained in the International Communist League Declaration of

Principles (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998):

“Modern capitalism, i.e., imperialism, reaching into all areas of the planet, in the course of the class struggle and as economic need demands, brings into the proletariat at its bottom new sources of cheaper labor, principally immigrants from poorer and less-developed regions of the world—workers with few rights who are deemed more disposable in times of economic contraction. Thus capitalism in ongoing fashion creates different strata among the workers, while simultaneously amalgamating the workers of many different lands. Everywhere,

the capitalists, abetted by aristocracy-of-labor opportunists, try to poison class consciousness and solidarity among the workers by fomenting religious, national and ethnic divisions. The struggle for the unity and integrity of the working class against chauvinism and racism is thus a vital task for the proletarian vanguard.”

Our program is for a series of workers revolutions that would lay the basis for an international planned, socialist economy. This is the only road to eliminating poverty, the main driving force for mass migrations throughout the world, and providing a life of abundance for all.■

Spartacist Forums

U.S. Imperialism: Enemy of Women’s Rights Internationally—For Women’s Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

- Honor George Tiller! For Free Abortion on Demand!
- For Free, Quality Health Care!
- Break with the Democrats—Forge a Workers Party!

BAY AREA

**Saturday
October 10, 3 p.m.**

The Women’s Building
3543 18th Street
San Francisco
(near 16th St./Mission BART)
(510) 839-0851
slbayarea@sbcglobal.net

LOS ANGELES

**Saturday
October 10, 2 p.m.**

Immanuel Presbyterian Church
3300 Wilshire Blvd.
(2 blocks west of Vermont/
Wilshire Red Line Station)
(213) 380-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net

NEW YORK CITY

**Saturday
October 10, 3 p.m.**

CWA Local 1180 Hall
6 Harrison Street
Manhattan
(1 train to Franklin, west
on Franklin to Hudson,
1 block south to Harrison)
(212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net

Trotskyist League/Spartacus Youth Club Forum

Iran in Turmoil Imperialists Hands Off!

**For a Leninist-Trotskyist Party in Iran to
Fight for Workers Revolution!**

TORONTO

(416) 593-4138
spartcan@on.aibn.com

Saturday, October 3, 7 p.m.

OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education)
252 Bloor Street West, Room 5150
(at St. George subway)

Capitalism in Its Death Agonies— America Needs Socialist Revolution! Break with the Democratic Party of Racism and War! For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

CHICAGO

(312) 563-0441
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net

Saturday, September 12, 5 p.m.

University of Illinois at Chicago
Student Center East, Room 713
750 S. Halsted Street

Semenya...
(continued from page 12)

time she received high-quality training as a runner.

Semenya is hardly unique among women athletes in having what is deemed a “masculine” appearance. Legendary Mozambican 800-metre champion Maria Mutola was dogged throughout her career by similar speculation that she was not really female. Compare this with the treatment of white South African runner Zola Budd who was described merely as “tomboyish.” But even when it comes to the question of “sex determination,” research shows that one in 1,000 people are born with an “intersex” condition (“The Gender Trap,” guardian.co.uk, 30 July 2008). According to the Intersex Society of North America, the term “intersex” is used to describe a variety of conditions in which a person’s sexual anatomy doesn’t fit the typical medical definitions of male and female. There are also chromosomal and adrenal anomalies that are sometimes described by this term. As Alice Dreger, a professor of medical humanities and bioethics at Northwestern University, pointed out to the New York Times: “It turns out genes, hormones and genitals are pretty complicated. There isn’t really one simple way to sort out males and females. Sports require that we do, but biology doesn’t care. Biology does not fit neatly into simple categories, so they do these tests.” Dreger said, “But at the end of the day, they are going to have to make a social decision on what counts as male and female, and they will wrap it up as if it is simply a scientific decision” (“Gender Test After a Gold Medal Finish,” 19 August).

In fact, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) abolished universal gender testing after the Atlanta games in 1996, where eight women “failed” the tests but were cleared after challenging the results. Seven of these women were found to have an intersex condition. Such gender testing in Olympic sports began in 1968 at around the same time that anabolic steroid use by athletes came under scrutiny. Much of the hysteria against steroid use and accusations of cheating by having men compete as women were whipped up against the former Soviet degenerated workers state, as well as the East European deformed workers states, as part of the anti-Communist Cold War. Czech runner Jarmila Kratochvilova was dogged by gender and steroids accusations after setting the world record in Semenya’s event in 1983, a record which still stands. Such anti-Communist accusations of cheating also did the rounds in the bourgeois press around the Olympic Games in China last year, such as the imputation that China had lied about the age of some of its champion female gymnasts.

Anti-Communism also plays a role in the attacks on Caster Semenya. An article in the Mail & Guardian (28 August) focuses on one of her coaches, Ekkart Arbeit, who was the head coach of the ath-

letics team of the former DDR (East Germany) and a key target of the furor whipped up over the “doping” of athletes. Such accusations were used to deny the enormous advantages of the planned economies of the bureaucratically deformed workers states, where capitalism was overthrown. As Katarina Witt, the world champion East German figure skater,



Friends and relatives of Caster Semenya gather outside her home at impoverished village of Ga-Masehlong outside Polokwane.

recalled, “The state provided for me.... Skating is rather expensive, and in East Germany all the equipment and the time on the ice that you needed were provided” (Times online, 25 May 2003).

The IOC and IAAF have continued the practice of “gender testing” if a complaint is made about a particular athlete. These tests are supposed to be kept private, but in Semenya’s case she and her coaches were clearly pressured by IAAF officials to have her drop out of the competition prior to the final, including by making public the accusation that she is not a woman. The IAAF has managed to take to truly grotesque levels the regular humiliation Caster Semenya has been subjected to here in South Africa, such as bathroom inspections demanded by rival teams in local athletics competitions. Today it was reported that after Semenya returned from the African championships in Mauritius in July, she was given gender tests that she thought were just standard drug tests. Her coach, Wilfred Daniels, has resigned and apologised to the athlete for the way he and Athletics South Africa, the sport’s national governing body, had handled the whole debacle. The devastating consequences of such high-tech “gender testing” as the IAAF practices were seen in the case of Santhi Soundarajan, an Indian runner whose brief hope of lifting her family out of dire poverty in the state of Tamil Nadu was shattered after she “failed” a gender test and was stripped of an Asian Games 800-metre medal in 2006. Soundarajan subsequently tried to commit suicide.

The cruel and twisted treatment of Semenya and other athletes before her who have faced scrutiny for not looking sufficiently “feminine” is an expression of the reactionary sexual stereotyping upheld as the norm in capitalist society. These stereotypes along with entrenched male and female gender roles flow from the institution of the family, which is

the main social source of oppression of women, youth and homosexuals in class society. The institution of the family, along with organised religion and traditional authority, serves as a key prop for the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression by instilling subservience to authority and ensuring that the task of rearing the next generation of wage slaves falls largely on the shoulders of the domestic slaves, women. Anything that deviates from the family “ideal” is thus viewed as a threat to social order, whether it be gay sex or giving women control over reproduction through access to contraception and abortion.

The consequences of not conforming to these reactionary sexual stereotypes are often quite brutal in South Africa, where women suspected of being lesbians are targets for “corrective rape” as with the gang rape and murder in 2008 of former women’s soccer star and gay rights activist Eudy Simelane (“Raped and Killed for Being a Lesbian: South Africa Ignores ‘Corrective’ Attacks,” guardian.co.uk, 12 March). This murder echoed that of AIDS activist Gugu Dlamini in 1998 by a rabid mob who beat her senseless for having the courage to talk openly about her disease and sex life. In Durban in 2007, Zandile Mpanza was stripped naked and paraded by a group of men who then burnt her house down for violating a rule against women wearing pants in the area of their hostel. South Africa has one of the highest rates of rape in the world, and for those women who even try to report the crime, the result is generally further humiliation at the hands of the police and the courts.

Such violent abuse is the most extreme reflection of the degraded status of women more generally in South Africa, which is also measured in high rates of HIV/AIDS infection and death among women, with a high maternal mortality rate along with infant mortality that has worsened since 1990. The intersection of racial, sexual and class oppression in South Africa is in many ways epitomised by the legions of black women who toil in the most menial of domestic service and cleaning jobs in the wealthy, white suburbs, just as they did under apartheid.

For a Black-Centred Workers Government!

South African athletics officials along with the Tripartite Alliance government have vigorously protested the treatment of Caster Semenya, with Parliament planning to lodge a complaint with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights because the gender tests constituted a

“gross and severe undermining of rights and privacy.” The government organised a “hero’s welcome” for Semenya and other gold medalists upon their return to the country along with a meeting with the president, Jacob Zuma. The justified outrage over the abuse of Semenya is predictably being used by the capitalist government of the bourgeois-nationalist African National Congress (ANC) and its partners, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the COSATU trade-union bureaucracy, to whip up a frenzy of nationalist pride, complete with “anti-imperialist” rhetoric. Yet it is these very same leaders who for 15 years have administered a system of neo-apartheid capitalism in South Africa, where the economic order continues to be based on white privilege and the superexploitation of the overwhelmingly black working class by the Randlords and their imperialist partners.

The misleaders of the working class in the SACP and COSATU bureaucracy seek to obscure the reality that they themselves are responsible for maintaining the capitalist system which perpetuates racial, national and women’s oppression. The SACP/Young Communist League and COSATU spokesmen piously preach the need to defend women’s rights, while defending a bourgeois constitution that enshrines the authority of tribal chiefs and elders who enforce a benighted social order in rural areas. That practices such as abducting women into marriage continue in some parts of the country gives a sense of how fraudulent the SACP’s purported “national democratic revolution” really is. What we wrote ten years ago remains true today:

“While the African National Congress-led bourgeois-nationalist government of Nelson Mandela has put on paper some of the broadest liberal democratic laws—striking down prohibitions on homosexual sex, legalising abortion and promising free health care to pregnant women and their children—all these legal provisions amount to a cruel hoax.... This capitalist government cannot and will not deliver on promises of quality health care for women, housing, jobs, education or anything else the population desperately needs.” —“Brutal Murder of South African AIDS Activist,” Workers Vanguard No. 706, 5 February 1999

The only road forward in addressing the triple oppression of race, sex and class faced by black women in South Africa is that of permanent revolution. Genuine national and social liberation will be realised only through the expropriation of the capitalists and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. We fight for a black-centred workers government. There can be no justice in South Africa until the non-white majority has power in a workers state that would unite the many black tribal- and language-based groups along with the Coloured (mixed-race) and Indian populations, with ample room and full democratic rights for those whites who would join in building a society based on genuine equality. Proletarian revolution will put the enormous wealth of this country at the disposal of the workers and poor. Only by extending socialist revolution internationally, especially to the imperialist centres, and building a world socialised planned economy can the material conditions of life for the masses of southern Africa and the rest of the neocolonial world be lifted up to a level of material abundance for all.

Such a revolutionary overturn will make it possible to eliminate the material roots of women’s oppression: to replace the institution of the family with socialised childcare and housework, thus freeing women from domestic servitude. This is the program that Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party sought to carry out in the young Soviet workers state following the October Revolution of 1917. Our task is to build a revolutionary workers party like the Bolshevik Party that will act as a tribune of the people, a defender of all the oppressed, to lead the fight for socialist revolution as part of a reformed Trotskyist Fourth International. ■

SPARTACIST (English edition) No. 54, Spring 1998 \$2 (48 pages)

Order from/make checks payable to: Spartacist Publishing Co. Box 1377 GPO New York, NY 10116

Women and Revolution

Women and Permanent Revolution in South Africa

ANC neo-apartheid regime perpetuates superexploitation of black working masses and oppression of women: squatters live in rural poverty (left), women workers at SA Dried Fruit protest degradation on the job.

SPARTACIST

Afghanistan...

(continued from page 1)

politicians—whether Democrats, Republicans, Greens or “Independents.”

Our starting point is proletarian class opposition to the U.S. capitalist rulers and to the imperialist system as a whole. In the lead-up to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq we called for the military defense of these countries without giving any political support to the reactionary, woman-hating Taliban cutthroats or the capitalist dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. Today, insofar as the forces on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan aim their blows against the imperialist occupiers, we call for their military defense against U.S. imperialism without giving them any political support. *All U.S. troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan now! Hands off Pakistan!*

Antiwar Movement: Shill for Democrats

A recent *New York Times* (30 August) article, commenting on protests planned for October against the Afghanistan occupation, noted that the antiwar movement has been “largely dormant since the election of Barack Obama.” In fact, it has been largely comatose since the 2006 midterm elections, when the Democrats gained control of the House of Representatives. Now, as the article described, liberals have been especially loath to “challenge” the Democratic administration they helped elect. The call for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan has been packaged as a plea to Obama to fulfill his promise of “change,” both at desultory antiwar rallies in March as well as for the upcoming October protests.

The *Times* article notes that a more recent liberal refrain is that the president “risks his entire domestic agenda” by getting bogged down in Afghanistan. Another antiwar organizer complained, “There are some who feel that powerful forces are pushing the president to stay on this course and that we have to build a more powerful movement to change that course.” In reality, the Afghanistan war *is* Obama’s war and his domestic agenda—bailing out the capitalists while shafting workers, blacks, immigrants and the poor—goes hand in hand with U.S. imperialist military depredations abroad.

The *Times* article confirms what we have said all along: the liberal/reformist-led antiwar movement has been nothing but a shill for the Democrats. In the lead-up to the presidential election, World Can’t Wait, run by the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), screamed, “Drive Out the Bush Regime.” The International Socialist Organization (ISO) enthused that the Democrats “are finally giving voice to the frustration” about the war (*Socialist Worker*, 4 May 2007). Likewise, the ANSWER coalition, currently led by the Party for Socialism and Liberation, and the Troops Out Now Coalition, initiated by Workers World Party, both pushed the politics of “Anybody but Bush.”

A recent article on the CounterPunch Web site (4-6 September) by quirky radical-liberal columnist Alexander Cockburn reported that Socialist Action leader and West Coast antiwar coalition organizer Jeff Mackler recently cancelled an antiwar protest against Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi when it was learned that Pelosi’s appearance was sponsored by the San Francisco Labor Council. Cockburn quotes Labor Council chief Tim Paulson saying: “Our partners in the antiwar movement”—among which Paulson includes U.S. Labor Against the War and ANSWER—“have been calling me to say they are condemning this protest as irresponsible and divisive.”

Afghanistan and Soviet Intervention

For much of the reformist left, support for the Democratic Party at home and for anti-Communism abroad have been defining features. With few exceptions, these reformist “socialists” all howled with the imperialists in demanding Soviet troops out of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Washington started funneling arms to Islamic *mujahedin* (holy warriors) from the moment the Soviet-allied People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) came to power in April 1978. As modernizing left-nationalists, the PDPA attempted to implement a program for redistributing land, lowering the bride price, educating women and freeing them from the *burqa*. In the context of backward, benighted Afghanistan, these relatively modest reforms were nothing short of revolutionary. When the huge Islamic hierarchy launched a fierce insurgency, the Soviet Union intervened in December 1979 after repeated requests by the embattled PDPA regime. Beginning with Democrat Jimmy Carter and continuing under Republican Ronald Reagan, the U.S. seized on the Red Army intervention to launch a renewed anti-Soviet offensive (Cold War II), in particular waging a proxy war aimed at killing

living standards, education and women’s rights just to the north in Soviet Central Asia, which once looked much like Afghanistan.

Under the Soviet military umbrella, the Afghan government began mass literacy campaigns and provided medical care. Over 300,000 peasants received land. By the late 1980s, half of all university students in Afghanistan were women, and women made up 40 percent of the country’s doctors, 70 percent of its teachers, and 30 percent of its civil servants. Women in the workforce had increased 50-fold, and 15,000 women served as soldiers and commanders in the Afghan army. The London *Guardian* online (30 September 2001) quoted Saira Noorani, a woman surgeon who left Kabul in 2001: “‘Life was good under the Soviets,’ Saira said. ‘Every girl could go to high school and university. We could go wherever we



Young Spartacus

Spartacist/Spartacus Youth League contingent at March 1980 anti-draft demonstration in Washington, D.C.

Soviet soldiers and officers in Afghanistan.

For Marxists, there was no question which side working people and the oppressed the world over had in this conflict. The threat of a CIA-backed Islamic takeover on the USSR’s southern flank posed pointblank the need for *unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union*, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state. Moreover, the Soviet military intervention opened the possibility of social liberation for the Afghan masses, particularly women. We Trotskyists proclaimed: *Hail Red Army! Extend social gains of October Revolution to Afghan peoples!*

In contrast, the ISO and its then-parent group in Britain, Tony Cliff’s Socialist Workers Party, demanded: “Troops Out of Afghanistan!” (*Socialist Worker* [Britain], 12 January 1980). The Maoist RCP likewise condemned the Soviet intervention. To justify siding with the reactionary *mujahedin* and their imperialist patrons, the reformist left invoked the lie of “poor little Afghanistan” and screamed about the national rights of the country being trampled by “Soviet imperialism.” In fact, even if Afghanistan were a nation, the question of its national self-determination would have been subordinated to the overriding class and social questions—i.e., defense of the Soviet Union as well as the struggle for women’s rights and social progress in Afghanistan.

However, Afghanistan is not a nation but rather a patchwork of tribes and peoples, with a minuscule proletariat. There weren’t sufficient internal class forces to sustain the PDPA’s reforms, let alone a social revolution. Soviet military intervention, however, posed the overthrow of the landlords, tribal warlords and mullahs that dominated Afghan society and perpetuated its backwardness. The social progress potentially open to the Afghan peoples was visible in the stark contrast between Afghanistan’s impoverished backwardness and the huge advances in

wanted and wear what we liked.’” She also said: “Since then everything has been a long dark night.”

Afghanistan and American Intervention

In a campaign to militarily and economically bleed the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, the U.S. launched the largest CIA covert operation in history. But the Red Army was *not* defeated militarily in Afghanistan. A prominent commander of the Soviet Army in Afghanistan, Major General Alexander Liakhovsky, asserted in his book, *Afghan: Tragedy and Valor* (1995): “During the period of the ‘Afghan war’ they [Soviet soldiers] never once retreated and never surrendered their positions.” He added: “They did much for the good of the Afghan people in carrying out their peacekeeping functions (they provided medical aid to the population; they built roads, schools and hospitals; they provided humanitarian aid and so forth). For many long years, for example, they preserved from destruction Kabul and other major cities, which, as I have already stated, after the *mujahedin* came to power were reduced to battlefield arenas and now lie in ruins.”

It is not just this former Soviet general who recognizes that the Red Army was not militarily defeated. Even on the eve of the Soviet withdrawal, a writer for *Soldier of Fortune* magazine noted that the Soviet army could “still go wherever it wants to go in Afghanistan” (quoted in Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan* [1995]).

The Soviet withdrawal in 1988-89 was a *political* betrayal by the Stalinist bureaucracy under Mikhail Gorbachev, opening the door to capitalist counter-revolution in the USSR itself in 1991-92. The Soviet intervention cut against the grain of the nationalist Stalinist dogma of “socialism in one country.” Gorbachev’s betrayal flowed from the whole outlook of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which subor-

dated the interests of the international proletariat in an attempt to defend its own privileged position as a parasitic layer resting on the collectivized economy, thus undermining the defense of the Soviet workers state itself. We fought for a proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and return the Soviet Union to the Bolshevik internationalism of Lenin and Trotsky. We warned from the outset that the Kremlin bureaucracy, in its quest for “peaceful coexistence” with U.S. imperialism, might cut a deal at the expense of the Afghan peoples.

After the Soviet withdrawal, the Afghan government fought on valiantly for three years. The Partisan Defense Committee—a legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League—wrote to the PDPA government in 1989 offering “to organize an international brigade to fight to the death” against the forces of Islamic reaction. When that offer was turned down, the PDC, at the request of the Afghan government, launched an international fund drive to aid civilian victims of the *mujahedin* siege of Jalalabad, raising over \$44,000.

When the *mujahedin* finally took Kabul in 1992, re-enslaving Afghan women, the various tribally based *mujahedin* militias carried out a vengeful war of mass murder, torture and rape of rival ethnic populations, which left at least 50,000 people dead in Kabul alone. The Taliban, recruiting from the historically dominant Pashtun ethnic population, emerged as the strongest of the *mujahedin* factions. Backed by the Pakistani government and supported by U.S. imperialism, the Taliban came to power in 1996.

The 2001 U.S. invasion that drove the Pashtun-based Taliban fundamentalists from power installed in its place a regime based largely on the coalition of former Islamic *mujahedin* militias—Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara—grouped in the Northern Alliance. Karzai was chosen by the U.S. as the Pashtun figurehead, while Northern Alliance warlords, mainly Tajik, filled key security and military posts. This remains, more or less, the reactionary regime overseen by the U.S. today. Karzai’s vice presidential running mate in the recent election, Muhammad Fahim, is one of the biggest drug lords in the country, while another of his supporters, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, was notorious for cutting off women’s breasts (*Liberation*, 20 August). For his part, Abdullah Abdullah, a former foreign minister under Karzai, was once an aid to Tajik *mujahedin* leader Ahmed Shah Massoud, a butcher who in 1993 ordered the massacre of hundreds of Hazara men, women and children, and destroyed the Hazara neighborhood in Kabul, killing up to one thousand more.

While cynically decrying the plight of women under the deposed Taliban regime, Afghanistan’s U.S. overseers brokered a constitution in 2004 that effectively enshrined Islamic *sharia* law. Today, the average life expectancy for Afghan women, as well as men, is 44 years (24 years below the world average for women) and the literacy rate is 12.6 percent. Women are still forced to wear the head-to-toe *burqa* in public. According to the Afghan Education Ministry, as of early summer at least 478 schools, mostly for girls, had been destroyed, damaged or threatened out of existence by Islamist terror.

The U.S. fights its “war on terror” in order to impose its will on oppressed peoples around the world. The horrors produced by U.S. imperialism’s “holy war” against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, as well as the present occupation of the country, show once again that the capitalist system is a barrier to social progress and a breeding ground for barbaric reaction. Our purpose is the forging of a multi-racial revolutionary workers party that fights for the defeat of U.S. imperialism through socialist revolution. As opposed to the Obama-enthralled reformist opponents, we follow the proletarian, internationalist and revolutionary road of the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

Caster Semenya—Leave Her Alone! Racist, Sexist Furor Over South African Runner

JOHANNESBURG, September 7—At last month's world athletics (track and field) championships in Berlin 18-year-old Mokgadi Caster Semenya, a black woman from an impoverished village in rural South Africa, achieved a stunning victory in the women's 800-metre race, running the fastest time this year with a huge lead over her competitors. Her accomplishment was all the more impressive given what transpired just before she ran the final: the world media was informed by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) that Semenya was being subjected to "gender verification" testing. After Semenya won the gold medal, an IAAF spokesman announced that she would be stripped of the medal if tests showed that she was not a woman.

Caster Semenya was able to become a world champion athlete despite growing up in a country where the degraded status of women is reflected in traditional practices such as *lobola* (bride price) and polygamy, which reduce women to property to be bought and sold into marriage. Yet it was in Berlin that she faced the ultimate humiliation at the hands of athletics officials and doctors who wanted to prod

and poke her young body to determine whether she had an "unfair advantage" over her competitors because she is not female enough. The treatment of this athlete, who has struggled to overcome the barriers of race, sex and class in neo-apartheid South Africa, has ignited a firestorm of indignation and protest from all quarters in this country, and beyond. It has been aptly described as a modern-day version of the abuse of Sarah Baartman, a Khoikhoi woman who was taken to Europe in 1810 to be studied and exhibited as an anthropological and sexual curiosity ("the Hottentot Venus") and whose brain and genitals remained on display in the Paris Musée de l'Homme until at least 1974.

The IAAF is well aware that there was nothing questionable about Semenya's performance, which was slower than that of the woman gold medalist in last year's Olympics. The vilification of Semenya, in which the Afrikaans newspaper *Rapport* had a hand, has everything to do with race and sex. As Semenya's mother bluntly stated, "They're just jealous because they don't want black people improving their status" ([London] *Guardian*, 23 August).

Black South African athletes suffered "double apartheid" for many years. Under the system of apartheid segregation, the country's white capitalist rulers denied most black athletes the material and legal means to participate in organized sport at the national and international level. This isolation was exacerbated by the international boycott of everything South African promoted by anti-apartheid liberals throughout the 1960s to '80s. While apartheid formally ended in 1994, when Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first black president, sport, like other aspects of life, still reflects the poverty and deprivation of the oppressed non-white masses.

The Politics of Biology

In Caster Semenya's case, the most advanced forms of medical testing, including genetics and endocrinology, are to be used to supposedly determine her sex. The IAAF states that it is not accusing Semenya of knowingly cheating by trying to pass for a woman. Instead, according to their cruel logic, they are checking whether, unbeknownst to her and her family, she is not really female. As some



Getty

have pointed out, Semenya's rapid improvement as an athlete can be explained in large part by the fact that last year she moved from a rural backwater with virtually no sporting facilities and enrolled as a student of sport science at the University of Pretoria, where for the first

continued on page 10

L.A.: Anti-Union Onslaught at Overhill Farms

Labor: Fight Victimization of Immigrant Workers!

As part of a recent blitz of measures to crack down on "illegal" immigration, the Obama administration has been pushing employers to fire workers whose Social Security numbers do not match government records. To force the issue, Obama expanded many of the anti-immigrant programs of the Bush White House, such as the E-Verify database and I-9 audits of employer records. Mass terminations of immigrant workers have followed the audits at one industrial plant after another, from 254 workers, mostly women, at food processor Overhill Farms in May to about 1,500 at clothing maker American Apparel in September, both in the Los Angeles area.

These "desktop raids" have ravaged immigrant families, as the *Los Angeles Times* (12 June) described in the case of Overhill Farms: "There were no frantic scenes of desperate workers fleeing *la migra* through the gritty streets of the industrial suburb southeast of downtown Los Angeles. For more than 200 Overhill



Jorge Lopez

Los Angeles, July 29: Protest against use of I-9 audits and electronic verification to fire immigrant workers.

workers, however, the effect was devastating: All lost steady jobs last month and now find themselves in a precarious employment market, without severance

pay or medical insurance. It wasn't a hot tip or an undercover informant that helped seal their fates, but a computer check of Social Security numbers." The

Overhill firings are a window into what the Democrats have in store for immigrant workers everywhere. On July 1, the

continued on page 8

No Deportations! Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!