

## From Slavery to Mass Incarceration

# Black Liberation and the Fight for a Socialist America

Bettmann

We print below, in slightly edited form, a Black History forum given in Oakland, California, on February 27 by Spartacist League Central Committee member Reuben Samuels.

Welcome to Lockdown America. As I speak, over 7.3 million men, women and children are in jail or prison or on parole or probation. The U.S. may not manufacture many automobiles now, but with less than 5 percent of the world's population, it leads with one-quarter of the world's prisoners. There is a direct relation between these two facts, as displayed by the charts showing the steady decline in manufacturing jobs since World War II and the massive increase in the prison population since 1980.

Of the 2.3 million men, women and children behind bars, 70 percent are black or Latino. At the time of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, 100,000 black people were behind bars. Today there are over 900,000 blacks stuffed into America's overcrowded dungeons. Fifty-five years after *Brown* promised equal educational opportunity, five times as many black men are in prison as in four-year colleges and universities.

Some worry about life after death. For us the question should be, is there life after birth? Death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal was right when he said in his February 7 commentary, "When Young People Are the Enemy": "How a society treats its poorest, least defended children is a measure of its madness." Last August, the *New York Times* (10 August 2009) reported: "About two-thirds of the nation's juvenile inmates...have at least one mental illness, and are more in need of therapy than punishment." One out of every four incarcerated Latino children is held in an adult prison. You're not old enough to screw, drink or buy a cigarette, but you're old enough to be sent away to the

state pen, where young prisoners are especially vulnerable to sexual and physical abuse.

Meanwhile, the U.S. prison camp in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, is still open for business, and U.S. imperialism's black Commander-in-Chief Barack Obama has ramped up the number of secret, Special Forces-run, black-site torture chambers for his Afghanistan surge. Transparency, anyone? The esteemed Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881), who saw the inside of tsarist prison camps in Siberian exile, put the question this way in *The House of the Dead*: "The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons." In California, 80 percent of incarcerated women are mothers. Last October the ACLU hailed it as a victory when the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled six to five that a jury should decide if a woman in late-stage labor needs to be shackled to her bed during delivery, a common practice in America's dungeons.

Imprisonment for black males without a high school education tripled between 1978 and 1998 to **59 percent**, whereas the rate for blacks with some college **decreased** from 6 to 5 percent—even though the arrest of Harvard professor

Henry Louis Gates Jr. last year demonstrates that the fate of educated black people is anything but secure in racist capitalist America. Nevertheless, those middle-class blacks who have turned their backs on the ghetto poor have found their spokesman in Obama, who disses black fathers with statements like, "what makes you a man is not the ability to have a child—but the courage to raise one." This, as one in four black children by age 14 loses a father to prison.

Last February, Cornel West, the sometime Obama booster, popular hip-hop professor of religion at Princeton and member of the Democratic Socialists of America, ventured down to the Garden State Youth Correctional Facility near Trenton, New Jersey. In the spirit of the newly inaugurated president Obama's hope-hype, he told a select audience of 200 young inmates:

"In the midst of 244 years of slavery, when they had no control over land, territory, no rights, they held together in the dark and raised their voices to create the spiritual."

He then asked: "You all still listen to the spiritual, don't you?"

We still ain't got no land, no job either, dad's in jail, the bank's got the house, but we've still got spirituals. No wonder Karl Marx called religion the opium of the

people—and the pushers in the pulpits do no hard time.

### The Civil Rights Movement

Black Columbia University professor Manning Marable, a leader of the Committees of Correspondence, called mass black incarceration "the great moral and political challenge of our time." How to meet this challenge? In an August 2000 piece titled, "Racism, Prisons and the Future of Black America," Marable looks back to:

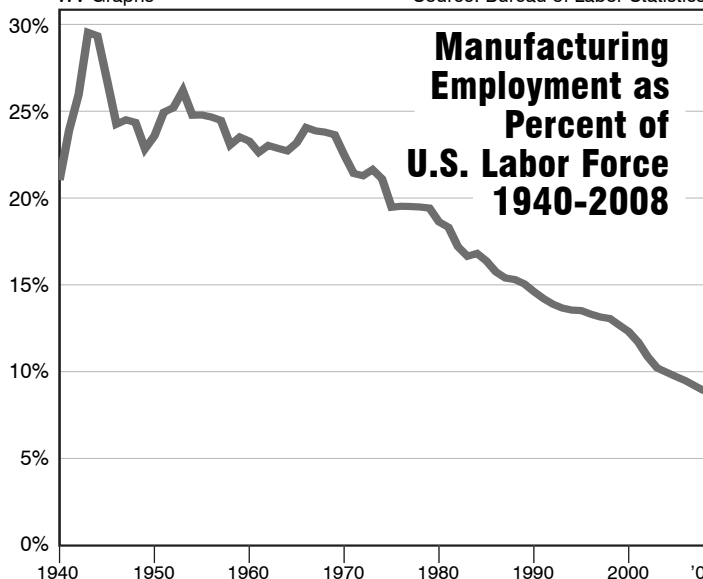
"the black freedom struggle of the 1960s [that] was successful largely because it convinced a majority of white middle class Americans that Jim Crow was economically inefficient, and that politically it could not be sustained or justified. The movement utilized the power of creative disruption, making it impossible for the old system of white prejudice and power to function in the same old ways it had for decades."

From the outset, the civil rights movement was dominated by a black middle-class leadership represented by Martin Luther King Jr. The aim of their "creative disruption" was to pressure the Democratic administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson to grant formal, legal equality. They did, in part because Jim Crow had become an embarrassment

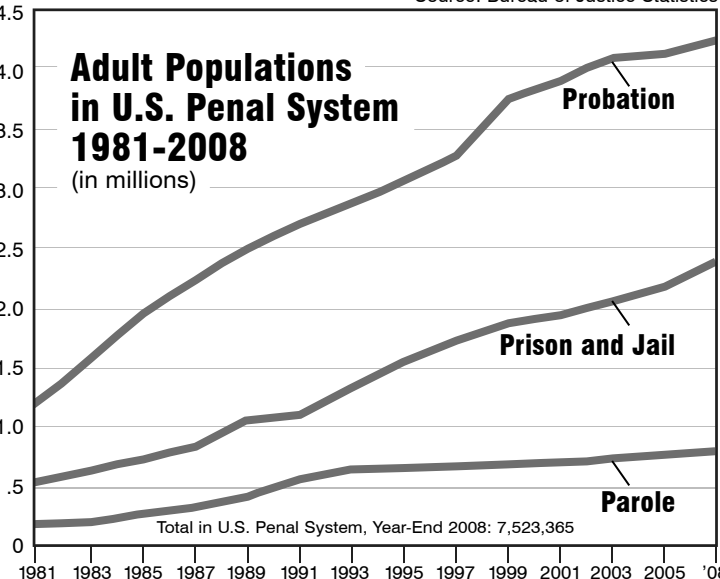
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WV Graphs

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics



# Victory to the British Airways Strike!

## Shut Down Heathrow Airport!

MARCH 22—As we go to press, an initial three-day strike by British Airways (BA) flight attendants—the first strike by BA’s cabin crews in 13 years—has concluded its third day. In response to the company’s humiliating demands for massive concessions, another four-day strike by the Unite trade union is slated to begin on March 27. BA is the world’s sixth-largest airline and Europe’s third-largest. Its main hub, Heathrow Airport, which is 15 miles from central London, is one of the busiest in the world. As a result of the strike, with some 80 percent of the union’s 12,000 members walking out, BA has been forced to cancel some 1,100 flights.

The BA strike is one of a series of labor actions in Europe’s airline industry. Pilots at TAP Portuguese Airlines are planning to strike for six days beginning March 26, while, in Germany, the Lufthansa pilots union said its members will strike for four days on April 13. Meanwhile, workers in Greece, facing massive assaults on their wages, benefits and working conditions amid the global economic recession, have mobilized for several general strikes over the last month against government austerity plans.

While BA claimed that it had plans to

move some 60 percent of its passengers, particularly out of Gatwick Airport, the *Financial Times* (21 March) reported that “Unite said at least 37 of the flights due to fly on Sunday had no passengers and were only being operated to get aircraft to their intended destination abroad so people could be brought back to London on scheduled flights.” The strike has certainly had an impact on BA’s operations. But there has also been scabbing. As our comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain underlined in a March 19 leaflet, which we reprint below, “To defeat BA’s scabbing, solidarity strikes by other airport workers, in defiance of the anti-union laws, are necessary.” All BA flights must be grounded. Key to victory are labor solidarity actions, extending to airline and airport workers internationally, including in the U.S.

\* \* \*

A successful strike by cabin crews [flight attendants] at Heathrow Airport is necessary in order to defeat British Airways boss Willie Walsh’s union-busting. Twelve thousand BA workers, members of the BASSA division of the Unite union, are set to take three days of strike action from 20 March and another four

London, March 20:  
Picket line of  
striking BA workers  
near London’s  
Heathrow Airport.



Reuters

from the 27th. Walsh would like to gut BA of unions altogether, which means all workers have an interest in supporting the BA strike. What’s posed is the very existence of unions at Heathrow Airport, the largest remaining bastion of unionised workers in the country.

The airline industry is reeling from the impact of the current recession: figures for 2009 internationally show the largest decline in passenger traffic since World War II, net losses estimated at \$9.4 billion and some 32 airlines going under. With BA making huge losses, last November Walsh imposed major changes on the cabin crew—cutting more than 1,100 jobs—which provoked the strike. In a classic union-busting move, BA plans to put newly recruited crew on lower pay and harsher conditions. Contrary to media lies about a pampered workforce, main cabin crew starting pay is currently £11,000 [about \$16,500] a year, rising after 12 years to £20,000. Make no mistake, if Walsh gets away with this attack on the cabin crews he will take it as a green light to go after all unionised workers at Heathrow, including ground staff, maintenance engineers and baggage handlers. This in turn will have a detrimental effect on airline safety.

Walsh has form when it comes to union-busting: before coming to BA in 2005, he ran Aer Lingus in Ireland where he earned the nickname “Slasher” by cutting 2,500 jobs. Walsh would like to turn BA into a long-haul version of notoriously anti-union Ryanair whose chief, Michael O’Leary, egged on BA to “screw the union, lower the costs and lower the fares” (MailOnline, 24 February). Aer Lingus recently announced it will send its cabin crews notices of termination, re-hire them at lower pay and worse conditions and will impose 230 redundancies [layoffs].

The BA cabin crews have shown impressive resolve in taking on the union-

busters. After a December strike ballot that showed 92 per cent in favour of striking was invalidated by a court injunction, a new ballot in February won an overwhelming 81 per cent support. On the other side, Walsh & Co. are preparing for war. They have set aside £2 billion to break the strike and are aggressively building up a scab operation that BA claims will enable them to run 60 per cent of flights during the first strike.

To defeat BA’s scabbing, solidarity strikes by other airport workers, in defiance of the anti-union laws, are necessary. BA employs 3,000 baggage handlers at Heathrow, and thousands of engineers who service and maintain the aircraft. Without cargo and maintenance, nothing flies. Solid strike action, backed by unionised engineering and ground staff at Heathrow, could bring BA’s worldwide operation to a screeching halt and provide a powerful demonstration of what trade unions actually exist for. **BA cabin crew must not be left to fight alone! Picket lines mean don’t cross!**

Workers in the airline industry have tremendous potential power—the world economy cannot function without them. Airline workers internationally, including the Teamsters union in the U.S. as well as public sector union ver.di in Germany and the Australian Transport Workers Union, have pledged to support the BA strikers. Concrete acts of class solidarity across national borders, such as refusing to work scab planes that arrive in other countries, would be of immeasurable help to British workers in their battle against BA. Such internationalism would also stand in powerful contrast to the chauvinist anti-foreigner strikes that have swept Britain’s construction sites in the past year demanding “British jobs for British workers,” a slogan long associated with the fascists [see “Down With Reactionary Strikes Against Foreign Workers!” WV No. 930,

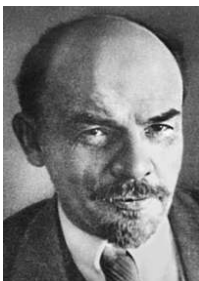
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### Lessons of the Paris Commune

March 18 marks the uprising that established the Paris Commune of 1871. In this first example of working-class rule, the proletariat governed the city for 72 days before being crushed by the French army with the support of German forces. Over 20,000 Communards were slaughtered and tens of thousands more imprisoned or deported. In his classic work *The State and Revolution*, V.I. Lenin pointed to the lessons drawn from the Paris Commune by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, in particular



TROTSKY



LENIN

the need to smash the capitalist state and replace it with the dictatorship of the proletariat, which, on an international scale, would lay the basis for the withering away of the state in a communist society.

The only “correction” Marx thought it necessary to make to the *Communist Manifesto* he made on the basis of the revolutionary experience of the Paris Communards.

The last preface to the new German edition of the *Communist Manifesto*, signed by both its authors, is dated June 24, 1872. In this preface the authors, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, say that the programme of the *Communist Manifesto* “has in some details become out-of-date,” and they go on to say:

“...One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that ‘the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.’...”

The authors took the words that are in single quotation marks in this passage from Marx’s book, *The Civil War in France*....

The current, vulgar “interpretation” of Marx’s famous statement just quoted is that Marx here allegedly emphasises the idea of slow development in contradistinction to the seizure of power, and so on.

As a matter of fact, **the exact opposite is the case**. Marx’s idea is that the working class must **break up, smash** the “ready-made state machinery,” and not confine itself merely to laying hold of it....

The Commune, therefore, appears to have replaced the smashed state machine “only” by fuller democracy: abolition of the standing army; all officials to be elected and subject to recall. But as a matter of fact this “only” signifies a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different type. This is exactly a case of “quantity being transformed into quality”: democracy, introduced as fully and consistently as is at all conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois into proletarian democracy; from the state (= a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into something which is no longer the state proper.

It is still necessary to suppress the bourgeoisie and crush their resistance. This was particularly necessary for the Commune; and one of the reasons for its defeat was that it did not do this with sufficient determination. The organ of suppression, however, is here the majority of the population, and not a minority, as was always the case under slavery, serfdom and wage slavery. And since the majority of the people *itself* suppresses its oppressors, a “special force” for suppression **is no longer necessary!** In this sense, the state **begins to wither away**. Instead of the special institutions of a privileged minority (privileged officialdom, the chiefs of the standing army), the majority itself can directly fulfil all these functions, and the more the functions of state power are performed by the people as a whole, the less need there is for the existence of this power.

—V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (1917)

## WORKERS VANGUARD



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# An Orgy of Post-Katrina Bourgeois Reaction

## Notes on New Orleans

The following article was written by Joe Vetter, a founding member of the Spartacist League/U.S. and the organizer of the SL's former New Orleans branch.

### By Joe Vetter

Following Hurricane Katrina's devastating strike on New Orleans in August 2005, the business community and the Bush-Cheney administration saw an opportunity to "change the demographics" of the city. Local businessman James Reiss, chairman of the local Regional Transit Authority and one of the leaders of an exclusive gated community in New Orleans, immediately told the *Wall Street Journal* (8 September 2005): "Those who want to see this city rebuilt want to see it done in a completely different way: demographically, geographically and politically. I'm not just speaking for myself here." That meant cleaning out the public housing projects, and terrorizing, especially, the black population.

Naomi Klein, in *The Shock Doctrine* (Picador, 2007), wrote that while she was at a Baton Rouge shelter later that September, "the news racing round the shelter that day was that Richard Baker, a prominent Republican congressman from this city, had told a group of lobbyists, 'We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did'." Klein continued: "Joseph Canizaro, one of New Orleans' wealthiest developers, had just expressed a similar sentiment: 'I think we have a clean sheet to start again. And with that clean sheet we have some very big opportunities'."

#### Milton Friedman's Free Marketeers

The imperialist endeavors of the U.S. inform government policies at home. Under Bush a section of the State Department was set up to monitor countries where natural disasters (such as tsunamis) or man-made disasters (wars like Iraq) had created a big enough shock to create "opportunities" to force the implementation of "free market" economic reforms. This section of the State Department continues to exist under Obama, who declared during the 2008 presidential campaign, "I am a pro-growth, free market guy. I love the market." Borrowing from the "free market" model, public housing near the French Quarter was hungrily eyed as land that could be used for the development of luxury hotels and housing. This followed the lead, too, of former president Bill Clinton's Secretary for Housing and Urban Development,



Above: Demonstrators push past security guards to reclaim their homes at St. Bernard public housing project in New Orleans, April 2006. Below: Residents and supporters protest plans to demolish the housing project, December 2007.

WV Photo

Evan Casper-Futerman



Henry Cisneros, who got the ball rolling with the destruction of public housing projects like Cabrini Green in Chicago.

Milton Friedman himself literally got up from his deathbed to write an op-ed for the *Wall Street Journal* (5 December 2005), noting that "most New Orleans schools are in ruins" and that this was "an opportunity" for privatizing the school system in New Orleans. The privatization was done with great speed, making most of the schools in New Orleans into private charter schools. There are only four public schools left controlled by the elected school board, while most public school teachers have been fired, decimating the union. Friedman called for the distribution of vouchers to make it possible for parents to send their kids to any school of

their choice. In New Orleans this mostly means the notoriously bad Catholic schools, where the teaching staff have little or no educational training and are grossly underpaid (in the name of service to the church and "his holy father" the Pope).

Milton Friedman and his "Chicago Boys" were the architects of the "shock treatment" mass unemployment and starvation in Chile following Pinochet's bloody military coup in 1973. In "Behind Friedmania" (WV No. 260, 11 July 1980), we pointed out: "*Business Week* (12 January 1976), hardly an organ of liberal protest, recognized that only a brutal military dictatorship could impose the Friedmanite economic model: 'Because a drastic cut in government outlays often triggers a sharp jump in unemployment, the almost inevitable result is labor unrest. Countries that try the cold-turkey approach to inflation therefore tend, like Brazil and Chile to be regimes that use police power to contain the social fallout of these economic policies'."

In New Orleans today, many hospitals are still closed. Hundreds of people are suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome and are unable to get help. This is the Friedmanite shock therapy that has been created.

Naomi Klein points out in *The Shock Doctrine*:

"On September 13, 2005—fourteen days after the levees were breached—the Heritage Foundation hosted a meeting of like-minded ideologues and Republican lawmakers. They came up with a list of 'Pro-Free-Market Ideas for Responding to Hurricane Katrina and High Gas Prices'—thirty-two policies in all, each one straight out of the Chicago School playbook, and all of them packaged as 'hurricane relief.' The first three items were 'automatically suspend Davis-

Bacon prevailing wage laws in disaster areas,' a reference to the law that required federal contractors to pay a living wage; 'make the entire affected area a flat-tax free-enterprise zone'; and 'make the entire region an economic competitiveness zone (comprehensive tax incentives and waiving of regulations).'... All these measures were announced by President Bush within the week."

To ease the way for the rebuilding of the state power by repression, the race card was played and a media offensive was launched against "looting." Whites were described as "resourceful" and blacks as "looters." Eddie Compass (then chief of police) appeared on *Oprah* attributing the most heinous crimes to the people trapped in the Louisiana Superdome and the Convention Center. Mayor Ray Nagin called the trapped people "animalistic." Claims of looting and crime were picked up by every major media outlet, and retailed as fact in *The Tin Roof Blowdown*, a best-selling Dave Robicheaux novel by James Lee Burke. But after the crisis passed, a *Times-Picayune* reporter investigated the rumors and found no truth in them.

#### Camp Greyhound

The blog "dystopolitik" (May 2008) states, "Pentagon planners, and military officials are using Katrina data to conduct war-games of future domestic scenarios, according to *Army Times*." On the ground, upon entering New Orleans a few days after Katrina, Brigadier General Gary Jones, commander of the Louisiana National Guard's Joint Task Force, said, "This place is going to look like little Somalia." In bourgeois parlance that means a "failed state." With that comment the mission of the military was clarified: The rescue operation was a far distant second to the repression of the city. People actively engaged in rescue work, even actor Sean Penn, were attacked as in the way. As military checkpoints were set up, Jones further said, "This will be a combat operation to get this city under control."

A recent book by Dave Eggers, *Zeitoun* (McSweeney's Books, 2009), tells one family's ordeal. It is the story of how New Orleans painting contractor Abdulrahman Zeitoun stayed behind to watch over his and his clients' properties in the flood, feeding trapped dogs and rescuing people with his canoe. One day his wife and children, who had driven out, suddenly lost touch with him, finally to discover after weeks of agony that he had been seized and dumped into the notorious "Camp Greyhound."

This "camp" was built using hundreds of prisoners from Angola state penitentiary, creating a maze of wire cages topped with razor wire on the parking lot of the Greyhound bus station. It was made so that one guard could watch everyone at once, with no privacy for the prisoners, who were forced to sleep on the dirty bare asphalt. If the prisoners moved too near the fencing, they were sprayed with pepper gas and then doused with water several minutes later (to prevent visible blistering). Many routinely had plastic bags placed over their heads to simulate smothering, like waterboarding, a long-standing torture method of the New Orleans Police Department. No one was ever told the charges against them. No prisoner was allowed to see a lawyer or make a phone call. This prison resembled Guantánamo Bay or the "black site" at Bagram Air Force base in Afghanistan. Some military personnel referred to New Orleans as New Ora, or Baghdad by the Bayou.

The warden from Angola prison oversaw the construction of Camp Greyhound and said that this was the first step in the rebuilding of New Orleans: "You can't

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Guantánamo on the Gulf Coast: New Orleans "Camp Greyhound," jail facility built by prisoners from Angola state penitentiary in the days after Hurricane Katrina hit.



# Parliamentary Cretinism and Class Collaboration

## Canada: A Prorogue's Gallery

A part of the British Commonwealth, Canada is subordinate to the British monarchy, whose representative, the governor-general, has the power to suspend the Canadian parliament, as happened in December at Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper's request. The following article about this question originally appeared in Spartacist Canada No. 164 (Spring 2010), newspaper of the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

### SPARTACIST CANADA

On January 23, more than 20,000 people in many Canadian cities protested against the suspension (prorogation) of parliament by governor-general Michaëlle Jean at the behest of Tory prime minister Stephen Harper. These protests, called in the name of “Canadians Against Proroguing Parliament” (CAPP), were backed by the capitalist Liberal Party of Canada, the NDP [New Democratic Party] social democrats and a variety of reformist left groups. Prominent among the latter were the International Socialists (I.S.). They helped organize and build the Toronto demo and one of their leading members made CAPP's money pitch from the platform. While Liberal heavies like Bob Rae worked the Liberal/NDP crowd in Toronto, the Ottawa rally was addressed by both Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff and NDP leader Jack Layton.

A central demand of these protests was that parliament “get back to work.” But the “work” of parliament is to ensure the continued exploitation of the working class and the supremacy of private property. Job one when parliament does “get back to work” will be to continue making the working class pay for the capitalist economic crisis; the Tories are planning massive spending cuts, including an expected assault on the pensions of government workers.

Unlike our reformist opponents, we Marxists do not uphold the “sanctity” of parliament, though we certainly oppose its arbitrary curtailment by the executive power of the capitalist state. We also call for the immediate abolition of the monarchy, the governor-general and the unelected Senate—no mere relics but rallying points for social reaction.

The fake left's embrace of this “movement” to recall parliament reflects their deeply reformist view that the capitalist state can be administered in the interests of the workers and oppressed, especially

if the NDP is helping to run it. In contrast, we recognize that the capitalist state must be smashed through proletarian revolution and replaced with workers councils (soviets), organs of working-class power.

Our defense of bourgeois-democratic rights is closely linked to combatting illusions in the “democratic” trappings of this unjust social system. V.I. Lenin, leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution,

Communist Party (CP) declared that “this movement to ‘get Parliament back to work’ can help spark a powerful campaign to block and defeat the Harper Tories” (January 7 statement). The CP's “anybody but Harper” sentiment—shared, if expressed less crudely, by the entire reformist left—can only be read as an endorsement of the bourgeois Liberals or at best the NDP.



Spartacist Canada

**January 23: Toronto protest against suspension of parliament. Reformist left blocked with bourgeois Liberals and NDP social democrats, breeding illusions in capitalist “democracy.”**

captured the essence of capitalist democracy in a scathing attack on the reformist enemies of Soviet Russia, the world's first workers state: “The working people are *barred* from participation in bourgeois parliaments (they *never decide* important questions under bourgeois democracy, which are decided by the stock exchange and the banks) by thousands of obstacles” (*The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* [1918]).

We thus do not, on principle, run for or accept executive offices, from mayor to president. In parliaments and other legislative bodies, communist deputies can, as *oppositionists*, serve as revolutionary tribunes of the working class. But assuming executive office or gaining control of a bourgeois legislative or municipal council, either independently or in coalition, requires taking responsibility for the administration of the machinery of the capitalist state, including its corrupt, violent, racist police forces (see “Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State! Marxist Principles and Electoral Tactics,” *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 61, Spring 2009).

The Harper government's latest suspension of parliament is a very real violation of bourgeois-democratic norms. But consider the history of the parliamentary parties that paraded in the streets. It was the Liberal government of Mackenzie King that interned Japanese Canadians during World War II, a racist atrocity backed by the NDP's predecessors, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. Pierre Trudeau's Liberals imposed martial law in Quebec in 1970 and Jean Chrétien's Liberals, backed by the NDP, imposed the Clarity Act, which effectively bans Quebec from exercising its democratic right to self-determination. Federally or provincially; Tory, Liberal or NDP: the bosses' parliamentary governments wage incessant attacks on workers and the oppressed on behalf of the exploiters.

When Chrétien prorogued parliament (four times), the fake left raised no hue and cry. Now, mired in their typical “fight the right” opportunism, the reformist

In that same “fight the right” spirit, the I.S. begged the NDP to “step it up” so as “to make a difference to the outcome of this fight.” Blaring “Make Harper Pay,” the I.S. pleaded that “the union movement, social justice organizations, anti-war activists, environmentalists and socialists must go all-out to make this movement as big and as militant as possible” (*Socialist Worker*, January 2010). This is a blatant call on workers to join hands with their capitalist exploiters for the purpose of running the capitalist state. In this the I.S. repeats their bowing to the Liberal-NDP coalition a year earlier. We said that this class-collaborationist alliance was an enemy of the interests of the working class.

Also agonizing over the role of their cherished NDP was Fightback, the Canadian group of Alan Woods' International Marxist Tendency. Noting the presence of the bourgeois Liberals at the anti-prorogation rallies, Fightback worried that “if the movement continues in its present class collaborationist formation, with demands acceptable to the Liberals, then it will go nowhere.” They recommended fighting “against the dictatorship of the bosses and for a genuine socialist workers' democracy” (marxist.ca, 26 January). Yet what they mean by this is to call on the NDP, in which they are buried, to take power “on a socialist program.” But the Canadian state is a *bourgeois* state. Putting the NDP at the helm of this state is the antithesis of a genuine socialist program, i.e., workers revolution to smash the capitalist state and replace it with the dictatorship of the proletariat, the necessary foundation for any regime based on workers democracy.

According to Fightback, “the NDP and the unions need to put themselves at the head of this movement and extend it beyond the issue of prorogation.” The NDP is a bourgeois workers party, based in part on affiliation with workers unions but committed to a thoroughly pro-capitalist program. Contrary to Fightback, the only reason the NDP social democrats “put themselves at the head” of any social

struggle is to derail and confine it to what is acceptable to the capitalist rulers.

The “Marxist” pretensions of the I.S., Fightback et al. are an utter fraud. This is best illustrated by their cheering on (and in some cases participating in) the capitalist-restorationist movements which destroyed the bureaucratically deformed/degenerated workers states of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Under cover of defending the same classless (i.e., bourgeois) “democracy” they tout today, they joined in the imperialists' “human rights” crusade, the sole aim of which was capitalist counterrevolution. They have the same attitude towards China, by far the strongest of the remaining bureaucratically deformed workers states, where the return of capitalism would be a gigantic defeat for China's worker and peasant masses for whom the 1949 Chinese Revolution has brought tremendous social gains. In contrast, we Trotskyists stand for the unconditional military defense of China, as well as the other deformed workers states—Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam—against imperialism and internal counterrevolution, while calling for the overthrow of the bureaucratic Stalinist misrulers through workers political revolution.

### Down With Anglo Chauvinism! Independence for Quebec!

The recent suspension of parliament has its immediate origins in the Tories' attempts to deflect anger over the well-established fact that the Canadian military in Afghanistan has been routinely handing over prisoners to their Afghan puppet allies for torture. At a more fundamental level, however, the inability of the ruling class to “solve” the Quebec national question has produced a structurally dysfunctional parliamentary system. Various using military repression and threats, economic blackmail, compromises, cajoling, insults and more threats, the Anglo-chauvinist rulers are dead set on maintaining the French-speaking Québécois as an oppressed nation within a unitary Canadian state. This is the fundamental fault line of the reactionary “Canadian confederation.”

Following the collapse of the 1987 Meech Lake accord and the 1995 referendum which came close to victory for the side of Quebec sovereignty, the Québécois have repeatedly voted for a majority of bourgeois-nationalist Bloc Québécois MPs [Members of Parliament]. Since 2004, this has produced a series of weak minority governments in Ottawa, which worries the anglophone ruling class. Outside Canada, even that haughty mouthpiece of British capital, the *Economist*, has brooded about Canada's “deadlocked politics.”

What is decisive for Marxists, though, is the fact that Canada's protracted split along national lines has created a deep divide within the working class, pitting working people of English Canada and Quebec against one another instead of the capitalist rulers. As we recognized prior to the 1995 referendum, the only foreseeable way forward is for revolutionaries to advocate Quebec independence. By getting the national question off the agenda, workers of both nations will see more clearly that their true enemies are their “own” capitalist bosses, and not one another.

The English Canadian union tops and NDP have long been virulently hostile to Quebec's national rights. They have lined up behind the Canadian ruling class whenever the Québécois seriously tried to assert their right to self-determination, including in the 1995 referendum. Such

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# Vanunu Slams Nobel War Prize

The International Communist League has always honored and defended former Israeli nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu. In 1986, Vanunu exposed to the world that the Israeli Zionist rulers had produced enough nuclear weapons and delivery systems not only to incinerate every Arab capital but to bomb major cities in the Soviet Union as well. For his service to humanity, he was kidnapped in Italy by Israeli Mossad agents, whisked back to Israel, tried before a secret military court and then locked away in prison for 18 years—12 of them spent in solitary confinement.

Now, Vanunu has ripped the veil of hypocrisy from the bourgeoisie’s venerated Nobel Peace Prize, for which he had been nominated. In a February 24 announcement, Geir Lundestad, Director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute, revealed that for the second consecutive year Vanunu wrote letters “where he stated explicitly that he did not want to be a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize. The reason he gave was that Simon [sic] Peres had received the Nobel Peace Prize, and Peres he alleged was the father of the Israeli atomic bomb and he did not want to be associated with Peres in any way.” In one of

these letters, Vanunu wrote that “Peres was the man who ordered the kidnapping of me in Italy.”

Shimon Peres, whose paternity of Israel’s nuclear arsenal is well documented in his 2007 authorized biography by Michael Bar-Zohar, shared the 1994 “peace” prize with his fellow Labor Party leader Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat for their role in negotiating the 1993 Oslo accords. This imperialist-brokered pact was portrayed as laying the foundation for a Palestinian “mini-state” in part of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. In fact, it has led only to greater oppression, impoverishment, terrorization and degradation for the Palestinians. For his part, Peres, an early supporter of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, has the blood of countless Palestinians on his hands. He was Israel’s prime minister twice, and during his second reign ordered the 1996 attack on a UN refugee camp near the southern Lebanese village of Qana in which over 100 civilians were slaughtered.

Vanunu is the first nominee to request that his name be withdrawn from consideration. But in 1973, Vietnam’s Le Duc Tho refused to accept the “peace” prize.

It had been jointly awarded to him and Henry Kissinger, the National Security Advisor for the U.S. imperialists, who had the blood of over three million Vietnamese on their hands. In refusing to remove Vanunu’s name from the list of nominees, Lundestad made clear that Vanunu had little chance of winning. Not surprising, since the award is a model of Orwellian “war is peace” Newspeak.

Peace Prize recipients have included Elihu Root, U.S. Secretary of War during the Spanish-American War through which the U.S. colonized Cuba and Puerto Rico and then occupied the Philippines, slaughtering up to a million people; Charles Dawes, architect of the imperialist victors’ reparations that bled Germany following World War I; Columbia University president Nicholas Murray Butler, an early supporter of Italian fascist Benito Mussolini and Hitler’s Nazis; United Nations general secretary Dag Hammarskjöld, who was involved in the assassination of Congo nationalist Patrice Lumumba; Menachem Begin, who had been a leader of the Zionist terrorist Irgun which carried out bloody slaughter and mass expulsions of Palestinians in the 1940s; and U.S. president Jimmy Carter, who came to office with

appeals for “ethnic purity” and engineered U.S. imperialism’s funding and arming of the reactionary, woman-hating Afghan *mujahedin* in their war against the Soviet-backed Afghan government.

The most recent honoree is U.S. Commander-in-Chief Barack Obama, who seemed to be rewarded for not being George W. Bush, though his acceptance speech differed little from a Bush presentation, except for its sophistication. Obama invoked the virtues of a “just war” in defense of a barbaric occupation that has resulted in the deaths of untold thousands of Afghans and the pounding of villages through aerial bombardment. He also took the occasion to rattle sabers at capitalist Iran and the North Korean deformed workers state for their work toward developing nuclear capability in defiance of imperialist threats and sanctions.

Since his release from Israel’s dungeons in 2004, Vanunu has been barred from leaving the country, talking to non-Israelis, going near airports and is under 24-hour surveillance. Last December he was placed under house arrest after meeting a Norwegian woman in a Jerusalem hotel (see WV No. 950, 15 January). As Vanunu recently wrote to a Norwegian journalist, “What I want now, I need now, is freedom, passport, not any awards.” Hands off Mordechai Vanunu! Let him leave Israel!

## BA Strike...

(continued from page 2)

13 February 2009]. *Down with nationalist protectionism! For international working-class solidarity with BA strikers!*

In August 2005, BA ground crews showed their immense power by striking against the mass sacking of over 600 Gate Gourmet catering workers. This “unofficial” strike defied the anti-union laws and brought Heathrow to a standstill, snarling up BA operations and costing them over £40 million. However the union leadership under Tony Woodley of the TGWU (now part of Unite) scandalously repudiated the strike as “unlawful” and left the sacked Gate Gourmet workers, who were mainly Asian women, out to dry [see “Wildcat Strike Protests Mass Sackings at Heathrow,” WV No. 853, 2 September 2005]. Today the Unite leadership is bending over backwards to capitulate to BA, volunteering their own package of cuts and begging Walsh to put his last offer back on the table. They have even agreed that workers will fork out an extra £37 million a year to cover a gaping hole in the BA pension fund!

Bleatings of David Cameron’s Tories aside, the fact that Unite bankrolls the Labour Party doesn’t prevent the Labour

government from kicking the union in the teeth. Labour’s transport secretary Lord Adonis has viciously condemned the strikes as “totally unjustified” while [Prime Minister] Gordon Brown said a strike at BA would be “deplorable.” But only an inveterate Labourite reformist would whine, as *Socialist Worker* (20 March) did, that Brown “should be attacking BA chief executive Willie Walsh.” Fat chance. While Old Labour governments routinely sided with the bosses against striking workers, New Labour prides itself on its loyalty to the bankers and bosses and its hostility to the unions. New Labour set out to sever the party’s links to the trade unions, which would transform it from a reformist party (i.e., one with a working-class base but a pro-capitalist programme) into an outright bourgeois party like the U.S. Democratic Party. This process remains incomplete because the party is dependent on union funds, but Labour is moribund as a reformist party.

Behind the condemnation of the strikers by Adonis and Brown stands the state, which has at its disposal a welter of anti-union laws and the courts and cops to enforce them. What the workers have is their numbers, their organisation and the power to halt the industry, hitting the bosses in the bottom line. But what is needed to unleash this power is a political

battle against the sell-out Unite leadership.

For the members of the Unite union it must surely rankle that their dues have been funding the Labour Party to the tune of £11 million in the past four years, which amounts to “feeding the hand that bites them.” But the union bureaucracy is tied hand and foot to the capitalist order and would gladly scupper [wreck] the strike in the interests of re-electing this rotten Labour government. When the cabin crews originally announced a 12-day strike over Christmas, Unite co-leader Derek Simpson stabbed his membership in the back by publicly condemning their strike proposal as “over the top.” The bitter enmity between Unite co-leaders Derek Simpson and Tony Woodley is palpable, but *all* wings of the bureaucracy are cringingly subservient to the Labour Party. Unite’s “political director” is Charlie Whelan, a former spin doctor for Gordon Brown.

With an election for Unite general secretary in the offing, the supposed “left” candidate is Jerry Hicks, formerly union convenor at Rolls Royce, who outdid Unite bureaucrats Simpson and Woodley in his support for the protectionist strikes for “British jobs for British workers” last year. Hicks stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the Socialist Party [affiliated with Socialist Alternative in the U.S.], which was part of the leadership of the anti-

foreigner strikes at Lindsey oil refinery.

The Lindsey strike launched a crusade that saw foreign workers removed from a site in Wales and being denied jobs at many other building sites in a racist climate that has been a gift to the fascist BNP.

We told the truth: those strikes are poison to the interests of the multiethnic working class in Britain and workers throughout Europe. We say no vote to any of these traitors in the Unite election and no vote to Labour in the general election. The unions must oppose chauvinist “British workers first” protectionism as well as the “war on terror”—which targets Muslims—as well as all other racist divide-and-rule ploys. What’s needed is to mobilise the multiethnic working class *against* Gordon Brown’s Labour government in a fight for jobs for *all*, through a shorter work week with no loss in pay, and to undertake a union organising drive to draw into their ranks all of the working class, including its minority and immigrant components. In the heat of hard class struggle, workers must replace the Labourite cringers atop the unions with a class-struggle leadership as part and parcel of the fight for a multiethnic revolutionary workers party that will fight for a socialist revolution to establish a workers government.

*Victory to the BA strikers! ■*

Anglo chauvinism has served to drive the once-militant Québécois working class into the arms of their “own” national exploiters, represented by the Bloc and Parti Québécois.

The reformist left capitulates to the Anglo chauvinists of the NDP in English Canada and, in some cases, to the bourgeois nationalists in Quebec, depending on where their immediate opportunist appetites lie. The Communist Party and Fightback oppose independence outright and cover their straight capitulation to Anglo chauvinism with empty “unite-and-fight” rhetoric (see “‘Fightback’ and the Quebec National Question,” SC No. 162, Fall 2009 [reprinted in WV No. 943, 25 September 2009]). Others, such as Socialist Action, favour Quebec independence, but only as a means to ingratiate themselves with “left” Québécois bourgeois nationalists. Today their chosen vehicle for this is the left-nationalist Québec Solidaire, a petty-bourgeois formation that does not even pay lip service to socialism.

Along with Fightback and the CP, the grotesquely misnamed Bolshevik Ten-

dency is another staunch “left” defender of “Canadian unity.” In line with their sneering contempt for all forms of special oppression, the BT openly opposes independence for Quebec. Notoriously, the BT has the dubious distinction of being *the* “socialists” officially invited to a Montreal “Canadian unity” rally organ-

ized by business groups on the eve of the 1995 referendum on Quebec sovereignty! More recently, a BT contingent blended right into the flag-waving January proration protest in Toronto—none of their placards breathed a word of criticism against the ruling-class Liberal Party, let alone the social-democratic NDP. The BT



**Bolshevik Tendency (far left) blends seamlessly into “get Parliament back to work” rally, Toronto, January 23.**

is an integral part of the syphilitic chain of pro-capitalist reformism.

While workers and the oppressed must oppose ruling-class attacks on bourgeois-democratic rights, they must do so by their own methods and under their own independent banner. As we said in our 22 December 2008 supplement, “Liberal-NDP Coalition: Tool of the Bosses” (SC No. 160, Spring 2009):

“The Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste is fighting to build the nucleus of a revolutionary Marxist party that can root itself in the working class. Taking up the cause of all the oppressed, such a party would give conscious leadership to the struggles of the workers not only to improve their present conditions but to do away with the entire system of capitalist wage slavery. ‘Unity’ with the oppressors, or with their social-democratic political agents, is the road to defeat. The only way to smash the all-sided assault on social programs, to assure free quality medical care, childcare and jobs and decent living standards for all, to end the neocolonial pillage of the Third World, is by ripping the productive forces from the hands of the capitalist class through socialist revolution and putting them in the hands of those whose labour makes society run.” ■



# Incarceration...

(continued from page 1)

to U.S. imperialism’s posture as the defender of “democracy” against the Soviet degenerated workers state.

The bankruptcy of the civil rights movement’s leadership and its liberal program was revealed when the movement went North, where black people already had formal legal equality. As the French writer Anatole France wrote about legal equality in the late 19th century: “The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.” The struggle for a fundamental change in conditions of life in the ghettos—for real equality, jobs, decent housing and adequate schools—collided head-on with the economic realities of American capitalism.

## Revolutionary Integrationism

From slavery to convict labor, from the chain gang to the assembly line, American capitalism has been built upon the lash-scarred backs of black labor. Any organization that claims a revolutionary perspective for the United States must confront the *special oppression* of black people—their forced segregation at the bottom of capitalist society and the poisonous racism that divides the working class and cripples its struggles.

Counterposed to liberal integrationism, which holds that black equality can be achieved within the American capitalist system of racial subjugation and ruthless labor exploitation, we advocate *revolutionary integrationism*: the understanding that black freedom requires smashing the capitalist system and constructing an egalitarian socialist society. This perspective is also counterposed to petty-bourgeois black nationalism and black capitalism, an ideology of defeatism that would deny blacks their birthright: *the wealth and culture their labor has played a decisive role in creating*. As Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky told his American supporters in 1939: “We must say to the conscious elements of the Negroes that they are convoked by the historic development to become a vanguard of the working class.”

## Early America and Slavery

The capitalist ruling class is also acutely aware of this fact. Shortly after this republic was founded, the black slaves of the French colony that is now Haiti, roused by the French Revolution, were organized into an armed force that won their freedom by defeating Europe’s mightiest armies, inspiring slave rebellions throughout the Americas.

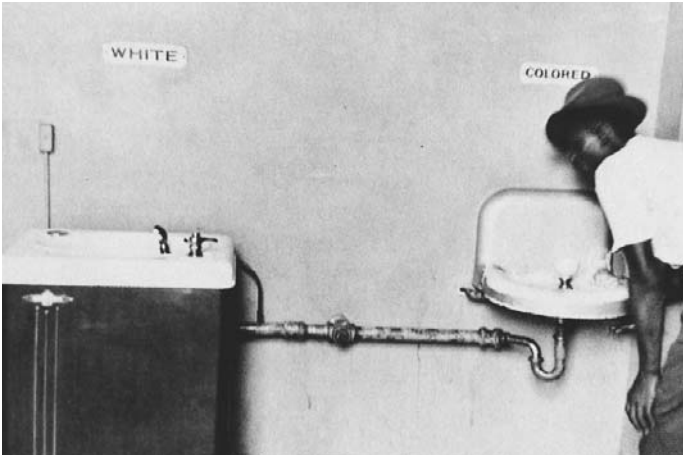
Since then, if not before, America’s rulers have been haunted by the spectre of black insurrection and social revolution. The payback to Haiti was 200 years of political isolation, economic depredation and military occupation. The response at home: the incarceration and criminalization of black people that is woven into the

very fabric of this country.

In 1793, the same year that slavery was abolished in Haiti, Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin in the U.S., which would vastly expand both the scope and the profitability of the Southern plantation-based slave economy. The surplus value extracted through the oldest form of exploitation would fuel the birth of industrial capitalism in the U.S. and, with it, capitalism’s gravedigger, the proletariat.



Ebony



Elliot Erwit

**Above: Civil rights protests in 1950s and 1960s helped shatter Jim Crow segregation but could not attack roots of racial oppression in American capitalism. Left: Segregated drinking fountains, North Carolina, 1950.**

Also in 1793, Congress passed the first national crime bill, the Fugitive Slave Act. The law fleshed out the slave-catching clause in Article 4, Section 2, of the recently ratified U.S. Constitution—that very document that President Obama as a candidate claimed “had at its very core the ideal of equal citizenship under the law.”

## The Bourgeois State and the Civil War

The instrument for criminalization and incarceration is the state, an instrument of organized violence for the suppression of one class by another. Friedrich Engels explained in *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884) that the state consists “not merely of armed men [like the police and army], but also of material adjuncts, prisons, and institutions of coercion of all kinds.” Writing at the dawn of modern imperialism, he described how this state or public power “grows stronger, however to the extent that class antagonisms within the state become exacerbated and adjacent states

after the most diabolical of biblical monsters. No exploiting class but the bourgeoisie has built such monstrous institutions of coercion, suppression and destruction—this Leviathan that swallows up the whole of society—in order to struggle to the death to avoid leaving the stage of history.

It was not words of eloquent moral suasion, or freedom protests and petitions or “creative disruption” that crushed the slaveowning Confederacy in the Civil War, but the Union Army—two and a half million strong, including the decisive mobilization of 200,000 black soldiers and sailors. The Civil War—the Second American Revolution—was the last of the world’s great bourgeois revolutions that began with the English Civil War of the 17th century and included the French Revolution of the 18th century.

## Reconstruction and Betrayal

Yet the Civil War was a *bourgeois* revolution, with all the contradictions that implies. A barbaric and archaic system of

exploitation had been overthrown. But what would replace slavery? The ensuing period of Radical Reconstruction, imposed on the South with Union army bayonets, was the most democratic and egalitarian period in American history. Public schools were established where previously it had been a crime punishable by death to teach blacks to read and write. It gave us the Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, which overturned the notorious 1857 *Dred Scott* Supreme Court decision that declared blacks “so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.”

But Northern capital eyed the devastated South not as a laboratory for a radical-democratic experiment, but as an opportunity to profitably exploit Southern resources and cheap labor. Cotton was still king in the South and Northern textile mills obtained nearly all their cotton from the South, from which they produced \$100 million worth of cloth a year.

The Compromise of 1877, which withdrew the last Union troops from the South, sealed the betrayal of black freedom. Reconstruction governments were overthrown and in the late 19th century replaced with governments based on Jim Crow lynch law terror. The precise number of lynchings will never be known. One generally accepted figure is that of the 3,943 lynchings between 1880 and 1930, 3,220, or 82 percent, had black victims.

The death penalty, where judges in black robes supplant racist mobs in white sheets, is the lynch rope made legal. A suit brought before the Supreme Court by black Georgia death row prisoner Warren McCleskey showed that black people in Georgia convicted of killing whites were sentenced to death *22 times* more frequently than those convicted of killing blacks. In rejecting McCleskey’s appeal in 1987, the Supreme Court openly acknowledged that to accept his premise would throw “into serious question the principles that underlie our entire criminal justice system.” We can all agree with that. *McCleskey* has been called the *Dred Scott* decision of our time. We say: *Abolish the racist death penalty!*

## Class War vs. Convict Lease

To recreate the cheap labor so coveted by Northern and Southern capital, the freed slave had to be forced back into bondage, especially on the plantations. The 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which codified emancipation, also contained the exception with which to forge new chains for the freed black:

“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, *except* as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States.” [emphasis added]

Under that exception, every former slave state passed a plethora of laws that criminalized vagrancy, loitering, gambling, using “obscene language,” homosexuality, bigamy, “miscegenation.” These were punishable by long sentences or a fine so high no poor man could pay it, so that the convict was “leased out” for a

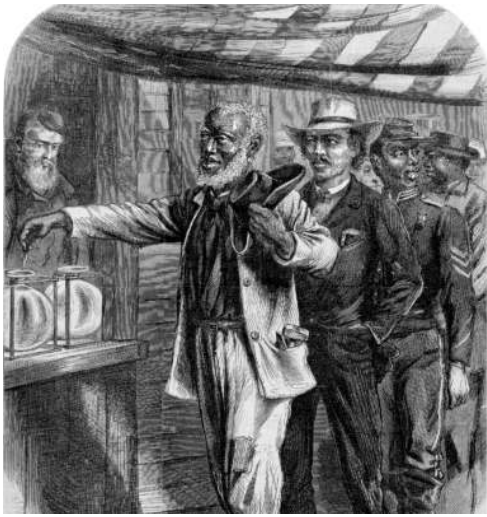


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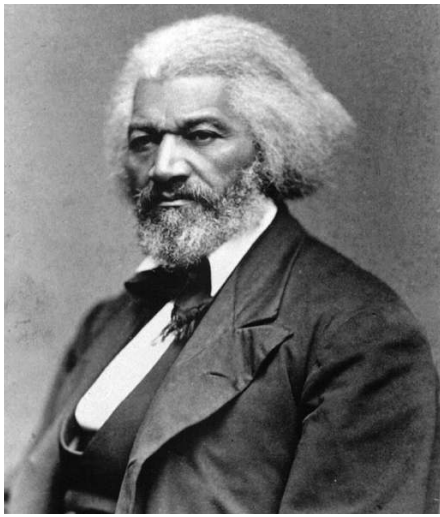


Library of Congress

**Left: Scarred back of slave. Right: Soldiers of 107th U.S. Colored Infantry at Fort Corcoran near Washington. Nearly 200,000 black Union soldiers and sailors helped turn tide of Civil War.**



Harper's Weekly



Frederick Douglass House

**Left: Southern black men voting in 1867, during Reconstruction period. Right: Frederick Douglass, pre-eminent revolutionary abolitionist.**

term of labor to pay off the fine.

As an 1892 letter published in the Washington, D.C. *Evening Star* pointed out:

“The lease system brings the state a revenue and relieves it of the cost of building and maintaining prisons. The fact that the convicts labor is in this way brought into direct competition with free labor does not seem to be taken into account. The contractors, who get these laborers for 30 or 40 cents per day, can drive out of the market the man who employs free labor at \$1 a day.”

—Quoted in Ida B. Wells, ed., *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition* (1893)

Just as slave labor in the Caribbean helped fuel the industrial revolution in England, it was convict labor that would lay the foundation for the growth of industry in the South (even as the South remained largely agricultural). Slavery was inhuman. But as the chattel slave was an expensive piece of “property,” there were some economic deterrents to the regular use of the most extreme forms of plantation brutality. No such limit existed for convict labor. According to David M. Oshinsky's *Worse Than Slavery* (1997), much of the railroad system in the South was built by leased convicts packed in rolling iron cages moved from job to job, working in such hellish conditions that they rarely survived past two years.

Coal fueled the advance of industry in the South, employing black and white together under hellish conditions. There was a popular saying that down in that inferno all are black, even though the dirtiest jobs were reserved for those who started off the shift with coal-colored skin. Despite deep race-hatred elsewhere, those conditions mandated biracial solidarity in bitter class war.

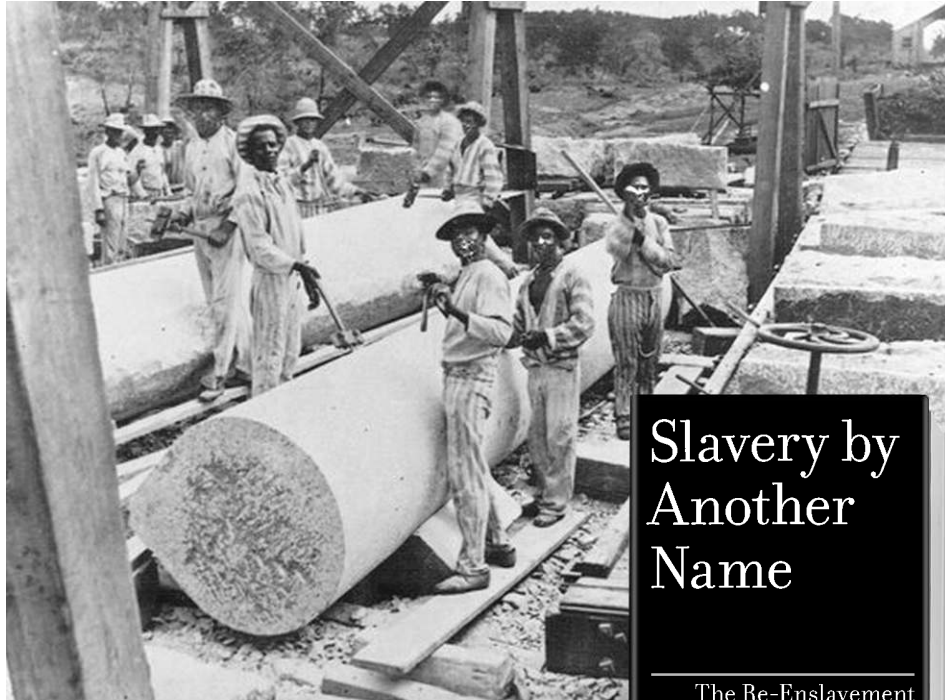
The Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company (TCI) deployed convict labor from 1871 in eastern Tennessee coal fields. Free miners were organized by the Knights of Labor. When their contract expired in April 1891, TCI locked them out and brought in convicts to break the union. There ensued two years of class war. Armed miners up to 3,000-strong marched to stockades holding convict laborers, overwhelmed the guards and released the convicts, sometimes burning the stockades to the ground.

The miners were finally outgunned and outnumbered by a state militia reinforced with army Gatling guns and field artillery. Defeated on the battlefield, the miners nevertheless celebrated something of a victory when the convict lease was not renewed, and TCI was forced to pull up stakes and move its headquarters to Birmingham, where it also operated mines with convict labor. That saga is the subject of Douglas Blackmon's Pulitzer Prize-winning best seller *Slavery by Another Name* (2008). In Birmingham, also, the deployment of convict labor met with fierce resistance by the besieged biracial United Mineworkers, a history unfortunately downplayed by Blackmon.

The post-Reconstruction “Redeemer” governments, based on open black disenfranchisement and Jim Crow terror, made the legal pretense of the horrendous convict lease system unnecessary. In Tennessee, the state simply took over the

mines and worked them with prison labor. In 1912 Alabama also took over the TCI mines and worked them with convict labor for another 16 years. Elsewhere in the South, Blackmon writes:

“As African Americans across the region were ground into political and economic penury, the difference in the costs of legally enslaved and free, but impoverished, labor narrowed dramatically.... “Moreover, while thousands of state prisoners in Georgia, the Carolinas, and other states were no longer leased to



Texas State Library & Archives Commission

**Pulitzer Prize-winning book by Douglas A. Blackmon chronicles inhuman exploitation of convict labor. Above: Leased prisoners constructing granite columns for the Texas State Capitol in mid 1880s.**

private corporations, they were being forced into an ‘improved’ method of coercing labor and intimidating African Americans—the chain gang.”

In Mississippi and Louisiana, abolition of convict leasing was part of a “reform” package that had as its purpose the complete triumph of white supremacy in political affairs. There, the massive Parchman and Angola prison plantations were made state institutions. Today Angola State Prison is the largest maximum security prison in the country. With long rows of stooped black bodies working under the hot sun, and armed overseers called “trustees” at the end of each row, chattel slavery underwent a 20th-century renaissance.

If I have concentrated on the South it is because its Jim Crow laws and black codes, and not the early 19th-century Quaker vision of the pen as a place of penitence and rehabilitation, shaped the prison boom of the 1980s and 1990s.

#### American Imperialist Decline

The militant class struggle of the 1930s that built the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) finally integrated black labor into powerful industrial unions, if only at the bottom of the workforce. World War II not only pulled the United States out of the Great Depression but intensified the “Great Migration” of millions of Southern blacks to Northern industrial cities. During the war, it took

only 90 days to turn illiterate black rural youth, whose only experience had been chopping weeds in cotton fields, into literate apprentices with high-grade industrial skills. A black proletariat was being forged, strategically integrated into basic American industry, representing the link between the anger of the ghetto and the power of organized labor.

With its imperialist competitors like Japan and Germany devastated, the U.S. emerged from World War II the pre-eminent capitalist power, producing one half of the world's goods. That pre-eminence continued well into the 1950s. With profits fat, at least industrial workers were able to achieve some real gains, but not without hard class struggle. At the same time, as U.S. imperialism's Cold War against the Soviet Union was being launched, and following a massive post-war strike wave, the power of the state to police and shackle labor was magnified. The Taft-Hartley Act outlawed the secondary boycott and banned Communists and other leftists from serving as union officers. In 1955, the AFL and CIO were fused under a homogenized leadership of Cold War fanatics. It was no accident that U.S. union membership began to decline in the mid 1950s, having reached its historic peak in 1954. In 1959, 500,000 steelworkers struck for 116 days; they

the latest technology and much higher productivity. By 1960, U.S. per-hour manufacturing costs were three times those in Europe and ten times those in Japan. Because of increased competition and overproduction, prices were falling worldwide by the early 1970s. But in the U.S. during the same period, the rate of worker compensation increased as strike activity soared. Thus, the rate of profit fell for non-financial corporations from a peak of 10 percent in 1965 to less than 6 percent in the second half of the 1970s, *a fall of more than a third*.

The struggle for black equality in the 1950s broke the back of the Cold War anti-Communist consensus and in the 1960s intersected growing opposition to U.S. imperialism's losing war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants. While the bourgeoisie was willing to permit the gradual abolition of *legal* segregation and a little upward mobility for a small layer of blacks, it unleashed a campaign of “white backlash” and police terror aimed at reining in and suppressing the struggle for black freedom.

Vicious police repression in major U.S. cities precipitated black ghetto eruptions across the country, which were reflected in widespread disaffection among black soldiers in the U.S. military. Meanwhile, working-class upheavals shook America's allies: France in 1968, Italy in 1969 and Portugal in 1974-75. These reverberated across the Atlantic. In the U.S., when 210,000 postal workers walked out in 1970, defying a federal strike ban, President Nixon called out 26,000 National Guard and Army troops to scab. But only 16,000 showed up; to say they were worse than useless would be an understatement. The potential for an explosive and revolutionary transformation of American society was evident. Once again the spectre of black and red haunted the country's rulers.

The response was the bipartisan “war on crime” launched in 1968 by the “Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act,” passed under Democratic president Johnson and a Democratic Congress. The Cold War domestic Counter-intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), which originally targeted the Stalinists and Trotskyists, was now expanded to include the New Left, black radicals and other social activists. The militant Black Panther Party in particular was in COINTELPRO's crosshairs. The Panthers represented the best of a generation of black activists who courageously stood up to the racist ruling class and its kill-crazy cops. In 1968, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover vowed, “The Negro youth and moderate[s] must be made to understand that if they succumb to revolutionary teachings, they will be dead revolutionaries.” Under the ruthless COINTELPRO vendetta, 38 Panthers were assassinated and hundreds were railroaded to scores of years in prison hellholes—and many are there today, like Mumia Abu-Jamal.

#### A Lumpen Vanguard?

Unfortunately, the Panthers, along with most of the New Left, rejected the organized working class as the agent of

*continued on page 8*

## Slavery by Another Name

The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II  
DOUGLAS A. BLACKMON

only returned to work under government intervention and Taft-Hartley injunction. As Leon Trotsky had warned:

“Monopoly capitalism is less and less willing to reconcile itself to the independence of trade unions. It demands of the reformist bureaucracy and the labor aristocracy, who pick up the crumbs from its banquet table, that they become transformed into its political police before the eyes of the working class.”

—“Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay” (1940)

Meanwhile, America's imperialist competitors were rebuilding their plants with

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# Incarceration...

(continued from page 7)

black freedom and socialist revolution. Inspired by the Caribbean-born black psychiatrist and nationalist Frantz Fanon, the Panthers turned to the most wretched and the most despised layer of black ghetto youth to be the vanguard of the black struggle. The underlying ideology of the Panthers was that of Fanon: that the most oppressed are the most revolutionary. But, in fact, the lumpenproletariat in the ghetto, removed from the means of production, has no real social power. Moreover, as Marx noted in his 1850 work, *The Class Struggles in France*, this layer, which also includes prostitutes and pimps and petty thieves who mostly prey on workers, are “thoroughly malleable, as capable of the most heroic deeds and the most exalted sacrifices as of the basest banditry and the foulest corruption.”

Incarcerated black militants served as a transmission belt for social protest into America’s penitentiaries, which are but a concentrated expression of racist, capitalist barbarism. What such heroic figures as Malcolm X and George Jackson demonstrate is that some individuals, politicized and radicalized by their own experiences, *transcend their background to choose a social solution to their oppression*. As a black supporter wrote us from Soledad Prison some 33 years ago, “For the bulk of the lumpenproletariat its social and economic stake in capitalist society—its largely parasitic relationship *within* capitalist society—is dependent upon the continuance of such an economic system.”

## One-Sided Class War

Back on the economic front, the decline of American industry was accelerated by its aging capital stock. New investment went not into retooling and modernization of industry, but into speculative capital or into moving American plants to the low-wage, non-union South and low-wage countries abroad. Organizing the South meant taking Jim Crow racism and the Democratic Party head-on—anathema to the pro-Democratic Party labor tops. International class solidarity with superexploited workers abroad, whose conditions were enforced by brutal U.S.-backed, anti-Communist dictatorships, meant taking on the Cold War establishment, of which the labor bureaucracy was still very much a part.

The labor bureaucrats supported the election of Georgia Democrat Jimmy Carter, who openly proclaimed the virtues of “ethnic purity.” In 1979 Carter appointed Paul Volcker as chairman of the Federal Reserve, the same Volcker who is now Obama’s point man on economic “reform.” After his appointment by Carter, Volcker gave away his game

plan for reversing Wall Street’s declining rate of profit in a *New York Times* (18 October 1979) interview: “The standard of living of the average American has to decline.... I don’t think you can escape that.” The Fed chairman proceeded to drastically tighten the money supply, forcing interest rates up to 16.4 percent and driving economic activity down, creating what was then the worst recession since the Great Depression. The Iranians were blamed—some things never change. It was not the ayatollahs in Tehran but the people running Wall Street and the Fed who were responsible.

To let folks know what was coming, Ronald Reagan launched his 1980 presidential campaign from Philadelphia, Mississippi, with a ringing endorsement of “states rights” before a cheering

der Carter and accelerated under Reagan. Between 1980 and 1985 the Department of Labor estimated that some 2.3 million manufacturing jobs disappeared for good. As auto plant after auto plant closed, Detroit lost half its population during the ’80s. By 1990, this once-proud center of industrial might and multiracial class struggle was 80 percent black and the poverty rate was 33 percent.

## The “War on Drugs”

The economic whip of unemployment was augmented by the vast expansion of police powers and prisons under the bipartisan “war on crime” and “war on drugs.” In 1973, New York State governor Nelson Rockefeller launched the harshest drug laws in the country, with mandatory minimum sentences of 15 to life for sell-



**Integrated packinghouse workers strike in dead of winter in Chicago, late 1930s. Militant class struggle built powerful multiracial industrial unions.**

crowd of some 10,000 whites. Philadelphia, which as you may recall was the setting for the film *Mississippi Burning*, is where civil rights workers Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner and James Chaney were murdered 16 years earlier. Obama’s admiration for Reagan, after “all the excesses of the 1960s and 1970s,” should be seen in this context.

Soon after taking office, Reagan fired over 11,000 striking air traffic controllers, a blow from which the labor movement has not recovered. Volcker stayed on as Fed chief, while unemployment reached 10.8 percent at the end of 1982. In the “miracle of the free market,” growing unemployment and the industrial reserve army replace the overseer’s whip and the trustee’s gun to discipline and drive down the wages of the working class. In addition, the ranks of the industrial reserve army were swelled with the profound deindustrialization that began un-

ing two ounces or possession of four ounces of heroin, morphine, coke or cannabis. As WV reported in “New York Tinkers with Rockefeller Laws: Down With the Racist ‘War on Drugs’!” (WV No. 949, 1 January), these laws, which have recently undergone some paltry reforms, provided a blueprint for similar draconian laws across the country. By the 1980s, the “war on drugs” was a major contributing factor to the historic rise in the prison population. From a figure of about 40,000 people incarcerated in prison or jail for a drug offense in 1980, there has since been a 1,100 percent increase to more than 500,000 prisoners today, with black people accounting for more than 60 percent of drug convictions.

Democrats, and especially black Democrats, have been among the most fervent drug warmongers. The Rainbow/PUSH Coalition’s Web site, referring to the “war on drugs” and other government policies, brags that “long before” they “became accepted public policy positions, Reverend Jesse Jackson advocated them.” And taking the “war on drugs” global has long been Al Sharpton’s mantra. He declared: “We have to use trade leverage to go after the countries that produce the drugs—who openly allow drugs to be in their economy—and put them out of business.” Obama, as well as Bush before him, has used the pretense of the global “war on drugs” to build military bases and back death squads in Colombia and wage murderous repression on both sides of the Mexican border (see “Mexico: Down With ‘Drug Wars’ Militarization!” WV No. 953, 26 February). Thanks, Al.

While some reformist outfits bewail the blatant racist profiling by the drug police, most do not raise the elementary democratic demand to decriminalize drugs. Indicative of this is a catchy chant from the Revolutionary Communist Party that only a somewhat demented Maoist could learn to love: “The war on drugs is a war on the people. The fascist crackdown is worse than crack.”

A recent article in Progressive Labor’s paper, *Challenge* (3 March), actually

equated drug treatment centers with police terror and capitalist exploitation, opining: “Having drug clinics in a mainly black and Latino neighborhood is no solution for health care, and is a result of the ruling class’ racist attempt to oppress workers.” As for the reformism-at-a-snail’s-pace International Socialist Organization, now that even Republican California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has called for a debate on legalizing marijuana, they have come out for it as well—but don’t hold your breath.

As we wrote in WV No. 949, we support any mitigation of the Rockefeller or other drug laws. But no amount of tinkering will change the reactionary nature of these laws or their racist enforcement. We oppose all laws against “crimes without victims”—such as drug use, prostitution, gambling and pornography. Such laws are at bottom designed to maintain social control. By removing the superprofits that come with the illegal, underground nature of the drug trade, decriminalization would also reduce the crime and other social pathology associated with it. We oppose drug testing in the workplace, which employers use to cow the entire workforce and weed out militants.

There is a saying as true as it is old: There is nothing so bad that a cop can’t make it worse. Yes, drug addiction can be a terrible thing, but addiction is a medical problem. As anyone can attest who has worked with addicts and understands the physiology and psychology of addiction, nothing creates or aggravates addiction faster than the stress and trauma of police and prison. That is why overcrowded prisons are a breeding ground for drug addiction, just as they are breeding grounds for communicable diseases.

By targeting prostitutes and drug addicts, the state also targets those who are at high risk for HIV, and one in every four Americans living with HIV passes through a prison. As of 2005, blacks and Latinos represented 71 percent of all new AIDS cases and the majority of people living with HIV/AIDS.

## Immigrants and Incarceration

It took a Civil War to smash slavery and create the Fourteenth Amendment, which granted citizenship not only to blacks but also to the children of immigrants born on American soil. While the American ruling class has always used racial and ethnic divisions to keep working people and the oppressed divided, the truth is that immigrant rights and black freedom either go forward hand in hand, or they fall back separately.

Today, some 400,000 immigrants pass through wretched detention facilities, some dying though sheer lack of medical attention and then “disappearing.” No wonder the Obama administration, like Bush’s, even refuses to make legally enforceable rules for immigration detention. We demand full citizenship rights for all immigrants, no matter how they made it here.

At the same time, an estimated 5.3 million Americans are denied the right to vote because of laws that prohibit voting by people with felony convictions, including 1.4 million black men. In Florida, over 30 percent of black men can’t vote. We categorically oppose every instance of black disenfranchisement. Full voting rights for prisoners and convicted felons!

In 2007, before the current economic crisis, the National Institute of Justice found that 60 percent of all felons remain unemployed a year after their release. We say: abolish every one of California’s 210 laws and regulations that prevent felons from getting jobs or licenses—even to be a barber, an interior designer or a guide dog trainer. Strike down criminal background checks for employment applications! Full access for ex-cons to all public services, like public housing!

At the same time, we oppose so-called “Second Chance” or “Ex-Offender” programs, which are meant to replace union jobs and exploit ex-cons as cheap labor

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Reuters

**Detroit: General Motors world headquarters looms above makeshift homeless shelter, March 2009 (left). Hard-hit residents line up to receive food supplies, December 2008.**



Getty

with no benefits or protection. One such program was recently instituted in Chicago transit (see “Down With Racist, Anti-Union ‘Ex-Offender Apprentice’ Scheme!” WV No. 923, 24 October 2008). We say: Equal pay for equal work! Organize ex-cons like anyone else into the unions with full union wages, benefits and protection!

### Impulse to Genocide

As the first to be fired and the last to be hired, black people were always over-represented in America’s industrial reserve army. But now the ravages of decaying American capitalism are driving many black workers out of the productive economy and into the ranks of the lumpenproletariat as an outlaw caste.

In the 1990s, Washington and California led the states in passing “Three Strikes Laws,” which established mandatory sentences for a third felony conviction. The ’90s also saw the resurrection of post-Civil War “black codes” in the

lence—disguises their core role as institutions of organized class repression and prettifies the irrational, rotting capitalist system they represent and defend. SCI-Greene, the Pennsylvania Supermax where Mumia Abu-Jamal is locked down 23 hours a day on death row, is not a profit center, although it is just as indispensable to the defense of the predatory profit system as the 82nd Airborne.

Black lumpenization is not some racist conspiracy between the White House and Wall Street, but part of the normal workings of the capitalist marketplace. As described by Marx in his renowned work, *Capital* (1867):

“The greater the social wealth...and, therefore, also the absolute mass of the proletariat and the productiveness of its labour, the greater is the industrial reserve army.... But the greater this reserve army in proportion to the active labour army, the greater is the mass of a consolidated surplus population, whose misery is in inverse ratio to its torment of labour. The more extensive, finally, the lazarus-layers of the working class, and

World War II. Many of the black and Latino youth for whom the bourgeoisie cannot provide a future end up in prison.

Our Spartacus Youth Clubs demand free, quality public education for all, from preschool to postgrad, and a living stipend so working people and the poor—and felons—can afford college. We demand a massive expansion of remedial and bilingual education for inner-city schools and neighborhoods. But equal and adequate education is rendered meaningless if the majority of blacks and other socially downtrodden people are excluded from using the results by a decaying social order that has consigned three generations of black youth to the scrap heap.

Labor has created the social wealth that has made human culture, science and technology possible. That is why we insist that the struggle for equal education is part of the perspective for the overthrow of disintegrating capitalism, which threatens the whole culture of

Cuba because there the capitalists were thrown out of power—although a proletarian political revolution remains on the agenda to get rid of the Stalinist bureaucrats running the country. From this former sugar colony, 400 doctors, whose entire education and training was paid for by the state, are now in Haiti providing top quality medical services to earthquake victims.

Marxism rejects the religious dogma of punishment, whether it is retributive or penitential. What is utopian is thinking you can reform the capitalist Leviathan and abolish its dungeons without overthrowing the whole damn capitalist-imperialist system. Only then can we consign the modern instruments of torture, incarceration and death to the museum, alongside the rack, the pillory and the whipping post.

### For a Revolutionary Workers Party

Shortly after the end of the American Civil War, Marx wrote in *Capital* (1867): “Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.” You will find those words on the membership cards of our Labor Black League for Social Defense.

You are not going to get labor and black freedom by backing the Democratic Party of racism and imperialist war. Yes, they claim to feel your pain, and the reformists push Democratic Party lesser-evilmism. When the Democrats get into office they can do greater evil with lesser resistance. And you’re not going to get any satisfaction with those green-washers of capital and pacifiers of the people, the Greens or the Peace and Freedom Party either.

Don’t buy the substitute, the imitation or the fake. Let’s get on with the immensely difficult and challenging task in this post-Soviet trough of building the kind of party needed for the inevitable social and class battles ahead, one that is proletarian, internationalist and revolutionary. Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Finish the Civil War! Break with the Democrats! Build a workers party that fights for a socialist future!■



AFP

**Women detainees at immigrant detention center in Texas, 2007. Homeland Security officials forced them to turn their backs to visiting media.**

form of so-called “quality of life,” “zero tolerance” and “anti-gang” laws and policies. These laws criminalized black and Latino youth, often for minor acts of misbehavior, and the poor and the homeless for their poverty. Following the so-called “’90s boom” of the Democratic Clinton administration, by 2000 one out of every three black men in their 20s was in prison or unemployed. As we wrote in the article “Lockdown U.S.A.” (WV No. 618, 10 March 1995): “The bourgeoisie’s vicious drive to imprison and execute the ever-increasing numbers of ghetto youth reflects a sinister impulse to genocide against a layer of the black population.”

Black Panther Party supporter, former Communist Party member and UC Santa Cruz professor Angela Davis has written: “Taking into account the structural similarities and profitability of business-government linkages in the realms of military production and public punishment, the expanding penal system can now be characterized as a ‘prison industrial complex’.”

—“Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex,” *ColorLines* (Fall 1998)

Following the Civil War, as we have seen, racist incarceration was used to force freedmen back onto the plantations or into the mines as convict laborers. But to treat today’s prisons as profit centers—when in fact the main activity is enforced inactivity punctuated by grotesque vio-

the industrial reserve army, the greater is official pauperism. *This is the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation.*” [emphasis in original]

Since 2000, the U.S. has lost another five million manufacturing jobs. The existence of a strong, skilled black proletariat is the product of an exceptional conjuncture in American history, and we must do our best to defend and extend it against all the ravages of American capitalism and the treachery of the pro-imperialist union bureaucracy. For black workers remain indispensable to a revolutionary rejuvenation of American labor—and does it need rejuvenating!

### Education and Revolution

A call for the March 4 “Day of Action to Defend Education” asks: “But if there’s money for wars, bank bailouts, and prisons, why is there no money for public education?” In his autobiography, the former slave Frederick Douglass quoted his former master that to educate a man “would forever unfit him to be a slave.” That is why it was a crime punishable by hanging to teach slaves to read or write. Visit inner-city schools today and you wonder if those codes are still in effect. Right now putrescent American capitalism has no need to educate working-class or poor youth; it has no room for those skilled black apprentices that filled the shipyards during

mankind, and its replacement with a centrally planned socialist economy on a global scale. Only that will make accessible the fruits of human culture to be fully utilized for the benefit of humanity at large.

If that seems utopian, look at the Cuban deformed workers state for only a foretaste of what is possible. We stand for the unconditional military defense of

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# Haiti...

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can only be a dagger aimed at the social and national aspirations of the Haitian toiling people. *All U.S./UN troops and police out now!*

In a 1941 article titled “Shall We Campaign for U.S. Government Aid to the USSR?” (*Militant*, 19 July 1941), the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) underlined: “There is a difference between not raising any objection, when a capitalist government sends aid, and *agitating* for such aid. The key to the whole question consists in the understanding that we cannot rely on bourgeois governments to aid our cause.” The SWP was addressing the demand of the Stalinist Communist Party that the U.S. provide aid to the Soviet Union following the June 1941 Nazi invasion amid the Second World War. The Trotskyists opposed all the belligerent imperialist powers in that interimperialist slaughter, while standing for the unconditional military defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state.

But while the circumstances were different than those in Haiti today, the Marxist method outlined by our Trotskyist forebears remains fully valid. To call on the imperialists to provide aid means taking “responsibility for bourgeois governmental policy.” Drawing out the logic of the Stalinists’ position, the SWP article added: “Were we to agitate for aid to the Soviet Union by the Roosevelt govern-

ment, would we then not be compelled to favor convoys to guarantee the arrival of the material shipped to the Soviet Union? Should we then not demand that the waters to Vladivostok be kept open by the U.S. government against Japan?” Indeed, the Stalinists’ call for imperialist aid was part and parcel of their support to the “democratic” imperialists in World War II.

In Haiti today, the U.S. imperialists have basically achieved their purpose, including a blunt reassertion to the rest of the world, most notably French imperialism, that the Caribbean remains an “American lake.” They are patting themselves on the back for a job well done as they wind down their military deployment in Haiti to 8,000 soldiers in order to direct troops back to where the Pentagon needs them—as part of the armies of occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the same time, some 9,000 UN troops and 3,600 UN cops are to occupy Haiti. The U.S. and other imperialist military forces in the Caribbean are a particular threat to the Cuban bureaucratically deformed workers state. *Defend Cuba! U.S. out of Guantánamo! All U.S. troops and bases out of Puerto Rico!*

Meanwhile, the Obama administration’s vaunted offer of temporary legal status for undocumented Haitian immigrants in the U.S. has been shown to be the sham that it is, as only a small percentage of these immigrants has been able to afford the \$500 application fees for the legal permits. Anybody who has made it to the U.S. should have the right to stay and work here. *Down with the racist ban on*

*Haitian refugees! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*

The notion purveyed by reformists like the ISO and WWP that U.S. imperialism can be cajoled or pressured into serving the needs of the oppressed, rather than its own class interests, shows boundless illusions in the good offices of the rapacious American ruling class. Such illusion-mongering goes hand in hand with fawning over Third World populist nationalists like Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Préval’s mentor, who was restored to the presidential palace in Port-au-Prince in 1994 by a U.S. invasion force after being ousted by a (U.S.-backed) military coup. Aristide was then subsequently whisked away by the U.S. in 2004.

Taking up the left flank of the reformists is the centrist Internationalist Group (IG). In a 20 January article, the IG grotesquely and cynically claimed that the earthquake provided an opening for socialist revolution in Haiti, “particularly at present where the machinery of the capitalist state is largely reduced to rubble and a few marauding bands of police.” As we wrote in response in WV No. 951, “not only is the state ‘largely reduced to rubble,’ but so is the society as a whole,” underlining that “there is a military power in Haiti that is far from ‘reduced to rubble,’ and it’s U.S. imperialism.” Indeed, the only force that seemed to share the IG’s delusions of an uprising in Haiti after the quake was the Pentagon.

Yet the IG denounced us as “support-

ing imperialism” because we didn’t call for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops. As we stated, in a situation where there were no good alternatives, we were “not going to call for an end to such aid as the desperate Haitian masses can get their hands on.” That the IG conjured up fantasies of a workers uprising was little more than an effort to give a phony “revolutionary” veneer to Haitian populists and others who used the earthquake to reinforce the illusions of the Haitian masses in Aristide (see “Haiti: IG Conjures Up Revolution Amid the Rubble,” WV No. 952, 12 February).

The desperate conditions of Haiti cannot be resolved within Haiti. To end the grinding poverty and degradation of the Haitian people, the imperialist system must be swept away through international socialist revolution. What there is of a working class in Haiti has neither the social weight nor industrial concentration to effect a revolutionary transformation of that society. But in the Dominican Republic, Canada and the U.S. there are hundreds of thousands of Haitian workers who can play a vital role in the struggle for socialist revolution. As we stressed in WV No. 951: “The key to the liberation of Haiti lies in proletarian revolution throughout the hemisphere, in which the mobilization of the sizable Haitian proletariat *in the diaspora* can play a key role.... It is only this revolutionary internationalist program that holds out any genuine perspective for the liberation of the Haitian masses.” ■

# New Orleans...

(continued from page 3)

have the security until you have the jail.” One ended up in Camp Greyhound by simply being “foreign” (Zeitoun was originally from Syria), black or in the wrong place at the wrong time. In *Zeitoun*, Eggers writes:

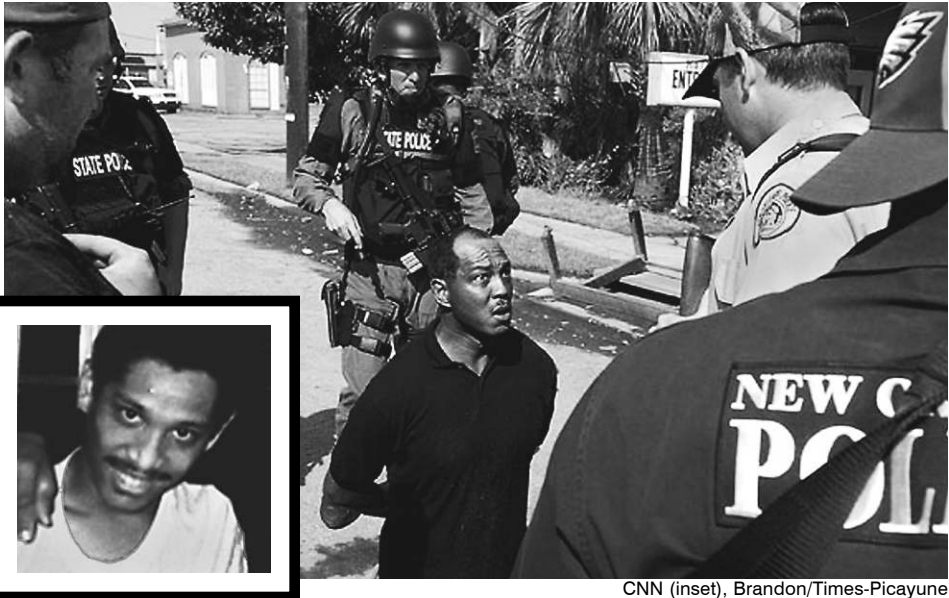
“One man said he was a sanitation worker from Houston. His company had been contracted shortly after the storm to come in and begin the cleanup. One morning he was walking from the hotel to his truck when a National Guard truck pulled up. He was arrested on the spot, and brought to Camp Greyhound.... He usually picked up garbage in Houston, but after the hurricane, his supervisor said they had taken a contract in New Orleans. This prisoner, thinking it would be interesting to see what had become of the city and wanting to help in its cleanup, went willingly. He was in uniform, and had identification, the keys to his truck, everything. But nothing worked. He was charged with looting and put in the cages behind the bus station.”

## Corruption, Killing and the NOPD

Corruption is almost synonymous with the word Louisiana. It goes back for many decades, possibly to the post-Reconstruction period. The story goes that the night before he was inaugurated as governor, segregationist Jimmie Davis (country singer and author of the song, “You Are My Sunshine”) was asked by a reporter: “What is going to be the first thing that you do as governor?” Davis’s reply was, “Steal!” Davis was responsible for building the “Sunshine Bridge,” which went across the Mississippi from nowhere to nowhere—when first constructed, the south end of the bridge emptied into a swamp.

Corruption is also synonymous with the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD)—as is daily murderous repression of the black population. Now under federal investigation is the infamous Danziger Bridge incident in which the NOPD killed two black people, one a mentally retarded man who was shot in the back. There is the burned-out car containing the body of Henry Glover, found behind a police station. This was not investigated until the *Nation* broke the story online in December 2008—and there are many, many more post-Katrina atrocities still coming to light.

For a sample of the death squads run by the NOPD in the pre-Katrina period you can read *Workers Vanguard* articles going back decades. “New Orleans Cop



CNN (inset), Brandon/Times-Picayune

**4 September 2005: Louisiana state police and New Orleans cops arrest Lance Madison at Danziger Bridge, as he and others tried to cross the bridge after Hurricane Katrina. That day, the cops killed two people on the bridge, one of them Lance’s brother, Ronald Madison (inset), a mentally disabled man.**

Death Squad” (WV No. 322, 28 January 1983) recounted the story of the 1980 execution-style slaying of four black people in the ghetto of Algiers, the subject of an exposé on *60 Minutes*. A decade later, another article with the same headline (WV No. 615, 27 January 1995) detailed the execution of Kim Marie Groves, who had filed a brutality complaint against NOPD cops, an execution NOPD cop Len Davis was charged with ordering.

But this is not simply about the local cops, who are plenty brutal, murderous and corrupt. Their mission is to repress blacks and labor. A few years ago as sanitation workers were shutting down Mardi Gras, they were attacked by the cops. Though the cops’ class hatred is up-front, their corruption can sometimes get in the way. More recently, the cops attacked unionized transit workers of the Amalgamated Transit Union. This was an embarrassment, as the *New York Times* (9 October 2009) reported: “Contentious episodes have kept the department in litigation, including a 2008 racially charged bar brawl involving off-duty police officers and transit workers; the integrity bureau reported that officers tried to cover up the facts of the brawl, and some officers were fired.”

The NOPD is so corrupt and therefore so little trusted by the bourgeoisie that Blackwater and other private mercenary groups resembling the Freikorps murderers of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were brought in to patrol New

Orleans streets. Their self-described mission was “securing neighborhoods” and “confronting criminals.” These mercenaries were brought in by Homeland Security and deputized by then-governor Kathleen Blanco. Or they were hired by the wealthy Bourbons. F. Patrick Quinn III hired them to guard his \$3 million private estate and his luxury hotels—hotels that were considered for contracts for housing FEMA

workers (see “Blackwater Down,” *Nation*, 10 October 2005). One reporter actually saw drones flying overhead. Blackwater frequently operates and loads armed drones in Afghanistan for the U.S. government. Meanwhile, some local cops were out “liberating” Cadillacs from a local dealership.

The idea of private military security fits right in with the free market concept, though even some “free marketeers” like the cultish Ayn Rand hesitate. As a *New Yorker* (9 November 2009) article on Rand noted: “Allowance is made for the state to run an army, a police force, and courts, but that’s it.” That *is* the core of the state, whether its functions are partially “outsourced” or not. As we wrote in “‘War on Terror’: Torture, Spying, Imperialist Butchery” (WV No. 890, 13 April 2007):

“The veneer of ‘democracy’ is meant to cover the reality of the capitalist state—with its cops, courts, prisons and army—as an apparatus of violence designed to protect capitalist profits and rule against the exploited and the oppressed. This murderous apparatus has been greatly bolstered by the ‘war on terror.’ But as sinister as the new measures are, what the government is actually able to get away with will ultimately be determined by the level of social struggle.”

It will take a proletarian socialist revolution to end the savage exploitation and brutal racial oppression of capitalist class rule and the barbarism through which it is enforced. Our purpose is to build the workers party necessary to lead the proletariat in that struggle. ■

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## For Free, Quality, Integrated Education for All!

We print below, slightly edited for publication, the speech given by a Spartacus Youth Club spokesman at the March 4 Day of Action to Defend Public Education protest at the University of California, Los Angeles.

As communists, we in the Spartacus Youth Club understand that the fight against racist reaction on campus must be linked to the fight for free, quality, integrated education for all. For open admissions! No tuition! Racial oppression and all forms of oppression are endemic to the capitalist system. Only through the struggle to get rid of this system and replace it with a socialist, egalitarian social order can the

material roots of oppression be eliminated. The racist lynch rope provocations sprouting across the UCs are a result of the racist purge of the universities. They demonstrate that Obama's so-called "end of racism" is a cruel lie. We say: **Finish the Civil War! For black liberation through socialist revolution!**

The main obstacle to this struggle is the illusion promoted by liberals, black politicians, trade-union misleaders and reformist socialists like the Revolutionary Communist Party that the capitalist system can be reformed to serve the interests of working people and the oppressed. Obama is the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism, director

of mass murder in Afghanistan and Iraq, and yet Progressive Labor Party worked in his campaign. We say: **Break with the Democrats! For a revolutionary workers party that fights for socialist revolution!**

What is needed here are not appeals to the campus administration, but militant joint student-worker protest to beat back the racists and the bigots. The UC Regents are the capitalist watchdogs over the university, yet liberal groups like Student Worker Front and BAMN promote them as allies. We say: **Abolish the Board of Regents! For student/worker control of the universities!** We oppose demands on the campus admin-

istration and the capitalist state to police "hate crimes" because these foster illusions in the racist cops and courts and bolster their repressive power. Such measures have historically been used against leftists, black militants and student radicals.

In the depths of the "Great Recession" students need to realize that only the multiracial working class, including immigrants and blacks, has the social power and the interest to fight this capitalist system. The Spartacus Youth Club seeks to win students to the working-class struggle against capital, based on the full program of revolutionary Marxism.



Young Spartacus

**Spartacus Youth Club demands "Break with the Democrats!" at March 4 demonstration at the University of California, Los Angeles.**

## San Diego...

(continued from page 12)

to protest cuts, layoffs, fee hikes and the shrinking numbers of blacks and minority students on the campuses (see "Protests against Education Cuts and Fee Hikes Sweep California," WV No. 950, 15 January). In California, the March 4 demonstrations brought out tens of thousands of university and high school students, as well as multiracial trade-union contingents of teachers and campus and public workers. But the demonstrations were organized on the basis of begging the bourgeois rulers to reorganize their priorities to benefit the oppressed. This comes down to pitting the workers and the oppressed against each other for crumbs from the capitalists—as shown when Schwarzenegger came out against any further cuts in funding for education, but instead chopped nearly half a billion dollars more in services for the poor, dis-

abled and elderly in line-item vetoes!

Grotesquely playing into the capitalists' divide-and-rule scheme, the chair of UCLA's Afrikan Student Union demanded the firing of the UCSD library staff after the noose was found. Seeking to work together with the same administration overseeing the gutting of education and the purging of black and minority students, the UCSD BSU co-issued a "joint statement" with the campus administration for the March 4 Day of Action proclaiming, "The UC San Diego administration and students have engaged in a productive wide-ranging conversation about how our common goals can be reached...there is a commitment from all participants to work together." The joint statement's recommendations centered on funding BSU-supported programs "to promote diversity on campus." In the context of the destruction of many of the gains of the civil rights movement, many liberal activists today have abandoned even talk of black equality in favor of the tokenistic rhetoric of "diversity."

In an open letter posted on their Web site, By Any Means Necessary (BAMN) extended an invitation to the UCSD BSU to join them begging on their knees to the Board of Regents to "follow California Attorney General Jerry Brown's lead by stating as their position in the federal court that Proposition 209 is unconstitutional and discriminatory." (Brown, a Democrat, is now running for governor.) Far from offering a perspective of struggle independent of the capitalists, BAMN and other liberals seek to channel the youthful fighters for black rights who are turning out for these protests into the dead end of reliance on the Democratic Party, the Supreme Court, the campus administration and other institutions of racist capitalist rule.

We defend affirmative action in university admissions because it has meant gains, however minimal, against the inherent race and class bias in higher education under capitalism. But, as we asserted against BAMN in an article written before

the 2003 Supreme Court decision against the University of Michigan's affirmative action program:

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

—"Free, Quality, Integrated Education for All!" WV No. 801, 11 April 2003

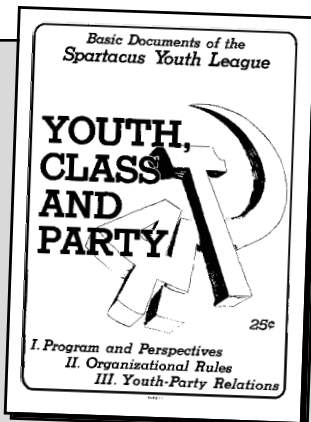
When it comes to the education of those they exploit, the capitalist rulers expend only what they need to maintain a minimally educated workforce. In the short term, the capitalists may give sops to head off social struggle, but under capitalism these reforms can be and usually are reversed. And if educating the sons and daughters of white workers

has increasingly become an expendable overhead, the children of impoverished black people are increasingly deemed an expendable population by America's rulers. Today the bourgeoisie questions "wasting money" to keep the black ghetto poor alive, much less educate them.

Full political, social and economic equality for the black masses requires a workers revolution to rip the economy out of the hands of the racist capitalist rulers and reorganize society on a socialist basis, where production is for human need, not profit. Only through the full integration of black people into an egalitarian socialist society will it be possible to eliminate the material roots of black oppression. The Spartacus Youth Club fights for workers rule, where everyone's labor and talents will be needed to build a socialist world of abundance and equality, and where education for all will be a natural part of this collective labor. Join us in this fight! ■



**Little Rock, Arkansas, 1957: Elizabeth Eckford braves racist mob to attend Central High School. Decades after the civil rights movement, public education is increasingly segregated.**



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## Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

### BAY AREA

**Thursday, April 8, 6:30 p.m.**  
**Proletarian State Power Versus Bourgeois Democracy**  
San Francisco State University  
Cesar Chavez Student Center  
Rosa Parks E  
Information and readings: (510) 839-0851  
sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net

### NEW YORK CITY

**Wednesday, April 14, 7:30 p.m.**  
**Imperialism and War: The Epoch of Capitalist Decay**  
Hunter College  
West Building, Room 509C  
(No. 6 train to 68th St.-Hunter College)  
Information and readings: (212) 267-1025  
nysl@tiac.net

### CHICAGO

**Wednesday, March 31, 5:30 p.m.**  
**The Fight for a Multiracial Revolutionary Workers Party: Finish the Civil War! For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!**  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
Student Center East  
Prairie Room  
750 S. Halsted Street  
(Exit Halsted Street at UIC-Halsted stop on CTA Blue Line)  
Information and readings: (312) 563-0441  
chicagosyc@sbcglobal.net

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# WORKERS VANGUARD

## All U.S./UN Troops Out of Haiti Now!

It is now more than two months since Haiti was struck by the earthquake that left over 200,000 of its nine million people dead. The quake has multiplied the desperate conditions of what was already the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Even before the devastation wreaked by it, nearly one out of every two Haitians had no regular access to drinking water and more than half the population survived on less than one dollar a day. Two centuries of looting by the U.S. and France and repeated American invasions to install and prop up brutal tinpot dictatorships had left the populace utterly exposed to the ravages of this natural disaster and totally reliant on outside aid. The quisling state administration of President René Préval—a fig leaf for a United Nations occupation regime—installed in 2006 at U.S. imperialism’s behest, collapsed as rapidly as did the tin shacks housing much of the population.

As part of a “relief effort,” the Obama administration dispatched some 20,000 troops and a flotilla of naval vessels to Haiti, not least in order to prevent Haitians from fleeing to the U.S. and to shore up the UN occupation force, which itself was dam-

aged by the quake. Some 2,000 additional UN troops have been sent to the country, as well as an additional 1,500 UN police.

In response to the quake, a range of pseudo-socialist groups in the U.S. rushed to beg the American imperialists to do right by the Haitian people and send “aid not troops.” In this, groups like the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and Workers World Party (WWP) served only to aid Democrat Obama, whose election they had hailed, in providing a “humanitarian” facelift for blood-drenched U.S. imperialism. The notion that the imperialist powers that have laid waste to this small black country will serve the interests of the Haitian masses is a sick joke.

As we made clear in our article, “Haiti Earthquake Horror: Imperialism, Racism and Starvation” (WV No. 951, 29 January), while we were not for the U.S. military going into Haiti, neither were we going to demand, in the immediate aftermath of that horrific natural disaster, the immediate withdrawal of any forces that were supplying such aid as was reaching the Haitian masses. But the continued presence of any U.S. or UN military forces

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Port-au-Prince: U.S. troops land on lawn of presidential palace, January 19.

## Lynch Rope Provocation at UC San Diego

### Young Spartacus

In the last two months, black students at the University of California San Diego (UCSD) have been subjected to a barrage of racist provocations. In February, the UCSD PIKE fraternity sponsored a “Compton Cookout” mocking Black History Month and promising guests a taste of “life in the ghetto.” Partygoers were urged to dress as ghetto stereotypes and promised there would be chicken, watermelon and malt liquor. Then angry black students were grotesquely denounced on UCSD Student Run Television as “ungrateful n----rs.” When Black Student Union (BSU) members made a search of the studio for the tape, now missing, they found instead a cardboard sign reading “Compton Lynching.” This outrage was followed by the hanging of a lynch rope, the symbol of Ku Klux Klan murderous race terror, from a campus library light fixture.

An Afghan student who saw the hanging noose correctly concluded, “I just took that noose as an attack on all of us.” Other UC students spoke of immigrant-bashing “border parties” that require attendees to hop a fence to gain admittance. That this was defended as just good fun reflects the pervasiveness of racist reaction. Meanwhile, the head of the UCSD College Republicans, who absurdly denounced UCSD as an “extreme leftist” school, announced that “subsequent protests could deepen racial separation.” This

is the old Jim Crow logic, where it’s not the racists but those who protest against racist treatment who are portrayed as threatening the racial “harmony” of a society founded on the bedrock of black oppression. Historically, every struggle for black equality has raised the spectre of communism.

In that vein, Governor Schwarzenegger, an admirer of the racist border vigilante Minutemen, went out of his way to condemn eleven students who were arrested protesting in defense of the besieged Palestinians at an appearance of the Israeli

ambassador at UC Irvine in early February. The “Governator” obscenely equated them with UC San Diego racists and swastika-carving vandals of UC Davis. We say: Hands off the Irvine 11! Defend the Palestinians!

The campus racists have been emboldened by the attacks of the capitalist rulers, both Democrats and Republicans, on the measures even minimally addressing discrimination against black youth. The elimination of affirmative action programs across the country, together with skyrocketing tuition and fee costs, has

meant a racist purge of black students from the universities. In 1996, California Proposition 209 banned affirmative action programs and slashed financial aid and remedial and counseling programs, with the result that today black students represent only **3.8 percent** of the student body in the University of California system! In the context of the current economic crisis, funding for public education has been cut to the bone in California, with programs closed, fees hiked and teachers laid off. Freshman class size at the California State Universities and community colleges, where there was proportionally higher black and minority enrollment, has been slashed, restricting access to education even further for working people and the poor.

The racist provocations sparked protests and occupations at UC San Diego and other UC campuses in the weeks leading up to the March 4 “Strike and Day of Action to Defend Public Education” called

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Black Student Union-organized protest against racist outrages at University of California, San Diego, February 24.

## Down With the Racist Purge of the Universities!