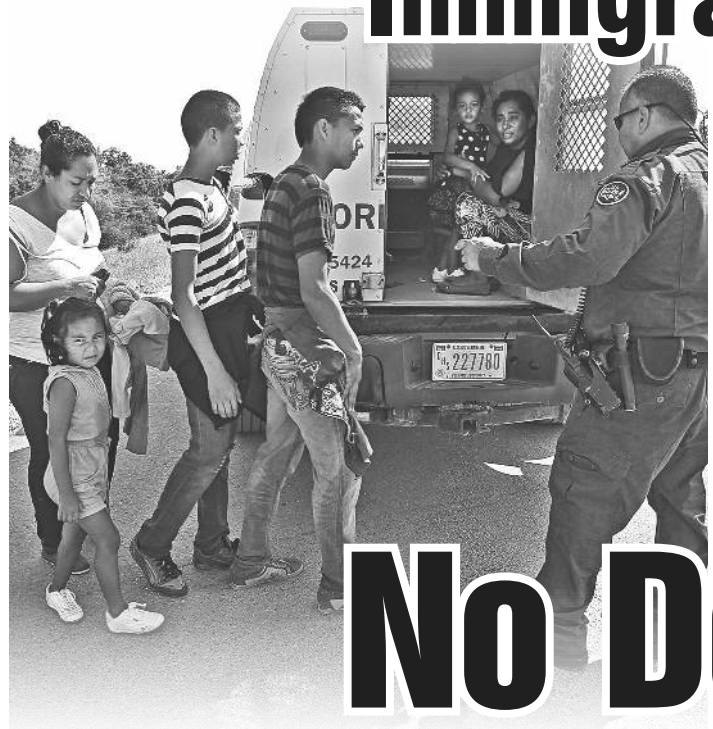


## Obama, Congress Squabble Over Immigration Reform Scam



San Antonio Express-News/ZUMA (left); KGBT

# No Deportations! Full Citizenship Rights!

While the vast majority of undocumented immigrants continue to live in misery under an ever-present threat of imprisonment and deportation, the White House and prominent Republicans are wrangling over the executive actions on immigration policy announced in November by the president. In the latest scene in Washington's political theater, Congressional Republicans have blustered about cutting off funding to the entire Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in order to spike Obama's proposal to provide more immigrants temporary relief

**Left: U.S. Border Patrol rounds up immigrants, Texas, 2014. Right: Mass uprising of immigrants protesting wretched conditions at Willacy County Correctional Center was suppressed by police, February 20.**

from deportation. But the government was never about to disrupt the core activities of the DHS, which include securing the borders and enforcing the customs and immigration laws. With both sides agreeing on the need to put immigrants fully under the thumb of the capitalist state, the debate is over the best mix of repression and exploitation to advance the interests of the bourgeoisie as a whole.

Deporter-in-Chief Barack Obama has done his part to terrorize immigrants, having overseen the deportation of over two million people, more than any other president. The White House brags that there are 3,000 additional border agents patrolling the Southwest today compared to 2008, with border fencing and surveillance systems having doubled over the same period. Obama's executive actions seek to further

beef up border security. Meanwhile, the president has requested additional funding to confine more immigrants in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centers than the daily quota of 34,000 mandated by Congress.

Last summer, after the arrival of thousands upon thousands fleeing horrific violence and grinding poverty in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, ICE revived its policy of locking up women and children seeking asylum. The horrendous conditions in those countries are largely

*continued on page 11*

## Pasco, Washington

# Mexican Worker Shot Dead by Cops

Antonio Zambrano-Montes, a 35-year-old Mexican immigrant from Michoacán, had his hands up. Fired at 17 times, he was killed by police in Pasco, Washington, on February 10. Zambrano had recently lost his job as a farmworker because he fell off a ladder and broke both wrists. He lived in a shelter after having lost his home in a fire, left with nothing. Like many who risk their lives to escape the deplorable conditions imposed on their home countries by U.S. imperialism and its local lackeys, Zambrano had come to *El Norte* looking for work. He ended up in the fields owned by the American capitalists who make staggering profits from the exploitation of cheap immigrant labor.

The cop killing of Zambrano was filmed. The same was true for Eric Garner in New York as well as a homeless man known as "Africa" in Los Angeles last



Bose/NY Times/Redux

**Pasco, February 14: Protesters carry posters of Antonio Zambrano-Montes, killed by cops four days earlier.**

week, both casualties of the daily police violence meted out to black people in cities across the country. For allegedly throwing rocks, Zambrano was chased across a busy intersection, shot from behind and then executed in cold blood on the sidewalk. As always, bourgeois mouthpieces smeared the victim to make

it appear that he deserved what he got. Many activists see the parallels between the killings of Zambrano and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, who were both vilified by authorities after the police had blown them away and left their lifeless bodies lying on the ground.

Around 1,000 people demonstrated

against police brutality in Pasco on February 14. We solidarize with their anger and desire to end this raw terror. However, the bitter truth is that the only way to eliminate police brutality is to do away with the system of racist American capitalism, for which the thugs in blue are the front line of defense.

Some signs at the Pasco demonstration included calls for the police to protect, not kill, while others read: "Buenos policías, los respetamos" (Good cops, we respect you). But the very job of the police is to protect the property and profits of the capitalist class, and to violently repress and intimidate workers, the oppressed and those at the bottom of society. By the lights of the capitalist state, which is "an organ of class domination, an organ of oppression of one class by another."

*continued on page 11*



# In Honor of International Women's Day

The Russian Revolution of October 1917 was a beacon of liberation for the working and impoverished masses worldwide. At a time when women in the most democratic capitalist countries were denied even the right to vote, the young Soviet workers state undertook pioneering efforts toward the liberation of women.

Although many of the advances of the Revolution were reversed under the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which usurped political power from the proletariat in 1923-24, the central gains of the revolution, embodied in the overthrow of capitalist property relations and the establishment of a planned economy, remained. Before capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92, women in the Soviet Union enjoyed many advantages, such as state-supported childcare institutions, full abortion rights, access to a wide range of trades and professions and a large degree of economic equality with their male co-workers—in short, a status in some ways far in advance of capitalist societies.

To this day, millions of women in the advanced capitalist countries endure lives of misery and drudgery. In the U.S., despite formal legal equality, abortion rights are under sustained attack and quality childcare is scarce and costly. To end women's oppression, which is rooted in the institution of the family, will require building a socialist society of material abundance, in which child rearing and other functions now performed by the family will be the responsibility of society as a whole. The struggle for women's liberation is inseparable from the fight for international workers revolution.

We reprint below a 1921 address given by Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin to mark the March 8 workers holiday, International Women's Day.

## “International Working Women's Day” 4 March 1921

The gist of Bolshevism and the Russian October Revolution is getting into politics the very people who were most oppressed under capitalism. They were downtrodden, cheated and robbed by the capitalists, both under the monarchy and in the bourgeois-democratic republics. So long as the land and the factories were privately owned this oppression and deceit and the plunder of the people's labour by the capitalists were inevitable.

The essence of Bolshevism and the Soviet power is to expose the falsehood and mummery of bourgeois democracy, to abolish the private ownership of land and the factories and concentrate all state power in the hands of the working and exploited masses. They, these masses, get hold of politics, that is, of the business of building the new society. This is no easy task: the masses are downtrodden



VAAP

**Women workers demonstrate in Petrograd, March 1917. Banner reads: “If Women Are Slaves There Can Be No Freedom—Long Live Women's Equality.” “Women and Revolution” article published in *Spartacist* No. 59 (Spring 2006); order from Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116 (\$1.50).**

and oppressed by capitalism, but there is no other way—and there can be no other way—out of the wage-slavery and bondage of capitalism.

But you cannot draw the masses into politics without drawing in the women as well. For under capitalism the female half of the human race is doubly oppressed. The working woman and the peasant woman are oppressed by capital, but over and above that, even in the most democratic of the bourgeois republics, they remain, firstly, deprived of some rights because the law does not give them equality with men; and secondly—and this is the main thing—they remain in “household bondage,” they continue to be “household slaves,” for they are overburdened with the drudgery of the most squalid, backbreaking and stultifying toil in the kitchen and the family household.

No party or revolution in the world has ever dreamed of striking so deep at the roots of the oppression and inequality of women as the Soviet, Bolshevik revolution is doing. Over here, in Soviet Russia, no trace is left of any inequality between men and women under the law. The Soviet power has eliminated all there was of the especially disgusting, base and hypocritical inequality in the laws on marriage and the family and inequality in respect of children.

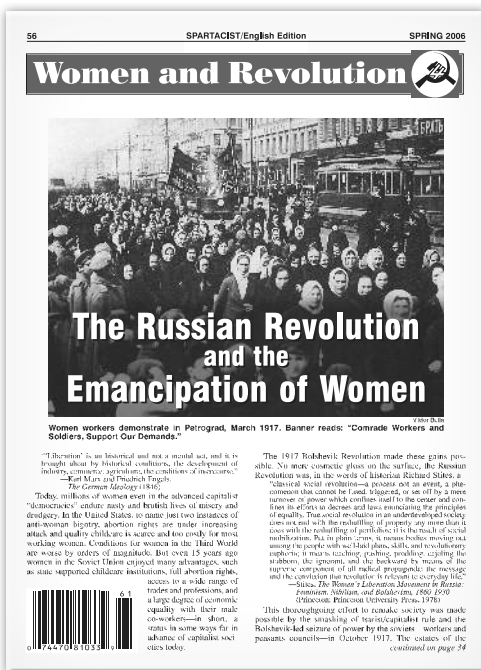
This is only the first step in the liberation of woman. But none of the bourgeois republics, including the most democratic, has dared to take even this first step. The reason is awe of “sacrosanct private property.”

The second and most important step is the abolition of the private ownership of land and the factories. This and this

alone opens up the way towards a complete and actual emancipation of woman, her liberation from “household bondage” through transition from petty individual housekeeping to large-scale socialised domestic services.

This transition is a difficult one, because it involves the remoulding of the most deep-rooted, inveterate, hidebound and rigid “order” (indecent and barbarity would be nearer the truth). But the transition has been started, the thing has been set in motion, we have taken the new path.

And so on this international working women's day countless meetings of working women in all countries of the world will send greetings to Soviet Russia, which has been the first to tackle this unparalleled and incredibly hard but great task, a task that is universally great and truly liberatory. There will be bracing calls not to lose heart in face of the fierce



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Our comrade Jeff Higgins, for many years a powerful spokesman for the Labor Black League for Social Defense, died in his sleep in the second week of February. He was 65 years old. We share the sorrow and tremendous sense of loss with his mother, sisters and the rest of his family.

Jeff was the oldest son of a black working-class family in Pasadena, California, where racial segregation rivaled the Jim Crow South. He grew up amid the battles of the civil rights movement and the explosions of ghetto anger against cop terror. Influenced by the Black Panther Party's militant black nationalism and their eclectic conceptions of "Marxism-Leninism," Jeff fought for black studies programs and protested against U.S. imperialism's dirty war in Vietnam as a student at the University of California at Riverside.

Don Alexander, a longtime leading cadre of the Spartacist League/U.S., described the bond he forged with Jeff at UC Riverside as the two black campus radicals "fought to become communists." Both joined the campus Young Socialist Alliance (YSA), youth group of the reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The small but highly political branch was dissolved after it led a revolt against the SWP having dropped its call for "free abortion on demand" in order to placate bourgeois feminists who deemed the slogan far too radical.

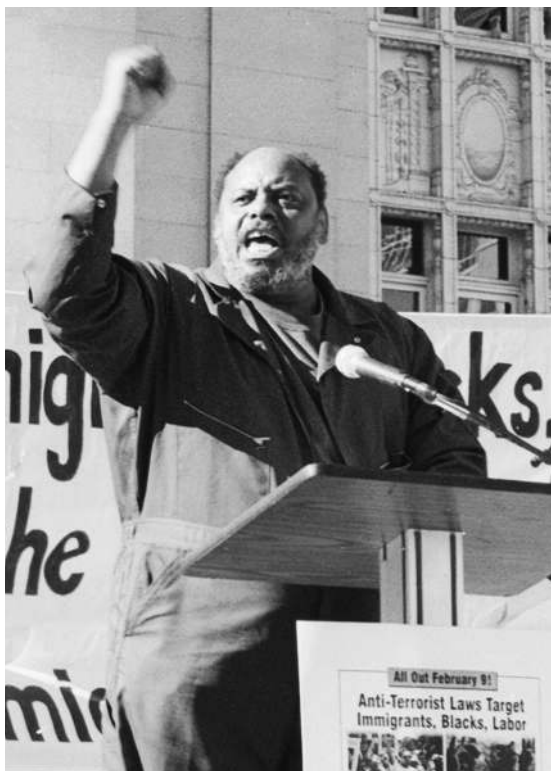
In his application for membership in the Spartacist League/U.S., Jeff wrote: "One of the basic motivations throughout my political development was to construct an understanding of the tasks posed by the special oppression of blacks" and "to do this on the basis of a Marxist world view." He rejected the SWP's simultaneous pandering to black cultural nationalists and to the liberal NAACP as an obstacle to the fight for black liberation. Recalling Jeff's contempt for the cultural nationalists—who strutted around in their dashikis and "struggle boots," baiting the two for associating with white radicals—Don noted, "It didn't escape our notice that these poverty pimps were tolerated by the bourgeoisie while the Panthers were being killed."

The demise of the Panthers under the hammer blows of state repression and internal splits ushered in a wave of demoralization among many black radicals. But, together with their experience in the YSA, it propelled both Jeff and Don to hit the books and study the writings and history of the Marxist movement. They began investigating other organizations that claimed to uphold the revolutionary internationalist program of Trotskyism. Moving to the Bay Area in 1974, they sought out the Spartacist League. Through a process of political discussion and struggle, they were won to the understanding that the only road to black freedom lies in the united class struggle of black and white workers led by a multiracial vanguard party to shatter the system of racist American capitalism through socialist revolution. In 1977, Jeff submitted his membership application.

Jeff began an apprentice program to become a unionized electrician and fought against great odds to get his journeyman's papers. Confronted with the prejudices of the building trades unions, which were mostly lily-white, male job trusts, Jeff withstood a level of anti-black racism that might have broken many. In 1985, the administration of San Francisco General Hospital drew up plans to build a separate toilet facility to ensure that Jeff, the only black electrician on the job, would not use the same facilities as white carpenters and painters. The Bay Area LBL organized a 60-strong protest, which drew more than a dozen other hospital workers on the receiving end of racist treatment by the administration, to demand: "Down with Jim Crow—No to White-Only Toilets!" When addressing the rally, which took place at a time of rising anti-apartheid protest, Jeff observed: "They don't want to use the same bathrooms as a black man.... This is South Africa right here in San Francisco."

Jeff was unable to maintain the discipline and commitments of party membership. But his programmatic convictions never wavered. As a member of the LBL, he played a leadership role in the group and was more often than not a spokesman at our anti-racist and other actions. He was with us in April 1984 when Richard Bradley, a supporter of the Spartacist League, scaled a flagpole in S.F.'s Civic Center plaza to tear down the Confederate flag. A photo in *Workers Vanguard* shows Jeff doing the honor of burning the hated "stars and bars" banner

# Jeff Higgins



WV Photo



## 1949-2015

of slavery and Klan terror. After then-S.F. Democratic mayor "Dixie Diane" Feinstein put the flag back up, we took it down again. When Bradley was put on trial on charges of vandalism, Jeff was a witness for his defense.

In 1993, when stories of the Jim Crow treatment of black people at Denny's restaurants hit the press, Jeff pushed for the LBL to mobilize nationwide protests. Hearing that there was some concern that holding these protests on the July 4 weekend would look "patriotic," Jeff pointed to the 1852 speech by Frederick Douglass on "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro":

"What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to Him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages."

Douglass' speech became part of our early efforts to mobilize for these protests, which drew hundreds of people from coast to coast, including support from several multiracial unions.

In January 1994, Jeff was the LBL speaker at our mobilization to stop a racist provocation by the KKK on the MLK holiday weekend in Springfield, Illinois. Covered in snow and buffeted by subzero temperatures, Jeff captured our perspective of "black and red" with his usual eloquence:

"What frightens America's capitalist rulers most is militant, integrated working-class struggle, black and white together, organized and disciplined, independent of the bosses' political machine and their waterboys in the trade-union bureaucracy. The only road open to real black freedom is in the building of a workers state—the organization of an egalitarian socialist society where workers of all races directly share in, and determine to what use is put, the wealth which their sweat and sacrifices create!"

The many comrades who witnessed him stir a crowd all recall Jeff's ability to engage by conveying both his hatred of black oppression and his satisfaction in fighting it. This included the fight to free former Panthers like Geronimo Pratt and Mumia Abu-

Jamal, who were framed up and imprisoned for the very courage and militancy that had inspired Jeff in his youth. Jeff's talents were also on display as chair of the LBL-initiated 2002 rally in Oakland where for the first time organized labor was mobilized in defense of its immigrant brothers and sisters targeted under the "war on terror."

Defiant and proud, Jeff had a heart as big as his build and a laugh to match. His anger fueled his ability to survive and fight but it also led to some wrong turns in his life. He had an extensive library and was a voracious reader hungry for knowledge, understanding the importance of studying the class battles of the past to apply the lessons to the present. Jeff's work on party facilities was a testament to his skill as an electrician and painstaking attention to detail. He had more than his share of painful losses, particularly the 1992 murder of his then-companion Martha Phillips in Moscow, where she was a leader in the International Communist League's fight to reimplant the program of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party against the drive to counterrevolution that destroyed the former Soviet Union.

In 2012, Jeff had a near date with death from meningitis, which he survived not least due to the care and attention of his companion at the time, Margaret. But he continued to suffer from many of the diseases that so disproportionately afflict black men in this racist society. Not long before he died, Jeff had one of his regular phone calls with former Spartacist League National Chairman Jim Robertson, who was among his closest friends. Jeff told Jim that he was doing well, reading a lot, pursuing his piano lessons, getting somewhat out and about and feeling that he had the financial capacity to survive. Thus, his comrades, family and friends can take some solace in that he died feeling relatively content with his life.

We hope that some of the current generation of black youth animated by the fight against cop terror might learn from Jeff's life and the process he went through to become a communist. Even after he was no longer a party member, Jeff remained part of our common movement for decades, and we always knew he would be there with us when the bugle blew.

The concluding words of Richard Wright's poem "I've Seen Black Hands" are a fitting tribute:

"I am black and I have seen black hands  
Raised in fists of revolt, side by side with the white  
fists of white workers,  
And some day—and it is only this which sustains me—  
Some day there shall be millions and millions of  
them,  
On some red day in a burst of fists on a new horizon!"



WV Photo

**San Francisco, 15 April 1984: Jeff speaking as Confederate flag burns after Spartacist supporters tore down banner of slavery and Klan terror at Civic Center.**



# Malcolm X: Courageous Fighter for Black Liberation

February 21 marked the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X at Harlem's Audubon Ballroom. We honor Malcolm for his intransigent fight for black freedom, which inspired young militants for years to come. Imprisoned as a petty street hustler in 1946, Malcolm converted to the Nation of Islam (NOI) behind bars and after his release in 1952 became its most visible and effective spokesman. The NOI under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad had been a small sect combining religious superstition and black separatism. It was Malcolm's eloquence in giving voice to the suffering black masses and his denunciations of the sellout liberal civil rights leaders that propelled the NOI into national prominence. He was also an anti-colonialist as he understood it, drawing inspiration from struggles against Western rule in Africa and Asia.

Despite its verbal militancy, the NOI stood aside from the struggle for civil rights. For Malcolm, who deeply believed its religious ideology, the NOI's abstention increasingly collided with his passionate commitment to fighting white supremacy, racial injustice and hypocrisy. Malcolm was suspended from speaking in public and then purged from the NOI after famously declaring that the 1963 assassination of President Kennedy was a case of the "chickens coming home to roost." Malcolm was relentlessly denounced by NOI leaders, including his former protégé, Louis X (today the reactionary demagogue Louis Farrakhan), who proclaimed Malcolm "worthy of death."

Following his break with the NOI, Malcolm lived barely a year before his murder. Much of this time was spent abroad, including a pilgrimage to Mecca. Although he founded two organizations in rapid succession—Muslim Mosque Inc. and the Organization of Afro-American Unity—they had no real program beyond the eclectic views expressed in his speeches. Our obituary of Malcolm, written by a founding member of the Spartacist tendency, noted:

"When you heard Malcolm speak, even when you heard him say things that were wrong and confusing, you wanted to believe. Malcolm could move men deeply. He was the stuff of which mass leaders are made. Commencing his public life in the context of the apolitical, irrational religiosity and racial mysticism of the Muslim movement, his break

toward politicalness and rationality was slow, painful, and terribly incomplete."

We reprint below excerpts of our article "Malcolm X: Courageous Fighter for Black Liberation," which first appeared in *Young Spartacus* Nos. 115 and 116 (February and March 1984) and was reprinted in *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 2.

\* \* \*

"Malcolm was our manhood, our living black manhood! This was his meaning to his people. And, in honoring him, we honor the best in ourselves...."

—Ossie Davis, 27 February 1965

Nineteen years ago the most admired and respected, the most hated and feared black man of his generation was assassinated while speaking at Harlem's Audubon Ballroom. Lenin once observed that while a revolutionist is alive and fighting, the oppressor class persecutes him, hounds him, vilifies him, circulates the most vile slanders about him. But after he's dead sometimes an effort is made to co-opt his memory, to portray him as a well-meaning, if misguided, do-gooder. The same people who savagely attacked him when alive now mourn him as a "great loss to the movement." Something like this has happened to Malcolm X.

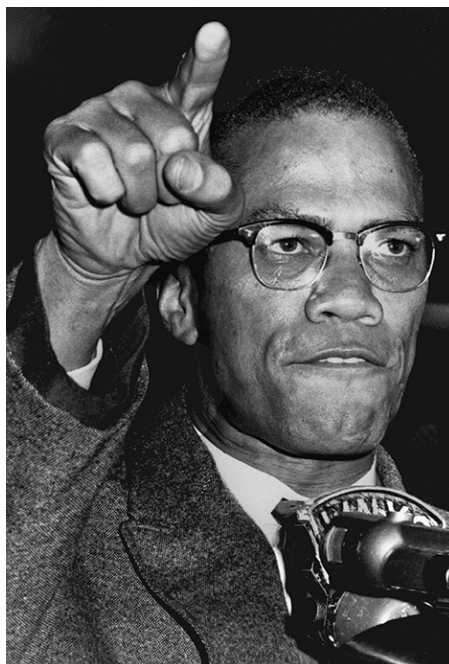
The white rulers of this country hated Malcolm X and responded with undisguised malicious glee to his violent death. The director of the official United States Information Agency, Carl Rowan (who is black) dismissed Malcolm X contemptuously as "an ex-convict, ex-dope peddler who became a racial fanatic." The obituary editorial in the liberal *New York Times* (22 February 1965) vilified him as "an extraordinary and twisted man, turning many true gifts to evil purpose":

"...his ruthless and fanatical belief in violence not only set him apart from the responsible leaders of the civil rights movement and the overwhelming majority of Negroes. It also marked him for notoriety, and for a violent end."

In other words, they think he got what he deserved.

The "responsible" civil rights leaders, needless to say, fed into the ruling class hysteria against Malcolm and the Black Muslims. Martin Luther King declared their views "bordered on a new kind of race hatred and an unconscious advocacy of violence." Malcolm returned the compliment, denouncing King as a "twentieth-century Uncle Tom" whose "primary concern is defending the white man."

Now and for some time past, however, an effort has been made to identify Malcolm with the "respectable" black leaders whom he despised. One of the most despicable of the whole lot is Bayard Rustin, the kind of "socialist" who's apt to be funded by the CIA. In 1963 Rustin was chief organizer for the March on Washington, which Malcolm dubbed "the farce on Washington." Yet not long after Malcolm was killed Rustin claimed, "Malcolm was moving toward the mainstream of the civil rights movement when his life was cut short" (*Down the Line* [1970]). Corpses can't protest. Rustin's line has been taken up by other reformist fakers. At the rally last August 27 (actually a pray-in for the Democratic Party) to commemorate the 1963 March on



May 1963: Malcolm X addresses Harlem rally.

Washington, Sam Marcy's Workers World Party carried a banner depicting King and Malcolm together. And Jack Barnes' Socialist Workers Party ran speeches by Malcolm and MLK in the *Militant*, but *not* Malcolm's scathing attack on the '63 March and King's rose-colored "dreams." Today the *name* of Malcolm X is being prostituted in the service of Democratic Party liberalism, which the *real* Malcolm X fought to the end with all the force of his extraordinary personality.

At a critical moment in contemporary American history Malcolm X was *the* voice of black militancy. His importance and appeal lay, in particular, in his intransigent opposition to the "white man's puppet Negro 'leaders,'" as he called them. Martin Luther King told the world that black people loved the white oppressor and would answer the racists' bombings and beatings with Christian forgiveness. He hoped in this way to shame the Northern white liberal establishment into moving against Southern Jim Crow by demonstrating the moral superiority of black people to the KKK killers and their confederates like George Wallace and Bull Connor. The idea that blacks had to prove to the "good white massa" that they were peaceable folk and god-fearing Christians enraged Malcolm to the depths of his being. It was degrading. Like the sheep reminding the wolf when it's time for dinner. Malcolm X cut through the sanctimonious claptrap and foot-shuffling hypocrisy of the "respectable" black leaders like a sharp knife going through a tub of butter:

"Just as Uncle Tom, back during slavery, used to keep Negroes from resisting the bloodhound or resisting the Ku Klux Klan by teaching them to love their enemies or pray for those who use them spitefully, today Martin Luther King is just a twentieth-century or modern Uncle Tom, or religious Uncle Tom, who is doing the same thing today to keep Negroes defenseless...."

"...but the masses of black people today don't go for what Martin Luther King is putting down."

—Interview in Louis E. Lomax, *When the Word Is Given...* (1963)

Within months after Malcolm spoke these words, Harlem erupted in the first of a series of ghetto explosions which shook white racist America.

Malcolm X was the voice of that angry black ghetto. He spoke for the desperate and angry ghetto masses because he had been one of them. When he spoke of the hell the white oppressor had made for

black people in America, of the torments-psychological as well as material—they suffered every day, he had been there....

## American Workers Revolution Needs Black Leadership

Here we come to the heart of Malcolm X's political weakness, after as well as before he split from the Muslims: his failure to recognize *class struggle* as the progressive motor force of history. Malcolm is often spoken of as a genuine representative of the black masses. This is only partially true. The social world of the unionized black auto worker, steel worker or docker, who recognized common interests and had engaged in common struggles with their white class brothers, was alien to Malcolm's experience and knowledge. He had been a ghetto hustler, then a convict, and then the minister of a separatist religious sect. For Malcolm, the fundamental and overriding division in American society was black and white, not workers and capitalists. He consistently emphasized that blacks in America were outnumbered ten to one. That's why he sought his main allies outside of American society.

True, in the last period of his life he came to recognize there were genuinely anti-racist whites and he welcomed their efforts. But such whites that he encountered were predominantly liberal or radical student-youth, often motivated by guilt over their privileged social position. Clearly reflecting his experiences with these white students (almost all of his speeches to white audiences were on campuses), he viewed overcoming racism among whites primarily in terms of individual enlightenment, not social struggle. Thus, in one of his last interviews (18 January 1965) he stated:

"If the entire American population were properly educated—by properly educated, I mean given a true picture of the history and contributions of the black man—I think many whites would be less racist in their feelings."

—By Any Means Necessary

The struggle against racism in this society is not basically one of proper education but of class conflict. Or rather the proper education comes through class conflict. The labor movement stands as the one racially integrated and powerful force in this society. It is the strategic weight of black workers in the labor movement which gives them the potential leverage to topple the entire racist, capitalist system. Black workers, armed with a revolutionary socialist program and organized by a communist vanguard party, *can lead* backward, even racist white workers in battles against the ruling class.

No one expressed the anger and the anguish of the oppressed black masses better than Malcolm X. As revolutionary socialists committed to the fight for black freedom, to finishing the Civil War once and for all through a third American revolution, we solidarize with Malcolm's stand against the sick racism and racists permeating this society. He was the man who told it like it is: that this system is maintained by and enforces the brutal oppression of 20 million black people, that its so-called democracy is a lie, that the politicians of both parties are con men and enemies of black freedom. His refusal to play the liberals' game, to beg for a little, hat-in-hand and his demand for freedom *now* inspired a generation of black militants. His call upon black America to stand up to the racist powers-that-be and his scathing denunciation of the strategy

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WV Photo

Malcolm X's memory is honored by participant at Spartacist-initiated labor/black anti-Klan mobilization in Washington, D.C., 27 November 1982.

## From Los Angeles to Amherst Zionist Smear Campaign Targets Pro-Palestinian Students

On February 22, vile posters appeared at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) showing two gunmen standing over a hooded prisoner. The posters were labeled with the name Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and the hashtag “#JewHaters.” Similar posters have been put up at campuses around the nation, from the University of Virginia to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst—the work of arch-reactionary provocateur David Horowitz, who has launched a “Jew Hatred on Campus” campaign. The purpose of this campaign, which targets at least 50 schools, is to slander pro-Palestinian groups such as the SJP as somehow supporting or “associated with known terrorist organizations” and furthermore to pressure university administrations to “withdraw campus privileges and university support from them.”

Horowitz, a one-time New Left activist turned rabid conservative hack, has a long track record of seeking to squelch leftist

speech. His 2006 book, *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America*, amounted to a call for witch-hunts and purges of the academy across disciplines as varied as African American studies, law, journalism, and international relations. In 2001, he made a splash by placing advertisements in campus newspapers arguing that black people should be thankful for slavery, then turning on those who condemned his grotesque racism as opponents of “free speech” (see “Racism and Witchhunts On Campus,” WV No. 756, 13 April 2001). His current push is well-timed to intersect the climate of “anti-terror” hysteria the U.S. ruling class has been whipping up to foment support for imperialist atrocities and the further trampling of civil liberties.

To protest Horowitz’s vicious campaign, Spartacist supporters attended a February 24 meeting at UCLA co-sponsored by the SJP and Jewish Voice for Peace that had been called to promote the Boycott,

Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign. Throughout the UC system, SJP groups have been lobbying the UC Regents to adopt such measures by divesting from “companies engaged in the violation of Palestinian rights.” (See “‘Boycott Israel’ Campaign and Illusions in Democratic Imperialism,” WV No. 1045, 2 May 2014).

Solidarizing with the SJP against the Zionist slurs, an SL spokesman said that the posters were “meant to isolate defenders of the Palestinian people, to associate them with terrorism and set them up” for vigilante attacks as well as government repression. We likewise stand for the defense of the oppressed Palestinian people from Israeli state terror. With regard to BDS, our spokesman explained that Marxists oppose the BDS campaign because it sees bloody U.S. imperialism as a lever for pushing Israel into respecting the Palestinians’ right to national self-determination. The speaker added that Washington will support Israel as long as it serves the stra-

tegic interests of U.S. imperialism, regardless of “how many Palestinians are killed, how much of their land is stolen, how many are detained at checkpoints.”

The SJP has called on the UCLA administration and cops to “launch an investigation concerning the creation and distribution of the flyers” and asked the administration to make a statement “condemning the targeting of a student organization with hate-speech.” The representative of the capitalist class on campus, the administration has amply demonstrated its attitude toward pro-Palestinian activists. Three years ago, for example, the UC Irvine administration colluded with the Orange County district attorney to prosecute 11 Muslim students for interrupting a speech by war criminal Michael Oren, then Israeli ambassador to the U.S. (see “Overturn the Convictions of the Irvine 11!” WV No. 995, 3 February 2012). We warn that any appeals to the administration to ban “hate speech” or otherwise police political expression will only empower it in the future to turn on leftists and any perceived opponents of the capitalist status quo.

In contrast to liberal pleas to agents of the class enemy, the SYC stands for mobilizing students, faculty and campus workers to meet Horowitz’s provocations with protest and exposure. When he emerged from his rat hole in 2001 to make an appearance at UC Berkeley as part of a nationwide speaking tour to detestably prettify America’s history of black

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## Join the Spartacus Youth Clubs!

*The Spartacus Youth Clubs intervene into social struggles armed with the revolutionary internationalist program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. We work to mobilize youth in struggle as partisans of the working class, championing the liberation of black people, women and all the oppressed. The SYCs fight to win youth to the perspective of building the Leninist vanguard party that will lead the working class in socialist revolution, laying the basis for a world free of capitalist exploitation and imperialist slaughter.*

### What We Fight For

**1** Mobilize students behind the social power of the multiracial working class! Picket lines mean don’t cross! For union-run minority job recruitment and training programs! For union hiring halls! Down with union-busting “workfare” schemes! Jobs for all at union wages! Organize the unorganized! Unionize the South! Down with multi-tier wages, which pit younger and older workers against each other! Cops, prison guards, security guards out of the unions! Keep the bosses’ government and courts out of the unions!

**2** Black oppression is the bedrock of racist American capitalism. Finish the Civil War! For black liberation through socialist revolution! For mass labor/black mobilizations to stop the fascists and race-terrorists! No to gun control! For the right of armed self-defense! No reliance on the capitalist courts or politicians! Fascist terror is not a question of “free speech.” Stop the Nazis! Stop the KKK!

**3** For free, quality, integrated public education for all! Nationalize the private universities! Down with the racist purge of higher education—defend affirmative action, no to tuition hikes! No to budget cuts! For an end to tracking! For open admissions, no tuition and a state-paid living stipend for all students! Abolish the administration—the universities should be run by those who work and

study there! Down with police occupation of public schools! Cops off campus!

**4** For women’s liberation through socialist revolution! For mass, labor-backed mobilizations to defend abortion clinics! Down with parental consent laws and “squeal rules”! For free abortion on demand! For free, quality 24-hour child-care! For free, quality health care for all! Equal pay for equal work! Down with anti-gay laws! Down with reactionary age of consent laws! Full democratic rights for homosexuals! Government out of the bedroom! Down with the anti-sex witch-hunt! Down with all laws against consensual activities, called “crimes without victims,” like pornography, gambling, drug use, prostitution and “statutory rape”!

**5** Down with racist anti-immigrant laws! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! Organize foreign-born workers into the unions! No deportations! No to racist “English only” laws! Down with anti-Hispanic, anti-Arab, anti-Asian, anti-Semitic and all racist bigotry!

**6** Down with the “war on terror,” which is a war aimed at immigrants, labor, the left and minorities! Free all the detainees! Abolish the racist death penalty! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Free all class-war prisoners! There is no justice in the capitalist courts! Defend victims of racist cop terror and police frame-up! No illusions in civilian review boards or “community control” of the police! For labor mobilizations against racist cop terror! Down with the “war on drugs,” a racist war by the ruling class against black and Hispanic youth! The capitalist state—at its core consisting of the cops, courts, prisons—is the executive committee of the ruling class, an instrument of organized violence by the capitalists against the workers and the oppressed. It must be smashed through workers revolution!

**7** Defend separation of church and state! Defend science against superstition and mysticism! Keep religion out of the schools! No prayer in the schools! Down

with the teaching of creationism! For the teaching of evolution! No government funding for religious, private or “charter” schools!

**8** Defeat U.S. imperialism through workers revolution! U.S. and allied forces out of Iraq, Afghanistan now! Down with the neocolonial occupations! For class struggle against U.S. capitalist rulers at home! No illusions in the UN—a den of imperialist thieves, their victims and their lackeys! All U.S./UN/NATO troops out of the Balkans, Haiti! For the right of independence for Puerto Rico! U.S. troops out of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean! U.S. imperialist butchers: hands off the world! No to the draft! Not one man, not one penny for the imperialist military! Drive ROTC, CIA and police recruiters off the campuses!

**9** For international working-class solidarity! Down with the chauvinist poi-

son of protectionism! Workers of the world, unite! For unconditional military defense of the deformed workers states of Cuba, China, North Korea, Vietnam and Laos against capitalist counterrevolution and imperialist attack! For workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucrats and establish regimes of workers democracy, based on the power of workers councils, and revolutionary internationalism!

**10** Break with the racist, warmongering Democratic and Republican parties of capitalism! No support to any capitalist parties, including Greens! For a revolutionary, multiracial workers party that fights for socialist revolution! Look to the example of the heroic, Bolshevik-led workers of 1917 Russia! For new October Revolutions! For the international rule of the working class!

15 May 2011

*The Spartacus Youth Clubs are the youth groups of the revolutionary Marxist Spartacist League/U.S., section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).*

### Spartacus Youth Club Events

#### BAY AREA

**Thursday, March 12, 7:30 p.m.**  
**Race, Sex and Class  
in Capitalist America**

Meet in front of the  
Ethnic Studies Building  
San Francisco State University

For more information:  
(510) 839-0851 • sycbayarea@fastmail.net

#### VANCOUVER

**Wednesday, March 18, 6:30 p.m.**  
**Marxism vs. Feminism:  
What Way Forward for  
Women’s Liberation?**

University of British Columbia  
Irving Barber Learning Centre  
Room 315

Information and readings: (604) 687-0353  
trotskyist\_vancouver@shawcable.com

Visit the ICL website: [www.icl-fi.org](http://www.icl-fi.org)

#### NEW YORK CITY

**Monday, March 23, 7 p.m.**  
**Women’s Oppression and the  
Struggle for Revolution**

CCNY, NAC Room 1/209  
138th St. and Amsterdam Avenue  
(Take #1 train to 137th St.-City College)

Information and readings:  
(212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

#### TORONTO

**Thursday, March 19, 6:30 p.m.**  
**Marxism vs. Feminism:  
Which Way Forward for  
Women’s Liberation?**

OISE, Room 2199, 252 Bloor St. West  
(at St. George subway)

In case of a strike on campus,  
class will be held off-campus.  
Picket Lines Mean Don’t Cross!

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

Civil Rights...

(continued from page 12)

about an economic recovery, the workers and blacks sure haven't seen it. A *New York Times* article (14 December) titled "A Growing Economic Recovery Bypasses Low-Wage Workers and Their Tables" comments mildly: "The newest federal statistics on hunger show that one in six people in this city, or about 1.4 million people, could not afford a consistent, adequate supply of food throughout the year during the three-year period from 2011 through 2013, a time of economic recovery." It goes on: "Meanwhile, food pantries and soup kitchens are reporting increased demand this year from low-wage workers" as well as from "the jobless, the elderly, the homeless." Great! A recovery where one out of six go hungry part of the time and where workers for major employers like Walmart have to go on food stamps. Walmart is now touting a raise for its workers to a paltry \$9 an hour.

Black people, who have the lowest incomes and are forcibly segregated at the bottom of this society, are hit the hardest. Another *New York Times* article (12 December) notes: "The wealth gap between minorities and whites has continued to increase in the midst of the economic recovery." The median net worth of a white household was ten times higher than that of a black household in 2007, and in 2013 it was 13 times higher. Housing in this country remains segregated and, with school busing all but gone, American public education is more segregated than at any time since the civil rights movement. Researchers have coined the term "apartheid schools" to describe schools with 1 percent or less white student enrollment, and there are a lot of them.

Michael Brown's mother wept when she described how hard she worked to get her son through high school. As an article by Nikole Hannah-Jones in the *New York Times* (19 December) commented: "If Michael Brown's educational experience was a success story, it was a damning one." The school district he attended is among the poorest and most segregated in Missouri. Half of black male students from his high school never graduate, and only one in four of those who actually do graduate make it to a four-year college. In fact, by the time Michael Brown graduated, the district had lost its state accreditation.

Just down the road lies Clayton, the wealthy county seat where a grand jury unsurprisingly decided not to indict the cop who killed Michael Brown. In the predominantly white public schools there, with computers, new books, gyms and things that schools should have, the graduation rate is 96 percent, with 84 percent continuing to four-year colleges. As the Hannah-Jones article says: "A network of school district boundaries has, to this day, divided students in racially separate schools as effectively as any Jim Crow law. Michael Brown's education was not

exceptional, then, but all too typical, and it illustrates the vast disparity in resources and expectations for black children in America's segregated school systems." Even the *New York Times* speaks some of the truth some of the time.

These prison-like schools do little except to funnel young black men into the actual prison system. Incarceration has been on a scale never before seen in American history. Roughly 2.3 million are behind bars, with black men locked up at the highest rate by far. Many are victims of the decades-long, bipartisan "war on drugs," pushed not only by Republican reactionaries but also early on by Democratic Party hustlers like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton.

A popular protest slogan has been "black lives matter." But they don't matter to the racist rulers of this class-divided society. In light of the deindustrialization of much of the country, many black youth

people as a race-color caste, which still defines them today. The unscientific category of "race" and the racist myth of black inferiority were necessary props to the institution of slavery in the U.S. These racist myths continue to be necessary props to American capitalism, part of the divide-and-rule strategy that the bourgeoisie uses to keep the working class down. We must also fight the anti-immigrant chauvinism that is used to turn white and black workers against their immigrant brothers and sisters.

The Civil War, in which 200,000 black troops were crucial to turning the tide, was a revolutionary struggle that smashed the rule of the slaveholders. After the war, the Northern capitalists soon allied with the Southern propertied classes against the aspirations of the black freedmen. The promise of "40 acres and a mule" was scrapped and



Martin Luther King and UAW head Walter Reuther (second from right) among others meet with President Kennedy in White House on day of March on Washington, 28 August 1963.

are treated as an expendable surplus population. At the same time, there are still significant numbers of black workers in strategic industries. These workers will be instrumental in any fight to put an end to this racist capitalist hell through socialist revolution.

The power of the working class is derived from its central role in production. By withholding their labor, workers can cut off the flow of profits, the capitalists' lifeblood. A mobilization of workers' power against racist cop terror could put a damper on police repression. But that means mobilizing the social power of the multiracial working class independent from and in opposition to the capitalist state and its political parties—Republican, Democrat and Green.

The notion of workers collectively engaging in hard-fought struggle in their own interests, much less in the interests of the black masses, may sound pretty far out to today's youth. But it is the only answer. When times change and social and class struggle heats up, the working class can, through the work of a revolutionary vanguard party, become imbued with the consciousness of its historic interest as a class fighting for itself and for all of the oppressed.

Marxist Fight Against Black Oppression

I want to talk a bit more historically about the American black question. Our starting point is Marx. There's endless garbage out there from black nationalists and academics about how Marxism is "Eurocentric" or how "Marx was a racist." Nothing could be further from the truth.

You cannot understand the black question in a Marxist or materialist sense without understanding, as it was called, the "peculiar institution" of slavery, and the bloody Civil War that ended it. One is struck by Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' astonishing knowledge of American history in their Civil War writings—as well as by their active anti-slavery organizing in Britain. They saw the Civil War as one of the century's major battles, a social overturn and a harbinger of socialist revolutions to come.

In slavery we see the origins of the material basis for the oppression of black

of the population," were not an oppressed nation or a nationality in any sense. Therefore, self-determination, or separation in an independent nation, for American blacks did not make sense. Fraser wrote, speaking of the black masses: "The goals which history has dictated to them are to achieve complete equality through the elimination of racial segregation, discrimination, and prejudice. That is, the overthrow of the race system." He went on to say: "These goals cannot be accomplished except through the socialist revolution" ("For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Struggle" [1955], reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 [Revised], September 1978).

From the formation of our tendency, which originated in the early 1960s as a left opposition inside the SWP, we described the black population in the U.S. as an oppressed race-color caste. We have always stood for the perspective of revolutionary integrationism, the fight for the assimilation of black people into an egalitarian socialist society. Reflecting how the struggle for black freedom is a strategic question of the American revolution, we said in an early document:

"Any organization which claims a revolutionary perspective for the United States must confront the *special oppression* of black people—the forced segregation of blacks at the bottom of capitalist society and the poisonous racism which divides the working class and cripples its struggles. There will be no social revolution in this country without the united struggle of black and white workers led by their multiracial vanguard party. Moreover, there is no other road to eliminating the special oppression of black people than the victorious conquest of power by the U.S. proletariat."  
—Preface, *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 (Revised)

We reject the various forms of black nationalism. And we reject the anti-Marxist conception of "white skin privilege" that has started to pop up again with greater frequency. This theory claims that white workers and bosses are supposedly united in "privilege." No! Some sections of the white working class do buy into the racism that is fomented by the exploiters. But they have no material stake in the perpetuation of this incredibly unequal society, whose white ruling class enjoys unparalleled riches coming at workers' expense. Look at the American South, where conditions are worse for white working people as well as blacks—few unions and low wages. White, black and Latino workers have a common interest in overthrowing capitalism, but you have to fight to bring this consciousness to the working class.

Organizing Black Workers in the South

Let me talk about the civil rights movement. Why is it that petty-bourgeois preachers like Martin Luther King and his group the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) came to the fore in the Southern civil rights struggles? Was the church so progressive? Was it the only institution that Southern blacks respected? Cornel West and his ilk would probably answer "yes" to both questions, and go on to talk about King as a "revolutionary Christian"—which seems like an oxymoron to me.

The truth is that civil rights struggles didn't start with King or the 1954 Supreme Court decision banning school segregation (now mostly a dead letter). They were sparked in the early 1940s

political power in the Southern states was restored to the former slavocracy, though slavery could not be restored. It is worth contemplating how it took a Civil War, a second American revolution, to end chattel slavery, to get the slaveholders to hand over "their property." Who could seriously think that today's capitalists can be persuaded to hand over the factories, banks, mines and mills without a struggle? That will take a third American revolution, a proletarian socialist revolution.

James P. Cannon, the founding leader of American Trotskyism, described the crucial intervention of Lenin and Trotsky's Communist International in the 1920s in driving home the centrality of the fight for black freedom to proletarian revolution in the U.S. As even the best of the American socialists had been pretty clueless on the question, Cannon said: "Everything new and progressive on the Negro question came from Moscow, after the revolution of 1917, and as a result of the revolution." The Comintern's abandonment of its original revolutionary program under the influence of Stalinism eventually led to disorientation and worse for the American CP on the black question, as it did on all other issues.

Crucially, it was the work of veteran Trotskyist Richard Fraser in the 1940s and '50s that deepened the Marxist understanding of the black question. Fraser, in the then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (SWP), began from the premise that black people, who he described as "the most completely 'Americanized' section

Malcolm X...

(continued from page 4)

of nonviolence earned him the enmity of the rulers and their kept "respectable" black leaders. But for us who see the fight for black liberation as strategic to a workers revolution against the whole hideous and irrational profit system, it is precisely his intransigent penchant for the truth and his uncompromising opposition to racist America that makes Malcolm X a hero. But he did not understand the potential *power* of American blacks as workers to liberate not only themselves but oppressed

peoples throughout the world. What is needed to release and direct that power is the construction of a racially integrated communist vanguard. Shortly after Malcolm was killed we wrote:

"...such a leadership will eventually be forthcoming. This is a statistical as well as a social certainty. This leadership, building on the experience of others such as Malcolm, and emancipated from his religiosity, will build a movement in which the black masses and their allies can lead the third great American revolution. Then Malcolm X will be remembered by black and white alike as a heroic and tragic figure in a dark period of our common history."  
—*Spartacist* No. 4, May-June 1965■

Marxist Bulletin

5

REVISED

WHAT STRATEGY FOR BLACK LIBERATION?

Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism

Key documents and articles 1955-1978

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when the social structure of black America, North and South, took on an increasingly urban, proletarian character. The creation of a Southern black proletariat fundamentally eroded the Jim Crow system of segregation, a system based on police/Klan terror aimed at atomized rural sharecroppers. A bunch of hooded Klansmen riding through rural Mississippi was one thing, but in all-black areas of Birmingham they were more likely to get their butts kicked.

Union organizing brought the black proletariat together in a setting where they had some social power. There is a fascinating article that comrades have recommended to me over the years called “Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement” (1988) by Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein. It details organizing efforts by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) at the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, in the early ’40s. Union organizing was also going on in the Southern cities of Memphis, Richmond, Charleston and Louisville.

At the R.J. Reynolds processing plant, blacks formed the majority of the workforce, although, of course, whites had the better-paying, easier jobs. Earlier, the American Federation of Labor had tried to organize the plant, but their plan for setting up two segregated locals hadn’t gone over too well with black workers. The CIO, which came in with “several young black organizers,” targeted black workers and “championed black dignity and self-organization” while supporting an industrial union for all.

Eventually becoming the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers Local 22, this union, not surprisingly for the time, was led by the Communist Party. Also not surprisingly, the black ministers and the black petty bourgeoisie came out hard against the union, writing letters to the bourgeois press urging workers to reject it. This Booker T. Washington-style accommodationism was typical for preachers, who are beholden to the capitalists and landlords. But black workers responded with indignation. One, noting that he attended church for 30 years, wrote angrily: “Now that the laboring class of people are about to unite and cooperate on wholesale scale for the purpose of collective bargaining, these same leaders seem to disagree with that which they have taught their people.” A group of union members asserted: “We feel we are the leaders instead of you.” Indeed!

Interestingly, as a side note, the 2014 documentary *Spies of Mississippi* shows how some blacks were used by the state government to infiltrate and spy on the civil rights movement, and they were not the most downtrodden. They were part of the black petty bourgeoisie—including a well-known black preacher and the editor



New York City, December 2014: Spartacist contingent at thousands-strong march against racist cop terror.

of a black newspaper—who felt that the struggle for integration would cost them their position in the black community.

Going back to Local 22, the union was organized and the CP recruited. They had a lively union hall with a softball team, checkers tournaments and a library with books by Herbert Aptheker, W.E.B. DuBois and Frederick Douglass. (Obviously CP-dominated.) The union engaged in political agitation against segregation and conducted voter registration drives alongside other CIO unions organizing anti-poll tax and anti-lynching campaigns in the South.

But this union movement was soon channeled by the CP into the Democratic Party. This was a continuation of the CP’s sellout perspective of tailing “progressive” capitalist politicians. In the mid 1930s, the CP along with the rest of the CIO leadership had joined Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition. In the South, such a perspective meant trying to reform a racist police state by supporting the ruling Democratic Party dominated by Dixiecrats.

In the late 1940s, the government launched a massive anti-Communist witch-hunt to smash the militancy of the industrial unions that had been organized in the 1930s and early ’40s. The Taft-Hartley Act barred Communists from holding union office and banned a whole host of militant strike tactics. The CIO opposed Taft-Hartley in the abstract, but adhered to it in practice. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union, the United Electrical Workers and nine other CP-led unions with around one million members, almost 20 percent of the entire CIO membership, were expelled from the CIO. A key figure in these red purges was Walter Reuther, head of the United Auto Workers (UAW) and later head of the CIO.

These witchhunts wrecked working-class civil rights activity in the South.

Media redbaiting, police attacks and CIO raiding, combined with the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), destroyed Local 22. It was the same story in Alabama with the CP-led Mine, Mill and Smelter Union. (The struggles of that union in New Mexico were the subject of the 1954 movie, *Salt of the Earth*.)

Ironically, the destruction of integrated union power took place against the backdrop of “Operation Dixie,” the official CIO campaign to organize the South (the name tells you enough). Predictably, as an organizing drive that avoided taking on the race question and excluded all left-wingers, it failed. Referring to this failure as “one of the great tragedies for American labor,” Michael Goldfield acerbically comments in his book *The Color of Politics* (1997): “The bureaucratism and obtuseness to the importance of solidarity and worker militancy, especially to questions of race, led the CIO right into a completely self-defeating strategy.” Class collaboration was the name of the game for the CIO bureaucrats.

By the late 1950s and ’60s, Birmingham and other places in Alabama would be at the center of the civil rights movement. Yet, the militant integrated unions that could have mobilized the social power of the working class at the head of that movement had mostly ceased to exist. The International Longshoremen’s Association, which was still a union bastion in the mostly non-union South, had segregated locals.

The Korstad and Lichtenstein article states: “Local 22 disappeared from Winston-Salem political and economic life, and a far more accommodative black community leadership filled the void left by the union’s defeat.” Perhaps the authors wouldn’t agree, but that accommodative leadership was Martin Luther King and the preachers who became the backbone of the gradualist, pro-Democratic Party civil rights establishment.

Let me comment that the erstwhile social-democrat Walter Reuther, having purged the reds from the UAW and smashed any attempt to mobilize against black oppression in Detroit, became a big supporter of Martin Luther King. That’s

not a contradiction. Like many anti-Communists, Reuther supported the liberal civil rights agenda as a way to undercut the political influence of communists. He could easily support Martin Luther King’s pacifist liberalism in the South, and not have to deal in the slightest with racist practices in the Detroit auto plants or within the UAW itself.

Early Civil Rights Struggles

In 1965, I went down to Mississippi. While I wasn’t in the SL then, by the time I returned I would have agreed 100 percent with what the SL wrote that same year:

“From the beginning the black voter registration campaign in the South was an assertion of potential independence—directed against the underlying social system as well as the segregationist political apparatus which helps maintain it. Revolutionary in implication because it involved organizing masses of black workers and share-croppers in struggle, the mass character of the movement poses a dangerous threat to the American ruling class and its politicians. Hence they use every means at their disposal to derail the movement—including sending in such kept leaders as Martin Luther King—to head it off and deliver it to the Democratic Party where the job of beheading and neutralizing it can be finished off.” —“Conspiracy and Treachery in Alabama,” *Spartacist* No. 4, May-June 1965

Today, we hear a lot of discussion about “reclaiming” King’s “radical legacy.” But, no, “kept leader” is about right.

Martin Luther King came to the fore during the Montgomery bus boycott. New in town and not originally in the leadership, he was pushed forward as a more “educated” and respectable spokesman. As a preacher, he had no real job to lose. Under the influence of anti-communist social-democrats like Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph, Martin Luther King proselytized for pacifism and nonviolence.

There is a funny story. Early on, Rustin visited Martin Luther King’s house and saw armed guards at the door and guns lying around, surely in response to threats against him. But Rustin had a fit. Rustin was also influential in helping King and others set up the SCLC. Emphasizing the “Christian” in its name, its strategy of pacifist “direct action” was captured in King’s famous statement: “We will soon wear you down by pure capacity to suffer.”

As a moral philosophy, this is disgusting. But the real point is it was a political strategy. It was a way of keeping the movement respectable, appealing to the consciences of those in power. King and the SCLC looked to the Northern liberals of the Democratic Party and the federal government to come to the aid of black people.

After the long bus boycott, the buses were integrated in Montgomery and King was riding high on his pacifism and “soul force.” But blacks in Montgomery were left to face the racist backlash. The KKK came out of their holes, black churches were bombed and King’s house was dynamited. Rosa Parks was blacklisted and hounded out of Montgomery, eventually forced to move to Detroit. King told angry blacks, even those rising to his defense, to cool it.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

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# The Rise of British Imperialism

In a preface to *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), V.I. Lenin described how imperialism is “a world system of colonial oppression and of the financial strangulation of the overwhelming majority of the population of the world by a handful of ‘advanced’ countries.” Lenin emphasized that in this period marked by the dominance of finance capital the imperialist powers are impelled to carve up the rest of the globe in a race for new markets, raw materials and cheap labor. The scramble to leech the greatest profits possible through the exploitation of working people is the root cause of wars of imperialist plunder and of the miserable conditions under which the overwhelming mass of the world’s population lives and dies. The only way out for the exploited and the oppressed is through socialist revolutions that expropriate the bourgeoisie’s productive property and establish an internationally planned socialist economy.

We reprint below Part Two of a presentation, delivered at the Trotskyist League of Canada/Ligue Trotskyste du Canada Thirteenth National Conference in Summer 2013, by comrade Russell Stoker on the developments that made Britain the first modern imperialist power. The edited version of the talk was first printed as a two-part article in *Spartacist Canada* Nos. 182 and 183 (Fall 2014 and Winter 2014/15). Part One, which appeared in *WV* No. 1062 (20 February), covered the Protestant Reformation and 1642-51 English Civil War; the second part addresses the connection between the Industrial Revolution and the slave trade.

In the U.S., as in Britain, early capital accumulation was made possible by the New World’s slave-based agricultural economy. The competing expansionist appetites of the Northern capitalists and the Southern plantation owners eventually reached a breaking point, culminating in the 1861-65 American Civil War. That war, the last of the great bourgeois revolutions, smashed the slavocracy in the U.S. South but did not end the deep-seated oppression of the black masses, which today remains a central feature of this class-divided society. By the turn of the 20th century, U.S. capitalism had entered onto the imperialist stage, and with its ascendancy a long trail of savageries and depredations the world over has followed ever since.

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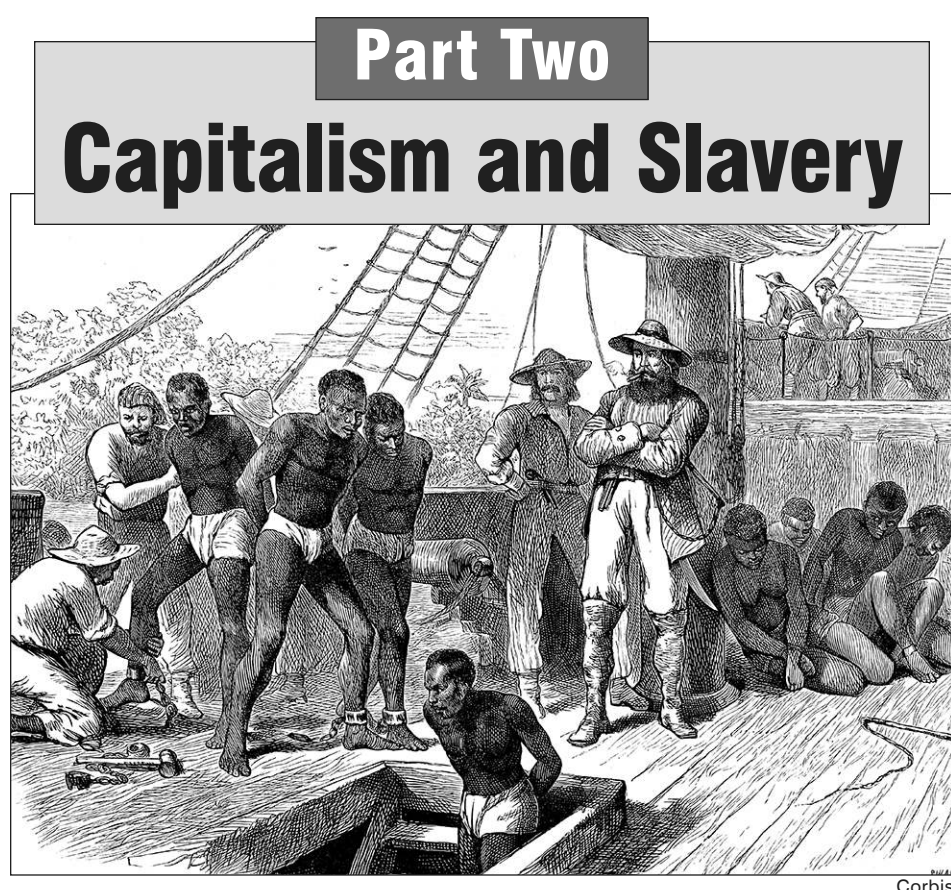
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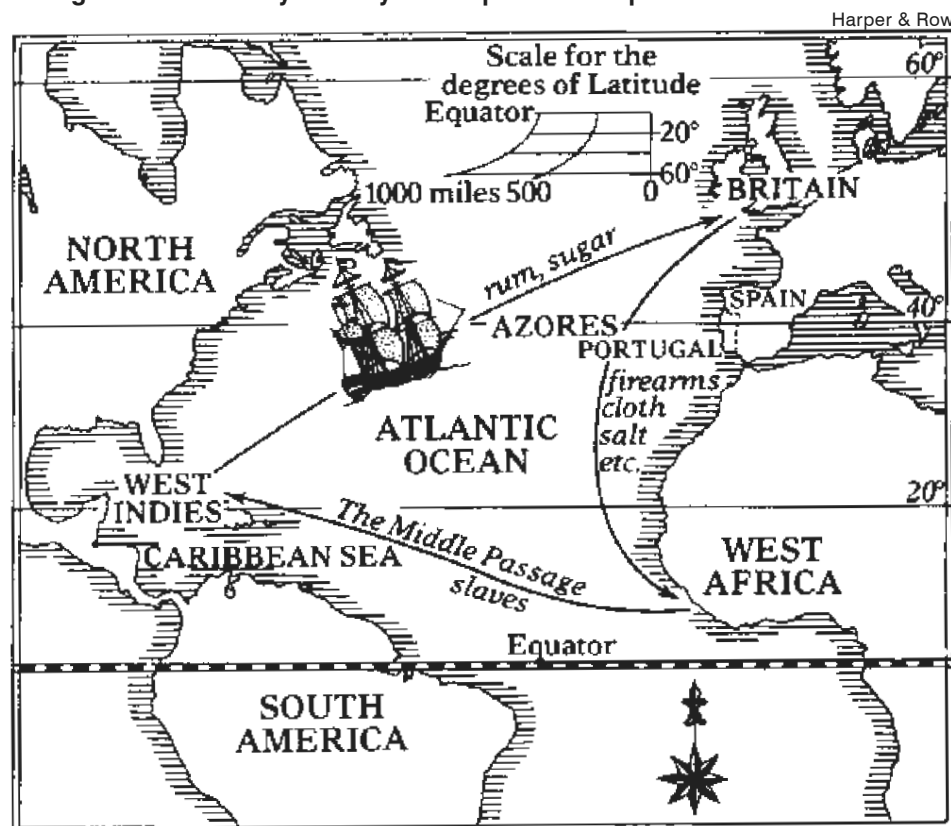
Eric Williams’ book *Capitalism and Slavery* was a shocker when he wrote it in 1944 and is still controversial today. He ripped the self-righteous mask from the apologists for the British ruling class who claimed the moral high ground and who tut-tutted American slavery because the British had passed the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act as early as 1807. Williams’ premise is that the profits of the British slave trade financed the Industrial Revolution. Even today, many respectable British academics damn Williams with faint praise, denying the fundamental role of the British slave trade in the development of British capitalism.

It’s entirely accurate to say that the blood and sweat of African slaves were both fuel and lubricant for the Industrial Revolution. Neither the early spice trade with India nor the lucrative extortion of wealth by the land pirates of the East India Company stimulated manufacture in Britain to any great extent. But for Liverpool and Lancashire in England’s northwest, the slave trade was quite a different story.

Liverpool was a sleepy fishing port at the mouth of the River Mersey for 500 years before it was declared a parish in 1699, the year the first slave ship departed from that village. Well, that was a roaring success. The town merchants could see the writing on the wall and the coins falling into their pockets. A few of the more



Above: Depiction of slave ship being loaded off coast of West Africa. Below: Triangle Trade was key to early development of capitalism.



farsighted pooled their capital and in 1715 they built their first wet dock, where ships could be rapidly loaded and unloaded, tied alongside the dock at a constant water level regardless of tides. Otherwise, row-boats were required to ferry goods back and forth while the ship lay at anchor in the river current. That was nearly 100 years before London had such advantages.

Liverpool dominated the trade because it had geographic advantages, especially during wartime, which was most of the time. The port was much farther north and away from the French and Spanish privateers. The Mersey provided cheap transportation from the Lancashire textile mills just inland. It was a natural fit.

Shortly after the wet docks were completed, four or five slave ships were setting out from Liverpool each year. I should mention that these slave ships and their voyages were financed by shareholders. Everyone got in on the action. Even the sons of carpenters and sailmakers found the means to invest and become slave merchants themselves, as did many slave ship captains.

By the mid 18th century, the port was launching some 24 slave ships per year, and thereafter Liverpool went to the head of the class in the British slave trade. Of the 8,000-plus British ships that were purpose-built for the slave trade, over 2,100 were made in Liverpool itself and almost all of

those were built after 1750. That works out to one complete ship every ten days.

All those ships required skilled workers to build and outfit them. They required vast quantities of Baltic timber, iron, sails, blocks and tackle and miles of hemp rope, not to mention capital to finance them. The canal-building craze was directly stimulated to cut transportation costs and increase production for both the slave trade and exports to the planter colonies. The manufacture of small arms, gunpowder, chains and shackles boomed. And all those workers needed housing and food.

The shipyards alone represented a vigorous economic undertaking, and they produced a large and growing population and a profitable market for regional agriculture as well. And that is just the ships that were built in Liverpool. Britain dispatched about 10,000 voyages to Africa for slaves, half of them out of Liverpool. Six wet docks were constructed at a cost in excess of one million pounds. Then for ship maintenance there were the dry docks, where the water could be completely drained out.

And none of those 5,000 ships departed empty. Manchester, like Liverpool, was at the very heart of the slave trade. Most of the woven goods pouring out of Manchester factories filled their holds and went to Africa in trade for slaves...or out to the colonies to clothe them. Nor did any

ship return empty. They brought back raw sugar for distilleries, molasses, rum, tobacco and later, vast quantities of cotton. All this was part of the slave economy. Lloyds of London, the world’s oldest and largest insurance market, reaped enormous wealth from the Atlantic slave trade.

## Sugar Colonies and the Planter Parliament

The Liverpool merchants and Manchester mill owners were just raking in the money and falling over themselves to improve production. But that was chump change to the sugar planters who were already rich as Rockefellers and twice as fat. The sugar plantations were gigantic hellish machines which ground up human lives and sugar cane and squeezed out vast fortunes for the slave owners.

Before they seized upon African slaves, the planters had pressed indentured servants into the fields—mostly poor people, many Irish—and there were kidnappings and corrupt judges who served as press gangs for the planters. But try as they might, the legions of defeated Irish rebels or scrawny souls plucked from the English prisons or off the damp London streets mostly died in their tropical servitude— from beatings, from malaria, or from all manner of ailments and mistreatment.

The planters tried enslaving the native populations as well, but the latter were too few in numbers and failed to perform for their masters. The healthy populations ripped out of Africa proved to be just the forced labour the planters were looking for, and they seized upon them with a vengeance.

It is hard to overstate the wealth the slave sugar generated. Many planters moved their persons back to England at the earliest opportunity and ruled in glorious absentia. Once home, they settled into fine country estates or magnificent town homes. With their great wealth, many bought seats in parliament to protect their interests. The planters’ grip on parliament would have made Boss Tweed of Tammany Hall jealous.

## The Slave Trade and Scotland

Glasgow became a major trading port in the 18th century. Not unlike Liverpool, the city was bursting with industry and wealth generated by the slave economy. Sugar refining was the first industrial boon in Glasgow. Before the 1707 Act of Union, which merged Scotland and England to form the United Kingdom, direct trade with the colonies was prohibited, and Glasgow was forced to import sugar from Bristol and to engage in no small amount of smuggling.

Meanwhile, the Scottish merchants were pickled with envy over the booming English trade and decided: “Man! I have got to get me some of this!” They pooled all their ready cash, something like half of the total Scottish capital. Then they outfitted some ships, and in 1698 sailed across the Atlantic to set up a colony of their own in Panama. This was the “Darien Scheme,” which comes down to us as the “Darien Disaster.”

When the English found out, they were having none of it—right shirty [angry] they were—and forbade assistance or trade with the Scottish colonists, who were by now starving and otherwise having a very bad day. Actually, a couple thousand out of the 2,500 colonists perished, for which no tears were shed by the indigenous people I am sure.

Well, things went downhill from there. The English were able to leverage a hostile takeover of Scotland with a big plump bag of cash and the juicy news that Scottish merchants could take part in the lucrative slave trade if Scotland joined in. That was the glorious Act of Union.

The ink was hardly dry before Scottish merchants owned nearly a third of the slaves in the sugar colony of Jamaica, which England had snatched from under



Spain's nose some 50 years previous. Post-1707, Glasgow rapidly came to specialize in the tobacco trade and the wealth associated with that trade washed over the city and along the River Clyde.

As in England, the rapid rise of the wealthy bourgeoisie coincided with the relative decline of the landed gentry and the old society, particularly following the bloody destruction of the Stuart-loyalist Jacobite clans at Culloden Moor in 1746. Amidst the new wealth, scholars and intellectuals began to meet freely to discuss radical new ideas in the taverns and public houses of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. A well-lubricated intelligentsia began to take form, you might say.

The fierce Calvinism of John Knox, which was needed to topple the tyrants, had given way to the enlightened liberals asserting the fundamental importance of human reason and empiricism, which were more useful tenets for capitalist development. The intelligentsia sported a new and optimistic belief that man could improve society and conquer nature with scientific discovery through experimentation. The great advances in Scottish science and engineering in the next century were the fruits of this process.

By the early 18th century, Scotland had become the first literate society in Europe. While Britain was besting the French all over the world during the Seven Years War, in Edinburgh, with a population of 60,000, there were six publishing houses and papermaking was an important part of the economy. An official survey in 1795 showed that out of a population of 1.5 million, 20,000 depended on writing and publishing and another 10,500 on teaching.

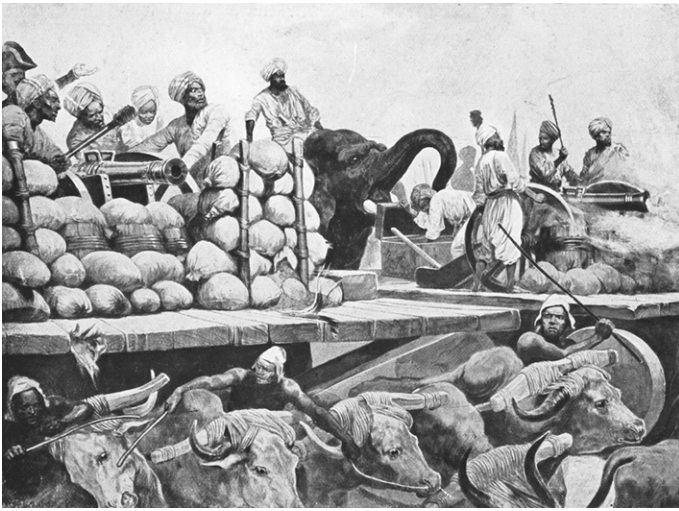
### American Independence and the End of the Sugar Monopoly

Because of sugar, Jamaica was, bar none, the most valuable British colony anywhere. Yes, even including India and the spice trade. The wee American colonies existed to provide foodstuffs and such for the sugar colonies—primarily Jamaica and Barbados—where every inch of arable land was taken up with sugar cane. But Britain's sugar monopoly had already been broken on the European continent and in America, where smuggling cheap sugar for the rum distilleries to avoid crown taxes was a significant and growing part of the colonial economy.

America's War of Independence against Britain was waged from 1775 to 1783 by an alliance with a built-in contradiction. Two different classes, the Northern manufacturers and the Southern slave owners, joined forces because both economies suffered under the strictures imposed by the British mercantile system. This system was a closed monopoly in which British manufacturers had command of a protected market and the sugar planters controlled the flow and price of sugar. American independence finally shattered British mercantilism.

Much blood and ink was spilled by the British rulers, who feared both the catastrophic destruction of the regulated trade and the loss of tax revenue from the colonies. The lords and planters ran point on this. The industry-based capitalists were not especially animated by opposition to mercantilism or slavery so long as they were making tons of money manufacturing goods necessary to the slave trade and the colonies. When the industrialists discovered later, to their great surprise, that far higher profits could be made outside of the mercantile system, only then did the tide begin to turn in favour of "free trade."

In Britain, the landed gentry had been natural allies of the sugar planters. For decades the government was dominated by the fabulously wealthy planters, who planted their seats in parliament whenever the fancy struck them. Parenthetically, that relationship was markedly different in France, where the king didn't lose his head until nearly 150 years after the English one did. The French monarchy distrusted its planter nobility and instead formed an alliance with what West Indian intellectual C.L.R. James called the "small whites," the petty bourgeoisie, in his seminal book *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint*



Richard Caton Woodville II

**Left: In 1757 Battle of Plassey, British troops secured Bengal for Britain's East India Company. Right: Scene from 1857-58 Sepoy rebellion. With suppression of uprising, British crown took direct control of Indian colony.**



The London Printing & Publishing Company

*L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1963).

The French planters never acquired anything like the power of their British counterparts, and that was despite the French sugar colony in Haiti being vastly more productive. C.L.R. James also intimates that some of the British forces advocating abolition in the late 18th century were cynically manipulating French revolutionaries to do the same in order to undermine sugar production in the French colonies. There may be some truth in that.

The powerful British planter faction faced an opposition which included both enlightened intellectuals and capitalists promoting free trade. The growing con-

or less concurrent with American independence—about 1776, which is to say 30 years before the Abolition Act in Britain and 60 years and more before slavery in the British colonies had mostly ended. Moreover, Watt's efforts at re-engineering the steam engine were directly underwritten by profits of the slave economy. And in 1860, 53 years after the Abolition Act, 75 percent of all British cotton was slave cotton from the American South. That is why the rulers of Britain supported the South during the American Civil War, as Marx pointed out at that time.

To recap, the Industrial Revolution grew out of a ready-made industry just humming along on the slave economy. Port

In 1600, when Queen Elizabeth founded the East India Company, India had a huge economy and possessed weaving technology at least equal to that of contemporary England. India alone produced about 25 percent of the world's manufactured goods, more than all of Europe combined. That continued right up to the 18th century. Compared to Elizabethan England, India had well over 25 times the population and land, which included present-day Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

But Mughal India had begun to disintegrate and the emerging rival princely states were increasingly subordinated in alliances with the various colonial powers. This started with the Portuguese who arrived in the 1500s, followed by the Dutch and then the English in the early 1600s and later the French. The race to dominate the highly lucrative spice trade with India became a huge impetus for all the European powers to develop their naval power and extend their reach economically and militarily.

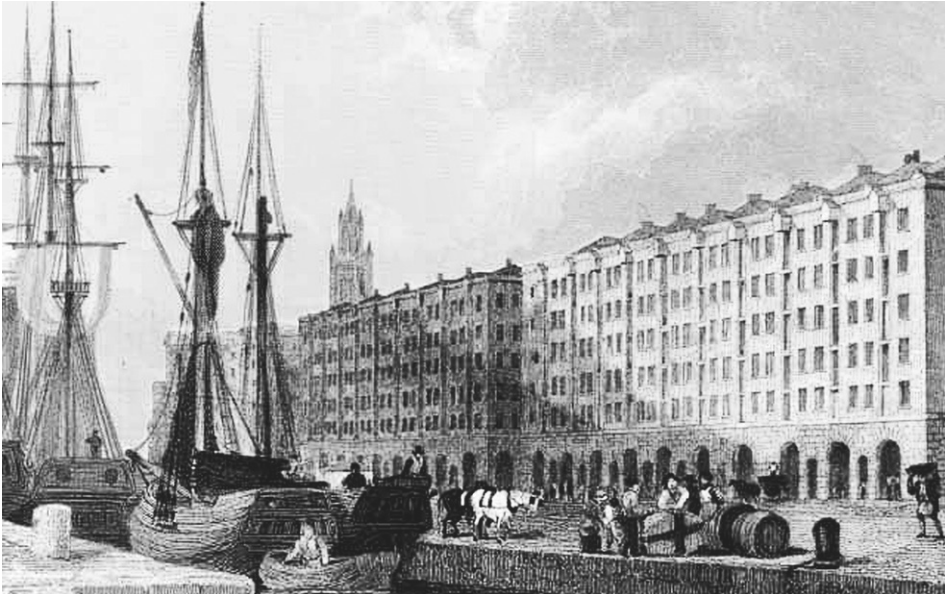
Britain succeeded in dominating French power in the Seven Years War between 1756 and 1763. This was a conflict between all the great powers of the day, and it extended across Europe, North America, the Caribbean, West Africa, the Philippines and, of course, India. The outstanding issue, as with all "great power" conflicts, was over who would rule the world.

The British victory in the 1757 Battle of Plassey is seen as the pivotal point in British supremacy in South Asia. It established the rule of the British East India Company in Bengal, which provided a rich staging ground to drive out the Dutch and French rivals. The British expropriated huge tracts of land, providing revenue through taxes and plunder for further conquest by the Company. This early period of colonial rule extracted enormous revenue through outright pillage, taxation and extortionate "tributes" from the besieged and occupied princely states.

By the end of the 18th century, cotton had already displaced British wool. It's no wonder, given that the bulk of British cloth went into Africa in trade for slaves or to the colonies. Both destinations were hot and humid climes where cotton clothing is superior to wear.

However, Indian cottons upset the proverbial apple cart. Better and cheaper, they were displacing the English product in Africa and even threatened to dominate the domestic English market. Prohibitive

*continued on page 10*



Samuel Austin

**Liverpool dock, circa 1830: The city was both a manufacturing center for slave ships and key hub for the slave trade, whose profits financed Britain's Industrial Revolution.**

lict between the interests of the industry-based bourgeoisie and agriculture-based slave owners foreshadowed much of the economic and ideological conflict that would play out decades later across the Atlantic in the American Civil War of 1861-65. That war was begun by the South as a predatory campaign for the expansion of slavery, and the victory of the capitalist North meant slavery's abolition. At the time, Karl Marx was leading the International Working Men's Association (First International) and he penned articles and declarations to marshal working-class support for the North. "Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black skin it is branded," he went on to note in Volume One of *Capital*.

Back in Britain, the passage of the Abolition Act had come in 1807, but concessions to the planters meant that slavery actually continued in the British colonies for another 30 years or so. The Abolition Act nevertheless marks the significant point at which the economic and political power of the industrialists overwhelmed that of the planters. Thereafter, as Eric Williams put it, "The center of gravity in the British Empire shifted from the Caribbean Sea to the Indian Ocean, from the West Indies to India."

Historians generally date the origins of the Industrial Revolution to the latter part of the 18th century. Certainly, the American War of Independence and the collapse of the mercantile system uncorked production. And James Watt's improvement to the Newcomen steam engine is more

facilities were marvellously improved at great expense and supported by factories with a quite modern proletariat. The slave trade wasn't the whole of the Industrial Revolution—not by a long shot—but it definitely was its firm foundation. For further study I would highly recommend comrade Jacob Zorn's presentation, "Slavery and the Origins of American Capitalism" (WV Nos. 942, 943 and 944, 11 and 25 September and 9 October 2009).

### The Industrial Revolution and India

Earlier we looked into why Germany, Spain or France did not become the first advanced capitalist-imperialist empire. Well, why not India?



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# Imperialism...

(continued from page 9)

import duties were slapped on Indian products coming into England. Export duties were also imposed in British India, and together those quickly destroyed India's trade in cotton and soon that of all other Indian manufactures. Although India had long been a producer and exporter of fine cotton goods, it was shortly reduced to exporting raw cotton to Manchester and importing finished English material on a scale that kept Manchester booming for decades.

That marked the first step in the transformation from the earlier, direct piratical extortion of wealth to a more modern and "respectable" bourgeois form of expropriation—which would become a classic impediment to the growth of the productive forces of the captive consumer nation. By the 1850s, the British East India Company in league with the British army and navy had control of most of the Indian subcontinent. This was the nursery of the British foreign policy famously known as "divide and rule," which exploited regional and religious rivalries. Britain imposed a dumbed-down education system stripped of science in an attempt to create a subordinate and dependant population.

Wherever and whenever the Industrial Revolution took hold, it meant the destruction of the artisan class. Not infrequently this was a brutal process. Nevertheless, the Industrial Revolution transformed society as it unleashed productive capacity: steam power, iron smelting, innovations with chemicals, mining and transportation. There was all that and more. Old, outmoded thinking fell away alongside the outmoded productive forms. In this sense, early capitalism was a powerful economic driver of innovation and technological achievement and science. The Industrial Revolution ramped up production and catapulted Britain into becoming the undisputed dominant world power with a virtual monopoly in manufacturing.

But in colonial India the Industrial Revolution played out quite differently. For centuries, the state exacted taxes and wealth from the villages in the form of goods and produce, but largely maintained the ancient village-based land system which generated that wealth. Public works provided regular irrigation to deliver water and nutrients for agriculture, which consisted of food, cotton and jute production. The village system provided economic sustenance to the village-based artisans including those of the important cotton trade. Now, this was a class-based society—not some kind of primitive idyllic communism—and there were larger urban centres with manufacture as well.

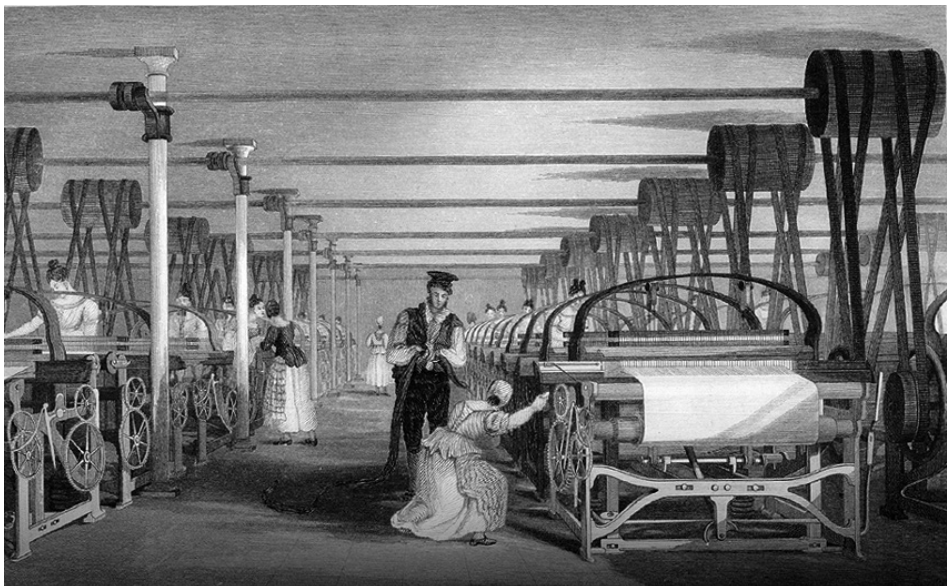
The British East India Company extorted Indian wealth on a massive scale. Economic disruption, both intentional and incidental, and the thorough neglect of public works, led to a collapse of Indian manufacture and agriculture. It produced intense impoverishment of its peoples which continues to this day. It is interesting to note, however, that the falling rate of profit and the declining ability of India to absorb British manufactures forced the British to begin manufacturing in India. That is to say, one could not endlessly extract wealth, impoverish the populace and pour British manufactures into the country without effect.

In 1830, the railway between Liverpool and Manchester opened. It was the beginning of the modern rail era and it sparked a worldwide railway construction boom, marking the heyday of the Industrial Revolution. Incidentally, it was in 1836 that the first railway opened in Canada; all the early equipment was British made. Rail construction was the selling point for Confederation here. B.C. joined explicitly on that promise of a transcontinental railway, which was financed through a scandalous land-grant scheme and finally completed, to great fanfare, in 1886. In India, British finance capital had by 1875 poured upwards of 100 million pounds into the railways and by 1880 had laid nearly 15,000 kilometres of rail there. That was initially with British

locomotives and rolling stock of British manufacture, which were later manufactured locally in India.

Though British firms owned outright five-sixths of the tea industry from an earlier period, I think that the rail investment demonstrates the importance that the export of capital had assumed. The British rulers were massively extorting dividends for the Indian rail system. Moreover that system was designed not to connect the Indian economy together, but to send its wealth abroad with as little delay as possible.

Concurrent with the spoliation of India, Britain of course applied itself vigorously and imperiously throughout Asia, espe-



T. Allom

**Textile factories utilizing the power loom exemplified the technological dynamism of early English capitalism.**

cially in China, as well as in Africa and the Near East, but that is all well beyond the scope of this talk. The *epoch* of imperialism started at the very end of the 19th century. But as Lenin noted, "two important distinguishing features of imperialism were already observed in Great Britain in the middle of the nineteenth century—vast colonial possessions and a monopolist position in the world market."

## Marxism and the Colonial Question

Frequently one encounters the assertion by Third World nationalists that Marx and Engels were somehow tainted with colonialism. There are often two complementary sides to this hind-sighted discourse. On the one hand, there is an associated fantasy image of the idyllic peasant life prior to industrialization. On the other, there is a false and haughty rendering of Marx and Engels' positions and sympathies.

Marx and Engels originally had hoped that the positive aspects of industrialization and free trade would spread to the colonies as a liberating force which would elevate those pre-industrial nations into the modern world. In 1853 Marx wrote an article titled "The Future Results of British Rule in India" where he said:

"England has to fulfill a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating—the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia."

Remember, at that time, imperialism was not fully developed.

But there was never any confusion about Marx and Engels' sympathies. They were not blind or indifferent to the monumental crimes committed by Western powers against the peoples of Asia, Africa and the Americas. They viewed such crimes as the overhead historical cost for the modernization of these backward regions.

This projection was not borne out by the actual course of development. In fact, even though the capitalists did introduce certain elements of modern industrial technology into their colonies and semi-colonies, for example transportation, the overall effect was to arrest the social and economic development of these countries. By the mid 19th century, the European bourgeoisies ceased to be a historically progressive class against the old feudal-derived aristocracies—with the key turning point being the defeat of the 1848 European revolutions.

Marxism is a science. It is based not on

received wisdom but on observation and analysis of social reality. Marxists are not infallible and, indeed, Marx and Engels learned from their observations and analyses of capitalist development and expansion. They developed a different attitude toward colonialism, which was expressed, for example, in their defence of the 1857-58 Sepoy rebellion in India and their condemnation of its torturous repression by the British.

In Ireland, too, the British smashed down every industry. Reactionary oppression and continued impoverishment reduced the Irish to being mere providers of cheap, consumable foodstuffs for English tables and cheap, consumable workers for Brit-

ish factories. Marx came to recognize that the liberation of Ireland from under the British boot was a precondition for the liberation of the British proletariat. Writing in a 9 April 1870 letter to Siegfried Meyer and August Vogt, he states:

"Every industrial and commercial centre in England now possesses a working class *divided* into two *hostile* camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the *ruling* nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country *against Ireland*, thus strengthening their domination *over himself*. He cherishes religious, social, and national prejudices against the Irish worker.... The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker at once the accomplice and the stupid tool of the *English rule in Ireland*."

## The Imperialist Epoch and Labour Reformism

In a 7 October 1858 letter to Marx, Friedrich Engels pointed to the corrupting influence of imperialism on the proletariat of the advanced countries. He wrote:

"...the English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat *alongside* the bourgeoisie."

Britain was the first of the modern imperialist powers. But it couldn't hold onto its place of privilege forever. By the dawn of the 20th century, the entire world

had been divided among rival imperialist powers, centrally France, Germany, the United States and Japan. The epoch of imperialism—the final stage of capitalism—had begun. In 1914 came World War I, interimperialist slaughter on a scale never before seen.

As the British rulers came under pressure from other imperialist powers, they could no longer aim at buying off or "bourgeoisifying" the entire British proletariat. Instead, in all the imperialist countries there emerged a thin layer, the labour aristocracy, bribed with some of the superprofits that the bourgeoisie reaped from its colonies. In most cases, this aristocracy of labour became the bulwark of reformist parties of the working class—what Engels and later Lenin called "bourgeois workers parties." With leaderships and outlooks that were pro-imperialist, these parties used their connections to the workers movement, as well as the occasional dubious pretension to socialism, in order to rally support for their own ruling classes in the First World War.

In sharp contrast to such parties, like the Labour Party in Britain, the Social Democrats in Germany and the Mensheviks in Russia, Lenin's Bolsheviks led a socialist revolution through taking a clear stand against imperialism and reformism. Calling for the defeat of all the great powers in World War I, the Bolsheviks had some success in transforming the interimperialist war into a civil war—a revolutionary war of workers and other oppressed peoples against their exploiters. In contrast to imperialist wars of predation, wars that were waged by colonial countries against their colonizers were considered by the Bolsheviks to be just and progressive. Lenin and his cothinkers fought for the international working class to wield its social power in support of such wars of liberation, while at the same time seeking to break the colonial masses from their existing leaderships, which were rooted in bourgeois and pre-capitalist exploiting classes.

I think that's a good place to wrap up our class on the rise of imperialism. We started out with the forging of the capitalist system in the Protestant Reformation, from the 1525 Peasant War in Germany through to the English Civil War of 1642-51. As Engels put it:

"In the so-called religious wars of the Sixteenth Century, very positive material class-interests were at play, and those wars were class wars just as were the later collisions in England and France. If the class struggles of that time appear to bear religious earmarks, if the interests, requirements and demands of the various classes hid themselves behind a religious screen, it little changes the actual situation, and is to be explained by conditions of the time."

—*The Peasant War in Germany* (1850)

From there, we tackled slavery and colonialism—how they fueled the Industrial Revolution and paved the way for the imperialist epoch. And that is where we remain today. To put an end to the imperialist system of war and neocolonial domination and replace it with a planned, socialized economy, the proletariat needs to smash the capitalist system. That in turn requires a political struggle against the reformists who are an obstacle to that perspective. ■

# Zionist...

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slavery, the Spartacus Youth Club initiated a united-front picket at which protesters denounced him as a racist ideologue.

The totally false equation of any criticism of Israel with anti-Jewish bigotry is pushed by a well-funded, well-oiled machine, supported by institutions ranging from university administrations to government agencies. The national antagonism between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Arabs stems from each nation's legitimate claim to the same sliver of land—an antagonism that cannot be equitably resolved under capitalism. We seek to forge class unity between the Arab and Jewish workers of the region. To break the Jewish working class from its allegiance

to Zionist ideology, and resulting loyalty to the racist Israeli rulers, will surely be very difficult. At the same time, Palestinian nationalism is equally an obstacle to the internationalist program needed to build fundamental class unity against the exploiters. Palestinian freedom can only be won in the struggle to shatter the Zionist state from within through working-class revolution, as part of the fight for a socialist federation of the Near East. The necessary condition for achieving this goal is building internationalist Trotskyist parties throughout the region and in the imperialist centers. The Spartacus Youth Clubs—as the youth auxiliaries of the Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League—are dedicated to the perspective of forging a revolutionary workers party here in the belly of the imperialist beast. ■

**WORKERS VANGUARD**



# Immigrants...

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the result of decades of U.S. imperialist depredations and violence fueled by Washington’s “war on drugs.” The number of refugees from Central America has dropped off recently, with Washington leaning heavily on the Mexican government to crack down on migrants inside its borders. Under the pretext of fast-tracking the immigration cases of the Central American refugees, thousands of others have had their hearings postponed until 2019. They are now in limbo—unable to visit their families abroad or obtain work permits and green cards—with the delays increasing the likelihood of eventual deportation. We say: Free all the detainees! No deportations!

DHS chief Jeh Johnson upholds the wholesale detention of women and children as an “effective deterrent” to new immigration, the revived ICE policy that was struck down by a federal judge on February 20. The Obama administration has not yet stated whether it will appeal, but its appetites were made clear by its budget request for next year: hundreds of millions more for adult and family detention beds as well as for “intensive supervision or electronic monitoring” of those not detained.

In addition to those locked up in detention centers, some 25,000 immigrants are incarcerated in privately run Criminal Alien Requirement (CAR) prisons. The plight of these prisoners was captured in a June 2014 report by the American Civil Liberties Union titled “Warehoused and Forgotten.” On February 20, up to 2,000 immigrants took over one such prison camp, Willacy County Correctional Center in Raymondville, Texas, to protest their deplorable medical care. This was the third mass protest by prisoners at that facility since 2012. After parts of the prison were damaged and the uprising suppressed, the Feds declared the prison to be “uninhabitable” and began transferring inmates to other, as yet undisclosed, locations.

In truth, the prison camp, known locally as “Ritmo” (a combination of Raymondville and Gitmo, the nickname for U.S. imperialism’s Guantánamo Bay torture center) was never habitable. The men were crammed into ten overcrowded and squalid tents; the showers and often-overflowing toilets were in the open with no partitions. Prisoners with serious illness or injury complained of only receiving Tylenol or ibuprofen as treatment. One prisoner interviewed by the ACLU suffered from hepatitis that had been left untreated. For running this hellhole for a decade, its operating company, Management & Training Corporation, was awarded \$532 million by the federal government.

Most of the inmates in Willacy and the twelve other for-profit CAR prisons are locked up for the supposed crime of illegal entry or re-entry into the U.S. In



**January 15: Immigrant rights activists outside federal courthouse in Brownsville, Texas, protest against Governor Greg Abbott’s efforts to block Obama’s executive action on immigration.**

the past, unlawful entry was treated as a civil offense punished only by deportation, but in recent years many immigrants are tossed into CAR prisons, some sentenced for up to 20 years. Between 1998 and 2012, the number of people entering federal prisons for immigration offenses soared from under 10,000 to over 23,000. More people are sent to federal prison each year for immigration offenses than for all else, except for drug convictions. Categorizing unauthorized entry into the country as a crime also boosts the claims of *la migra* that most of the people they deport are criminals; for many their only “crime” is seeking a better life for themselves and their families.

There are an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S., making up more than 5 percent of the total labor force. These workers are concentrated in domestic services, construction and agriculture—nearly half of farm laborers are undocumented. The roundup and deportation of immigrants threatens all labor by attacking its most vulnerable sections. Organizing immigrant workers and defending immigrant rights are crucial to revitalizing the labor movement.

The unions should champion full citizenship rights for everyone living in this country, that is, everything from the right to vote to the right to a U.S. passport, as well as access to medical care, bilingual education and what remains of the threadbare social “safety net.” Such a fight would cut across the efforts of the capitalist exploiters to sow divisions within the working class and go a long way toward solidifying the unity of workers, both native-born and immigrant.

### Obama’s Immigration Reform Scam

Obama’s November executive actions would allow undocumented immigrants who had arrived in the U.S. before turning 16 years old, as well as parents of

American citizens, to apply for permission to stay in the U.S. for three years. The prospect of up to 4.9 million people being able to avoid deportation, however briefly, is welcome. But the proposals, on top of offering only temporary relief and no real path to citizenship, are full of loopholes and caveats. Applicants have to come up with \$465 for a fee, gather documentation proving they have lived in the U.S. since 2010, and pass a background check. Anyone convicted of a felony or one “significant misdemeanor” or three lesser misdemeanors would be ineligible. Keep in mind that entering the country without inspection is classed a federal misdemeanor and that re-entry after deportation is a felony.

Having to declare their “illegal” status to the racist capitalist government will surely deter many potential applicants, as was the case under the 2012 Deferred Action For Childhood Arrivals. Over its first two years, barely half of those eligible applied under that program. Even if they are allowed to stay and pay taxes, immigrants will remain barred from Obamacare, food stamps and other government benefits. Moreover, there is no guarantee that permission to stay would be renewed in three years. Not to mention that the government may well use the information it has collected to expedite deportations.

The section of the bourgeoisie that rants about “American culture”—that is, white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture—being overrun by those from south of the border, was outraged by Obama’s executive actions. A lawsuit by Texas and 25 other states resulted in a federal court ruling that blocked implementation of Obama’s plan, though the administration has filed an appeal. The raw bigotry of right-wing Republicans allows Obama and the Democrats to dress themselves up as friends of immigrants.

But the Democratic Party, no less than the Republicans, is a capitalist party. Both parties seek to regulate immigration in accordance with the fluctuating labor needs of the capitalists, even if at the moment they disagree on the particulars. Indeed, Obama’s “reform” is intended to benefit a particular section of the U.S. capitalist class by ensuring a large pool of vulnerable immigrants who can be made

to work for a pittance with no job protection, no assured immigration status and no democratic rights. In response to a clamor from tech companies and manufacturers, Obama also wants to make available more “guest workers” with particular skills, at substantially lower wages.

As ever, the trade-union bureaucracy plays an important role in disguising the nature of the Democrats as a party of the class enemy. Trumpeting Obama’s executive actions as “a major victory,” the leadership of the heavily immigrant Service Employees International Union (SEIU) warned Congressional leaders that working people “will hold them accountable in the streets and at the ballot box in 2016.” For the SEIU tops, every maneuver by the Republicans is another excuse to get out the vote for the Democrats.

Similarly effusive was AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka, who hailed the administration for advancing “the moral and economic interests of our country.” Such statements, typical of a union officialdom that is ever loyal to capitalism, are designed to obscure the fact that the economic interests of the country’s filthy rich owners of industry and commerce are directly counterposed to those of the workers they exploit to amass their profits. While expressing a “concern” over the planned expansion of guest worker programs, Trumka went on to offer the services of the AFL-CIO bureaucrats to help “ensure that new workers will be hired based on real labor market need,” that is, to help control the flow of labor to maximize profit.

The working class can better its position, including that of its immigrant component, only by waging class struggle against the capitalist rulers. Such a perspective, which must entail an unwavering commitment to the fight against black oppression and attacks on immigrants, is anathema to the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy. What is needed is a new, class-struggle leadership of the unions.

Our aim is to unite the working class, at the head of all the oppressed, in the struggle for proletarian revolution to expropriate the bourgeoisie as a class and begin the socialist reconstruction of society. Our model is the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, which for the first time in history placed the working class in power. Among the early acts of the fledgling workers state was to grant full rights to immigrant workers, as laid out in its 1918 constitution: “Acting on the principle of the solidarity of the toilers of all nations, the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic grants all political rights enjoyed by Russian citizens to foreigners resident within the territory of the Russian Republic provided they belong to the working class or to the peasantry not using hired labor.”

In the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks, we fight for workers revolution across the globe: in the U.S. and other imperialist centers as well as in the dependent countries in Latin America and elsewhere. To succeed in that end, the working class requires the leadership of a revolutionary workers party. Such parties must be built in each country as sections of a reformed Trotskyist Fourth International—the world party of socialist revolution. ■

# Pasco, WA...

(continued from page 1)

Many people have expressed hope in an investigation of Zambrano’s killing by the federal government. However, the purpose of such investigations has never been to rein in cop terror, but to whitewash it—as shown in the Justice Department recommendation in January that no charges be brought against Michael Brown’s killer. Neither would the purpose be to protect the immigrant population of Pasco, which is nearly 60 percent Latino. It is the federal government under Obama that is directing the nationwide anti-immigrant crackdown of massive deportations and detentions.

In recent years, Pasco has attracted thousands of immigrants who toil for a pittance in temporary and dangerous jobs in the surrounding fields. They are patrolled by mostly white police forces that treat them with contempt. But the answer is not to recruit more Latino cops, as some spokesmen for Pasco’s Latino community advocate, which would just

put a different face on the same enemy and if anything, improve the effectiveness of the police in going after immigrants. Incorporating sizable numbers of black cops into the police forces of major cities has done nothing to lessen cop brutality. No amount of tinkering with the machinery of state repression can change the nature of the police.

The fight against police terror cries out for the mobilization of the enormous potential social power of the industrial working class welded to the anger of the ghetto and barrio poor. Such a class-struggle fight must be based on the understanding that the interests of the exploited and oppressed are counterposed to those of the capitalist rulers, their state forces and their political parties—whether Democrat or Republican. Black, white, immigrant—all workers need a multiracial revolutionary workers party whose aim is the uprooting of the entire capitalist system. Socialist revolution is the only way to avenge the death of Antonio Zambrano-Montes and the many other victims of this decaying order. ■

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# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Police Terror and Black Oppression Lessons of the Civil Rights Movement

*The following is a presentation, edited for publication, by Spartacist League spokesman Diana Coleman, who was an activist in the Southern Civil Rights Movement, at a February 21 forum in New York City. Her presentation began with Nina Simone's version of the song "Strange Fruit" about lynching in America.*

### PART ONE

"Southern trees bear a strange fruit  
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root  
Black bodies swingin' in the Southern breeze  
Strange fruit hangin' from the poplar trees..."

"Strange Fruit," originally sung by Billie Holiday, was written by a Jewish member of the Communist Party (CP) from New York, Abel Meeropol, who got a fair amount of government harassment for writing it. Meeropol and his wife are also known for adopting the children of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg after the two were executed for supposedly being Soviet spies at the height of the McCarthyite witchhunt in 1953.

Why play a song about lynching? As Isabel Wilkerson, who wrote the useful book *The Warmth of Other Suns* (2010) about the "Great Migration" of blacks to the North, commented recently: "For the most banal of missteps, the penalty could be an hours-long spectacle of torture and lynching. No trial, no jury, no judge, no appeal. Now, well into a new century, as a family in Ferguson, Missouri, buries yet another American teenager killed at the hands of authorities, the rate of police killings of black Americans is nearly the same as the rate of lynchings in the early decades of the 20th century." That is, a few times every week. The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement's 2012 annual report lists 313 black people killed by cops, security guards or vigilantes: that's one life snuffed out every 28 hours.

Here we are, celebrating Black History Month in the context of racist cop terror and the wanton murder of black people in this country, which has been going on for a long time. Every day, there are new reports of killings. But people are demonstrating and that's good.

Michael Brown, an unarmed black 18-year-old in Ferguson, executed in broad daylight by a white cop for the "crime" of walking in the street, and whose lifeless body was left there for hours; Eric Garner, killed for selling loose cigarettes; Akai Gurley, killed while walking down a staircase with his girlfriend in the New York projects; Tamir Rice, a black 12-year-old playing with a toy gun in a Cleveland park, shot by a cop and left to die while his 14-year-old sister was handcuffed and put in a police car where she watched her brother bleed out; Ezell

Ford, a mentally disturbed young black man, shot by Los Angeles cops for walking around his neighborhood. There is also Trayvon Martin, shot by a homicidal wanna-be cop, and Oscar Grant, killed by a transit cop in Oakland.

Nor should we forget Manuel Jaminés of L.A., a Guatemalan day laborer of indigenous background who spoke neither English nor Spanish, yelled at by cops

people short of workers revolution. That is the basic point of this talk.

### Racism, Repression, Poverty

In the 2008 and 2012 election years, we caught quite a bit of flak for putting forward our class opposition to both the capitalist Democrats and Republicans and calling Obama the commander-in-chief of racist U.S. imperialism. I remember being

continues to rampage. As we said in one of our seminal works, "Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom" (1966, reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9): "The struggle for Negro freedom takes place not only within the national arena, but within an international context. U.S. capitalism, which doubly exploits black workers, is the cornerstone of world imperialism." In the Near East, the imperialists are responsible for the bloody chaos of the region. Any blow to the imperialist forces, even by forces as repugnant as ISIS, would serve the interests of the international working class. While politically opposing these reactionaries, we place ourselves militarily on their side when they aim their fire against U.S. imperialism and its local proxies.

Let's be clear: U.S. imperialism has burned, bombed, napalmed, tortured and committed mass murder on a scale that ISIS can never achieve. Indeed, such barbarism is an essential part of imperialist subjugation. And it's hardly any surprise to now find out that an American torturer in Guantánamo got his experience torturing black people in Chicago. We say: U.S. imperialism hands off the world!

Here at home, Wall Street is making out like the bandits that they are. Corporate profits are breaking historical records while millions are unemployed or underemployed. With "low-wage America" a popular buzzword, Obama continues his talk about raising the minimum wage to a "fabulous" \$10.10 an hour. The reformist left—from Socialist Alternative to the Workers World Party to the International Socialist Organization—are pushing \$15 an hour. So I conclude that the difference between the reformist pseudo-socialists and the Democratic Party is \$4.90 an hour. You would think that even reformists would want a bigger reform than that!

Though bourgeois pundits keep talking  
*continued on page 6*



Local 22 tobacco workers during 1947 strike against R.J. Reynolds, with factory superintendent in background.

and shot in the head at point-blank range for being "threatening" while obviously empty-handed and confused. And even a 95-year-old white veteran in an assisted living facility in Chicago who refused to leave his room, shot dead by cops in 2013.

Of those cases, only Oscar Grant's killer went to jail, and that was for a minimal time; the rest of them walked away and mostly got a paid vacation out of it. Now the cops act as "judge, jury and executioner" instead of the lynch mob. Some progress! The promises of the civil rights movement—and the bloody American Civil War before it—are left unfulfilled and will stay that way until capitalism is overturned. Because beneath the raw, bleeding abscess of police brutality, there is the slower destruction of black people's lives caused by capitalist economic decay, ongoing discrimination and the all-sided racial oppression that is integral to the American capitalist system.

Police reform is a hoax and a hustle. Federal investigations go nowhere and the Democrats are simply the soft cops of the capitalist system. There is no road to black liberation and the liberation of all working

chased around a supermarket parking lot by an enraged, elderly black lady who was sure I was working for the Republican Party. I tried everything, including our slogans for black liberation through socialist revolution and for a revolutionary workers party, but nothing worked. All she could imagine was that I was a Republican operative.

Yet, when we said that the hopes for "change" around the incoming Obama administration would be brutally dashed, we were very right. Endless racist cop terror has made Obama's reference to the U.S. as a "colorblind" society pretty threadbare. The reality for most of black America has been, and still is: prison hell, unemployment, home foreclosures, rat-infested ghettos and prison-like inner-city schools.

Around the world, U.S. imperialism under Obama, no less than under Bush,



4 December 2014: "Hands Up" solidarity gesture by St. Louis fast-food workers during national day of action against poverty wages.

## For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!