

Ferguson, Madison, Nationwide Capitalist Rule Means Racist Cop Terror



Students and others protest in Madison, Wisconsin, against cop killing of Tony Robinson (left), March 9. Right: Anthony Hill, another recent victim of racist police.

In front of a crowd commemorating the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama, President Barack Obama offered a rehash of the bald-faced lie that racism is no longer “endemic” to America. This tune is to be expected from the black

overseer of a system that criminalizes young black men as part of maintaining the racial oppression that is woven into the fabric of American capitalist society. Obama declared that “what happened in Ferguson” is “no longer sanctioned by law

or custom,” as it was before the 1950s-’60s civil rights movement. In fact, under its liberal leadership, that struggle, while leading to the dismantling of legal segregation in the South, could not challenge the systemic police violence, poverty and mis-

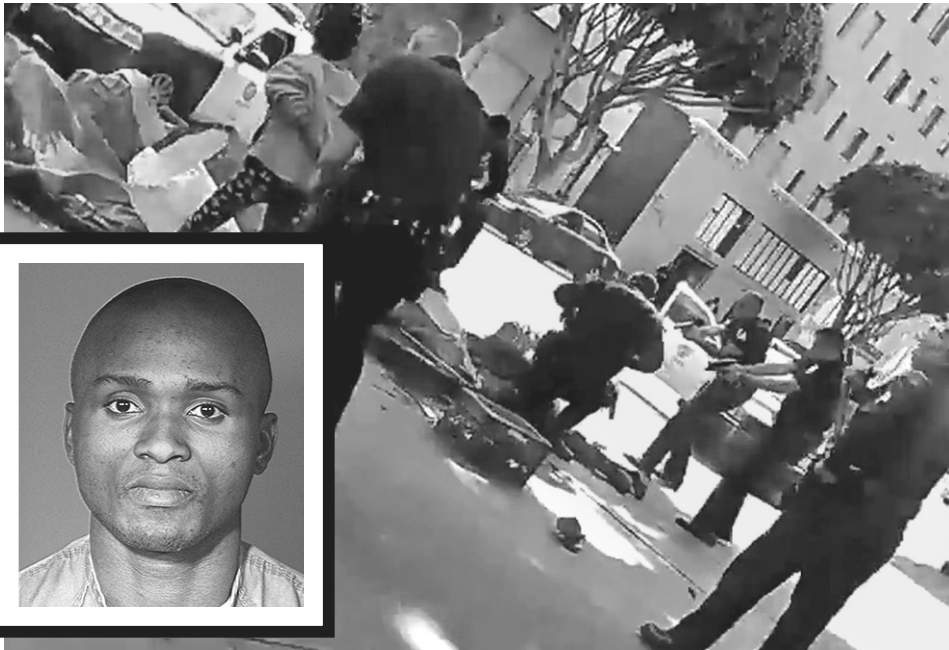
ery that define life for the black masses. Within days of Obama’s speech, killer cops had taken the lives of more unarmed black men, including Tony Robinson, a 19-year-old recent high school graduate in

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Life and Death on Skid Row LAPD Guns Down Homeless Man

LOS ANGELES—Millions have watched the video of cops carrying out the cold-blooded execution of an unarmed homeless black man, Charly Leunde Keunang (known as “Africa” or “Cameroon”), in broad daylight on March 1. After the gang of cops surrounded and savagely beat Keunang on a crowded Skid Row sidewalk, three opened fire and blew him away—yet another victim of racist cop terror. The shooting happened just a block from where Carlos Ocana, who was homeless and mentally ill, fell to his death last year after a cop tasered him on a rooftop. The LAPD’s snuffing out another life has sparked protests by Keunang’s friends, advocates for the homeless and leftists.

The LAPD and city administration of Democratic mayor Eric Garcetti have gone into high gear to blame Keunang for his own death, claiming that he reached for a cop’s gun. The police often resort to this tired excuse, including last August when they gunned down Ezell Ford, a 25-year-old black man plagued by mental



Inset: Charly Leunde Keunang, known as “Africa.” Still from video shows Keunang’s death at hands of L.A. cops on Skid Row, March 1.

health issues. Meanwhile, the bourgeois press is working to defame Keunang’s character—digging up a 15-year-old bank robbery as if it’s relevant—just as they

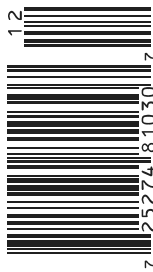
slandered Michael Brown as “no angel.” While hailing the LAPD as “one of the most progressive forces anywhere in the world,” Garcetti told people to

remain calm and await an official investigation. Any such investigation will be nothing more than a whitewash. Such was the case when a jury let off the cops in Orange County who brutally beat to death the homeless Kelly Thomas in July 2011. In each instance, the police were just doing what they are paid to do: enforce racist “law and order” on behalf of the capitalist rulers. Scores of homeless people die *every day* across America, but not fast enough for the ruling class, for whom the homeless, as this class-divided society’s castoffs, are not worth spending a dime on.

Police Occupation of Skid Row

The cops who killed Keunang were assigned to Skid Row, tasked with the daily forcing of homeless people off the sidewalks under the so-called Safer Cities Initiative (SCI). Initiated in 2006 under Democratic mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, the SCI war on the homeless is an application of the “broken windows” strategy of policing that current New York City police commissioner William Bratton brought to L.A. in 2002 when he arrived to head up the LAPD. By the logic of

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Sacramento, California

Cops Charge Black Activist with “Lynching”

On January 18, Maile Hampton, a young black woman and member of the ANSWER Coalition, was leading chants at a Sacramento, California, protest against a pro-cop rally. An online video shows the cops violently attacking several protesters, slamming a woman against a cop car and repeatedly throwing a man to the ground. While both were being handcuffed, the crowd chanted to let them go. Five weeks later, Hampton was arrested at her home. She now faces up to four years in jail on charges of felony “lynching”! As

Defend Maile Hampton!

the Partisan Defense Committee wrote in a March 14 letter protesting these outrageous charges: “A law supposedly intended to criminalize the extra-legal murder of black people, Mexicans and others by the racist terrorists of the KKK and their ilk, is now wielded by the police against those

who actively protest the modern-day legal lynchings carried out by the racist cops.”

Under the provisions of California’s so-called “anti-lynching” law, “the taking by means of a riot of any person from the lawful custody of any peace officer is a lynching,” a felony punishable by up to four years in prison. The law was enacted in 1933, a year in which 28 lynchings, 24 of black people, were officially reported in the U.S.—no doubt a small fraction of the actual number. In November that year, a howling mob of thousands stormed the San Jose jail, seizing, torturing and then stringing up two unemployed white men who were suspected of kidnapping and murdering the son of a wealthy local department store owner. Republican governor Jim Rolph praised the lynching as “the best lesson California has ever given the country” and pledged to pardon anybody convicted. Only one of the lynch-ers was ever charged under the “anti-lynching” law, a charge that was soon dropped.

Indeed, the law has never seriously been used against lynch terror. Instead, it came to be wielded by the courts and cops to expand and defend police powers. In a 1971 case, a California state judge argued that the word “lynching” did not mean seizing people in police custody in order to kill them. Instead, he ruled that a lynching was *any* protest against police arrest by “means of riot,” that being defined as an unauthorized gathering of two or more people that “disturbs the peace.”

In 1999, this ruling was taken to its Kafkaesque extreme in a court judgment

that declared: “A person who takes part in a riot leading to his escape from custody can be convicted of his own lynching”! Among those who have been arrested on the charge of “self lynching” was Tiffany Tran, a diminutive Asian American, who was charged with lynching herself for yelling “help” as she and other activists were being hauled away by cops during a 2011 Occupy Oakland protest.

One of the more chilling applications of this “anti-lynching” law occurred last July in Murrieta, a small town in Southern California. In a throwback to the Klan terror and lynchings of Mexican immigrants in nearby San Diego during the 1930s, armed white racists mobilized to turn back busloads of Latino immigrants being shipped to a local detention facility. The only arrests that day were of five people who had courageously come out to protest the anti-immigrant frenzy, only to be charged with “lynching.”

Here is an object lesson in not just the futility but the deadly danger of looking to the capitalist state to outlaw racist terror, whether that of Klan nightriders or the state’s own marauding police thugs. As we have always argued, the government, its cops and courts will turn around and use such laws against the working class, the oppressed and any perceived challenge to the vicious exploitation and racism that defines the rule of American capitalism. The whole history of California’s anti-lynching law is a graphic example.

We call on defenders of democratic rights and opponents of racist oppression to demand that all the charges against Maile Hampton be dropped now. Contact Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert by mail at 901 G Street, Sacramento, CA 95814, or by e-mail daooffice@sacda.org. Send copies to sac@ANSWERcoalition.org. ■



TROTSKY

Reforge the Fourth International

Under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, the Fourth International was founded in 1938 as a proletarian vanguard in opposition to the social-democratic Second and Stalinized Third Internationals. With much of its best cadre wiped out during the World War II period, the Fourth International was destroyed in the early 1950s under its then-leader, Michel Pablo, who had impressionistically responded to the postwar social overturns and expansion of Stalinism. The

Pabloites liquidated, wherever they could, into the Stalinist Communist Parties (and elsewhere into social-democratic or petty-bourgeois nationalist organizations), renouncing the need to build Trotskyist parties. Albeit belatedly and partially, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the U.S. joined the fight against this revisionist current.

Our forebears, the Revolutionary Tendency, waged a struggle within the SWP as it was succumbing to Pabloite revisionism in the early 1960s. Today, the International Communist League remains dedicated to the fight to reforge the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. We reprint below excerpts from an article anticipating the Fourth International’s founding, which appeared as the lead in the first issue of the New International, theoretical organ of the American Trotskyists in the 1930s.

The whole history of the modern proletarian movement has only served to underscore the all-importance and indispensability of that most highly perfected of all its instruments: the political party. Especially in our time has it become the master key to all problems. The class war is fought by class armies. The working class as a whole—to say nothing of its necessary allies in other sections of the population—is not characterized by firm homogeneity, it is stratified at different levels of consciousness, it is divided by conflicting ideologies, by separatist interests of caste, religion, nationality, sex, age. Emerging from its ranks—but transcending these differences and consequently able to overcome them—is its vanguard, the revolutionary political party. The party embodies the accumulated experiences of the proletariat distilled into its revolutionary theory. It is the repository of the consciousness of the class. It embraces the most advanced, the most militant, the most devoted, unites them firmly on the basis of tested principles and welds them together in rigorous discipline....

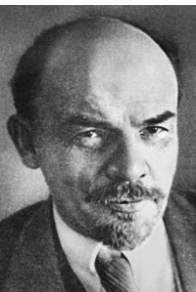
The day of *national* revolutionary parties ended long ago, as did the day of national party programs. In the period when world politics and world economy exist as distinct entities, there can be only one revolutionary party—the International, with sections in every country....

The Fourth International? This is no meaningless phrase. *It is a fighting program!* It means a fight to the death against Fascism, imperialism, war. It means an intransigent struggle against treacherous social reformism, bureaucratic Stalinism, cowardly compromising centrism of all species. It means the unconditional struggle to defend the Soviet Union which social democrats and Stalinists left in the lurch in Germany when they permitted the arch-anti-Sovietist Hitler to come to power without a battle. It means the militant struggle for revolutionary Marxism, for the final victory of the working class.

For the Fourth International! For revolutionary Marxism!

That is the unsullied banner our periodical will defend. In periods such as the one we are passing through now, it becomes fashionable in certain quarters to seek the reasons for defeat and reaction in all corners except where they are to be found, to trace the causes everywhere except to their roots. Not the traducers of internationalism are at fault; perhaps it is internationalism itself. Not the traducers of Marxism; perhaps it is Marxism itself which requires revision or “re-interpretation.” As yesterday, so today, we shall continue to work with all our strength for all the fundamental theories of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, which have been tested through and through and confirmed a thousand times over and from every angle.

—“For the Fourth International!” *New International* (July 1934)



LENIN

Correction on Cromwell and Calvinism

In its discussion of the 1642-51 English Civil War, Part One of the article “The Rise of British Imperialism” (WV No. 1062, 20 February 2015) blundered by referring to Oliver Cromwell as “the great Calvinist leader.” A thoroughly religious man, Cromwell’s sympathies lay with the Independents (today known as Congregationalists), which arose during the Puritan reformation of the Church of England. Although heavily influenced by the theology of John Calvin, the Independents were not the dominant Calvinist denomination, a position held by the Presbyterian church on the British Isles.

Most members of Parliament were Presbyterians when that body commissioned the New Model Army in 1645 to combat Royalist forces. Three years later, after Parliament moved to disband its army, whose ranks had been filled by Puritans under the leadership of Cromwell, the Presbyterians seeking to conciliate the monarchy were expelled from Parliament by force of arms in what became known as Pride’s Purge. The Scottish Presbyterians, who switched sides in the course of the war, also drew the wrath of Cromwell’s Puritan army. In 1650, Cromwell famously wrote in a letter to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland: “I beseech you in the bowels of Christ think it possible you may be mistaken.”

Cromwell did not direct fire only at the Presbyterian compromisers. After the defeat of the Royalists in England, he crushed the radical egalitarian sects

popular within the most plebeian layers of his army, such as the Levellers, who mutinied in 1649 over the planned invasion of Ireland. More than matters of religious doctrine were at play in the events of the English Revolution. As Leon Trotsky, co-leader with V.I. Lenin of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, observed:

“The adherents of the Episcopalian, or Anglican (half-Catholic) Church, were the party of the court, the nobility, and of course the higher clergy. The Presbyterians were the party of the bourgeoisie, the party of wealth and education. The Independents and the Puritans in general were the party of the petty bourgeoisie, and the petty independent landowners. The Levellers were the incipient party of the left wing of the petty bourgeoisie, the plebs. Under the integument of ecclesiastical disputes, under the form of a struggle for the religious structure of the Church, there proceeded a social self-determination of classes, a regrouping of classes on new, bourgeois foundations. In politics, the Presbyterian party stood for a limited monarchy, the Independents, also sometimes called ‘root and branch men,’ or—in the language of our day—‘radicals,’ were for a republic. The lukewarm nature of the Presbyterians was fully in accord with the contradictory interests of the bourgeoisie, vacillating between the nobility and the plebs. The party of the Independents, which had dared to carry its ideas and slogans to their logical conclusion, naturally supplanted the Presbyterians in the towns and villages which were the centers of the awakened petty-bourgeois masses, who had become the most important force of the revolution.”

—“Where Is Britain Going?” (1925)

WORKERS VANGUARD

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Lear Auto Contract Sellout UAW Tops Tout Two-Tier Bait and Switch

In preparation for contract talks with the “Big Three” U.S. automakers (GM, Ford and Fiat Chrysler) in September, UAW president Dennis Williams has addressed himself to the task of setting what he considers reasonable expectations for the membership. The rank and file is not, it seems, feeling all that reasonable. Workers are well aware that the Detroit auto giants are today swimming in profits, which were amassed by slashing hourly pay rates largely via the agency of the two-tier wage system. They are fed up with that system. Getting rid of it when the current contract expires tops the list of demands contained in bargaining resolutions submitted to UAW locals, according to a December survey by *The Detroit News*.

UAW members should have more than ample cause for concern over the desire and ability of Williams and his cohorts to take up this fight. Consider the deal reached by the UAW bureaucrats with Lear Corporation, an auto parts manufacturer, last September. Far from ending two-tier level wages as advertised, it packaged the continuation of substandard and unequal compensation in a different manner.

Williams has given a nod and only a nod to the expectations of the membership in the upcoming negotiations. He recently reminded union members that older (top-tier) workers have not received a raise in nine years and that achieving equal pay for equal work with a wage increase is not likely to be achieved, despite the earlier lip service he gave to the objective. At a December press conference, Williams

underlined his paramount concern: “It is about how we keep the companies competitive.” This same rationale was given in 2007 when the UAW tops told workers that two-tier wages were necessary to make the Detroit Three competitive with their Asian and German rivals in the “right to work” South, and would preserve union jobs.

Such “America first” chauvinism is the stock in trade of the trade-union bureauc-

its allegiance to the bosses by its integration into the Democratic Party, one of the dual parties of capitalist rule in this country. Although Democratic Party politicians often hypocritically mouth concerns for the wellbeing of working people and the poor, what you usually get is the same raw deal in a seemingly prettier package. In 2007-09, then-UAW president Ron Gettelfinger worked hand-in-glove with both the outgoing Bush administration

and with the newly elected Barack Obama to extend the two-tier concession and impose a six-year strike moratorium on auto workers as part of the bailout of the industry. So the workers

got the shaft, and the fat cats responsible for the disaster afflicting the auto industry wouldn’t have to dismantle their classic car collections.

At the end of World War II, the U.S. was the only imperialist power to emerge with its industrial infrastructure intact. In that context, the UAW was able to wield its strength to obtain good wages as well as unheard-of benefit packages (full health, mental health and pension coverage). Becoming one of the most formidable unions in the U.S., the union grew to a peak of about 1.5 million members in 1979. Since then, union membership has fallen sharply and there are now less than 400,000 UAW card holders, many in jobs unrelated to the auto industry.

The decline in wages has been as precipitous, especially in parts manufacturing where nearly three-quarters of auto workers are now employed. The wage slashing of entry-level parts workers traces back to the mid 1980s, blossoming into the tier system, which was first introduced at major parts manufacturers like Delphi in the 2003 contract. GM had only recently divested itself of that company and begun to outsource many of its parts orders. Today, auto parts workers make roughly 63 percent as much as those employed in the assembly plants. Additionally, about 14 percent of the workforce at the parts plants consists of agency-provided contract workers (a growing trend common to all industry) whose median wage is just above \$10 an hour.

This second-class status tramples on the historical role parts workers played in the organization of the auto industry. To no small extent, the impetus for the UAW’s founding came from the giant 1934 Auto-Lite strike in Toledo, Ohio (then a center of the auto parts industry). Moreover, “just in time” assembly, where there are no inventory stockpiles, gives striking workers in small parts plants considerable clout in their struggles against the bosses. In 1998, a walkout at the Flint Metal Center plant, expanding to the Flint East Delphi Facility, resulted in the shutdown of 27 of GM’s 29 North American assembly facilities due to lack of parts. Just as unorganized and often foreign-owned

assembly plants (seven of which are now among the 15 most productive in the U.S.) have driven down the wages of workers in UAW-organized plants, the paltry hourly rates paid to workers in auto parts facilities have dragged down the wages earned by those on the assembly lines. Today, assembly workers earn 21 percent less than they did just over a decade ago.

Such givebacks have infuriated the workers and engendered distrust of the UAW leadership, which last June was met with some opposition when it pushed through a 25 percent union dues hike. The increase was purportedly to build up a strike fund, mysteriously depleted given the dearth of strike action, in advance of this September’s contract expirations. Not a few of the union skeptics wondered how such an increase would serve to entice unorganized workers to join the UAW. Of course, a robust strike fund would help sustain workers in the event the union engages in class battle.

A Victory That Wasn’t

The anger and militancy of the UAW workforce as well as the duplicity and treachery that the union bureaucracy willingly employs to shortchange the workers and do a solid for the bosses was evident in a strike last September against Lear in Hammond, Indiana. At that plant, an integrated workforce of some 760, most represented by UAW Local 2335, manufactures seats for the Explorer and Taurus vehicles assembled at Ford’s nearby Chicago assembly plant on Torrence Avenue. A month after the old union contract had expired, negotiations were stalled; the two-tier system was the sticking point. Workers in UAW Local 551 at the Torrence plant, also aggrieved by the tier system, planned a solidarity demonstration under the banner “End Two Tier! Start with Lear!” at their plant.



Boone/Detroit Free Press

UAW president Dennis Williams, behind Democratic vice president Joe Biden at red-white-and-blue Labor Day parade in Detroit, 2014.

On September 13, Local 2335 pulled workers off the job, shutting down Lear’s Hammond plant. Although union bureaucrats had earlier put the kibosh on the Torrence demonstration, its cancellation did not stop expressions of union solidarity. UAW members from nearby factories joined the Lear pickets, and Teamsters honored the lines. By 11:30 a.m., production on the Torrence assembly line was halted. Shortly after noon the next day, a tentative deal was announced. Union officials declared the two-tier wage scale at the Hammond plant dead and gone, trumpeting the “victory” as a model for contract talks with the Detroit Three. Lear also called the agreement a “breakthrough,” a sure sign that the workers got screwed.

To paraphrase Mark Twain, the news of the death of two-tier at Lear was greatly

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Equal Pay for Equal Work! Organize the Unorganized!

racy. The early American socialist Daniel De Leon aptly described these union tops as the “labor lieutenants of the capitalist class.” The UAW was forged in the 1936-37 Flint sit-down strike, which successfully repulsed a cop assault and defied court injunctions, inspiring workers to occupy production lines in plant after plant across the country. The union was then tempered in the 1941 battles at Ford’s River Rouge plant, where recognition was won by breaking through the racist barriers that blocked white workers from joining hands with their black class brothers. Those socialists and Communists who had been instrumental in these class battles were driven out of the union in the late 1940s by UAW president Walter Reuther, as part of quashing opposition to U.S. imperialism’s Cold War against the Soviet Union.

The UAW International bureaucracy, known today as Solidarity House, reveals

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CORRECTIONS

Our obituary for Jeff Higgins (WV No. 1063, 6 March 2015) misidentified the Confederate flag that was burned. It was not the “stars and bars,” which was the official flag of the Confederacy between 1861 and 1863, but the better-known Confederate battle flag. The article “Hong Kong Protests: Spearhead for Capitalist Counterrevolution” (WV No. 1054, 17 October 2014) wrongly referred to the National Democratic Institute as the National Democracy Institute.

UAW...

(continued from page 3)

exaggerated. Within days, word leaked that the UAW bureaucrats had omitted a key concession in ballyhooing the deal. The bulk of those in the lower tier would be reclassified as “subassembly” workers, to be shuttled off to a new location in nearby Portage, Indiana, and paid sub-living wages. The union tops had pulled a classic bait-and-switch operation. In 2007, when the UAW struck a deal with Chrysler after just six hours on the picket line, workers called their walkout a “Hollywood strike.” The Lear action was also just for show, a production put on jointly by the Lear bosses and the UAW tops, designed to let an angry workforce blow off some steam before being presented a false bill of goods and sent back to work.

In the guise of eliminating tiers at Lear, the bureaucrats acceded to the creation of an entirely new category of workers making barely more than the federal minimum wage. Under this new sellout contract, workers who remain at the Hammond plant will start at \$16.50 an hour and cap out at \$21.58. Those at the Portage subassembly plant will start at \$12 an hour and cap out at \$15.25, well below the starting wage in Hammond. Lear human resources head Tom DiDonato bragged: “That is a whole different rate that makes us economically competitive.” The strategy of carving up the workforce to weaken the unions is hardly limited to auto. A case in point was the 2008 Boeing Machinists strike, during which non-union contract workers, performing jobs once done on site by Machinists, supplied parts for a struck facility in the Seattle area.

In relegating an entire layer of lower paid workers to a separate facility with fewer benefits, the UAW tops have done the bosses a real service. The dissension that the tier system engenders between workers can have an impact on the assembly line to the displeasure of management. For example, Fiat Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne, sounding more like the left wing of Solidarity House than a corporate fat cat, offered: “I do not think that it is a stable environment to promote an environment within our plants when you have two tiers of wages and you have people doing fundamentally the same type of work.” In 2013, Marchionne notoriously threatened to pull the plug on auto production in Italy and ship it elsewhere if union workers did not cave in to his demands.

With the new Local 2335 contract, workers from different tiers won’t be bumping elbows on the factory floor anymore. The tension that worries the auto bosses is dissipated when the second tier is renamed and off-sited. In addition, the solidarity between the tiers that was manifested in the strike is likely to be weakened. The bosses’ hope is “out of sight, out of mind.”



Watkins/Times of Northwest Indiana

Hammond, Indiana: Auto workers during brief strike at Lear plant last September. UAW bureaucrats falsely trumpeted settlement as a victory that ended the hated two-tier setup.

Come this September, the union tops are again likely to try to proclaim victory over the tier system while attempting to sell the membership a new scheme to preserve that system’s attack on wages and working-class unity.

For a Class-Struggle Perspective

As a cover for its complicity in the driving down of wages, the UAW bureaucrats engage in chauvinist rants over unfair foreign competition. These outbursts are often in the service of pushing protectionist measures, which abet the efforts of the American bosses to set auto workers in the U.S. against auto workers elsewhere. Solidarity House has done damn little to organize the unorganized (900,000 plus workers are employed in auto-related industries) and has barely touched the foreign-owned assembly plants here. In its attempt to gain a foothold in the South at the Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee, the UAW has circulated union authorization cards that read: “We recognize that our job security and our success as employees are bound up with the success of our company.” It should be noted that the UAW lost its recognition vote last year after agreeing to abandon door-to-door and barstool organizing methods.

Everyone knows that the power of the UAW can be recovered only by a massive campaign to organize the South. This task is impossible without an attack against the race/caste oppression of black people that is the bedrock of the capitalist order in this country; racism has served as a wedge between black and white workers. It is no accident that with the UAW back on its heels, the rapacious usurers are now looting long-abandoned Detroit, the one-time center of the union’s power. Nor is it an accident that the right-to-work South has come North, first to Indiana, then Michigan and most recently Wisconsin, all states with a significant number

of auto-related manufacturers and significant numbers of UAW-organized workers.

It needs to be remembered that before the class battles of the 1930s that built the CIO industrial unions, workers had *no* rights vis-à-vis their employers, except the rights to have the crap beaten out of them and lose their job. The right of workers to organize had to be won on the battlefields of class struggle; the putatively pro-labor laws that were passed at the time came only after the working class had already begun to stir. The purpose of this legisla-



Wayne State University

Detroit: Auto workers during bitterly fought 113-day UAW strike against General Motors in 1945-46. The union was forged, and gains won, through plant occupations and on the picket lines.

tion was to contain militant workers struggle within the framework of capitalist rule.

Thousands of strikes occurred up until the eve of World War II and a giant strike wave broke out in its immediate aftermath. By the mid 1950s, 35 percent of workers in this country were organized. That kind of class struggle is the short-term recipe for reversing the right-wing attacks on the union movement. There is only one long-term solution to the systemic poverty and immiseration of the working masses and the concurrent enrichment of the bosses under capitalism and that is the overturn of the capitalist order by the working class through socialist revolution.

If things look glum for working people now, they looked, if anything, worse at the onset of the Great Depression. Today,

car sales are up and auto manufacturers have done some hiring (prompting some recent growth in UAW membership) and are looking to do more of the same. Ford has reached the contract limit for the percentage of lower-tier workers it can hire and may be forced to add new hires at tier-one rates. The exceptions to the second-tier cap granted by the UAW tops to Fiat Chrysler and GM are due to expire in September.

The auto manufacturers do have some money for bonuses and wage increases but are not about to sacrifice the double-digit cuts to compensation that they have achieved with government intervention and the assistance of the union bureaucrats over the last two decades. The craven posture of union officialdom can only encourage the corporate vultures to demand more. Solidarity House wants to oblige the bosses again but not to the point that pissed-off auto workers turn them out of office. The working and poor people in this country who have seen the rich get much richer while their own families get much poorer would undoubtedly be more than just a little pleased if action was taken to turn this state of affairs around. All in all, the situation for auto workers is not unfavorable and a strike in September is anticipated by many.

The class-collaborationism of the union bureaucracy has long threatened the very ability of the trade unions to survive. The disparity between the appetites of the pro-

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Down With War on Refugees! Full Citizenship Rights Now!

The following article is reprinted from Australasian Spartacist No. 225 (Autumn 2015), newspaper of the Spartacist League of Australia.

**Australasian
SPARTACIST**

Under Australia's notorious mandatory detention policy, first implemented by the Keating Labor government and imposed by successive Liberal and Labor governments with increasing brutality, desperate refugees continue to be imprisoned indefinitely in detention camps under atrocious conditions. Many of those now incarcerated have fled imperialist devastation in their homelands of Afghanistan and Iraq or imperialist-backed terror in Sri Lanka. Under legislation introduced in 2013 by the then Rudd Labor government, refugees arriving by boat are now denied asylum in Australia. Thousands have been transferred to remote Pacific islands where they languish while their claims are "processed." On top of these measures the current Liberal/National Coalition government has closely cooperated with the murderous Sri Lankan regime to intercept and return refugees fleeing from there to Australia. Under a shroud of secrecy enforced by the government, Australian naval and customs authorities have also intercepted refugees at sea and forced them back to transit points in Indonesia.

Australia is the only country in the world that mandates the indefinite deten-

tion of refugee children as the first and only option. A recent report by the Australian Human Rights Commission into children in detention highlights the nightmare refugees experience. It revealed alarming rates of mental illness, self-harm, and assault. The [Tony] Abbott government's response to the report was to first delay its release and then denounce it as a political exercise.

The federal government's cruel mistreatment of refugees, fully backed by the Labor Party, is consistent with Australia's racist history, from the dispossession and brutal oppression of the Aboriginal people to the White Australia policy to keep Asian and dark-skinned masses out. Today, the ongoing war against immigrants and Aborigines is designed to sow divisions amongst the working class and thwart united struggles against the union-busting, profit-gouging capitalist rulers.

The multiracial proletariat has the social power and interest to come to the defence of refugees. But the obstacle to mobilising the working class is the pro-capitalist trade-union misleadership, which buys into and promotes Australian nationalism. A class-struggle leadership of the unions, linked to a revolutionary workers party, would fight to close the detention camps and inscribe on its banner: Full citizenship rights for all who have made it here!

We print below an 11 February protest letter to Peter Dutton, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, from the Partisan Defence Committee (PDC) in



Refugee Action Collective

Above: Riot squad descends on Australia's Manus Island refugee detention camp, January 16. Right: Refugees on hunger strike, January 19.



no credit

Australia. The PDC is a class-struggle non-sectarian legal and social defence organisation whose political views are in accordance with the Spartacist League/Australia.

* * *

We protest the federal government's vicious persecution of refugees. For having the temerity to seek a safe place to live, refugees (including women and children) arriving in Australia by boat are held captive in detention centres. Suffering under the government's cruel policy of indefinite mandatory detention the only options given to these asylum seekers are to return to the country they fled, where they face the very real prospect of death, imprisonment or torture, or in the case of those incarcerated on Nauru and Manus Island, to "resettle" in impoverished Cambodia or Papua New Guinea (PNG).

With no other means of protesting, desperate refugees are increasingly putting their lives in jeopardy. In January hundreds of refugees went on hunger strike on Manus Island, protesting the condi-

tions which they aptly likened to those at the notorious U.S.-run Guantánamo Bay prison and torture centre. The hunger strike ended when security guards stormed the compounds and amongst other things seized mobile phones, one of the few means refugees have of communicating their situation to the outside world.

It is reported that the Manus Island centre increasingly resembles a secretive prison camp with threats, arbitrary raids, beatings, and the disappearing of anyone thought to be "of interest." Approximately 58 refugees were forcibly removed from the detention centre and jailed in appalling conditions in the PNG prison system.

Iranian detainees on hunger strike against their indefinite detention at Darwin's Wickham Point detention centre are being met with the same callousness and contempt. This, despite the fact that one of them is close to death.

We condemn the government's ongoing persecution of asylum-seekers and demand: Close the detention centres! Release all the detainees immediately with full citizenship rights in Australia! ■

Stevan Kirschbaum Acquitted Reinstate Boston School Bus Union Leaders Now!

On March 5, a jury took just ten minutes to acquit Boston school bus union leader Stevan Kirschbaum, who had been slapped with frame-up charges of assault and battery with a deadly weapon and trespassing as part of an anti-union vendetta. The verdict was a victory for the besieged drivers represented by United Steelworkers (USW) Local 8751, many of whom are Haitian, Cape Verdean or Latino, as well as for labor more broadly. Veolia Transportation (now called Transdev) has been waging a vicious union-busting campaign against this workforce since July 2013, when the Boston school district handed over operations of the school bus fleet to the company.

The conflict between the union and the company flared up on 8 October 2013. With Veolia routinely flouting work rules, arbitrarily reassigning routes and short-changing drivers on their paychecks, the drivers demanded to talk to management before boarding their buses that day. Management responded by locking out the drivers, who then set up pickets at the bus yards in protest. Bus service resumed the next day as Veolia met with Local 8751 representatives. Meanwhile, the company vin-



Workers World

Boston, March 5: Stevan Kirschbaum speaks to supporters outside courthouse after his acquittal.

dictively suspended five union leaders for having supposedly led a "wildcat strike." Four were then fired: grievance committee chairman Kirschbaum as well as local vice president Steve Gillis, recording secretary Andre Francois and steward Garry Murchison. (For more, see "Boston Job Action:

No Reprisals Against School Bus Drivers!" WV No. 1033, 1 November 2013.)

The attack against Local 8751 was supported by the Boston city rulers and their kept media, with Democratic mayor Thomas Menino vowing to "make sure this illegal behavior has consequences."

Menino especially screamed for the heads of Kirschbaum and Gillis, who are supported by the reformist Workers World Party (WWP), red-baiting them as a "rogue element" and "rabble rousers who cause trouble." These comments were echoed at the time by Martin J. Walsh, a supposed "friend of labor" Democrat who succeeded Menino at City Hall. Such virulent reaction to the mere whiff of labor struggle underscores that the Democrats, no less than the Republicans, represent the interests of the capitalist exploiters. Small wonder Walsh "has done nothing to defend the drivers, despite labor's backing of his election," as the WWP laments in its article "Boston Union Under Siege" (workers.org, 26 February).

Veolia and the city bosses took their vendetta against Kirschbaum one step further last June 30, the day the drivers' contract expired. When union members went to their break room for a contract briefing, management tried to block the doorway with a table. The charges that were fabricated against Kirschbaum were for having allegedly pushed the table against the legs of a manager.

Bus drivers and their allies repeatedly packed the courtroom to demonstrate solidarity, and Local 8751 organized weekly bus yard rallies. The defeat of the frame-up gives impetus to the campaign to reinstate the four fired union leaders, whose case is currently being heard by an arbitrator. To help beat back the union-busters, the labor movement must stand behind the drivers and demand that Kirschbaum, Gillis, Francois and Murchison get their jobs back. *An injury to one is an injury to all!* ■

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. Part One appeared in WV No. 1063 (6 March).

PART TWO

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was a youth group that emerged out of the lunch counter sit-in movement sweeping Southern black campuses in 1960. It was formed vaguely under the auspices of King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Its initial goal was formal, legal equality, and it accepted King's basic pacifist strategy, as you can see with "nonviolent" in its name. To put the strategy in my own words: you have a nonviolent demonstration, get your head beat in by racist Southern sheriffs, scandalize the nation and force the federal government to send in the troops to "protect" black people. SNCC activists started out with the illusion that the U.S. government was on their side.

As Marxists, we know that the bourgeois state is not neutral but an organ for the suppression of the working class and the black masses by the capitalist class. Contrary to liberal myth, federal troops were only brought in when black people began to defend themselves and fight back, from Little Rock in 1957 to Birmingham in 1963. SNCC learned the hard way that the government was not on their side.

It is useful to make a comparison between Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and SNCC. SDS started out as the student group of the League for Industrial Democracy (LID). Moribund by 1960, the LID had served as a handmaiden of the U.S. government in the left and labor movement. Populated by what is called "State Department socialists" such as Norman Thomas and Michael Harrington, the LID also counted among its members UAW president Walter Reuther and Bayard Rustin. As the SDS radicalized, the LID was horrified by what it had given birth to, just as the SCLC was horrified by SNCC's leftward motion. As the famous Bob Dylan song "The Times They Are A-Changin'" said: "Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command." There was a political and generational distance.

In 1961-62, SNCC organized black people in Albany, Georgia, in a very popular, all-sided attack on segregation. The KKK was mobilizing and things would really heat up. Then Martin Luther King would come in for a weekend and, to the dismay of the SNCC activists, declare a truce to contain the struggle. In the documentary *Eyes on the Prize*, you can hear a leader from SCLC complaining, "We were like firefighters" having to put out the fire. It came to a head when the cops attacked a rally outside a black church and black youth began to fight back however they could, throwing bricks and bottles. King came in again to announce a "day of penance" for the horrible crime of black peo-

ple actually daring to defend themselves against police brutality. SNCC refused to condemn the action and started referring to King as "De Lawd," as in, "the Lord says this." It was not meant as a compliment. There is quick reference to this in the movie *Selma* but it is never explained [see "Selma: The Movie and the Real Story," WV No. 1060, 23 January].

SNCC, the Democrats and the Klan

In 1963, at the famous March on Washington, SNCC saw how the whole liberal establishment and the liberal wing of the trade-union bureaucracy were used to keep the lid on the civil rights move-

patsy with the Kennedy administration as part of the whole liberal-labor politics of Rustin, [the NAACP's Roy] Wilkins, [A. Philip] Randolph, Reuther, King, the Catholic and Protestant hierarchy." The same names always appear. There was a real social-democratic establishment, backed by much of the reformist left, which worked overtime alongside King to keep the movement within the bounds of liberal bourgeois politics.

It was this establishment that put pressure on SNCC chairman John Lewis to tone down his criticism of the Democrats at the march, which he did. The whole thing became a giant liberal prayer fest, channeling the masses into the Dem-

was especially important during the Cold War. Racist violence in the South had become an embarrassment overseas, and U.S. imperialism was competing with the Soviet Union for influence in Africa and Asia. You can see a hint of this in *Eyes on the Prize* when one of the Little Rock Nine—black students who integrated the high school—gives an obviously rehearsed speech commenting: "Communists enjoy taking advantage of situations like this [meaning racist violence] to twist the minds of the people of the world." I would bet this was written by the NAACP, which was running the Little Rock case. Seeking to posture as the champions of "democracy," and with Jim Crow segregation outmoded, the U.S. government eventually acquiesced to the demand for legal equality in the South—but not without a lot of struggle.

As Clayborne Carson makes clear in his definitive book on SNCC, *In Struggle* (1981), the Kennedy administration offered civil rights groups, including SNCC, funding to move them away from direct action and to doing voter registration, assuming it would be less explosive and more useful to the Democratic Party. But any move toward the 20th century was explosive in Mississippi. In the summer of 1964, when civil rights workers Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner were killed, SNCC organized 80,000 black people whose right to vote had been denied to sign protest ballots. SNCC took these protest ballots and formed the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). With Fannie Lou Hamer, a local woman, at its head, the MFDP delegates tried to get seated at the 1964 Democratic Party National Convention in Atlantic City in place of the all-white Jim Crow delegation from Mississippi.

SNCC and the MFDP were offered a rotten compromise whereby they would get two at-large seats while the entire Dixiecrat delegation would be seated. The usual suspects—King, Reuther, Rustin—were there to try and browbeat SNCC into accepting the compromise. But this time SNCC wasn't going to be intimidated, and they rejected it. James Forman came to the conclusion: "No longer was there any hope, among those who still had it, that the federal government would change the situation in the Deep South."

It was in this charged atmosphere that I went down to Mississippi for the second Freedom Summer. Mississippi was basically a police state. Blacks and whites couldn't drive in the same car for fear of Klan terror. Everywhere along the highways you would see billboards urging you to join the White Citizens' Councils, which were basically Klansmen in suits. We knew it was dangerous and we tried to prepare. For example, in all our cars we disabled the overhead light that comes on when you open the door because it silhouetted you, especially at night, and made you an easy target. For years after, I would always flinch when the car light came on, afraid I was going to be shot.

I want to deal with some of the contradictions I saw in SNCC. I was in Gulfport, Mississippi. We didn't do much voter regis-



Bob Adelman

Above: Protesters raise portraits of civil rights martyrs Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman at 1964 Democratic National Convention, where Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party tried and failed to unseat Dixiecrat delegation. Below: January 1964 meeting between Democratic president Lyndon Johnson and Martin Luther King, with other liberal civil rights leaders.

Bettmann



ment. An early leader of SNCC, James Forman, who is slandered in the movie *Selma* as some sort of petulant jerk feuding with King over turf, commented bitterly in his autobiography, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (1972): "Originally planned as a march for jobs and freedom, with the emphasis on black people and their demands, the March on Washington of 1963 turned into a victory celebration for the Kennedy administration and its supporters."

He went on: "The sellout leadership of the March on Washington was playing

ocratic Party. Malcolm X forthrightly called it the "Farce on Washington" and offered a blunt rebuttal to King: "I don't see any American dream; I see an American nightmare." We honor Malcolm X, despite our difference with his nationalism and religiosity. Today is 50 years since his assassination. There was no reconciliation between Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, who told the truth about the Democrats.

The U.S. government filmed the March on Washington for foreign consumption to prove how democratic the U.S. was. This

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

tration, being somewhat disillusioned with the Democrats after the last year's Democratic National Convention. We decided to concentrate on lunch counter sit-ins. When our integrated group wasn't served at a lunch counter, we organized black youth, mostly teenagers, to demonstrate in front of the store. We were then surrounded by a screaming racist mob. Each day, our forces became bigger, but so did the mobs. The cops would come in their squad cars with Confederate flag license plates, in case you didn't know what side they were on, and laugh at the whole scene.

Luckily, there was a longshore union in Gulfport. It was a segregated black local of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), and I heard there were meetings about us between the union president, the mayor and the police chief. The union president said that if we were arrested or killed, the longshoremen would go on strike and shut down the port. The threat of that kind of political strike was enough. We weren't arrested or killed and the lunch counter began serving blacks. I was impressed with these longshoremen and wish I could have met them. They were the power in the background. I thought that there must be some left group out there who knew how to organize the power of labor in defense of black rights. In the SL's successful anti-Klan united fronts in the 1980s and '90s, I saw that power consciously mobilized in the fight for black freedom.

While I was down in Mississippi, the 1965 Los Angeles Watts upheaval broke out over police brutality. Martin Luther

Fannie Lou Hamer speaking to Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party supporters outside Capitol in Washington, D.C., September 1965.



the illusions in the federal government. In the 1960s, FBI informers held top-level leadership roles in the Klan. The Klan couldn't move without the FBI knowing it beforehand. The FBI rode with the KKK; they weren't there to disrupt the Klan, they were loyal members of both organizations. This was government policy directed not only by J. Edgar Hoover but also by liberals like Kennedy, and by Johnson.

Liberal Pacifism vs. Armed Self-Defense

As you can read in the document "Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom" (1966, reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9) the SL stood for armed self-defense in the South. Akinyele Omowale

based Deacons for Defense and Justice, this book gives many more examples.

That more people were armed corresponds with my own experience in Mississippi. Worried about bomb threats, we moved out of our house for a while. Along with another young white woman, I went to stay with a friendly black family. When night fell, they urged us to sleep in one of the bedrooms, insisting that there would be "no violence." When I looked around the room, every guy there was holding a rifle or a shotgun. I thought, "Well, this is the kind of nonviolence I'm for!"

The white SNCC worker I drove back to California with at the end of the summer had spent his time in the Mississippi Delta, which was more dangerous. The SNCC chapter there had encouraged black people to vote and assured them protection if they did. He spent every night touring around the black section of town in his van with several guys and some shotguns watching for the KKK. I thought it was a very worthy way to have spent the summer. As the SL has always said about gun control, if guns are banned, only the cops and the Klan will have them.

When the question of nonviolence versus the right to armed self-defense was debated, it wasn't really the question, "Do you have the right to defend your family against the Klan?" It was more like, "Were you for armed self-defense for a mass movement embracing millions who were challenging the capitalist state?" It was a debate that revealed your attitude toward "the system" or the "white power structure" or whatever other terms were current for the American capitalist state. "Armed self-defense" was really a way to say that you had the right to not bow down to the white racist government that oppressed black people. Martin Luther King was pledging allegiance to that government. The question of nonviolence versus armed self-defense was the way "reform versus revolution" was posed in the civil rights movement. But it was a very confused debate, with the more radical types tending toward a kind of incoherent black-nationalist separatism.

During these years, the cadres who would later found the SL were the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) within the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The SWP had for decades been the Trotskyist party in

the U.S. But by the early 1960s, the SWP was losing its revolutionary bearings and was tailing non-proletarian forces. Internationally, this meant uncritically supporting the petty-bourgeois nationalist Castro leadership of the Cuban deformed workers state. Domestically, it meant abstaining from the Southern civil rights struggle and later embracing black nationalism.

The RT fought the party majority's criminal abstentionism and pointed out that young radicals would not come to a Marxist program without the intervention of a revolutionary party. The RT fought inside the SWP for the party to seize the opportunity to recruit black Trotskyist cadre to their ranks. The RT put forward a series of demands linking the fight for black rights to other struggles of the working class and addressing immediate felt needs, such as self-defense guards and union organizing drives throughout the South. Believe me, I would have been so happy to run into a Marxist in Mississippi, but there weren't any. When I came back from Mississippi, I checked out left groups in Berkeley for a number of years until I decided on the SL.

Like in Watts in 1965, ghettos across the country erupted over the next three years, an expression of the frustrated expectations aroused by civil rights agitation. These upheavals marked the beginning of the end of the civil rights period. When it was clear the explosions were part of a pattern and not isolated events, it also became clear that King's "turn the other cheek" liberalism had no relevance to the embittered urban black masses.

In 1966, Stokely Carmichael, newly elected chairman of SNCC, raised the demand for "black power." This call electrified young radicals North and South. We noted at the time that the black power slogan "represents the repudiation of tokenism, liberal tutelage, reliance on the federal government, and the non-violent philosophy of moral suasion" ("Black Power—Class Power," *Spartacist West* Vol. 1, No. 8, 30 September 1966; reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 [Revised]). But we also warned in "Black and Red" that the slogan "must be clearly defined in *class*, not racial terms, for otherwise the 'black power' movement may become the black wing of the Democratic Party."

Unfortunately, this prognosis was borne out, and not simply in the South. Beginning with Carl Stokes in Cleveland in 1967, black mayors were installed in Northern cities to contain the seething discontent of the ghetto masses. They cynically sold themselves as agents of "change" from within the system. In Detroit, there was Coleman Young and in Chicago, Harold Washington. In 1985, Philadelphia's black Democratic mayor Wilson Goode oversaw the FBI/cop bombing of the MOVE commune, killing eleven people, five of them children. In 1989, David Dinkins, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America led by Michael Harrington, became the first black mayor of New York City. He promised to tame the largely black municipal unions with his pledge to Wall Street, "They'll take it from me."

continued on page 8



May 1964: National Guard brutalizing SNCC activist during desegregation struggle in Cambridge, Maryland.

King went to L.A. to try to cool things off and President Lyndon B. Johnson complimented him on his good work. King made clear that "as powerful a police force as possible" should be brought to L.A. to stop the upheaval. This quote by King is nearly impossible to find on the Internet, but you can find it quoted from the *New York Times* in *Spartacist* No. 5 or *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 2. My fellow SNCC activists cursed King's name because it was clear he was calling for pacifism for us but guns for the National Guard to put down black people in the ghettos.

In Mississippi, we heard that our SNCC project might be attacked by the KKK. So the SNCC activists on my project proposed talking to the FBI about it. Being a red-diaper baby, I was horrified. I had seen my mother kick an FBI agent in the shins when he tried to barge into my parents' house. But it was decided that we all had to go together. They assumed the FBI agent would be a Northerner, but he was a real Southerner, with a heavy drawl. When he asked for our address, I was shaking my head and trying to get them to stop, but they didn't listen to me. Soon thereafter, we heard through the grapevine that our house was in danger of being bombed. I wasn't surprised and went around saying various versions of "I told you so" for days.

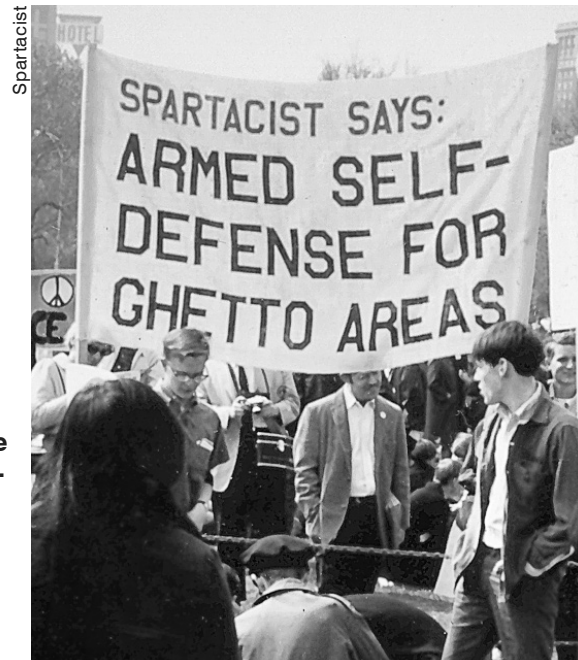
Such illusions in the FBI were part of

Umoja's new book called *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* (2013) makes clear that many SNCC projects couldn't have lasted very long without the armed protection of local black people. Also, a lot of SNCC members themselves were turning to armed self-defense. While people may have heard of Robert F. Williams of North Carolina—the author of *Negroes With Guns* (1962)—or of the Louisiana-



John Herman Williams

Left: Robert F. Williams (center), shown with members of Monroe, North Carolina, NAACP in 1957, organized armed self-defense against KKK terror. Right: Spartacist banner at rally in Chicago, 1968.



Civil Rights...

(continued from page 7)

Obama is just the latest in this tradition. In the late 1960s and '70s, the capitalist rulers, while co-opting a layer of civil rights activists, also waged a war of police terror against black radicals, particularly targeting the Black Panther Party. The Panthers originated at just about the same time that SNCC militants were embracing black power. The Panthers represented the best of a generation of young militants who sought a revolutionary solution to the oppression of black people. But despite their militancy and personal courage, their program of black nationalism was a total dead end, as it always is. Disdainful of the only force for revolutionary change, the multiracial working class, they were isolated and more vulnerable to the FBI's brutal COINTELPRO vendetta. Within a few years, some Panthers like Bobby Seale would run for office in the Democratic Party. Others, like former Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal, America's foremost class war prisoner, still languish in jail for crimes they did not commit.

The Myth of King's Radicalism

In the mid to late '60s, I was not interested in Martin Luther King's pacifist liberalism any more than I was interested in my parents' "old school" CP reformism. The idea that King was becoming some sort of revolutionary never crossed my mind. But this is now common coin among leftists and young radicals. For example, Ferguson Action, an organization anchoring the national Black Lives Matter movement, put out the call to "reclaim" Martin Luther King this year, stating: "Martin Luther King Jr.'s life's work was the elevation, honoring, and defense of Black Lives.... This movement was built on a bold vision that was radical, principled, and uncompromising.... Unfortunately, Dr. King's legacy has been clouded by efforts to soften, sanitize, and commercialize it."

Or as the reformist Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), somewhat more cynically, says in a recent forum announcement: they will "cover Dr. Martin Luther King's criticism of the U.S. economic system, his dedication to ending poverty, his opposition to the Vietnam War, and his view that mass social movements were needed to change society" and, further, "how his true legacy can help guide the current movement against racist police terror." You can find similar quotes from the International Socialist Organization (ISO), Workers World and others.

Martin Luther King was a smart, savvy politician. Realizing that he was losing touch with young radicals, black and white, he adjusted his rhetoric, but he didn't change his politics. In Memphis in 1968, he urged restraint and pacifism during the sanitation workers strike. Speaking about the war in Vietnam one year earlier, he explained that when he tried to teach non-violence, angry black youth kept asking, "What about Vietnam?" Being no fool, King figured he better comment. When he said these were "revolutionary times" during his speech at Riverside Church in New York City, he meant:

"These are days which demand wise restraint and calm reasonableness. We

must not engage in a negative anticommunism, but rather in a positive thrust for democracy, realizing that our greatest defense against communism is to take offensive action in behalf of justice. We must with positive action seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity, and injustice, which are the fertile soil in which the seed of communism grows and develops.... This kind of positive revolution of values is our best defense against communism."

This was quite different from the Panthers or my New Left friends and I, who were chanting for the Vietnamese Communists of the National Liberation Front: "Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh, the NLF is going to win!" Of course, I had a lot to learn about Stalinism, but I knew I was for the defeat of U.S. imperialism. The SL's slogan, "All Indochina Must Go Communist!" which actually contains an implicit criticism of the nationalism and betrayals of Vietnamese Stalinism, helped recruit young people who were *for* communism, not those trying to stop its spread.

It is important to understand that in the late 1960s and early '70s, a layer of the American bourgeoisie was beginning to

the rest are taken from the same liberal playbook.

The essence of the capitalist state is armed bodies of men—cops, prisons, courts, National Guard and army—used by the ruling class to suppress the working class. At a recent anti-police brutality event here in New York City called "The Gathering," which the ISO, PSL and others were involved in, the message was "police accountability." But the cops are not accountable to us; they work for the bourgeoisie. Their role is to protect capitalist private property and part of their job is to make it clear that black people are simply second-class citizens. Ferguson Action's national demands include demilitarizing law enforcement. True, the cops have all this intimidating military hardware, but let's not believe there was a "golden era" when the cops only did foot patrols. Then and now, most black and Latino youth are killed the old-fashioned way with billy clubs, handguns and shotguns.

All the other ways of "reforming" the police are also self-defeating illusions.



Vietnamese National Liberation Front reached out to black GIs. Message reads, "U.S. Negro Armymen: You Are Committing the Same Ignominious Crimes in South Vietnam That the KKK Clique Is Perpetrating Against Your Family at Home."

worry about losing the war in Vietnam, especially when the real enemy was the Soviet Union. They thought it was time to cut their losses, that's all. Martin Luther King's position wasn't any more "revolutionary" than the many Democratic Party politicians who spoke at the antiwar rallies trying to woo young people back to working within the system. The SWP, by this time totally reformist, did yeoman's work for the bourgeoisie organizing these rallies as giant platforms for the Democrats.

A Class-Struggle Perspective

Formal, legal inequality in the South was susceptible to reform. But getting rid of the economic and social reality that is black oppression in America—from de facto segregation and poverty to police brutality—is not subject to reform because it is integral to the capitalist system. Many young people today are unimpressed with Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson and rightly so. But so many of the demands of Black Lives Matter and

Civilian review boards, which have been around at least since the '60s, have changed nothing. Body cameras? Well, Eric Garner's killing was taped, and what difference did that make? Then there are federal investigations. The Feds just put out the word that no charges would be brought against Darren Wilson, the cop who killed Michael Brown. The FBI found "no evidence" that Brown's civil rights had been violated. How much more violated could they have been? Other demands raised at the demos in Ferguson and elsewhere have included special prosecutors, investigations by [Attorney General Eric] Holder and reviews by Obama of police weaponry and training.

But when the Feds get involved, it is to defuse anger over police atrocities and prevent a social explosion. The function of the Department of Justice—which includes the FBI and the Bureau of Prisons—is to spy on political activists, enforce the racist "war on drugs," victimize militant trade unionists and run prisons. Calling on the top overseer of the whole plantation to protect black people from his local subordinates is like asking the fox to guard the henhouse. We seek to win militant youth and workers away from the dead end of pressure politics to a revolutionary perspective. All the "direct action" and militant tactics in the service of the same old pressure politics will not change this system. Capitalism must be overturned.

Michael Brown's mother is a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union, and many trade unionists individually participated in the Ferguson protests and other protests. Fast-food workers in the St. Louis area, demonstrating for \$15 an hour, held die-ins and moments of silence for Michael Brown, as did the union demonstrators at the Walmart

Black Friday boycott in Long Beach, California, that I went to. In an inchoate way, these workers recognize that the fights for labor rights and for black rights go forward together or fall back separately.

However, the strategies on offer from the trade-union bureaucracy are totally bankrupt. The conservative bureaucrats atop the labor movement have sapped the strength of the unions by rolling over in the face of all-out union busting, while barely lifting a finger in defense of minorities. With their boycotts, mini-rallies, civil disobedience photo ops and electoral pressure on the Democrats, the labor misleaders look to the very forces—the president, Congress, state legislatures—that have presided over the attacks on workers. The whole perspective of the labor tops is predicated on the lie that the working class and the owners of industry share a common interest in the profitability of American capitalism. And by refusing to actively fight against anti-black racism, repression and anti-immigrant bigotry, the labor misleaders have criminally aided the rulers in weakening and dividing the working class.

A telling point is how the current sellout bureaucrats welcome and organize police into unions. Back in the days of the struggles that built the industrial unions, the cops weren't seen as "brothers" for obvious reasons: they were beating, shooting and killing strikers. That the trade-union misleaders embrace the bosses' thugs is one of the more grotesque examples of their traitorous role as the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class.

The key to unlocking the power of labor is the fight for a class-struggle leadership and the independent political mobilization of the working class. What is needed is the kind of struggle that forged the unions in the first place—mass picketing, hot cargoing and sympathy strikes. As my mother always used to tell me: "The best things in life are illegal, immoral or fattening." So true! And when it comes to class struggle, the most effective tools are all illegal. But why is that surprising? The entire legal edifice of this country has always buttressed the rule of the property owners.

In conclusion, class struggle is inevitable, as capitalism breeds it. What is not inevitable is who will win. For the working class to seize power from the hands of its oppressors and hold onto it requires the leadership of a revolutionary workers party whose purpose is not only to improve the present conditions of the working class and the oppressed, but to do away with the entire system of capitalist wage slavery. As we wrote in "Black and Red": "To the extent that the black workers, the most militant in the U.S. working class, become infused with a revolutionary socialist perspective, and thereby become able to provide leadership to the class as a whole, they play a vital role in the success of the world revolution." Only then, when the workers rule, can the wealth produced by their labor be used for the benefit of all.

* * *

During the discussion at the forum, an audience member raised a question about women in the civil rights movement and the struggle for women's liberation. We print below, edited for publication, Diana's response, as well as her summary remarks.

Stokely Carmichael's famous statement that the position of women in the movement "is prone" captured the backwardness of SNCC on the woman question. You could see this backwardness elsewhere in the civil rights movement. For example, there was only one token woman speaker at the March on Washington. They had women singers (I think one was Mahalia Jackson), but Rosa Parks was not invited to speak. In the case of the Black Panthers or the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, again you quite often saw extreme male chauvinism; black nationalism and male chauvinism go together in many ways.

But the answer is *not* feminism, which was my initial response. I was involved in women's liberation stuff, and it was feminist. It was sectoralist—every group

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LAPD...

(continued from page 1)

“broken windows,” cracking down hard on petty violations supposedly prevents more serious crimes. In NYC, this policy resulted in the death last July of Eric Garner, strangled by cops for selling loose cigarettes.

As indicated by its original name, “Homeless Reduction Strategy,” the real purpose of SCI is to clear the homeless out of Skid Row to further the gentrification that began there in the 2000s. This has meant criminalizing people simply for being without a home. UCLA law professor Gary Blasi reported in 2011 that about 85 percent of citations on Skid Row “were for things like sitting on the sidewalk, for which you could actually be arrested, or dropping a cigarette ash—that was littering—or not quite making it across the street before the ‘Don’t Walk’ sign went on. That was 1,000 citations a month in those categories.”

Safer Cities poured additional undercover officers and 50 new beat cops (not to mention the parallel increase in private security guards) into an area of around 50 city blocks! The police initially cited homeless people for camping and confiscated their meager belongings if they left them to use a restroom or to visit a soup kitchen. After the American Civil Liberties Union won a lawsuit against the anti-camping ordinance, the city offered a “compromise,” agreeing to stop kicking the homeless off the sidewalk between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.

Laws against the homeless have a long history in capitalist America, one bound up with the effort to enforce the subjugation of black people. Vagrancy laws were expanded after the Civil War in order to help bind former slaves to the plantations as part of a new system of labor discipline. Following the social upheavals of the civil rights movement, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down vagrancy laws in 1972, but they have since been resurrected under other guises—the average California city today has nine separate anti-homeless laws, while L.A. and San Francisco each has 23.

Skid Row: Disgusting Reality of Capitalist Decay

Los Angeles Times columnist Steve Lopez captured the reality of Skid Row: “It’s as if there’s been a war or natural disaster, and the wounded, shellshocked and penniless have been herded into a

dystopian holding pen where they have nothing left but a small measure of their self-respect, plenty of company and countless temptations to sink even lower.” Up to 5,000 people, predominantly black and male, eke out an existence on Skid Row. They make up fully 10 percent of the population of downtown L.A., a higher concentration of homeless people than anywhere else in the country.



Skid Row, Los Angeles, 2013.

In L.A. County as a whole, 91,000 people are homeless on any given night, by some accounts more than in any other American metropolitan area. Notwithstanding the common perception of Southern California weather, the elements take a toll on those living on the sidewalks, and many suffer from diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis. As is typical in racist capitalist America, half the L.A. County homeless population is black, although black people comprise only 9 percent of the county’s overall population.

Skid Row is what it is by design. While the neighborhood has been around since the late 19th century, Skid Row was at first largely a red-light district and home to day laborers, only taking on its modern incarnation in the 1970s. Since L.A. has always been decentralized, and anyone who had money avoided downtown, black Democratic mayor Tom Bradley purposely concentrated the homeless there, out of sight. As Martha Burt, an Urban Institute researcher into U.S. homeless communities, explained: “This doesn’t mean there

was any actual increase in services or in public money going into assist anybody who was being herded into that area.... It just means that whatever was left by way of services was highly concentrated in a relatively few blocks of downtown.” In a practice termed “patient dumping,” hospitals have released homeless and mentally disabled people directly onto the streets of Skid Row.

near where Keunang was killed tried to expand, opposition by residents of lofts in the same building quashed the attempt. What the capitalists do offer is prison: L.A. County jail system is in effect the largest psychiatric ward in the U.S.

Homelessness and the Capitalist System

The scourge of homelessness is firmly rooted in the normal functioning of the capitalist system. Capitalism maintains a reserve body of unemployed to keep downward pressure on wages. A one-sided class war against the working class in recent decades has further slashed jobs and pay. Plenty of workers struggle to make ends meet and are at the complete mercy of the banks, living in fear that they are only one paycheck away from being thrown out on the street.

In order to fight the immiseration of workers and the degradation of the chronically unemployed, the labor movement must be mobilized in struggle at the head of all the oppressed. What’s urgently needed is a class-struggle fight for jobs for all. Equally urgent is the need for quality medical care, free at the point of delivery, as well as a massive program of public works—high-quality integrated housing, schools, libraries and hospitals for working people and the poor.

But providing these burning necessities is incompatible with the capitalist profit system. As Friedrich Engels, who with Karl Marx was a pioneer of modern communism, wrote well over a century ago in *The Housing Question* (1872): “As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of life and labour by the working class itself.”

Crucial to this perspective is the forging of a Leninist vanguard party, the necessary instrument to bring the working class to power. In just one night, a revolutionary workers government would requisition living space from fancy hotels and the mansions of the rich—put the homeless in the Wilshire Grand Hotel, Beverly Hills and the Pacific Palisades! By ripping the productive forces out of the hands of the capitalist parasites and establishing a planned, centralized economy that serves the interests of society as a whole, the victorious working class will be able to provide a decent life for all. ■

should organize its own people. Whites organize whites, women organize women and blacks organize blacks.

I had to face this sectoralism head-on when my friends and I got industrial jobs. It was after the May-June 1968 events in France when the New Left realized there was a working class out there. In the factory where I was working, there were men, women, blacks and whites. Those were more radical times: guys would come up to me and say, “I hear you are some kind of leftist.” And my feminist friends would say, “Don’t talk to them, you’re just there to organize women.” And I would say, “Jeez, that doesn’t seem like a very good idea.” Then we were going to have a women’s contingent at an antiwar

demo, and my feminist friends said, “Just invite the white women, because blacks ought to organize blacks.” I said, “First of all, there are no black organizers in my factory so that’s not going to work and, anyhow, hell will freeze over before I only invite whites.”

We learned that the industrial working class is the one place in the U.S. where you see blacks, whites, Latinos, Asians, men and women. And that you actually had to fight hard to organize the working class. I realized that the feminist movement provided no way forward. I was at this feminist meeting with my friends from the East Oakland Women’s Collective, and these feminists said to us, “Communism and feminism are incompatible.” And I said, “You’re right, I’m out of here.”

* * *

When I was in Mississippi in the summer of 1965, my SNCC collective was going to have a community meeting at a church. I mentioned that one of the things we should bring up at the meeting was this new thing called the war in Vietnam. In the discussion about my proposal, everybody shot it down. I was told that SNCC was conducting a single-issue campaign and that we weren’t going to get into other stuff. Some in the group argued that black people, especially in the South, were very patriotic and a lot of times went into the military and therefore would not appreciate us raising opposition to the war. So I didn’t bring it up.

In the years that followed, I often thought back on this incident. I saw more and more blacks coming back from the war and going to demonstrations like Stop the Draft Week in Oakland. I saw Muhammad Ali declare: No Viet Cong ever called me the “N” word. I saw people like Geronimo Pratt coming back from Vietnam and joining the Black Panthers. It was obvious that there was indeed a relationship between black oppression here and U.S. imperialism’s wars abroad, and that blacks were often in the forefront of opposing U.S. imperialist rampages. So I was sorry that I hadn’t brought it up in Mississippi in 1965.

The U.S. tends to have long periods in which not much happens and then there is fairly explosive struggle, often more militant than in European countries where the working class has a reformist, social-democratic leadership. When class and social struggle do break out, what matters is whether there is a revolutionary party that has learned the programmatic and historic lessons of previous class battles and is able to lead those struggles forward. Not just to win some immediate demands, but to actually lead the working class to take state power here in the belly of the beast. That’s what the International Communist League and the SL stand for. ■

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South Africa...

(continued from page 12)

up in opposition to the attacks against immigrants, including by confronting the youth who were looting. What these conditions cry out for is the mobilisation of the powerful trade unions in defence of the immigrants and to unite all the oppressed in the struggle for jobs and quality housing for all. COSATU issued a statement against the looting, but this statement called on the very same police that were taking part in the attacks against the immigrants to act evenhandedly.

Like their ANC alliance partners, the COSATU bureaucrats use anti-immigrant chauvinism to deflect mass anger and also to cover up for their own role in selling out working-class struggles. For example, in a series of tweets in December 2014, COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, while claiming to “condemn xenophobia,” complained that “the current displacement of Africans even in spaza shops mainly by guys from [the] East is not politically sustainable,” making blanket charges of “smuggling” against Chinese shop-owners. This chauvinism was echoed by ANC minister of water and sanitation, Nomvula Mokonyane, who in January railed on Facebook about a “takeover” of township spaza shops by “people of Somali or Pakistani origin,” which she called “a recipe for disaster” that she would raise with the authorities. COSATU is an integral part of the South African capitalist government through its ANC/SACP/COSATU nationalist popular front. *Break with the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance! For the class independence of the proletariat from all bourgeois parties!*

A large percentage of workers in mining and other industries in South Africa come from neighbouring countries and have been an integral part in building the economy and the labour movement. It is in the vital interests of the entire workers movement to defend immigrants, both as a measure of self defence and to maintain the integrity of the working class movement. Immigrants must be organised into trade unions with full rights, pay and benefits. This requires fighting for *full citizenship rights* for all immigrants and against deportations by a Leninist vanguard party fighting as a tribune of the people.

Attacks on foreign-owned shops have become a feature in many of the service delivery protests in black townships, which are mainly composed of unemployed, desperate youth, would-be petty proprietors, and others with little to no direct relationship to the means of production. Youth unemployment in particular is dire, with recent statistics indicating that 71 percent of all unemployed are between the ages of 15 and 29. General unemployment amongst the blacks is in the region of 40 percent. What’s needed is the mobilisation of the township poor behind the social power of the trade unions. A class-struggle perspective would mean linking the fight to defend immigrants to a fight for *jobs for all* to deal with the astronomical levels of unemployment through a shortened workweek with no loss in pay and massive public works programmes to provide roads, housing and other desperately needed services for the masses.

Adequate housing for millions in the townships and squatter camps, electricity



AP photos

Relentless anti-immigrant harassment under ANC government. Left: Cop menaces immigrants in Johannesburg, 2008. Right: Soldiers demand immigrants’ documents in Diepsloot township, 2010.

and clean water for the entire population, free, quality education and healthcare for all and all the other desperately needed measures—to achieve these requires the socialist transformation of society. The industrial and mining proletariat has the power and class interests to unite all of the oppressed in a determined struggle for a revolutionary workers government.

Widening Cracks in the “Rainbow Nation” Myth

Advanced workers and revolutionary-minded youth need to understand that the scapegoating of immigrants is just one aspect of the capitalist rulers’ racist “divide-and-rule” schemes that threaten much broader sections of the working masses. During the 2008 anti-immigrant attacks some Venda, Shangaan and Xhosa-speaking South Africans were also victims of the violence. The fact of the matter is that little has changed in the “new” South Africa. The white bourgeoisie retains an iron grip on the productive forces of the country—the mines, factories, banks and land—while subcontracting the administration of the bourgeois state to the ANC-led Tripartite Alliance. These unchanged apartheid-era economic and social conditions allow the white minority to continue enjoying First World living standards while the black masses are trapped in Third World poverty.

Under such conditions and a declining capitalist economy, the frustrations of the masses have manifested themselves in growing divisions along tribal, ethnic and racial lines. For example, in recent months legitimate grievances against lack of basic services in Malamulele, Limpopo Province, have been diverted into tribal tensions between the Tsonga and the Venda. Early last year, disgruntled black petty bourgeois mobs in KwaZulu-Natal (including supporters of the bourgeois ANC and EFF [Economic Freedom Fighters]) were involved in war-like racist mobilisations against Indian counterparts they accused of getting better tender deals. Meanwhile, reports of white racists’ attacks on blacks are on the increase. All these instances provide a damning verdict on the bankruptcy of the “rainbow nation” myth that somehow the racial, tribal and other divisions inherited from apartheid could be overcome while leaving intact the capitalist system and attendant social structure.

We characterised the deal [ending apartheid] between the ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance and the white minority rulers as a betrayal of the national struggle

for black liberation. Eighteen years ago we wrote that:

“Widespread expectations for better housing and jobs cannot be met; even simple democratic demands such as the right to an education for all children or the right of women to birth control and abortion are denied to the overwhelming majority by social inequality and lack of facilities. If the masses’ frustration does not find expression along *class* lines it will fuel and embitter every other kind of division.”

—*The Fight for a Revolutionary Vanguard Party: Polemics on the South African Left*, April 1997

The ANC-led nationalist movement cannot bring social progress to the non-white masses because it is committed to maintaining South African capitalism. It is precisely for this reason that the divide-and-rule practices inherited from British imperialism still exist today. They can only be ended when the national question is transcended and the enormous wealth is taken away from the white capitalist class and their black junior partners. The way out of this dilemma is the forging of a Leninist-Trotskyist party that fights for a workers revolution centred on the black majority and whose ranks must be drawn from the multiracial and ethnically diverse South African society.

Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution

Emphasising the interrelationship between the fight for working-class power and for national liberation of the oppressed majority, we call for a black-centred workers government. This slogan is aimed at bringing the *class* principle to the fore, based on the Leninist understanding that the struggle for national liberation, using the methods of class struggle, can be a powerful motor force for socialist revolution in South Africa. It is based on a recognition of the overwhelming weight of the national/racial question in this country, where the majority of the African people are oppressed by the privileged white minority. Our call for a black-centred workers government seeks to address the felt burning needs of the black masses for genuine national emancipation and equality, and to highlight the fact that the proletarian revolution is very much the supreme act of national liberation.

Our call also draws a line against those who refuse to recognise or are indifferent to the fact that the racial hierarchy established under British colonial rule and perfected under apartheid—with whites on top, followed by Indians, coloureds [mixed race, partly of Malay origin], and blacks at the rock bottom—continues to define the social reality of neo-apartheid capitalism. Most of the pseudo-socialist left embraces nationalist fictions like the “rainbow nation” or “nonracialism” in one form or another, which deny or downplay the continued existence of dramatic divisions along colour, national and tribal lines among the oppressed nonwhite masses. In practice, these fictions serve to prettify the racist reality of neo-apartheid capitalist rule and provide a cover for the ANC, DA and other bourgeois forces to promote vicious divide-and-rule.

A distinct phenomenon of South African capitalism is the strong overlap between racial and class oppression. While we support the struggle for national emanci-

pation, we are irreconcilably opposed to all nationalist ideology. Historically, the depth of black national oppression was characterised by the absence of a black property-owning class, thus strengthening the false consciousness that all blacks share the same interests which stand above class divisions. While the objective reality has changed under neo-apartheid, with political power being given to a black elite and the development of a relatively tiny black bourgeoisie that act mainly as black front men for the still dominantly white capitalist class, the ideological grip of nationalism remains deep amongst the working class and the oppressed and acts as a major obstacle towards the development of class consciousness.

The ANC/Alliance nationalists, as the new overseers of racist South African capitalism, have relied on the same “divide-and-rule” strategy as their white predecessors, pitting different sections of the oppressed against each other. The brutal oppression and vicious scapegoating of immigrants from Africa and Asia is one of the clearest examples of the reactionary face of black nationalism.

A black-centred workers government would have to demonstrate in words and deeds that it is not a new black nationalism in a disguised form. A key task of such a government would be to transcend the national, racial and tribal divisions by fighting for and ensuring democratic rights and national equality of all the peoples of South Africa. It is on this basis that we emphasise the *inclusive* nature of this slogan: a black-centred workers government would include full democratic rights and an important role for the coloured and Indian toilers, as well as those whites who would accept a government based centrally on the black working class. South Africa conforms in an exceptionally clear way to Trotsky’s conception of permanent revolution which posits that national liberation and social and economic modernisation in colonial and semi-colonial countries can be achieved only through proletarian revolution.

We do not regard as sacrosanct the colonialist-drawn borders between African countries that have no correspondence with tribal or ethnic groupings. We fight for a socialist federation of Southern Africa where there will be equal rights for all the myriad peoples of the region. The South African proletariat, which is exploited by the capitalist class whose holdings extend throughout Southern Africa, has the social power that is key to liberating not only the downtrodden masses in this country, but those of the entire region groaning under neocolonial misery. Immigrants from neighbouring countries working and/or staying in South Africa will act as a human bridge connecting the proletarian revolution here to revolutions throughout the region. Socialist revolution and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie can lay the material foundations for social and economic progress and genuine equality. But such a perspective can only be realised through the extension of the socialist revolution to the most advanced imperialist countries and the establishment of a collectivised, planned, socialist world economy. This is the revolutionary Trotskyist programme of Spartacist/South Africa. ■

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Cop Terror...

(continued from page 1)

Madison, Wisconsin, who viewed himself as biracial, and Anthony Hill, a mentally ill Air Force veteran gunned down outside Atlanta, Georgia.

Each new killing by the police, as usual, comes with an official stamp of approval. The city of Cleveland pointed the finger at 12-year-old Tamir Rice for failing to “avoid” being blown away, while a Justice Department investigation gave a free pass to Michael Brown’s killer, Darren Wilson. Such is par for the course in, to use Obama’s phrase, “fair America,” where a filthy rich elite lord it over working people, the black masses and the rest of the down-trodden. Indeed, terrorizing the poor and oppressed, as well as violently suppressing workers struggle and social protest, is what the capitalist rulers pay the cops to do. The thugs in blue have not resorted to planting “throwaway guns” on these victims; the law sanctions deadly force by police against any threat they perceive—and in this racist society black youth are widely perceived, especially by the cops, as lawbreakers. Harassment, or worse, for driving/walking/ breathing while black is a daily reality.

Ferguson’s black residents and anti-police brutality activists were back in the crosshairs after two cops standing guard were shot and wounded during a protest outside police headquarters the night of March 11. City authorities and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder blamed protesters for the “ambush,” paving the way for heightened repression as county and state police again descended on the small community. After a huge manhunt, a 20-year-old black man was arrested. What-ever happened the night of the protest, the ongoing violence-baiting of protesters is a clear message: they deserve whatever they get from the marauding cops.

Some observers have found solace in the Feds’ second Ferguson report, which knocked the aggressive ticketing and other “unconstitutional” practices of its police as well as their pervasive harassment of black people. In an online *Atlantic* article (5 March), black journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates lauds the “due process” extended to Wilson while remarking: “The lack of faith among black people in Ferguson’s governance, or in America’s governance, is not something that should be bragged about. One cannot feel good about living under gangsters, and that is the reality of Ferguson right now.”

Since the report was released, several local officials, including the widely reviled police chief, have submitted their resignations. We say good riddance. But changing who fills these positions does nothing to address the material reality of racist oppression in this country or the cop terror that is one of its starkest expressions. The aim of the federal investigation, as always in such cases, was never to rein in the police, but to neutralize fury over their crimes, thwart unrest and paint a gloss on the “justice” system. In fact, Ferguson is hardly the worst case, as even the liberal

bourgeoisie’s main mouthpiece, the *New York Times*, felt compelled to document in the article “Ferguson Became a Symbol, but Bias Knows No Border” (7 March).

As many of those around the Black Lives Matter movement proclaim, state violence is endemic to a society that has written off the lives of black ghetto youth, who are deemed unworthy of education and cast aside into the ranks of the jobless and/or locked up. But in faulting a “broken system,” these activists are criticizing social and legal institutions, not the economic foundations on which those institutions stand. The entrenched oppression of black people in this country, a legacy of chattel slavery, is rooted in the capitalist profit system. Under capitalism, a handful of exploiters who own industry, the banks and large farms—that is, the capitalist class—amass huge wealth off the labor of the working class. The police, as the frontline defense of that system, are at the core of the repressive capitalist state machinery, along with the courts and prisons. This system cannot be fixed by tweaking laws or cleaning out corruption, which is the content of the demands of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Black people are an integral part of American class society while at the same time forcibly segregated at its bottom as a race-color caste. Bearing the brunt of cutbacks and job losses, they are the last hired (if at all) and first fired. Even so, black workers continue to form a strategic core of the multiracial working class—the only force, based on its role in production, with the social power and historic interest to sweep away the capitalist system, paving the way for black liberation in an egalitarian socialist society.

The Illusion of Police Accountability

On March 11, over a thousand people marched in Madison to demand justice for Tony Robinson, who was shot in the head by a cop in his own apartment in this mostly white college town. One of the protest organizers was the Young Gifted and Black Coalition (YGBC), which formed after the killing of Michael Brown. In January correspondence with the Madison police chief, the YGBC sought “open and honest dialogue” with the city’s top cop, offering specific recommendations for reforming local law enforcement and the county jail. Politically linking arms with the YGBC, the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO) posted this correspondence approvingly on its website with the headline: “Time to Hold the Police Accountable” (socialistworker.org, 22 January).

The YGBC imbibes in the widespread illusion, peddled by the ISO, that the police can be made answerable to the public. The letter calls on the Madison Police Department to “address racial disparities,” which is like imploring a viper to ease up on its bite. In fact, the capitalist state apparatus can never be made to “protect and serve” the interests of workers and minorities.

The cops are not “accountable” to anyone other than to the capitalist masters they serve. Madison is proof positive. A petri dish for police reform schemes, the city is known as a liberal haven in a state with a long history of supposedly progressive police chiefs. Still, as the YGBC itself attests, black people are arrested and incarcerated there at much higher rates than whites. Matters will not change with more diversity training and more black cops, who are no less devoted to the job than their white counterparts. A black officer was involved in killing Charly Leundeun Keunang in Los Angeles earlier this month (see article on page 1).

The YGBC also embraces “the values of community control and self-determination.” The black nationalists who raised “community control” in the late 1960s were drawn from a layer of the black petty bourgeoisie seeking its own piece of the pie by making a virtue of the ingrained segregation that was seen as unchangeable. They also often opposed organized labor. The actual content of the “community control” slogan was an appeal for more black Democratic Party politicians, cops, judges and administrators. Since then, black mayors

have been installed in one major city after another to help contain the discontent of the black masses while presiding over cop terror and pushing through attacks on labor and social programs.

Cops Are Not Workers

Drawing a link between the interests of the besieged black masses and those of the working class does not take a Marxist analysis. In an article titled “Black Lives Matter to Labor” (27 February), Terry Melvin, secretary-treasurer of the New York State AFL-CIO and president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, observes how “the fate of Black workers is the fate of American workers,” with black workers playing a central role in the unions. So why hasn’t anti-black repression been met with massive, militant protest by organized labor,



WV Photo

March 11: Spartacists at protest in Madison.

with its ability to bring production to a halt and stop the flow of profits?

Melvin’s conclusion that black lives matter “because the American Dream matters” is indicative. This patriotic myth holds that working people can “make it” if they work hard to help maximize the bosses’ profits. The union bureaucracy, of which Melvin is a part, has long shackled the workers to their class enemies, largely through support to the capitalist Democratic Party, falsely portrayed as a friend of labor and black people. The “American Dream” is in fact a nightmare for the untold millions who daily scramble to get by.

Emblematic of the labor tops’ allegiance to the capitalist system is their opening of the unions’ doors to the police and security guards. Of the 16 million people covered by a union contract today, around 7 percent are in so-called “protective service occupations.” This embrace of the racist killer cops and strikebreakers as class brothers and sisters is just one more noose around the neck of organized labor, further sapping the fighting strength of the unions. Cops, prison guards and security guards have no place in the union movement.

Separate associations representing cops and prison guards, referred to by the misnomer “unions,” have grown in recent years, right along with mass incarceration. Above and beyond defending the capitalists’ hired guns, the role of these organizations is to advance an agenda of more weapons, manpower and leeway for cop savagery. Witness the Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association in New York City, which seized on the killing of two Brooklyn cops last year to spin a tale of a “war on police” in order to better squelch protest. In Albuquerque, New Mexico—with one of the country’s highest rates of fatal shootings by cops, eight times that of the NYPD—the police fraternity routinely has rewarded trigger-happy cops with \$500 to help them “decompress” after they shoot someone.

Pseudo-Marxist groups like Socialist Alternative (SAIt) regurgitate the union bureaucracy’s filth that cops are “fellow workers.” Such a view makes a mockery of the entire history of workers struggle. When miners used to sing the old labor anthem “Which Side Are You On?” they were not addressing the strikebreaking cops or Pinkertons.

In documents posted on SAIt’s website under the title “Marxism and the State: An Exchange” from a 2006 debate within their British affiliate, the Socialist Party, these reformists’ longstanding position that cops are “workers in uniform” is given a theoretical wrapping. The reader is told that “a revolutionary policy” involves supporting the police ranks’ “democratic rights, including the right to organise in a trade union.” SAIt goes on to say that unionizing the cops will create “more favourable conditions of struggle for the working class” by bringing them closer to the workers movement (yes, close enough to land a baton). The mere fact that these thugs are paid for their dirty work does not make them workers. If reformists like SAIt truly had the courage of their convictions, they should split off from the protests, go inside police stations—say in Ferguson, for example—and appeal for solidarity from these agents of state repression. Then see what happens.

For a Proletarian Orientation

Notably, in Madison the March 11 march and rally sparked by Tony Robinson’s killing was appended to a protest in opposition to an anti-union “right to work” bill signed two days earlier by Wisconsin governor Scott Walker. Some protesters also expressed sympathy with fast-food workers engaged in the “Fight for \$15” campaign to raise the minimum wage and win union recognition, including by marching to a Burger King and a Papa John’s after rallying at the Department of Corrections.

The cause of these heavily black, immigrant and female workers has become a focal point for the struggle against poverty wages and tenuous employment, with the campaign attracting fast-food workers who want to make a fight of it. But labor officials like those of the SEIU service workers union use the “15” rhetoric to pressure the Democratic Party into supporting minimum wage increases as a *substitute* for waging a class-struggle fight to obtain increased pay from the bosses. Ditto the reformists of SAIt, who in tailing behind the union bureaucracy have focused their efforts on legislative wheeling and dealing and petitioning to raise the minimum wage.

As we wrote in “Fight Poverty Wages Through Class Struggle!” (WV No. 1052, 19 September 2014), “The organization of the atomized fast-food workforce poses the need to mobilize the power of unionized workers along the supply lines of the fast-food chains, where once-strong union concentrations, such as in trucking and meatpacking, have been eroded by the craven policies of the union bureaucrats. A hard struggle to organize fast-food workers would rapidly fuel a resurgence of union strength in those industries.”

The millennials of today’s Black Lives Matter protests have not witnessed much by way of strike action. Many activists wrongly associate the working class as a whole with the sellout leaders atop the unions. What is necessary to transform the unions into battalions of class struggle and champions of the oppressed is a new labor leadership willing to fight it out class against class.

There is plenty of raw anger among working people over smaller paychecks, among black youth over cop terror, among immigrants over mass deportations. That anger must be turned into class struggle against the common enemy, the capitalist ruling class, which thrives on promoting racial antagonisms in order to keep working people divided. Such struggle could provide a springboard for working-class consciousness and organization. Crucially, the political ties of the unions and the black masses to the Democratic Party must be severed. And that requires revolutionary leadership. To militant activists unwilling to be led down the path of the same dead-end liberal politics that have buried black struggle for decades, we offer the perspective of building a multi-racial workers party in which black workers will be in the front ranks. Such a party would be dedicated to putting an end to the brutal capitalist order once and for all and establishing a socialist America. ■

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South Africa: New Wave of Anti-Immigrant Attacks

We reprint below an article from *Spartacist South Africa* No. 12 (Summer 2015), publication of the South African section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), on the latest wave of anti-immigrant attacks in that country. Since the article's publication, the mob violence has continued. On February 26, a group of South African shop owners threw gas bombs at several

SPARTACIST SOUTH AFRICA

foreign-owned stores in the Braamfischerville area of the Soweto township. In one case, a Somali shopkeeper suffered severe burns; as he was burning and begging for his life, the thugs looted his store. As our comrades' article notes, foreign-owned "spaza" shops have been especially targeted. These are informal, usually dilapidated, stores selling everyday household goods, which are often run from the owner's home.

The driving force behind the brutal anti-immigrant violence is the unspeakable poverty and destitution to which the overwhelming majority of black South Africans are consigned. Such atrocious conditions are overseen by the ruling Tripartite Alliance, which is led by the African National Congress (ANC) and includes the South African Communist Party (SACP) and COSATU labor federation. The capitalist Alliance government launches its own attacks against the working class, including the 2012 Marikana massacre mentioned in the article below, when cops killed 34 striking miners (see "Blood on the Hands of ANC/SACP/COSATU Government," *WV* No. 1007, 31 August 2012).

Our comrades in *Spartacist/South Africa* emphasize that the forging of a Leninist workers party is key to overcoming the myriad racial, ethnic, tribal and other divisions by which South African capitalism has always maintained its rule. As the *SSA* noted in a 15 May 2008 leaflet, issued amid a wave of anti-immigrant terror that killed dozens: "Defending all of the oppressed and exploited in the struggle for proletarian state power, such a party would cut through the ethnic hatreds born of the horrendous poverty produced by superexploitation" (reprinted in *WV* No. 915, 23 May 2008).

* * *

At least six people are reported dead, scores of foreign-owned spaza shops violently looted and thousands of immigrants displaced in the worst anti-immigrant attacks South Africa has seen in the last seven years. It started in Snake Park, but quickly spread to other parts of Soweto and other townships around Gauteng Province. The attacks were sparked by the killing of a 14-year-old youth when a Somali shop owner fired shots at a group of youth threatening to loot his shop and destroy his property.

The current attacks are a horrific reminder of the May 2008 xenophobic attacks, during which 62 people were killed, hundreds injured and many thousands left homeless. Since then, there have



Skuy/The Times

Above: Soweto residents looting shop owned by foreign nationals as cops look the other way, January 22. Below: Thousands march in Johannesburg to protest anti-immigrant attacks, February 12.



Anadolu

For Class-Struggle Defense of Immigrants!

been smaller outbreaks of anti-immigrant violence on a regular basis. To name just a few of these: In 2011 several foreign-owned shops were looted and burnt in the Port Elizabeth townships of Motherwell and KwaDwesi; In 2013 the East Rand township of Duduza erupted with violent looting of foreign-owned shops, spreading to other nearby areas like John Dube and Tsakane, following a dispute between a Somali shopkeeper and a customer over airtime.

There are widespread reports of cops' collusion in these attacks—including telling immigrants to go back to where they come from, demanding bribes in return for protection, and directly taking part in the looting. A cop was filmed taking part in the looting of a foreign-owned shop in Dobsonville. In other places like Zondi, residents reported that cops instructed looters to queue outside a targeted foreign shop and only allowed four looters at a time to prevent a stampede. As part

of the bourgeois state—an organ of class domination and oppression of one class by another—the job of the police is to defend capitalist rule and profits by violently repressing the working class and the poor.

Notwithstanding the empty statements of government ministers decrying the looting and promising police protection to foreigners, the fact is that the cops get the green light from their masters in the ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance government. This capitalist government bears full responsibility for stoking anti-immigrant hatred and marginalising immigrants through repressive state crack-downs—from the persistent round-ups, months-long detention in hellish deportation prisons, and increasingly restrictive immigration laws.

Following the outbreak of the latest round of xenophobic violence, government ministers and ANC bigwigs poured fuel on the flames with nationalist demagoguery, and blamed the immigrants

who were victims of the attacks for defending themselves. ANC boss and former SACP and COSATU leader, Gwede Mantashe, ranted that "we have an army throughout the country that we have no control over." He called on the security ministers to take action and on the communities to monitor immigrants living in their neighborhoods. As the attacks were raging, the Department of Home Affairs announced its intention to investigate the legal status of the foreigners doing business in Soweto. In what is a clear case of self-defence—an elementary human right, which we as Marxists uphold—the Somali shop-owner Senosi Yusuf, who shot 14-year-old Siphiwe Mahori, has been ridiculously charged with murder.

The ANC government absurdly denied that the lootings were a case of xenophobia, laying the blame on drug abuse and criminality. Reports by journalists in the field and communities show that almost exclusively foreign-owned shops were looted, while those belonging to South African citizens generally continued to operate with no disruptions. The ANC leaders' complaints about drug abuse-related criminality were echoed by the main opposition party, the neo-liberal, white-dominated Democratic Alliance [DA], which called for the reintroduction of specialised police units on drugs and gangs. The only thing these bourgeois parties offer in response to the social misery confronting the youth today is increased cop repression and putting more young people behind bars.

Underlying the attacks on immigrants are the horrible living conditions in most black townships—marked by widespread unemployment; generalised poverty; lack of basic services like water, electricity and roads; lack of proper housing; poor or non-existent health facilities and schools; etc. Twenty-one years after the end of apartheid, with the attendant empty promises of a "better life for all," it is becoming increasingly clear to the black toilers that the Tripartite Alliance has done nothing to alter the social and economic conditions of the impoverished masses.

Behind the liberation rhetoric of the ruling Tripartite Alliance and the democratic trappings of "one man, one vote" is the reality of neo-apartheid capitalism, based on the same social and economic foundations of white minority rule: the brutal superexploitation of the overwhelmingly black majority by a tiny, fabulously rich white capitalist class now sprinkled with a few black front men like Cyril Ramaphosa, Patrice Motsepe, Tokyo Sexwale, etc. To divert anger from themselves and the capitalist rulers, the ANC/Alliance tops scapegoat immigrants, many of whom are fleeing economic collapse and civil war in their countries of origin. From mass unemployment, crime and poverty to lack of housing—the capitalist government that oversaw the Marikana massacre blames immigrants for the failures of neo-apartheid!

Some South Africans in Soweto stood

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