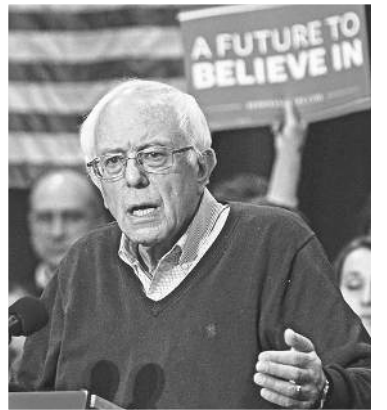


## Break with the Democrats!

# Bernie Sanders: Imperialist Running Dog



Reuters; Imago (inset)

FEBRUARY 8—The Democratic Party nomination of Hillary Clinton was thought to be a foregone conclusion. But the Iowa caucuses ended in a virtual draw between her and Bernie Sanders, disrupting the expected coronation of part two of the Clinton dynasty. A self-proclaimed “independent” with a “democratic socialist” veneer, Sanders has for the past quarter century been a member of the Senate Democratic Caucus. As the party’s former National Committee chairman Howard Dean observed in 2005: “He is basically a liberal Democrat.... The bottom line is that Bernie Sanders votes with the Democrats 98 percent of the time.” So it’s hardly an aberration that he is running for the presidency, the top executive office of U.S. imperialism, on the ticket of one of the two parties of American capitalism. What is an aberration is that Sanders’s candidacy is seen as introducing the idea of “socialism” to the United States.

Tapping into widespread anger against the stark economic inequalities in America, Sanders has made his rallying cry the populist appeal for a “political revolution against the billionaire class.” Yet he has long served the interests of this class, particularly with his support for the bloody wars, occupations and other military adventures of U.S. imperialism that have devastated countries around the globe. Now this longtime Vermont Senator promises to provide some relief for the folks “at home” from poverty wages, skyrocketing college tuition and student debt and the profit gouging of the “health care” industry.

Faced with the alternative of mainstream Democratic Party hack Hillary Clinton, Sanders’s promises of some economic relief have proved attractive. This is especially the case for white petty-bourgeois youth who are in hock for tens of thousands of dollars in student loans, with dim prospects for the future they hoped would be open to them. In this, the “movement for Bernie” echoes the Occupy movement with its populist cries of representing the “99 percent” against Wall Street bankers and high-rolling corporate magnates. Occupy dissolved

## For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

**U.S. airstrike in Syrian town of Kobani, October 2014. Bernie Sanders (inset) supports Obama’s imperialist bombing campaign in Syria.**

during the 2012 campaign to re-elect Wall Street Democrat Barack Obama. And, much as Obama’s election as America’s first black president aroused great expectations of change that were necessarily dashed, Sanders’s campaign is directed at

bosses’ thugs, their police and their courts.

While some of what Sanders calls for—like free tuition, Medicare for all and higher wages—would certainly be welcome, the true purpose of his campaign is to promote the myth that the capital-

defend their interests against the robber barons of Wall Street. Such illusions have long served to tie the working class to the rule of its exploiters.

The populist view that “99 percent” of the population share common interests is false. Society is divided into two fundamental classes: the capitalists—the handful of families who own the banks and corporations—

and the working class, whose labor is the source of the capitalists’ profits. The working class is not just one more victim of capitalist austerity. It is the only force with the potential power and historic interest to sweep away the capitalist system, which is based on the exploitation of labor and rooted in racial oppression. To lead this fight, the workers need their own party—a revolutionary workers party that takes up the cause of all the oppressed.

### The Face of Capitalist Oppression Abroad and at Home

Contrary to the myth peddled by Sanders that the banks and corporations have hijacked “our democracy,” the purpose of the American government since its foundation has been to defend the property and profits of the ruling class. The capitalist class runs both the Democratic and Republican parties. The main difference is not *what* they do but *how* they do it. The racist, reactionary, Christian fundamentalist lunacy of the current Republican Party is one expression of a decaying system whose masters are driven to further starve the poor, bust the unions, drive down wages and slash such threadbare social programs as still exist. The Democrats lie and do the same thing because they serve the same interests. They just try to put a nicer face on it.

America is ruled by a single class: it is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The facade of democracy is designed to facilitate capitalist class rule. It obscures the fact that the capitalist state, with its cops, courts, prisons and military, is not

*continued on page 11*



Reuters

**Impoverished families at back-to-school charity distribution of shoes, clothing and backpacks in Los Angeles, October 2015.**

refurbishing illusions in the democracy of American capitalist rule.

Amid chants of “feel the Bern” from his supporters at a closing rally in Iowa, Sanders declared: “What the American people understand is this country was based and is based on fairness.” On the contrary, this country was built on the brutal enslavement of black people and is maintained through their continuing segregation in the mass at the bottom of this society. It was established on the genocide of Native Americans. And American history is replete with the bodies of fighters for the working class, killed at the hands of the

ist Democratic Party is the party of the “little guy.” What he is introducing into “the conversation” has nothing to do with socialism but is rather the fraudulent idea that the “people” can vote into office a benevolent capitalist government that will

## Notes on Ta-Nehisi Coates

See Page 3



# On Socialism and Communism: A Correction

20 January 2016

Dear WV:

The otherwise very good article entitled “Hell Is Not Hell Enough: No to Public Housing Smoking Ban!” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 1080, 11 December 2015) ends with the following sentence, “Workers rule in the U.S. and internationally—based on a centrally planned, collectivized economy—will provide the building blocks for socialist society, the banner of which will be ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.’” In fact, as Karl Marx explained, that phrase is not the banner of “socialist society” but of the higher phase of communist society. Marx uses the terms “lower” and “higher” phases of communist society to refer to what revolutionists since Lenin’s time have generally called the “socialist” and “communist” phases, but in no way should socialism be confused with the higher stage, as in the *WV* article. (And, of course, both of those stages come after the dictatorship of the proletariat, during which a workers state is necessary to expropriate and suppress the exploiting class and to oversee the socialization of production.)

By far the best-known exposition in Marx’s writings on the transition from the overthrow of capitalism to a fully communist society is in the 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. In it he explains,

“What we are dealing with here is a communist society, not as if it has *developed* on its own foundations, but on the contrary, just as it *emerges* from capitalist society, which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birth-marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges. Accordingly, the individual producer receives back from society—after the deductions have been made—exactly what he gives to it.”

Lenin, in *The State and Revolution*, explains that this is encapsulated in the socialist principle (“banner” if you will) of “An equal amount of products for an equal amount of labour.” Since no two people are really equal, that is, they don’t have the exact same productive capacity or the same needs, this “equality” (referred to as “bourgeois right”) actually results in the unequal distribution of the wealth of society.

*Critique of the Gotha Programme* states: “In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and thereby also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life’s prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of common wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois

right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!”

In getting there, Lenin emphasizes the “protracted nature of this process” because of the fact that the influence of capitalist society—what people often falsely assume is “human nature”—will take time to eradicate. But it is in the

interests of the working class to lead society there, once they’ve seized power from the bloody capitalists who’ve already long outlived their historically progressive function. Then, with worldwide economic and social planning, humanity can steer itself to heretofore unimaginable heights.

Comradely,  
Elijah B.

## More on Flint Lead Poisoning

5 February 2016

Dear Comrades,

In the recent article “Capitalists Poison Flint,” [*WV* No. 1082, 29 January] we note that lead poisoning is “known to cause irreversible brain damage.” Young children are especially vulnerable to even low lead levels in the body. There is no medical cure that can reverse the neurological damage. However, as a recent article in *Wired* magazine notes, “The way to treat lead poisoning after the fact is to get kids the services they should have had anyway. Access to early childhood education, for example, is proven to help kids with developmental delays catch up with their peers.” Prominent Flint pediatrician Mona Hanna-Attisha emphasizes, “The

sooner we get them services, the better the outcomes.”

The ruling class has shown no intention of providing the resources needed to help the people of Flint. While the various levels of government engage in cover-up and finger-pointing over this racist atrocity, the clock is ticking. Federal law nominally mandates special needs education for every child who requires it—the federal government must pay up *now!* The labor movement should take up the fight for immediate testing, continued monitoring and the highest quality education for all the affected children, including those of undocumented immigrants.

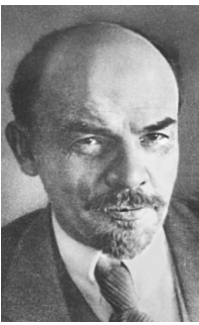
Comradely,  
SH



TROTSKY

### Bourgeois Elections and the Dictatorship of Capital

*As the presidential primary circus kicks off, America’s rulers tout this country’s political system as a model of democracy. The First Congress of the Communist International in 1919 contrasted the fraud of bourgeois democracy, a fig leaf for the class dictatorship of capital, to the system of proletarian rule in the form of soviets (councils) in the early workers state established through the 1917 October Revolution in Russia.*



LENIN

So-called democracy, that is, bourgeois democracy, is nothing but a veiled dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The highly touted general “will of the people” is no more real than national unity. In reality, classes confront each other with antagonistic, irreconcilable wills. But since the bourgeoisie is a small minority, it needs this fiction, this illusion of a national “will of the people,” these high-sounding words, to consolidate its rule over the working class and impose its own class will on the proletariat. By contrast the proletariat, the overwhelming majority of the population, openly wields the class power of its mass organizations, its councils, in order to abolish the privileges of the bourgeoisie and to safeguard the transition to a classless, communist society.

Bourgeois democracy puts the primary emphasis on purely formal declarations of rights and freedoms, which are beyond the reach of working people, the proletarians and semiproletarians, who lack the material resources to exercise them. Meanwhile, the bourgeoisie uses its material resources, through its press and organizations, to deceive and betray the people. In contrast, the council system, the new type of state power, assigns the highest priority to enabling the proletariat to exercise its rights and freedom. The power of the councils gives the best palaces, buildings, printing plants, paper stocks, and so forth to the people for their newspapers, meetings, and organizations. Only thus does real *proletarian* democracy even become possible.

—“Platform of the Communist International” (March 1919),  
reprinted in *Founding the Communist International* (1987)



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Finish the Civil War! For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

## Abolitionist Politics in the Fight to End Slavery

Speaker: Don Cane, Spartacist League Central Committee

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303 Hudson St.,  
Lower Level, Oakland

(Berkeley Korean United Methodist Church,  
at College and Manila Aves.)

For information: (510) 839-0851  
slbayarea@fastmail.net

#### LOS ANGELES

Saturday, February 20, 4 p.m.

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Sunset Red Line Metro Station)

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

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Manhattan

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Take A, C or E to 42nd Street)

For information: (212) 267-1025  
nysl@tiac.net

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chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net

### Black History and the Class Struggle

## WORKERS VANGUARD



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

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The closing date for news in this issue is February 9.

No. 1083

12 February 2016

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of His Work



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# Telling Some Truth, but Pushing a Myth

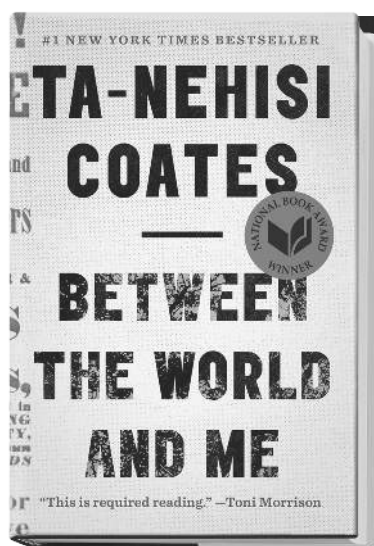
## Notes on Ta-Nehisi Coates

Since last summer, when his book *Between the World and Me* was released, black commentator and ideologue Ta-Nehisi Coates has been fawned over by the bourgeois liberal and not-so-liberal press. The book, which is written in the form of a letter to his son, is nominally a memoir on being black in racist America. Coates has since won a MacArthur “genius grant” and the 2015 National Book Award for nonfiction. A.O. Scott of the *New York Times* called the book “essential, like water or air,” and Bijan Stephen of *The New Republic* called it “precisely the document this country needs right now.” The book has been a *New York Times* best seller since it came out, and it made every major newspaper’s list of the top ten books of the year.

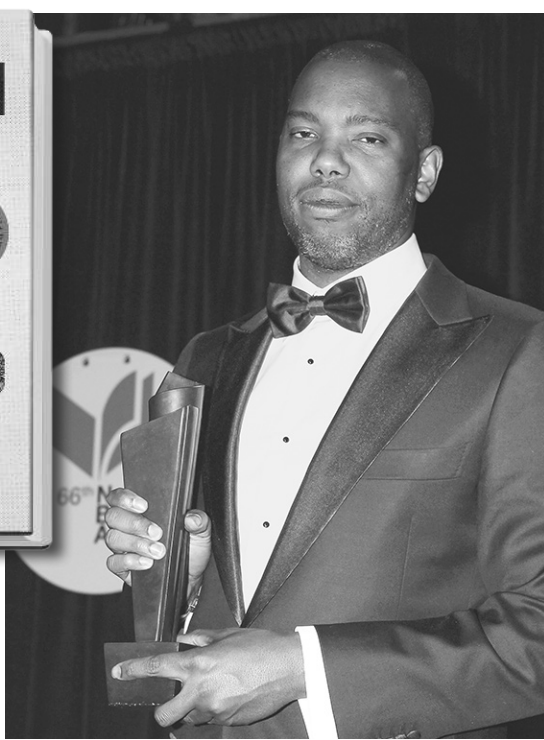
The popularity of Coates’s book intersects the end of the presidency of Barack Obama. Liberal commentators will make much ado about the first black president’s “legacy.” For the racist rulers of America, Obama’s election gave a much-needed facelift for U.S. imperialism. The image of a black man in the highest office of the land briefly provided a thin gloss on murderous capitalist class rule. Under Obama’s reign, there have been countless more victims of U.S. imperialist plunder and torture abroad. Meanwhile, conditions of life for black people—from joblessness and mass incarceration to segregated education and housing—have only deteriorated in this so-called democracy, a democracy for the rich. The last two years have also witnessed Black Lives Matter protests and other expressions of justified outrage in the streets over unrelenting racist cop terror. Yet, occurring in a long period without significant social and class struggle, such anger is coupled with little hope that anything fundamentally different from the situation in racist capitalist America today can ever exist.

Cue Coates’s book, which is perceived by many black and white petty-bourgeois liberal youth as “radical” simply because it acknowledges that racial oppression in America is real and structural, and that it victimizes even the economically better-off black elite (of which Coates is now a part). He also counters the pernicious “blame the victim” and “personal responsibility” rhetoric, which is preached by Obama (and Democrat Bill Clinton before him) to blame black people for their own oppression—all in the service of gutting social services and attacking the poor.

But Coates is an apologist for the racist capitalist system. In early 2008, he began writing for the moderate, centrist *Atlantic*. At that time, Coates was a defender, occasional tepid critic and general champion of the newly elected Obama, who was pushing the myth of a “post-racial” America. In May 2011, Coates wrote an article comparing Wall Street Democrat Obama to intransigent fighter for black freedom Malcolm X, titled “The Legacy of Malcolm X.” Its punchline was: “Why his vision lives on in Barack Obama.” That’s quite a distortion, but it’s hardly the first time Malcolm X’s name has been misused in the service of Democratic Party liberalism. Although not a Marxist, the real Malcolm X denounced the Democratic Party and exposed the con game of American “democracy.” He said, “A Dixiecrat is nothing but a Democrat in disguise.” He understood that the U.S. government and its representatives, Democrats as well as Republicans, were deadly enemies of black freedom. Malcolm was hated and feared by the capitalist rulers for telling the truth about racist America. Coates, on the other hand, is loved by the liberal elements of the



New York, November 2015: Ta-Nehisi Coates with his National Book Award.



WireImage

bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie because he pushes illusions in the same system of “democracy” that Malcolm X detested.

Coates’s book tells some truths about American history in order to push a myth. Referring to racist cop killings, he writes, “The truth is that the police reflect America in all of its will and fear, and whatever we might make of this country’s criminal justice policy, it cannot be said it was imposed by a repressive minority.” Coates promotes the falsehood that the capitalist exploiters and white workers and poor are united in a “syndicate” called “white America” that is “arrayed to protect its exclusive power to dominate and control” black bodies. He further argues that, from the time of slavery to the present, the white population as a whole has materially benefited. He cynically writes that white people reside in “perfect houses with nice lawns,” living a dream that “smells like peppermint but tastes like strawberry shortcake,” and that these “dreamers” maintain this suburban dream on the basis of denying that it comes from black oppression.

Class divisions in society do not figure in Coates’s book, and he has nothing to offer black workers. Coates quotes the infamous 19th-century apostle of slavery and white supremacy John C. Calhoun: “‘The two great divisions of society are not the rich and poor, but white and black.’... ‘And all the former, the poor as well as the rich, belong to the upper class, and are respected and treated as equals.’” Coates continues, in his own words, “And there it is—the right to break the black body as the meaning of their sacred equality.” But the lie that white workers and white capitalists are “equals” and have more in common than black and white workers do is the historic lie the American capitalist rulers have used to keep the working class and oppressed divided. Promoting this lie is what puts Coates in the ideological good graces of the bourgeoisie, the tiny repressive minority *class* that clearly benefits and is raking in the profits.

In his writings over the past year, Coates claims he has been “radicalized,” i.e., that he no longer believes in the great progress for black people that he once attributed to Obama’s election. His book argues that nothing will change until the white “majoritarians” who collectively run American democracy wake up and realize the real truth of history. He tells his son at the conclusion of the book: “But do not pin your struggle on their conversion. The Dreamers will have to learn to struggle themselves, to understand that the field

ity means that the root of the problem of discrimination and white supremacy is prejudice. This is the reigning theory of American liberalism and is the means by which the capitalists throw the responsibility for the Jim Crow system upon the population as a whole. If people weren’t prejudiced there would be no Negro problem. This contention is fundamentally false.”

—Richard S. Fraser, “The Negro Struggle and the Proletarian Revolution” (November 1953), printed in “In Memoriam—Richard S. Fraser,” *Prometheus Research Series* No. 3, 1990

Coates’s pushing of white collective guilt conceals the fact that the oppression of black people as a race-color caste has a material basis. Black oppression is integral to the system of American capitalism, which was built on chattel slavery. It persists because it is a key prop for capitalist rule and profits. Full social, economic and political equality for black people cannot be achieved short of getting rid of capitalism through socialist revolution. The forcible segregation of the vast majority of black people at the bottom serves to divide the working class and to suppress wages for black, white and immigrant workers alike. The joining of the fight for black freedom to the struggle against all exploitation is the Achilles’ heel of the American capitalist behemoth.

We do not advocate begging the bourgeois state for reparations, a ridiculous proposition in a society where so many black people are denied jobs, not to mention welfare. And what of the millions of other victims of American capitalism: Native Americans, immigrants and, for that matter, poor and working-class whites? As black reformist left academic Adolph Reed argued against Coates in a January 21 interview with Doug Henwood on KPFA radio: “I can imagine going to talk to a long displaced steel worker in Western Pennsylvania who’s fretting now about further increase in economic insecurity.... And you’re going to explain to him or her that because of slavery they’ve got to be on the giving end of some transfer payments that will go to recompense blacks for harms done in the past.” What is necessary is hard class and social struggle to link the fight for black rights with the struggle for decent jobs, quality integrated housing, education and health care for all.

*continued on page 10*



Young Spartacus

23 October 1999: Spartacists helped build PDC-initiated, labor-centered action to stop Klan provocation in New York City.

Reprinted below is an article from Spartacist Canada No. 187 (Winter 2015/2016), publication of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyiste. The original article was based on a presentation given by Miriam McDonald at a Trotskyist League/Spartacus Youth Club class in Toronto on October 29.



One could not find a more powerful indictment of the present imperialist order than the waves of desperate people currently seeking refuge in racist “Fortress Europe.” The U.S.-led wars and occupations in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere have destroyed these countries, ravaged their economies and robbed their peoples of their already meagre livelihoods. Life is so intolerable that hundreds of thousands have chosen the deadly risks of this journey.

A good part of this talk will be about Canada’s reactionary history with regard to immigration. For now, I’ll note that the newly elected Liberal government is promising to settle 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2015. Such deeply hypocritical gestures should fool no one. Under Liberal and Tory regimes alike, the Canadian imperialists have taken part in most of Washington’s bloody wars across the Near East and Central Asia that have driven millions from their homes. And Canada’s immigration policies—who is let in and how they are treated once here—have always been marked by brutal racism and anti-Communism.

Canada’s rulers are the common enemy of all working people; in their own class interests, workers must champion the rights of immigrants and refugees, demanding full citizenship for everyone in this country! The working class must mobilize to defend their foreign-born class brothers and sisters against the racist violence that is intrinsic to capitalist class rule.

Because of the bloody civil war, more recently compounded by imperialist bombardment, something like four million people have been driven out of Syria. Close to eight million are internal refugees. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, desperate millions yearn to escape the grinding poverty inflicted by the imperialist subjugation of the neocolonial world. According to the UN, there are presently some 60 million people worldwide displaced by war and persecution, the highest number since World War II.

These facts underscore that the solution to this *man-made* catastrophe lies not in this or that country admitting a few thousand more immigrants, but in overturning the imperialist system that has created it. Our aim is to win workers and youth to the understanding that international proletarian revolution is the only way to secure a future for humanity.

## The Imperialist System

In the *Communist Manifesto*—written in 1847, a few decades before the rise of the imperialist order—Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels explained the driving forces of capitalism. Through free competition on the market, manufacturing and then large-scale industry swept away the old patchwork of handicraft systems from medieval times. Industrial production, communication and transportation were revolutionized. The bourgeoisie’s “heavy artillery,” as Marx and Engels put it, was the cheap prices of commodities which allowed it to penetrate the less developed regions of the world. The capitalist system, as the *Manifesto* declared, “compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.”

By the dawn of the 20th century, the “normal” capitalist exploitation of work-



# Immigration, Racism and Anti-Communism



AP (top), Bettmann

**Top: Desperate refugees arrive on island of Lesbos, Greece, September 2015. Above: Indochinese “boat people” in late 1970s faced racist backlash but were ultimately accepted by anti-Communist U.S. and Canadian rulers.**

ers had been supplemented and intensified by the exploitation of entire nations, ruled directly or indirectly as colonies of one or another of the great powers. As Russian revolutionary V.I. Lenin wrote in his 1916 pamphlet *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*:

“Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.”

This was an elite club which does not to this day admit new members. The powers established at that time remain the central imperialist powers today: the U.S., Germany, France, Britain and Japan, along with a constellation of smaller countries in Europe as well as Canada and Australia. The imperialists foment civil wars and communal slaughter, and topple or install as necessary the local despots whose task it is to ensure the uninterrupted flow of profits from the neocolonial world to the banks and stock exchanges of Wall Street, the City of London, Bay Street [center of Toronto’s financial district] and elsewhere.

Liberals like Naomi Klein and reformists parading as Marxists will denounce some of the crimes of the bourgeoisie. But

they also push the false notion that imperialism is a policy that can be moulded depending on the politics of whatever capitalist party is in power. The corollary is that this system can be reformed to be more humane, less rapacious. It falls to us Marxists to expose this rubbish and to show that imperialism is an *economic system*, as integral to the modern world as skin and bones are to a person, and that it must be overthrown.

In the last century, rivalries among the bourgeoisies of the imperialist states twice engulfed the entire world in inter-imperialist war. Lenin’s pamphlet was written two years into World War I. Millions of young men were sent by their exploiters to die in a bloody scramble for markets and spheres of influence. In Lenin’s words, this marked the epoch of wars and revolutions. A year later, in 1917, his Bolshevik party led the proletariat to power in the world’s first successful workers revolution. They smashed the capitalist state, swept out the bankers, bosses and landlords, and inspired uprisings of workers and oppressed peoples in country after country.

For the rest of the 20th century, the imperialists were obsessed with reversing the Bolshevik victory and preventing its spread. The political counterrevolution led by Joseph Stalin beginning in 1923-24 performed a valuable ser-

vice for imperialism by destroying the revolutionary Bolshevik party and the internationalist program it embodied. The Soviet Union was undermined and betrayed by the Stalinists’ twin nationalist dogmas of building “socialism in one country” and “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism. Yet the very existence of the Soviet workers state, with its planned economy and collectivized property forms, remained a beacon and a call to struggle for workers and the oppressed around the world.

The USSR also provided the nominally independent countries of the neocolonial world a breathing space to at least manoeuvre between the Soviets on one side and the imperialists on the other. Hence the 1991-92 destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state removed an enormous military and diplomatic obstacle to untrammelled imperialist freebooting and militarism. This, perhaps more than any other factor, has contributed to the increased poverty and oppression that drives the massive tide of refugees that only grows year by year.

The 1990-91 U.S.-led war on Iraq, which began as the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR entered its terminal decline, opened an ongoing 25-year quagmire of imperialist-fomented slaughter, civil wars and ethnic cleansing in the Near East. This has been accompanied by more imperialist military adventures in Africa and Asia. During the 1992-93 UN “peacekeeping” invasion of Somalia, racist murder and torture of civilians was carried out by Canadian airborne troops who included known fascists. Under cover of the “war on terror,” the U.S. and its British, Canadian and other allies have laid waste to countries from Afghanistan to Iraq and Libya. In these bloody wars, the workers of the world had a side *against* the imperialist forces. Any military setbacks for the imperialists can provide some respite to the afflicted region and can stimulate opposition by the working class in the imperialist centres.

## Immigration, Racism and the Working Class

Under capitalism, immigration is manipulated to suit the economic and political needs of the rulers; thus there can be no “progressive” immigration policy. Indeed, one of the prime roles of national borders and nation-states is to control the flow of goods, capital and people between countries. In times of boom, the capitalists import workers; in times of economic constriction, these workers are fired, scapegoated for the loss of jobs and often deported.

Concentrated at the point of production, workers have great potential social power: they can shut down production and stop the flow of profits to the bosses. Their collective organization and methods of struggle, such as strikes, require class unity and thereby undercut racial and ethnic divisions. The numerically tiny ruling class is well aware of this, and it uses all the institutions of bourgeois society—the media, schools, churches and courts—to disguise the truth about capitalism and to promulgate its reactionary ideology. Each group of workers is taught that the problems are not due to the profit system but are the fault of workers who are from a different country, have different religious ideas or have a different skin colour.

In the late 19th century, sparsely populated Canada brought in 15,000 Chinese workers to build the railway. When this was completed and their labour no longer required, the racist head tax was imposed on Chinese people to restrict immigration. During the 1907 recession, the Asiatic Exclusion League, a group formed by the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council, staged a race riot, storming through Vancouver’s Japanese and Chinese areas.

The union misleaders refused to organize non-white workers, crippling



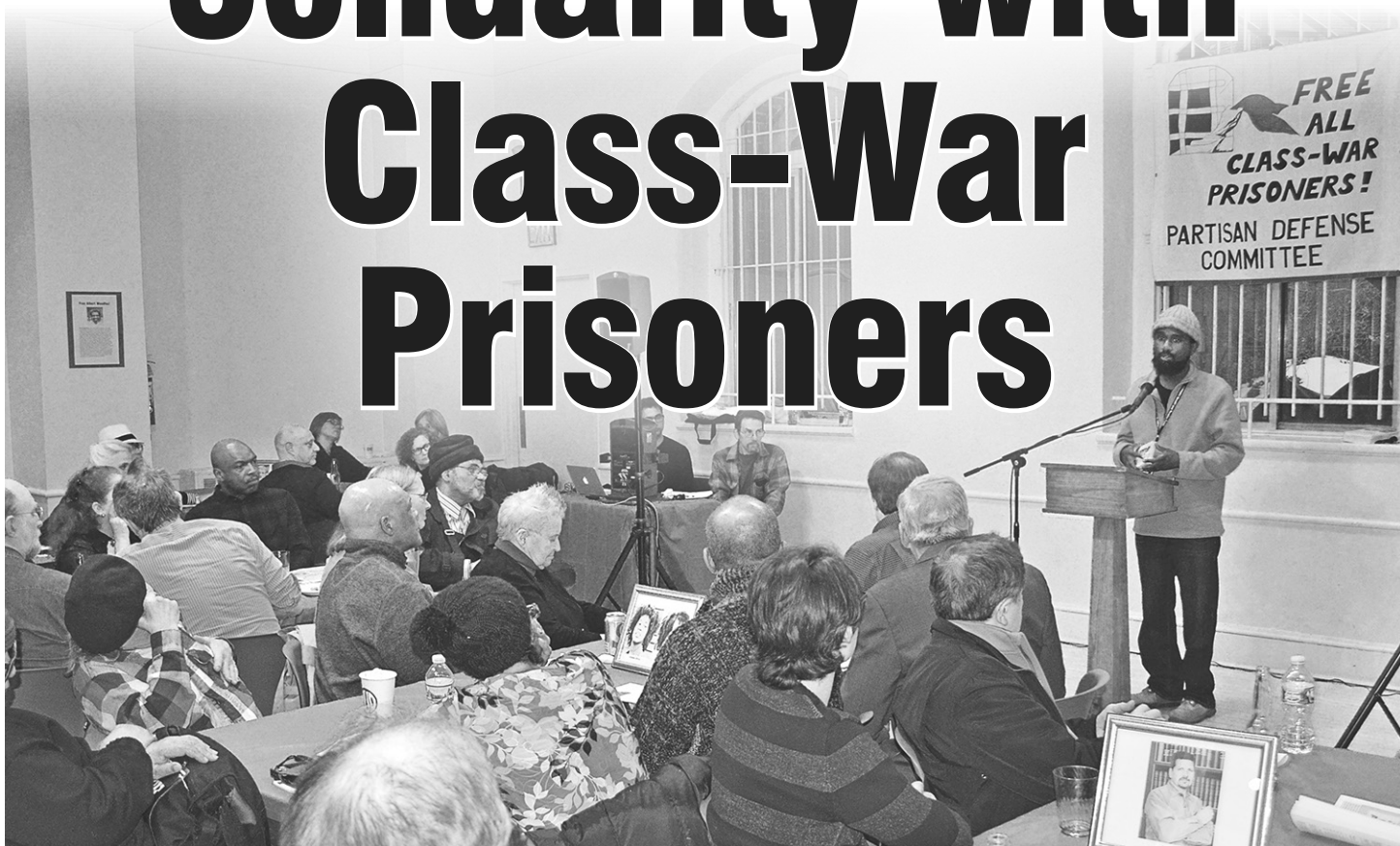


# Partisan Defense Committee

The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization which champions cases and causes in the interest of the whole of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League.

## CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

# 30th Annual Holiday Appeal Solidarity with Class-War Prisoners



WV Photo

Orie Lumumba, supporter of the MOVE 9, addresses the New York City Holiday Appeal, January 30.

The Partisan Defense Committee held its 30th annual Holiday Appeal in January and raised thousands of dollars for its program of sending monthly stipends to class-war prisoners. For three decades, the PDC has sent money to those imprisoned for standing up to racist capitalist repression and has also given holiday gifts to them and their families. Support for class-war prisoners is not an act of charity but an act of solidarity from those fighting on the outside to those behind prison walls. The fundraisers took place in New York, Chicago, Oakland, Los Angeles and Toronto and were attended by PDC supporters, former political prisoners, trade unionists and others.

Launched in 1986, the PDC stipend program revived a tradition of the International Labor Defense (ILD). Under James P. Cannon, a founding leader of the Communist Party and the ILD's first secretary (1925-28), that organization provided support to over 100 class-war prisoners. Today, we send \$50 a month to each of 14 prisoners: former Black Panther and

MOVE supporter Mumia Abu-Jamal; American Indian Movement spokesman Leonard Peltier; Michael Africa, Debbie Africa, Janine Africa, Janet Africa, Delbert Africa, Eddie Africa and Chuck Africa of the Philadelphia MOVE organization; former Black Panther members and supporters Mondo we Langa, Ed Poindexter and Albert Woodfox; and Jaan Laaman and Thomas Manning of the Ohio 7. (For more information on the

prisoners, see: "Free the Class-War Prisoners!" WV No. 1080, 11 December 2015.)

This expression of support helps ameliorate the harsh conditions of prison hell, both by reminding the prisoners that they are not forgotten and to help them buy things they need in prison, such as snacks, postage, writing materials and sometimes art supplies. As expressed by Ed Poindexter in his greetings to the Holiday Appeal: "Having been abandoned by

my five-member team of attorneys, it's heartening to know that your generous donations are enabling me to retain the services of a new attorney, and for that I'm profoundly thankful."

This year's Holiday Appeal was dedicated to the memory of two recently deceased class-war prisoners. Phil Africa died under suspicious circumstances in January 2015. Phil and eight others known as the MOVE 9 were wrongly convicted and sentenced to 30-100 years for the killing of a police officer during a 1978 raid on their home. Hugo Pinell, a courageous anti-racist activist who fought vehemently for prisoners' rights, was brutally assassinated in New Folsom prison in August 2015, two weeks after his release into the general prison population after 40 years of solitary confinement. Pinell was the last of the San Quentin 6 still in prison. They were framed up on charges stemming from the prison upheaval sparked by the August 1971 assassination of Black Panther Party member George Jackson by guards.

Pinell's daughter Allegra Taylor was a featured speaker at the Oakland fundraiser (see facing page). A poignant tribute to Hugo was also sent by his San Quentin 6 comrades, Willie Sundiata Tate and David Johnson, who recalled: "Those of us who knew him loved him, and those that he railed against hated him because he would not stand by and watch injustices being perpetrated by racism and white supremacy." On Hugo's decades in solitary, they noted, "He never broke...and never lost touch with his humanity."

Every year, a highlight of the Holiday Appeals is the opportunity to hear from the prisoners—and former prisoners—themselves. Mumia sent recorded greetings as did Jaan Laaman (see facing page). Thomas Manning reported that he is waiting to hear about his parole eligibility. The PDC also received greetings from MOVE 9 members Michael Africa, Debbie Africa, Eddie Africa, Janine Africa and Janet Africa.

Medical needs are a constant concern for many of the aging class-war prisoners. The generally dismal state of prison health care is exacerbated by the state vendettas against them. Manning's letter queried whether the prison authorities

*continued on page 8*

## Spartacist League Speaker at Oakland Holiday Appeal

*The following remarks, edited for publication, were given by Spartacist League spokesman Reuben Samuels at the January 31 Oakland event.*

Black bodies stacked in cages, blood on the streets and poison in Flint's drinking water: these atrocities reveal capitalist America's racist impulse to genocide. Chilling videos of racist cop executions generate nationwide protests around the plaintive rallying cry "Black Lives Matter"—in a social order where they clearly don't. Deindustrialization has turned too many black youth into an unwanted surplus population, to be gunned down or locked up.

The formal gains of the civil rights movement have been rolled back. Michelle Alexander's indictment of the racist justice system made "the new Jim Crow" a popular catchphrase. In the streets, the cop pistol replaces the lynch rope.

There is a state-sanctioned war on black people, and it is a very old war: Black oppression is indispensable to American capitalism, which was built upon the lash-scarred backs of slaves. It keeps the mass of black people forcibly segregated at the bottom and the working class divided. That is why Alexander's well-meaning prescription for "movement building"—pressuring for reforms from the very government that was built to enforce capital-

ist exploitation and racial oppression—is such a treadmill of defeat and resulting demoralization.

Achieving full social, economic and political equality for black people mandates socialist revolution. For precisely this reason, Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky told his supporters in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP): "We must say to the conscious elements of the Negroes that they are convoked by historic development to become a vanguard of the working class."

Flint, Michigan, was the birthplace of General Motors, where militant sit-down strikes in the 1930s spearheaded the United Auto Workers union. But the big auto plants left, heading south of the Mason-Dixon Line, and Flint was turned into a debtors' prison where more than 40 percent live below the poverty line. Democratic presidential contenders Clinton and Sanders may be wringing their hands now, but the cover-up of the Flint water crisis was a bipartisan criminal cabal condemning a generation of children to brain damage. It ran from Obama's EPA to the Republican statehouse. And Obama still refuses to declare Flint a disaster, thereby denying the city the real money and resources it needs.

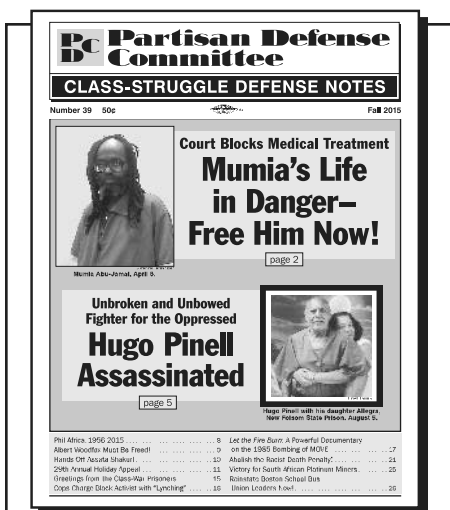
While Flint today is a far cry from its heyday as a bastion of labor power, a multiracial working class still exists in the

region. Flint needs a working-class fight for a massive program of federally funded public works, employing union members at union wages to rebuild infrastructure. How do we get that with a labor bureaucracy that sacrifices workers' needs to the bosses' profits? Clearly, labor needs a different kind of leadership.

Last year, we published the pamphlet *Then and Now*, which drew the crucial political lessons of the 1934 strikes by Minneapolis truckers, West Coast maritime and Toledo auto parts workers. Waged in the depth of the Great Depression, after a decade-long decline of organized labor, these strikes confronted the full force of the bosses' state. Unlike many strikes then, they won! Why? A key factor was that the strike leaders were committed to a class-struggle program, with no illusions that workers had common interests with the employers, their parties or their state: a leadership that grasped the class nature of American capitalism and the social power of those who made the economy run. Those victories changed history, inspiring the labor upsurge that built mass industrial unions.

But there was another development equally critical for charting a revolutionary perspective in America: the impact of the Russian Revolution on the black

*continued on page 8*



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class-war prisoner stipend program,  
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# A Visit with Mumia

The following are edited remarks by the PDC's Paul Cooperstein at the New York City Holiday Appeal.

Two weeks ago, PDC staff counsel Valerie West and myself visited Mumia in scenic Frackville, Pennsylvania. Last March Mumia was rushed to a hospital, on the verge of death, in a near-diabetic coma. For months he had had debilitating rashes all over his body; he had lost some 50 pounds. Mumia has active hepatitis C, and the prison has restricted efforts to get treatment. He has sued in federal court to compel them to provide such treatment, and before our visit, there was a three-day hearing in that lawsuit, with Mumia participating by teleconference.

We were pleased to see that Mumia is doing pretty well. He looked great; he has gained much of his weight back, he's been working out at the gym. Mumia is writing his weekly commentaries. As he told us, if he's able to do this, he feels he's doing his job. He has a very healthy appetite and relished the chocolate bar he was eating, as he *isn't* diabetic. Mumia doesn't have diabetes. That near-diabetic coma was a response to steroids he had been given for his rashes. Mumia seemed a bit sleepy toward the end of the visit—but I often have that effect on people. Throughout the visit, other prisoners and some of their visitors came by and gave their greetings to Mumia. He was lively, talkative and

funny; he actually has great comedic talents and does a very funny impersonation of Donald Trump and others.

The Corrections Department is very embarrassed over this lawsuit. Mumia was elated about the hearing. The judge slapped down the state's attorneys. The department's own doctor was turned into Mumia's witness, and they got caught submitting an affidavit over a doctor's signature that was not the one he signed. The prison conjured up a secret protocol for treating inmates with hepatitis C, which they didn't want to have announced in open court, that calls for treatment to be only given after the liver is severely damaged, when cirrhosis has set in—that is, when it's too late.

Mumia expects a decision in mid February. He's cautiously optimistic, but he knows from his own long history that what is said in court often has no relationship to how the judge will rule. There's no doubt that if the judge rules against them, the state will appeal, which will drag this out for another year or so. This will be a long fight, one on which Mumia's life depends. We encourage people to contribute to his legal expenses. Contributions can be sent to the Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, care of the National Lawyers Guild Foundation, 132 Nassau St., Room 922, New York, NY 10038, earmarked "Mumia legal expenses." ■

## Remarks by Hugo Pinell's Daughter

Following are excerpts from a presentation given by Allegra Taylor, daughter of Hugo Pinell, at the Bay Area event on January 31.

Why are we here and why is it important? The difference that the PDC makes in the lives of prisoners is so profound and it touches deep and long. The stipend that appears to be something that is so minor, it really takes them further. And then they have things they can do and share with their family as a result of the support they are getting here.

So this would have been my dad's 29th year, had he still been here with us, of being a recipient of PDC stipends. One time I asked my dad, "What do you do with your stipend money?" He said, "Oh honey, you know those nice cards and stuff that you get, sometimes I get cards with them. Sometimes I buy snacks and share them with the other prisoners. And sometimes I just leave it sit there for a big order." I guess they get to order once or twice a year....

When prisoners don't have family members or somebody who's there to support them, it makes serving their time that much more difficult. It hardens their heart against people because of their loneliness and feeling like nobody cares. I often wonder how did my dad manage to live almost 46 years in solitary confinement. October of the year that they killed him—it would have been 46 years.

The impact that we make on prisoners by reaching out to them: by sending a card; putting money on their books; if you can visit, visiting even if it's once a quarter or once a year. That one visit makes a big difference.

My dad fought for prisoners' rights because of what he experienced firsthand and what he witnessed with his own eyes. The assassination of my dad was deeper than we can all even think, but the one thing I feel deeply in my heart is that they never wanted one Hugo Pinell to experience a "win." With all the political things going on now around the prison system, the last thing that they wanted to see was one Hugo Pinell walking around in gen-



WV Photo

Allegra Taylor at Oakland Holiday Appeal, January 31.

eral population and there being peace on the yard....

Ever since my dad's murder, I have been trying to figure out where I go from here and how do we pick the pieces and what needs to be done still. Sometimes I just want to lie down and just say: "Forget it." And then I remember the fight. And then I remember the years, all the years that my grandmother waited for him to come home. And when he was almost there, they took that from her.

I'm going to continue my dad's work. It's delicate right now because of the situation at hand. There is going to be a trial soon. There's going to be an arraignment in March. But I made up my mind. Prisoners' lives matter and they might not matter to the people that they offended, hurt, stole from—but they matter. And they have families. And they're not just a prisoner. We as a people come together on one accord to support somebody that people look at as less than, or nothing, or useless, or throwaways—just a criminal. Those same people are somebody's dad, somebody's son, brother, sister. ■

# Greetings from Class-War Prisoners

## Mumia Abu-Jamal

2 December 2015

### Gazing Out on a Field of Blood

It's Christmas Season in America, ca. 2015, and when we look at the national landscape, we can hardly ignore the gore, both literal and figurative, that litters the landscape of the US in this historic epoch.

American streets are virtual shooting galleries, where cops pour the people's sacrificial blood on the foul altars of the police state.

Where there is repression, there is too resistance: the mass protests of Black Lives Matter—so named because in this era of black political ascendancy (i.e., the age of Obama) black lives *don't* matter.

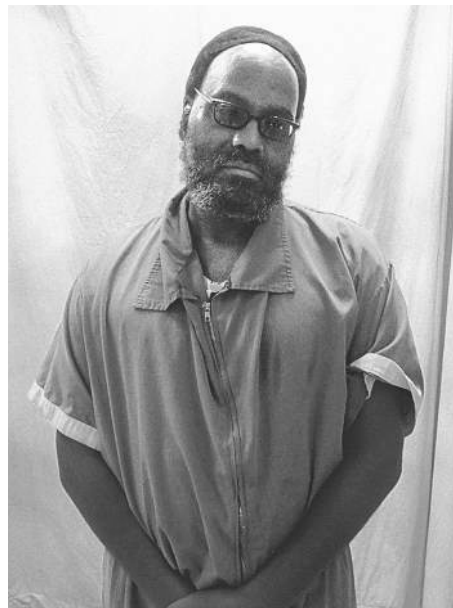
But it is there, the stirrings of mass discontent with a rancid system of repression in defense of capital.

In the field of politics we see the tendrils of the emergence of fear and fascism—the capitalists represented not by the well-practiced actors of politics, but by the superrich themselves—who apparently no longer trust their minions to get the job—unlimited capital accumulation from the poor and working class—well and truly done. Fear of foreigners in a nation of foreigners, calls for walls—and war.

This is the politics of capitalism's degeneration.

Marx said that the depravities of marching imperialism abroad always and ultimately returns home—with repression, prisons, cops and the nets and fetters of law.

Cops today look like the Robocops of yesterday's fantasy fiction; Star Wars and its imperial storm troopers, killing machines to defend the rapacious crim-



CSDN

inal banks and the millionaires and billionaires now playing politicians.

A field of blood before us—unless the people are resolute enough to unite—and rebel—to write a new future for us all.

*Ona Move!*

*Long Live John Africa!*

*Greetings to the 30th Annual Holiday Appeal!*

Mumia Abu-Jamal

P.S.—Last night, I saw a report on the crises faced by many, many Vietnam-era vets, who, because of blood transfusions during the war, have contracted Hepatitis C. The VA recently announced, "Sorry there's a cure (Sovaldi and Harvoni) but we can't afford it. If you survive the next few years, we'll see." It sounds remarkably similar to what state gov'ts are saying to thousands of state prisoners, yes? MAJ

## Jaan Laaman

15 December 2015

Hello, to my PDC comrades and to all you good activists, organizers, revolutionaries and PDC supporters, who are here tonight for this Partisan Defense Committee holiday event.

This is Jaan Laaman, coming to you from deep in the Sonoran Desert, at the u.s. prison in Tucson, Arizona. As many of you already know, I am a long held political prisoner and a long time recipient of political and material support from the PDC.

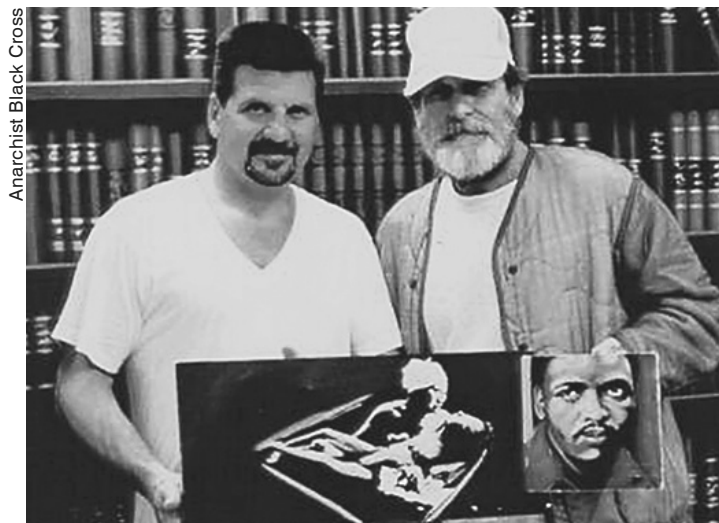
I'd surely enjoy being there with you right now, listening to remarks and having some good conversations. Actually, like other political prisoners around the country, I am right there with all of you, in positive and militant spirit and with these words.

There are many struggles, issues, worthy campaigns and organizations that reach out for and need people's support. The concrete work the Partisan Defense Committee does and has been doing

for 30 years (and I do know, because at this point, I have been in captivity for 31 years), is truly important for us class war prisoners. The PDC's work is also pretty unique and it is certainly real revolutionary solidarity and support. Your participation and support at this event, as well as your continuing awareness of and support for political prisoners held by the u.s. government, is a solid act of solidarity and important to us behind the walls.

As u.s. imperialism reaches and prepares for more and new wars, particularly in Syria, while cops shoot and murder people of color and others daily, it is important that we continue to resist on all levels. As you talk, work and struggle, keep us class war prisoners, political prisoners in mind too. For more direct information on and from political prisoners, check out [www.4strugglemag.org](http://www.4strugglemag.org). Have a great event and remember—Freedom Is A Constant Struggle!!

Jaan Laaman (10372-016)  
U.S. Penitentiary Tucson  
P.O. Box 24550  
Tucson, AZ 85734



Anarchist Black Cross

Jaan Laaman and Tom Manning at Leavenworth federal prison.

Holiday Appeal...

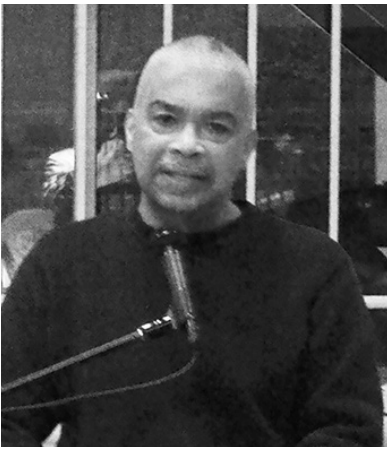
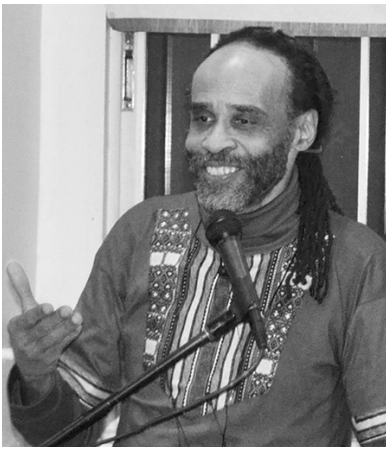
(continued from page 6)

would allow him to receive desperately needed neck and back surgery. Leonard Peltier was recently diagnosed with a life-threatening abdominal aortic aneurysm. Participants at the New York City fundraiser heard a report of a recent PDC visit to Mumia, including an update on his medical crisis (see page 7).

In New York City we also again welcomed Lynne Stewart. As a lawyer, Stewart spent decades defending Black Panthers and leftist radicals until she was arrested in 2009 and subjected to a frame-up “war on terror” show trial for defending an Islamic cleric imprisoned for an alleged plot to blow up New York City landmarks in the early 1990s. After nearly dying from breast cancer in prison, Stewart was finally released in December 2013 after a months-long fight for compassionate release, a demand supported by more than 40,000 petitioners worldwide, including the PDC.

Over the past 30 years, the PDC has provided stipends to over 40 prisoners internationally, including eight union militants. Many of these prisoners, largely victims of the racist rulers’ war against militant black activists, have been supported since nearly the beginning of our stipend program. Among them are victims of the notorious FBI Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) of surveillance, frame-up and murder.

One COINTELPRO victim, Francisco



WV Photos

Speakers at NYC Holiday Appeal (left to right): Lynne Stewart with her husband, Ralph Poynter; Muata Greene of the CBTU; Francisco Torres, formerly of the San Francisco 8.

Torres, spoke at the New York benefit. Torres, along with other former members of the Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army known as the San Francisco 8, was falsely charged in 2007 for the 1971 killing of a San Francisco police officer. The charges against Torres were finally thrown out in 2011.

In his speech referencing protests against the epidemic of racist cop killings in the U.S. and student protests in Puerto Rico, Torres pointed to the importance of our stipend program, emphasizing how any dissent against the racist capitalist system could land someone in the crosshairs of the racist rulers: “You are potential political prisoners. Like when you get arrested at demonstrations, they try to criminalize you, but you are a political

prisoner once you are arrested.”

Protests against the epidemic of racist cop killings and other forms of police terror were in the forefront of all presentations. Other speakers in New York included Muata Greene of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and MOVE supporter Orie Lumumba. In Toronto, Bruce Allen, vice president of the Niagara Regional Labour Council, spoke to the ongoing ordeal of Albert Woodfox.

James P. Cannon described the defense work of the ILD as a “school for class struggle,” an opportunity to learn the real nature of the capitalist state. Along those lines, comrade Vincent of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyiste Montreal local described to the Toronto event his experience of brutal state repression during the

2012 student strike in Quebec. Experiencing that repression taught him some basic truths about the capitalist state. But, as he explained, it took the study of Marxism and the workers movement to understand that “without a perspective of socialist revolution centered on the working class, you end up vainly pressuring one wing or another of the bourgeoisie.”

We urge our WV readers to support the work of the Partisan Defense Committee and to write to these prisoners. Become a PDC sustainer to help drive the work forward. Send contributions to: PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013. For more information on how to contribute and how to correspond with the class-war prisoners, go to www.partisandefense.org. ■

SL Speaker...

(continued from page 6)

question. The early American labor movement was combative but was crippled by anti-black and anti-immigrant bigotry. In the age of the robber barons, Jay Gould bragged: “I can hire one-half of the working class to kill the other half.”

It took the Russian Bolsheviks to begin to turn this around. To make a revolution in the tsarist “prison house of peoples,” Lenin had to wage a bitter fight within his own party for the Bolsheviks to become the champions of freedom and equality for oppressed nations and races, whom Lenin saw as crucial allies of the international working class in the revolutionary struggle against capitalism.

In this spirit, we fight against deportations and for full citizenship rights for all who have made it here, not only because we fight all forms of social oppression. Immigrants often bring with them more militant traditions of class struggle that can invigorate the labor movement here and serve as the bridge of proletarian revolution to and from Latin America, the Caribbean and elsewhere. Immigrants help to internationalize the working class in this deeply parochial country.

After the Russian Revolution, Lenin and the Communist International (the Comintern) fought to transmit these lessons to their American comrades. As James P. Cannon, a founder of both the American Communist Party and later of American Trotskyism, would later write:

“The influence of Lenin and the Russian Revolution, even debased and distorted as it later was by Stalin, and then filtered through the activities of the Communist Party in the United States, contributed *more than any other influence from any source* to the recognition, and more or less general acceptance, of the Negro question as a *special* problem of American society.” —“The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement,” *The First Ten Years of American Communism* (1962)

As the Stalinized Communist Party abandoned the black struggle in order to support Franklin D. Roosevelt and U.S. imperialism, the then-Trotskyist SWP waged an aggressive fight for black rights and equality during World War II. That is our tradition. The SWP sought to link the fight for the defense of black rights to the working-class struggle against capitalism, recruiting hundreds of black workers and making a significant breakthrough in Detroit.

However, these gains and the tradition of “black and red” unity were largely

wiped out in the ensuing Cold War period. Fighting black oppression was reduced to questions of discrimination and prejudice, which could be remedied without challenging American capitalism or its state. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision against Jim Crow education acknowledged the unequal distribution of resources as the root cause, but did not mandate redistribution as a remedy. The liberal-led civil rights movement could successfully overturn de jure segregation in the South, but it could not challenge black inequality in the U.S. as a whole. The best of a generation of black militants, the Black Panthers, were gunned down and locked up before they could be won to a revolutionary proletarian perspective; many of those who survived sold their souls to the Democrats, the other party of capital.

The dearth of class struggle today has created the climate of hopelessness and despair where angry black youth are sold “love yourself” identity politics and white anti-racists are told to “check your privilege.” The noted black spokesman for the politics of despair Ta-Nehisi Coates has some cachet because he dissed Obama for blaming blacks, especially black men, for their own oppression. But his best seller *Between the World and Me* collectively guilt-trips white people. Thereby it amnesties the truly guilty, the white American ruling capitalist class. According to Coates, every broken black body, like Freddie Gray’s in the back of a Baltimore police van, “privileges” the white race, because it wasn’t the body of their son, brother or lover. And there is nothing you can do about it, he says, except demand that whitey pay some blood money in the form of reparations.

Coates opens this work with a quote from acclaimed black writer James Baldwin, whom he claims to imitate: “And they have brought humanity to the edge of oblivion: because they think they are white.” This quote, taken from Baldwin’s essay “On Being ‘White’...and Other Lies,” has exactly the opposite meaning from that which Coates seeks to impart. Baldwin was a liberal integrationist and a universalist. In his searing indictment of racial and sexual oppression in America, Baldwin sought to debunk the myth of “white privilege,” as the title of the essay underlines. In the passage directly preceding the quote above, Baldwin said of whites: “By informing their children that Black women, Black men and Black children had no human integrity that those who call themselves white were bound to respect. And in this debasement and definition of Black people, they debased and defamed themselves.”

Although Baldwin would not agree with the means that we believe are necessary, he shared with us a passionate desire for a world where all forms of racial discrimination and oppression—along with the very existence of race, ethnicity and nationality as categories of any social significance—will be nothing but memories of a barbaric capitalist past. But getting there requires a series of workers revolutions to sweep away capitalist rule. Combating the very real racial, national and other prejudices that divide the working class is crucial to forging the revolutionary leadership needed for victory. That will allow our irrepressible sex drive (which never respected artificial boundaries, as Neanderthal DNA in our genome testifies) to do the rest. If you want to fight for such a world, come join us. ■

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S. Local Directory and Public Offices

- Website: www.icl-fi.org • E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net
- National Office: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, (212) 732-7860
- Chicago.....Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680, (312) 563-0441  
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net  
Public Office: 1st Sat. of every month, 2-5 p.m., and by appointment, 222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)
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trotskyiste.montreal@gmail.com
- Toronto .....Box 7198, Station A, Toronto, ON M5W 1X8, (416) 593-4138  
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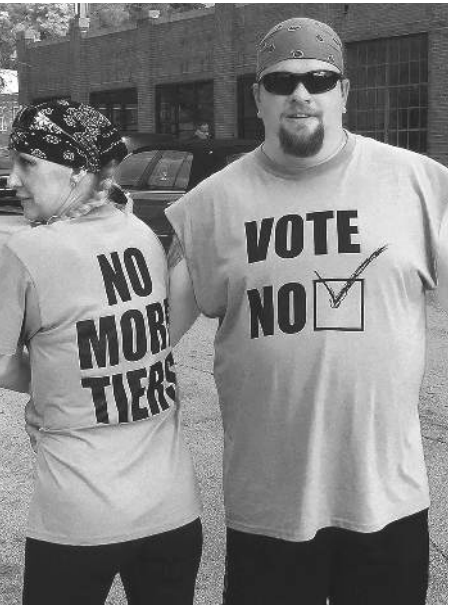
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We print below a report, edited for publication, from a reader who was a temporary worker at a Midwest plant that supplies parts for Ford. Written late last summer as the United Auto Workers (UAW) was negotiating new contracts with the “Detroit Three” automakers Fiat Chrysler, GM and Ford, the report shines a harsh light on the increasing use of temps and the grueling working conditions facing all auto workers. It also highlights the anger among auto workers that can and must be mobilized in hard class struggle against the auto giants.

At the center of last year’s contract dispute was the demand to eliminate the hated tier system. Brought into the auto assembly plants in 2007 with the agreement of the union bureaucracy, this system meant that newer workers got paid less than workers hired before 2007 to do the same job. The new contracts agreed to by the union tops preserved the tiers and were opposed by huge numbers of UAW members. In the end, the UAW misleaders finally forced the sellout contracts down the throats of angry autoworkers late last year. At Fiat Chrysler, the workers rejected management’s initial offer by a two-to-one margin, while a clear majority of skilled GM workers and 49 percent of Ford workers rejected the rotten deal. In the course of negotiations, UAW workers repeatedly threatened to strike.

Workers’ bitterness at the tier system expresses their strong desire for equal pay for equal work and working-class unity. As part of the necessary fight for industrial unionism and the closed shop, all workers—including the growing legions of non-unionized temporary workers—should be organized into the unions at top pay with full benefits and union protections. In parts plants like



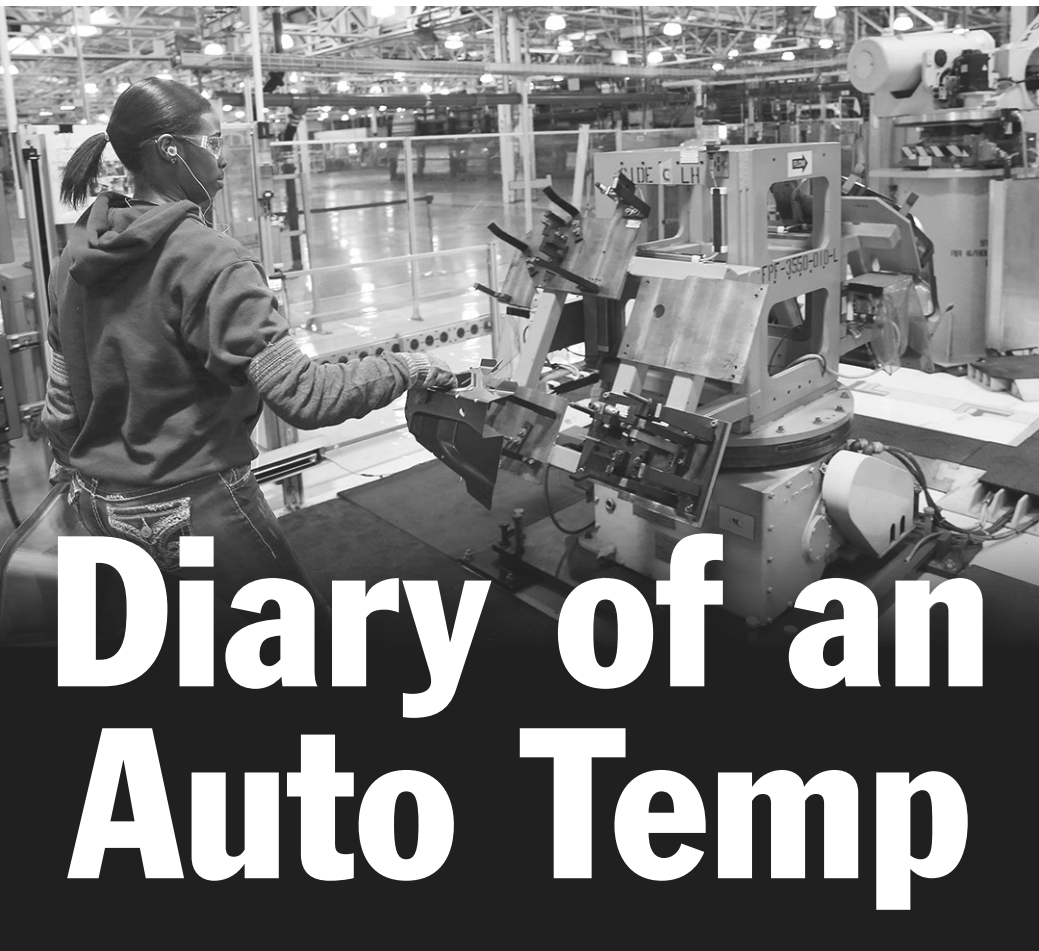
September 2015: Fiat Chrysler workers opposing sellout contract.

the one described below, workers should be in the same local as the final assembly plant they supply. But, as we wrote in “UAW Tops Force Through Sellout Contracts” (WV No. 1080, 11 December), today’s union leaders, who are committed to maintaining the profitability of the auto giants, “push reliance on the capitalist Democratic Party and the government, in place of independent working-class action.” We continued:

“What auto workers need is a class-struggle leadership forged in battles like the ones that built the UAW and other industrial unions in the 1930s.... To hold to such a perspective against the many obstacles that the bourgeoisie will put in the way requires building a revolutionary workers party dedicated to the overthrow of the capitalist profit system for good and forever.”

\* \* \*

This summer I spent some time working at an auto parts plant in the Midwest. The plant was one of several located adjacent to a large Ford auto plant. It manufactured front and rear bumpers and overheads (roofs) and is one of several different locations that all produce something dif-



On the line: worker at Fiat Chrysler stamping plant in Warren, Michigan.

ferent. For example, one shop manufactures axles, another front and rear bumper fascias, etc. My plant employed some 280 people in three shifts, in addition to 90 temps who were brought in this summer.

Any new-hire was actually an employee of a temp agency. Temps were paid \$10 an hour. If the company hired the temp permanently (after three months), the rate of pay would increase to \$12 an hour, but they would still have to wait another three months on probation before getting full union protection. The pay range for UAW workers was \$12 to \$24 an hour, going up in intervals of \$0.25 every six months.

While the building was new, it had old machinery from the Ford plant. All parts made there were transferred by semitruck to the Ford assembly plant down the street. The parts from the various parts plants in the area were all assembled together at Ford. From there, the final product was shipped off along the supply chain.

### Auto Parts Plantation

The workers at the plant were black, with the exception of a few whites and Latinos. Almost all of the black workers grew up in the ghetto, though some were now living in nicer, working-class areas because they had this job. The gender makeup was divided equally on my shift. The general feel of the place was that of a plantation, and several of the union workers commented on it being such. It’s a sentiment that puts the term “wage slavery” in a whole different light.

The two team leads were white and although they were union members, they reported directly to and worked with management (although they had no ability to discipline). My lead was known for being very pro-strike and anti-racist and was respected by most of the workers for this. The shift supervisors (who were management, not union members) were black; they walked the lines shouting: “Move it, move it, move it!” to get the operators (line workers) to work faster. All the superintendents (the plantation overseers) were white with the exception of one black guy. They sat at their computers in the break area, while the workers worked their butts off. Management was trying to get the team leads out of the union and categorized as management.

The workers (temp and union) were all fairly young, with just a handful over 40 years old. The majority of the full-timers had been employed for over three years. There were skilled workers (mechanics and maintenance engineers) who were part of the UAW like everyone else. Material handlers (forklift drivers) were also in the union and got \$0.50 more per hour than the assembly line workers. All union workers were in the same UAW

local, though it’s a different local from the Ford assembly plant. The temps were non-union but were generally pro-union and looked forward to joining the UAW. Some saw working at this parts plant as a way to eventually get hired at Ford, where many had friends or family working.

### Life on the Line

Parts came to the factory in several pieces and had to be assembled through a network of “lines.” Some of the parts were made in Mexico, others in stamping plants in the U.S. Once the parts arrived at the plant, they were put on huge shelves in the back of the factory. A “cherry picker” was assigned to each line and was solely responsible for getting the parts down and putting them out for the line workers to use. The cherry picker operator, who was definitely overworked and underpaid, had to pick parts based on a stream of barcodes that came directly from Ford.

The primary line that I worked on made front bumpers. The parts needed to be scanned in and carried between a series of stations where various stages of the assembly were done. At the second station, for example, there was a timer and the workers had 40 seconds to complete that stage of building the bumper or else the overall shift quota would be hurt. The quota was between 500 and 600 for complete front bumpers per night. On top of that, workers had to maintain an additional “bank” of roughly 200 fully assembled bumpers.

The working conditions were extremely onerous for union and temp workers alike. This line at one time comprised 30 workers, but over time the number of workers dropped to two! So I and another woman constructed each of these bumpers and did all the hauling from start to finish. She

and I were very frustrated because there was obviously a need for more people on the line.

I worked the third shift, meaning 12-hour day shifts Friday and Saturday and then 12-hour night shifts Sunday and Monday. First shift worked 12-hour days Monday through Thursday and second shift worked nights. While workers expected to work 12-hour shifts as part of “mandatory overtime until further notice,” management often avoided confirming the overtime as a way to cheat workers out of their final break.

The forklift drivers worked a different schedule from the line workers. They worked 13 consecutive days with the same break schedule and overtime requirements. This posed serious safety concerns, although no one on my shift was injured in a forklift accident. Each shift had its own set of material handlers.

During the course of the summer, management’s treatment of the workers with regard to breaks became more and more abusive as negotiations for the parts plant contract went on. The treatment of the temps regarding breaks was much worse than for union workers. On the hottest days, some of my co-workers passed out from the heat. Management provided water, but only on breaks.

Workers could bring bottled water back to their stations. While there were a lot of powerful ceiling fans, there was no air conditioning or windows, so the fans just blew hot air. When it was 100 degrees outside, it would be well over 100 inside.

Generally, workers got three ten-minute breaks during their shift. For each break, there were two bells. The first bell normally meant it was time for us to finish what we were doing and then head to the break area. The second indicated that the break had started and the 10 minutes had begun ticking. When the workers had to return from break, there were two bells again: the first one meaning clean up your area, finish your smoke or whatever, and the second one meaning it was time to head back to the line. There were two minutes between each bell, which was how long it took the workers to get from their stations to the break area.

By the end of the summer, the first bell meant nothing, and we had to keep working at the line until we heard the second bell. From that point, we were to quickly take a break and be back on the line by the time the first bell rang again. This was a major source of tension between workers (including the team leads) and management. If a temp was caught coming back from break “late,” they were escorted out of the building by management (i.e., fired!). Union workers were given three days’ suspension for being “late.” The union rep on the shift said to the workers: “Please, I’m begging you; please just do what they say. Don’t give them any lip. Management is sick of hearing it and we’re sick of hearing it.” Needless to say, he wasn’t a popular guy among the ranks, especially during this speedup.

To give a sense of how precarious it was to be a temp, one of the temps that

*continued on page 10*

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Class-Struggle Leadership Made a Key Difference

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# Auto Temp...

(continued from page 9)

I regularly drove to work with was fired because his three-year-old daughter got sick. He needed to take the day off work to take care of her because he couldn't find a babysitter. A union member's child got sick once too, but the union member was able to take the day off work (with pay) to take care of her son. It should have been like that for everyone!

## Social Attitudes

The "N" word was used promiscuously at my location by young black workers. I never heard whites or Latinos use it. There was a white guy who wore a Confederate flag belt buckle to work every day. He was very pro-union and apparently not actually a racist, since he hung out with black guys at work and also outside of work. He seemed like an example of the mixed consciousness of some white workers in Middle America, where the Confederate flag is sometimes looked at as a sign of "rebellion" and not as the flag of slavery and race terror.

There were a few openly gay men and women in the plant. They were treated as equals among the ranks of workers. Nonetheless, when it came to a discussion that took place on the Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage, there seemed to be a mixed reaction due to religious beliefs. One temp commented along the lines of, "I think it's a sin, but who am I to judge? I'm also a sinner." But this

response was not necessarily representative of everyone. Another temp, whose best friend was gay, was very excited about the ruling.

There was also a very strong hatred for the cops. On lunch and breaks, my co-workers would check out Facebook and other social media for news headlines. Not surprisingly, a lot of trending articles were about cop killings of blacks. This would always set off an angry verbal reaction by the workers.

## Contract Battle

This summer, the local contract at this plant expired, and it was a major source of contention between management and the workers—both temp and union. In short, the union had voted to strike if a contract agreement was not reached, but this strike didn't happen. In July, the union voted down the contract: 97 percent voted no and 3 percent yes. The main topic of debate was the issue of raises. Workers wanted a raise. Bottom line. But because the proposed contract offered only about a \$1 raise over the lifetime of the contract, it's not shocking that no one liked it, considering that auto workers hadn't had a reasonable raise since 2008.

During this same period, as a show of unity, the union members all wore red, which looked really cool. I asked my "old-timer" co-worker if I could wear red too, she said "Sure!" So I wore a shirt with red in it, as a show of solidarity. The union told the membership at the contract vote meeting to shout out "no contract, no peace" on the day shift, so that HR



UAW

Industrial unions were built through hard class struggle, like 1937 Detroit auto sit-down strike.

would hear them down the hall. Lots of people on the rear bumper line shouted it, and on overheads too, but the guys who work on the front bumpers mostly stayed quiet. The overhead guys got some crap from the union reps on shift because when they did chant, they started getting creative with contract demands, making up awesome chants like: "No talking! No substrate!" (Substrate is the material that the overheads are made out of.) Basically they were saying, "Stop the negotiating,

we're going on strike." The union reps really didn't like this.

After the local contract was voted down, the company had 30 days to reach agreement with the union; otherwise there would have been another meeting to vote on another strike authorization. I spoke with one of my former co-workers recently, who informed me that this August meeting never took place and that people were getting fired or quitting, but that they still didn't have a contract.■

# Immigration...

(continued from page 5)

union] organized anti-Communist raids against Mine-Mill throughout the 1950s." —"For a Class-Struggle Fight Against Anti-Immigrant Racism!" *Spartacist Canada* No. 99, September/October 1994

In a showdown on August 26, 1961, a mob of 1,800 laid siege to Mine Mill's Sudbury union hall, and the cops stood by as the rioters smashed every window. Years later, the *Sudbury Star* obtained an RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] report on the attack which revealed that "the mob on Saturday night was composed of former Hungarian freedom fighters and ex-Nazi storm troopers, who have been imported in considerable numbers by Inco in the past few years."

By the 1980s, East Europeans could pretty much step off the plane in Gander airport in Newfoundland and gain asylum. But for leftists fleeing "free world" death squads in El Salvador, Guatemala and Chile the Canadian door was slammed shut.

## Open Borders: A Liberal Utopian Response

As Marxist revolutionaries, we understand that there can be no progressive immigration policy under capitalism. It's not our business to propose solutions to the imperialists, but rather to educate the working class in the need to overthrow

their system. Not so our opponents on the left, who promote illusions that the same rapacious imperialists who have destroyed the Near East can be persuaded to come to the aid of their victims.

Today, many leftists—for example, the International Socialists and No-One Is Illegal—call for "open borders," a demand increasingly raised as a solution to the present crisis in Europe. In reality, this call reflects illusions in the European Union, a reactionary imperialist consortium which we Marxists oppose on principle. In his *Imperialism* pamphlet, Lenin devoted a chapter to ridicule the "silly little fable about 'peaceful' ultra-imperialism," which was pushed by Karl Kautsky, the theoretician of the German social democracy and vociferous opponent of the Bolshevik Revolution.

The notion of a peaceful imperialist order without immigration restrictions is utterly utopian and tantamount to calling for the abolition of national states under capitalism. The modern nation-state with defined borders arose as a vehicle for the development of capitalism and it remains the basis of the capitalists' economy and their state. No bourgeoisie will give up control over its territory or borders without a fight. This will be so until the capitalist order is destroyed through a series of workers revolutions.

Applied to small or neocolonial countries, the consequences of "open borders" can be reactionary, for example in advancing imperialist economic penetration. On a

sufficiently large scale, mass immigration is incompatible with the right of national self-determination. Just look at Israel. The imperialist states closed their borders first to Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany and then to survivors of the death camps. Hundreds of thousands of European Jews were forced to go to Palestine. This mass influx resulted in the Palestinian Arab population being displaced and expelled from their homeland.

Some advocates of "open borders" argue that unlimited immigration can be a solution to world poverty. In "The Leninist Policy Toward Immigration/Emigration," written more than 40 years ago, we explained:

"This is merely a variant of utopian egalitarianism—the belief that a just society can be established by sharing out the currently available wealth....

"In reality, the economic resources do not now exist to satisfy the material aspirations of mankind, and a policy of worldwide leveling would only intensify conflicts between the working masses of various countries."

—WV No. 36, 18 January 1974

The realization of the Marxist program—a communist society—requires the eradication of economic scarcity. Replacement of capitalist property rela-

tions by collective ownership of the means of production and a worldwide planned economy will result in a *vast increase* in the productivity of labour and living standards, and this alone can lay the basis for the emergence of a classless society. The elimination of national borders will be possible in a communist society where material scarcity, national divisions and racism will be relics of the past.

Today, the working class in this country is thoroughly multiracial, from Punjabi port truckers in B.C. to black transit workers in Toronto. Workers must take up the cause of immigrants and ethnic minorities, who are key to the workings of the Canadian economy. Often more willing to fight for the rights of all workers, these workers can be a catalyst for broader class and other social struggles. This perspective requires a fight against the pro-capitalist union misleaders and the NDP, during which a new class-struggle leadership of the unions will be forged. The battles of a revitalized labour movement will in turn help to create conditions for the emergence of the multiracial vanguard party that is required to lead the workers to overthrow the capitalist order.■

# Coates...

(continued from page 3)

The only road to "reparations" for the huge injustices of slavery and exploitation is to end the capitalist system that maintains black oppression today and put the resources of U.S. society in the hands of the working class and in the service of the oppressed. Those genuinely seeking a strategy to end racial oppression must look to the working class, which stands as the one racially integrated and powerful force that can transform this society. We seek to win white, Latino and other minority workers to the understanding that fighting for black freedom is the key to winning their own liberation from the common enemy, the capitalist exploiters. As Karl Marx stated shortly after the Civil War, "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin

where in the black it is branded."

Contrary to Coates, who argues that black people have no power to change society, black workers form a strategic part of the proletariat and are the most unionized section of the working class. They form an organic link to the down-trodden ghetto masses, who are valuable potential allies in the class struggle against the capitalist rulers. Our outlook is one of building a 70 percent black, Hispanic and other minority Bolshevik party. Class-conscious black workers, armed with a revolutionary Marxist program, can play a central role in building such a party, *leading* white workers, even backward ones, in battles against the capitalist class with the aim of workers rule. This is the only way to overcome centuries of racial oppression and open the road to the assimilation of black people into an egalitarian socialist society.■

## Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

### CHICAGO

**Saturday, February 13, 3 p.m.**  
**Marxism and the Fight for Socialist Revolution**

222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)  
(UIC-Halsted Blue Line Stop, Morgan St. Exit)  
Information and readings:  
(312) 563-0441  
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net

### VANCOUVER

**Thursday, February 18, 6:30 p.m.**  
**The 1917 Russian Revolution: How the Working Class Took Power**

Britannia Community Centre  
Learning Resource Centre Room  
1661 Napier Street  
(off Commercial Drive)  
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353  
trotskyist\_vancouver@shawcable.com

### NEW YORK CITY

**Tuesday, March 1, 7 p.m.**  
**The Russian Revolution of 1917: How the Working Class Took Power**

CCNY, NAC, Room 1/211A  
138th St. and Amsterdam Avenue  
(Take #1 train to 137th St.-City College)

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

### TORONTO

**Wednesday, March 2, 6:30 p.m.**  
**Communism vs. Feminism**

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

For more information, visit the ICL website: [www.icl-fi.org](http://www.icl-fi.org)

# Sanders...

(continued from page 1)

some neutral arbiter. It is an instrument for organized violence to preserve the rule of capital. The choice at election time is simply over which capitalist party will oversee the exploitation of the working class as well as the repression of black people, immigrants and all the oppressed at home, while prosecuting U.S. imperialism’s wars abroad.

Many are revolted by U.S. war crimes, including the bombing of civilians in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, committed under Hillary Clinton’s watch as Obama’s secretary of state. While Sanders scored some debating points against her by citing his refusal to vote for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, he has a long record of support to U.S. military depredations around the world. He backed the United Nations sanctions against Iraq that led to the deaths of some 1.5 million people and eviscerated the country in the lead-up to the 2003 invasion. He voted for the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force that launched the war on Afghanistan. Sanders has since regularly voted for military funding to these wars and occupations. Today he supports the U.S. bombing campaign in Syria and vows that, if elected, he would continue the murderous drone strikes that Obama has unleashed in the Near East, Africa and Central Asia. In 2014 Sanders joined the other 99 Senators in endorsing the Israeli massacre of Palestinians in Gaza.

Indeed, Sanders’s record on the foreign policy score is so shameful that even his most ardent supporters on the left, Socialist Alternative (SAIt), have felt compelled to address it. A 28 January article on [socialistalternative.org](http://socialistalternative.org) concedes that Sanders’s foreign policy is “mistaken” and “falls short,” but assures the reader that this “does not negate enormously progressive aspects of his campaign.” But imperialist war abroad is a counterpart of increased misery and repression for the working masses and oppressed at home.

In the face of massive protests against racist cop terror, both Clinton and Sanders have been trying to woo Black Lives Matter leaders. To hear the mainstream pundits, Hillary Clinton has the “black vote” sewn up, particularly in the South. However, Sanders, backed by black preacher/professor Cornel West, a leader of the Democratic Socialists of America, has been playing up his credentials as a participant in the civil



New York City, August 2014: Protest against racist cop killing of Eric Garner.

rights movement of the 1960s. Sanders recently won support from former NAACP president Ben Jealous, as well as from left-wing academic Adolph Reed and a number of other prominent black activists.

The truth is there isn’t much daylight between Clinton and Sanders when it comes to promoting racist “law and order.” Both backed Bill Clinton’s 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which vastly expanded the crimes punishable by death at the hands of the federal government and provided for 100,000 more cops on the streets and billions more in prison funding. Twenty years later, with countless more black and Latino people gunned down by cops and the prisons overflowing, the Clintons cynically regret their “mistake.” With equal hypocrisy, Sanders today decries “the disgrace of having more people in jail than any other country, disproportionately African-American and Latino.”

Since the time of slavery, the racist rulers have oppressed black people in America based on the color of their skin. The capitalists foment racial and ethnic hostilities to obscure the irreconcilable class divide between labor and its exploiters. This is supplemented by the great lie that the Democratic Party, the historic party of slavery and Jim Crow segregation in the South, represents the interests of black and working people. This lie has in turn been reinforced by the misleaders of the unions, who have shackled the power of labor to the class enemy, particularly through support to the Democrats. The results can be seen not only in the wreck-

age of once-powerful unions but also in the absolute devastation of the lives of the ghetto poor.

The road to black freedom lies in the struggle to smash this racist capitalist system through socialist revolution, and the power to do that lies in the hands of the multiracial working class. But this power cannot and will not be realized short of forging a class-struggle workers party that champions the cause of black liberation and mobilizes in defense of immigrants and all the oppressed.

## Reformism vs. Revolutionary Politics

The bottom line for Sanders’s more left-talking supporters is the notion that he is motivating people, notably youth, to take at least a first step to the left. Some even admit, in the words of a 5 February counterpunch.org article, that “socialism” for Sanders is really “Scandinavian-style capitalism (capitalism with a ‘human face’).” But the crucial thing, they claim, is that he is starting a “public discourse” about socialism. In reality, Sanders’s radical liberal acolytes are leading youth straight into the demoralizing dead end of the Democratic Party.

Early in the Sanders campaign, the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO) took SAIt to task for supporting a candidate running on the capitalist Democratic Party ticket. This is rich coming from an organization whose own leaders have run on the ticket of the Green Party, a small-time capitalist party that serves as a liberal pressure group on the Democrats. Following Sanders’s strong showing

in Iowa, the ISO is singing a new tune. In an article titled “Iowa’s Radical Message” ([socialistworker.org](http://socialistworker.org), 2 February) they opine: “Pretty much no one—*Socialist Worker* included—guessed that the wave of discontent could lift him to more than perhaps a single victory in New Hampshire.” The ISO goes on to enthuse that Sanders’s Iowa result has “demonstrated a deep dissatisfaction with the status quo” which “blasts open the lie that America is a fundamentally conservative country.”

There are indeed many boiling discontents in American society, and not all of them “progressive.” To gauge that anger, just look at the crowds at Donald Trump’s “Make America Great Again” election rallies or the evangelical Christians thumping their Bibles for Ted Cruz. Whipped up by the current crop of Republican presidential candidates, these reactionary yahoos see “illegal immigrants,” Muslim “terrorists,” Planned Parenthood, Black Lives Matter activists and the political establishment (read: a White House that is occupied by a black president) as driving America down the road to a socialist Sodom and Gomorrah. This is one reflection of the declining economic might of the world’s “only superpower.”

For their part, the Democrats are looking to cash in electorally among the millions who are desperate for decent jobs, housing, food, education for their children, health care. Sanders’s campaign provides a useful vehicle for luring people into believing that the Democrats will deliver. But the fact of the matter is that any significant gains won by labor and the oppressed in this country were wrested through hard-fought class and social struggle against the exploiters and their parties. Today, what remains of these gains continues to be ravaged in a one-sided capitalist class war enabled by union misleaders who have long forsaken the very means through which the unions were built.

As communists, we champion the fight for jobs at good wages; for quality, fully government-funded health care for all; for free, quality education for all at all levels. Our purpose is to link such demands to building a multiracial revolutionary working-class party that will lead the working class to overthrow this decaying system of exploitation, oppression and imperialist war. The resulting workers government will expropriate the capitalist owners of industry and the banks and use the wealth produced by labor for the benefit of the many, not the profits of a few. ***Fight, don’t starve! For a workers America! ■***

# Chicago...

(continued from page 12)

and charter schools were nonnegotiable and off limits, Lewis then pushed through a settlement that was not much different from what CPS had been offering before the strike. Less than a year later, Emanuel announced nearly 50 new school closings. Many CTU members now believe the strike was ended too early.

Significantly, a solid strike by teachers now could set the stage for driving Emanuel from office. In early January, the CTU House of Delegates (the union’s highest body) passed a welcome resolution calling on Emanuel to resign, but the ink was barely dry before Lewis distanced herself from it. “That was something that came from the membership,” she explained; “personally, I don’t care” (*Chicago Tribune*, 16 January). With the presidential primaries underway, the CORE bureaucrats are not eager to upset the apple cart in the Democrats’ Chicago stronghold. Any struggle to send Emanuel packing must not have as its goal placing a “kinder, gentler” Democrat in City Hall, but rather must proceed from the understanding of the need to build a class-struggle workers party that emblazons on its banner the fight against capitalist exploitation and all forms of oppression.

Democrats, including those pretending to be “friends” of labor and minorities, represent the interests of big business no less than Republicans do. One such false friend is Jesus “Chuy” Garcia, whom the

CTU tops (including Sharkey) endorsed in last year’s mayoral election. While offering up some rhetoric about bettering the lot of the “little guy,” Garcia is as much an enemy of working people as Emanuel. In the campaign, Garcia vowed to flood the city streets with 1,000 more killer cops, while arguing that he could more effectively wring concessions from the unions through negotiations than Emanuel could through his ham-fisted bullying. The CTU’s support is not reserved for so-called progressives. Last month, the union endorsed State Assembly boss Mike Madigan, the old-school Chicago Democrat and property tax lawyer known for shelving even the most modest reform bills, such as those for a minimum-wage hike and an elected school board.

Acting as CORE’s chief press agent is the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO). For years, ISO supporters both inside and outside the CTU have promoted CORE with nary a word of criticism. A recent case in point is the deafening silence on CORE’s Madigan endorsement in the ISO article “Rahm Declares War on Chicago Teachers” ([socialistworker.org](http://socialistworker.org), 3 February). No wonder. Notwithstanding their occasional nod to Karl Marx, these fake socialists espouse a program shared with various and sundry union bureaucrats, not least Sharkey, whose columns have appeared in the ISO press. For them, the entire purpose of labor protest and political activity is to pressure the Democrats to give workers a slightly better shake under capitalism.

Other reformist organizations have joined the ISO in participating in CORE, under the pretext that CORE is more “honest” and “democratic” than the union officials it replaced. In reality, it embraces the same pro-capitalist program, centered on supporting the Democratic Party, as the old-line union tops. Thus, these so-called progressives end up betraying the workers, as CORE, Lewis and Sharkey are doing today. What the unions need is a genuine class-struggle leadership that is dedicated to fighting against capitalist exploitation.

## Public-Sector Workers Under Attack

The CTU bureaucracy makes a big deal of Republican governor Bruce Rauner’s proposed measures to place CPS in receivership and bankrupt the teachers’ pension fund. But the Democrats are the dominant party in Illinois, including controlling the state legislature. And in pushing to bust the CTU, Emanuel has simply been carrying out the school “reform” policies of his former White House boss. The Obama administration’s policies are designed to help spur state governments to shutter supposedly failing inner-city public schools, roll out the welcome mat to non-union charter schools and launch anti-union attacks on seniority and tenure. Nationwide, the bourgeoisie has been out to gut public-sector unions, targeting teachers in particular, as shown by everything from the pending Supreme Court case (*Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*) to strip these unions of “fair

share” funds to the deplorable conditions of Detroit schools and their besieged staff.

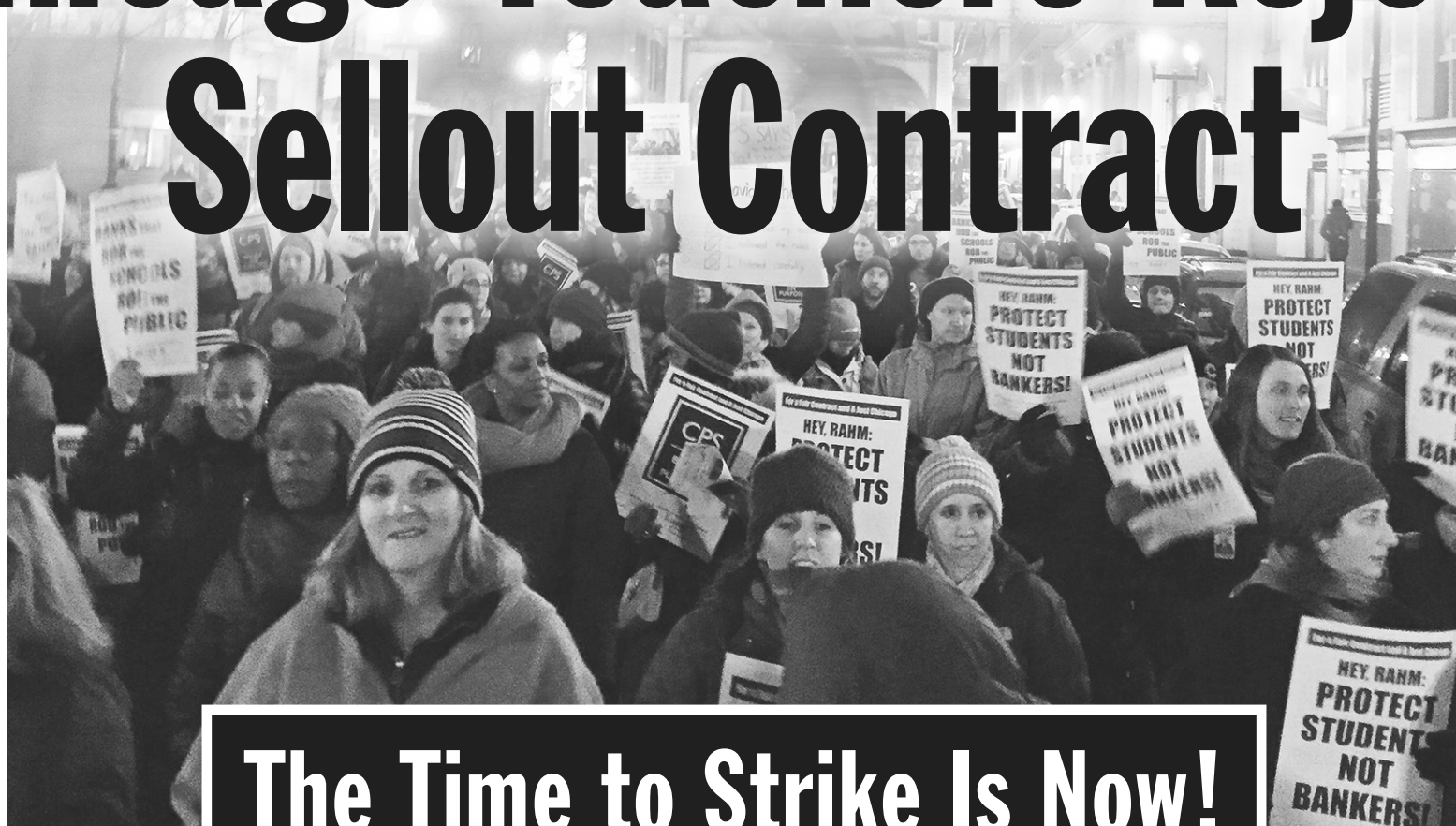
And from Emanuel to Madigan to Rauner, capitalist politicians of all stripes are sharpening their knives to slash public employee pensions. For decades, the annual CPS budget was financed by “borrowing” (i.e., looting) money from the teachers’ fund. Ever since that fund dried up, the banks holding the debt have charged exorbitant interest rates while encouraging the city to wrest sweeping concessions from teachers.

The fact that the bourgeois politicians are out to get the Chicago teachers should be sufficient warning of how suicidal it is to believe that working people possess common interests with their exploiters. Turning back the ruling-class war against labor, black people and other minorities requires a break from political subservience to the Democrats. The unions need a leadership committed to the independence of the working class from the class enemy.

The money and resources exist to provide quality, integrated, public education for all. Seizing that wealth and putting it at the service of workers and the oppressed can only come about by breaking the bourgeoisie’s hold on power. To that end, the working people must forge a party that fights for their class interests, a multiracial revolutionary workers party. The Spartacist League is dedicated to building such a party, one that will lead all of the exploited and oppressed in the struggle to sweep away this decaying capitalist system and establish an egalitarian socialist society. ■

# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Democrats, Bankers Out for Blood Chicago Teachers Reject Sellout Contract



WV Photo

### The Time to Strike Is Now!

On February 1, the Chicago Teachers Union's (CTU) 40-member bargaining committee, reflecting the overwhelming sentiment of the membership, unanimously rejected a rotten contract proposal that would have gutted teachers' pensions and jacked up health care costs. The next day, Mayor Rahm Emanuel's hand-picked head of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) moved to strong-arm the union into submission by announcing massive budget cuts, layoffs and a halt to pension contributions. In an open rebuke to the widely reviled Democratic Party mayor and his CPS flunkies, thousands of CTU members marched on February 4 through the city's Loop business district, chanting: "Rahm Emanuel's got to go!"

Steamrolling the CTU in the name of school "reform" has been a major pre-occupation of Rahm Emanuel—formerly chief of staff in Obama's White House—since he became Chicago mayor five years ago. But the teachers have proved to be no pushovers, as they showed in their nine-day 2012 strike. Now the CTU, whose contract expired in June 2015, is again on the front lines. With Emanuel out for blood—more layoffs, more public school closings, more non-union charter schools, more pension gouging—teachers voted overwhelmingly in December to authorize a strike. Giving voice to this sentiment, demonstrators at the February 4 rally chanted, "We will strike!"

There could hardly be a more opportune time for strike action in Chicago, with City Hall reeling after the lid was blown on its cover-up of the racist cop killing of Laquan McDonald. Such murderous police violence has the masses seething in the ghettos and barrios, which also bear the brunt of the assault on public education. The capitalist rulers have little but prison and menial jobs to offer black and Latino youth, and thus no interest in spending money to upgrade inner-city schools or in paying union wages to teachers to educate these kids. Known as

**February 4: Thousands of Chicago Teachers Union members and supporters rally after rejecting contract.**

"Segregation City," Chicago is the quintessential American city, where divisions of race and class are at their most raw.

A CTU strike in defense of teachers' livelihoods as well as public education would resonate with the mainly minority parents, as the 2012 strike did, and highlight the intertwining of black rights and labor rights in this deeply racist, class-divided society. Such a strike could also galvanize other beleaguered unionized public employees, not least the city's largely black transit unions, who are currently working without a contract. Teachers can count as potential allies organized labor, working people and the black and immigrant poor. Arrayed against them are all the forces of the ruling class, from Emanuel's capitalist Democratic Party cohorts and the bourgeois media to the

cops and courts. The social tinder is there for an explosive class-struggle fight that could fuse the power of labor with the anger of the ghettos and barrios.

### CTU Tops Sabotage Class Struggle

The teachers hold the match, but those who run the CTU—namely President Karen Lewis, Vice President Jesse Sharkey and their "progressive" Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE)—do not want it lit. These union "reformers" betray the membership and its impulse to struggle in favor of "working together" with the bosses and their political representatives in the Democratic Party.

Take the matter of who pays for pensions, which the CPS has chronically underfunded. Although Lewis previously

said that this issue is "strike-worthy," she recently volunteered that "we are willing to make certain sacrifices," including letting the CPS off the hook for its pension contributions! She declared the city's subsequent proposal to that effect a "serious offer." That did not go down well with her bargaining committee, much less the union ranks, spurring angry meetings demanding to know why Lewis would even put such a giveback package to a vote. Shortly after it was resoundingly defeated, Sharkey took to the airwaves to assure the bosses: "We're going to keep working and try to avoid a shutdown of the district, a strike."

The CTU tops have all but sworn off a strike before mid May, when the school year is nearly over and a walkout's potential impact would be much less. They are hiding behind the notorious Senate Bill 7, which Lewis herself supported when Emanuel pushed it through prior to the 2012 contract battle. That anti-labor legislation, which requires the union to get approval from 75 percent of its membership for any strike, also mandates a lengthy "fact-finding" period (followed by a "cooling off" period) before a work stoppage can legally begin. But City Hall is not waiting for any "fact-finding"—they're threatening to slash pension contributions now! Playing by the bosses' rules is a losing game. The only strike that is "illegal" is a strike that loses.

Emanuel's earlier provocations sparked the 2012 strike, which animated teachers and other unionists across the country. But with the CORE bureaucrats at the helm, the CTU was fighting with its arms tied behind its back. Lewis, Sharkey & Co. did not seriously seek to mobilize union solidarity in action, instead giving SEIU janitors the green light to cross CTU picket lines. Today, those SEIU jobs are largely eliminated, privatized to a non-union company. With the union leadership accepting the mayor's insistence that the critical issues of school closings, layoffs

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Reuters

**Democratic mayor Rahm Emanuel closed nearly 50 public schools in 2013, including Woods Elementary Math & Science Academy on Chicago's largely black South Side.**