

## Fake Socialists Pimp for Imperialist Sanders

# Break with the Capitalist Democrats and Republicans!



Reuters



Xinhua

Presumptive nominees of bosses' parties offer no choice for working class and oppressed. Center: Ferguson, November 2014: National Guard mobilized to quell protest over racist cop killing of Michael Brown.

The two main capitalist parties have effectively chosen their presumptive nominees for chief executive of U.S. imperialism. For the Republicans, it's the bigoted, wealthy real estate mogul and reality TV star, now turned populist demagogue, Donald Trump. Obama's former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, the quintessential Democratic Party machine politician and imperialist warmonger, is the standard-bearer for the other party of war and racism.

A primary challenge to Clinton by "democratic socialist" Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders was embraced not only

## For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

by many liberals but also by various self-proclaimed socialist groups. These reformists have bought and sold the claims by Sanders—who for a quarter century has caucused with the Democrats

in Congress—that he stands for a "political revolution against the billionaire class." His bid for the nomination having ended in failure, Sanders is now bargaining for concessions from the Clinton

Democrats, including in the meaningless party platform.

Sanders attracted support from college and other petty-bourgeois youth, as well as a layer of workers, by inveighing against Wall Street and promoting reforms, such as free college tuition, Medicare for all, reducing student debt and a \$15 an hour minimum wage. At the same time, he is a stalwart champion of bloody U.S. imperialism—from his support to the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force that launched the war on Afghanistan to his Senate vote endorsing the

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## European Union: Enemy of Workers and Immigrants

# Brexit: Defeat for Bankers and Bosses!

LONDON, June 28—Such is the arrogance of the British ruling establishment that within days of the vote for Britain to leave the European Union, prominent voices are already calling for the referendum outcome to be overturned, either through a second referendum or by Westminster. Meanwhile, Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn faced a full-scale insurrection by right-wing Labour Members of Parliament (MPs), including acolytes of former prime minister

Tony Blair. In the space of a day, some 20 MPs staged an orchestrated resignation from Corbyn's shadow cabinet. A defiant Corbyn quickly replaced all those who had resigned and insisted that he intended to remain as party leader.

At a convulsive meeting of Labour MPs last night, one after another of Corbyn's right-wing enemies rose to demand his resignation. Meanwhile, thousands of Corbyn supporters demonstrated outside the Westminster Parlia-

ment in an emergency protest called by Momentum, a left-Labour movement. Supporters of the Spartacist League/Britain participated in the protest carrying signs saying: "Defend Corbyn—Out with the Blairite Plotters" and "EU: Enemy of Workers and Immigrants—Britain Out Now!"

Today, Corbyn lost a no confidence vote among Labour MPs by 172 to 40. In the aftermath, he refused to resign and declared: "I was democratically elected

leader of our party for a new kind of politics by 60% of Labour members and supporters, and I will not betray them by resigning. Today's vote by MPs has no constitutional legitimacy."

Printed below is a June 24 statement by the Central Committee of the Spartacist League/Britain.

**WORKERS HAMMER** 

Standing on our consistent record of proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist opposition to the imperialist-dominated European Union (EU), the Spartacist League/Britain welcomes the

*continued on page 9*



On Opioids and Addiction

3 June 2016

I appreciated your article on “Capitalist Misery and Heroin Addiction” [WV No. 1089, 6 May]. Among harm reductionists, it is believed that drug use is an informed and deserved choice made by adults; often it is not negative. Still, many will say they are medicating problems caused by the material world they exist in. Your article covered many of the ways the state punishes people for this, but I would like to mention a few more.

Aside from the criminalization of drug use itself, capitalism harbors many inhumane treatments of drug users. Naloxone, a drug that reverses opioid overdoses and saves lives, ranges from unavailable to illegal in much of the country. Despite the fact that it has no pleasurable or “abusable” effects, law makers avoid the topic until it becomes favorable among affluent white communities. As you noted, America has no issue vilifying poor black drug users. It takes the addition of white youth fatalities to make politicians care.

Good Samaritan laws, which provide legal protection for persons involved in overdose situations after calling 911, are also side stepped despite the fact that their only consequence would be the saving of

countless lives. Instead people are left trapped between fear of imprisonment and death.

Access to syringes is yet another way that drug users could be assisted. Using cleans stops transmission of HIV and HCV (Hepatitis C), and lessens issues like abscesses and blood infections. The Center for Disease Control has officially stated that needle exchanges are effective and beneficial, yet they still remain illegal in many places. Even when they are legalized, many places see a high demand but absolutely no funding. Instead, opposing politicians claim that access to sterile supplies encourages criminal behavior. Injection drug users [IDUs] are left to fend for themselves.

While HIV treatment has progressed slowly over time, issues like intentional exposure laws criminalize infected persons. Those who have HCV (well over half of long term IDUs) face plenty of barriers for accessing treatment. There is a safe and highly effective cure, but funding for it can be difficult and many health care practitioners are poorly informed. HCV is viewed as a disease incurred by one’s own immoral choices, so it is not a priority. If a person can find a doctor and funding, insurance programs in most states have

mandatory sobriety periods with confirmatory blood tests. There is no scientific evidence to back such practices, yet they remain the standard in treatment. Many choose to stay infected rather than deal with this belittling process.

These are just some of the things that came to mind as I read your article. I encourage readers to keep an eye out for laws that can affect drug users; hopefully small changes can give us a speck of humanity under capitalism. I can only hope that these individuals manage to get by without excessive pain induced by the state, until an educated working class can free them from the capitalist system and allow us all to live making our own choices.

Hana

\* \* \*

2 June 2016

To *Workers Vanguard*

I have a small point to add to the very good article “Capitalist Misery and Heroin Addiction.” A powerful recent investigation by the *LA Times* (“OxyContin’s 12-Hour Problem,” 5 May) exposed one cause for the spike in opioid addiction: lies, capitalist profit, and big pharma (in particular, Purdue Pharma, the manufacturer of OxyContin). The article details how OxyContin was launched into posi-

tion as the bestselling painkiller in America based on marketing materials promising a unique 12-hour duration so that it can be taken at twice daily regular intervals. But even before it went to market, trials showed that this duration didn’t hold for many patients. And since then, Purdue worked overtime to squelch any claims that it might last a shorter span of time. The result of this has been an epidemic of patients who go *into withdrawal* twice a day until their next dose. These repeated episodes of withdrawal raise the risk of addiction and abuse. One expert the *Times* quotes describes how Oxy at 12-hour intervals could be “the perfect recipe for addiction.” The article goes on to describe many individuals’ harrowing stories of patients subjected to tremendous stress and agony by the big 12-hour lie. The untold misery caused here (conducted in the name of healing others!) is but one small example of how the capitalist profit motive runs counter to basic human decency, corrupting and destroying every aspect of social relations. This scandal serves as a further demonstration that we cannot provide genuinely quality health-care for all short of overturning the profit system and establishing a socialist society based on human need rather than lining the pockets of the wealthy few.

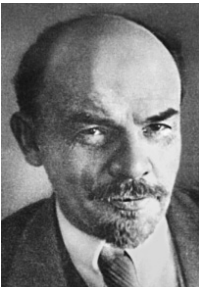
Gerrit Bogle



TROTSKY

Bourgeois and Workers Democracy

*Behind the facade of bourgeois democracy lies the dictatorship of the capitalist class, which is defended by the state apparatus of repression (cops, courts and prisons). Writing a century ago, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin explained that the working class must champion democratic rights as part of its struggle to overthrow the capitalist rulers and establish its own state with democracy for the masses—workers democracy.*



LENIN

Capitalism in general, imperialism in particular, transforms democracy into an illusion—and at the same time capitalism generates democratic tendencies among the masses, creates democratic institutions, accentuates the antagonism between imperialism, which repudiates democracy, and the masses which strive toward democracy. Capitalism and imperialism cannot be overthrown through any reforms—not even the most “ideal” democratic reforms—but only through an economic overturn. But the proletariat which has not been educated in a struggle for democracy is incapable of accomplishing an economic overturn. Capitalism cannot be defeated without a *seizure of banks*, without abolishing *private ownership* of the means of production. These revolutionary measures, however, cannot be realized without the organization by the entire people of a democratic administration of the means of production which have been confiscated from the bourgeoisie, without attracting the entire mass of the working people—the proletarians, the semiproletarians, and the petty peasants—to a democratic organization of their ranks, their forces, their participation in the state government.... Socialism leads toward the dying off of *every* state, consequently of every democracy; but socialism cannot be realized except *through* the dictatorship of the proletariat, which combines force against the bourgeoisie—the minority of the population—and a *complete* development of democracy—a really general participation, with equal rights, of the *entire* mass of the population in all the *state* affairs and in all complicated problems of liquidating capitalism....

The Marxian solution of the question of democracy consists in the *utilization* against the bourgeoisie of *all* democratic institutions and tendencies by the entire proletariat, a proletariat which leads its class struggle with a view to preparing for its victory over the bourgeoisie and the overthrow of the latter.

—V.I. Lenin, “Reply to P. Kievsky (Piatakov)” (August-September 1916) in *The Bolsheviks and the World War*, ed. Gankin and Fisher (Stanford University Press, 1976)

# WORKERS VANGUARD

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

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

*Workers Vanguard* (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and skipping the last issue in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 1618, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116. Email address: [vanguard@tiac.net](mailto:vanguard@tiac.net). Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

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

The closing date for news in this issue is June 28.

No. 1092

1 July 2016

CORRECTION

In our article “Imperialism, Zionism and Anti-Jewish Bigotry” in WV No. 1091 (3 June), we referred to American Jewish academic Norman Finkelstein as the son of a concentration camp survivor. In fact, both of Finkelstein’s par-

ents were survivors of the Holocaust. His mother, Maryla Husyt Finkelstein, was in the Majdanek concentration camp and his father, Zacharias, was in Auschwitz. Both of them had previously survived the Warsaw Ghetto.

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# Organize All Wireless Workers!

Verizon workers along the East Coast organized in the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) have voted overwhelmingly to ratify contracts agreed to at the end of their hard-fought seven-week strike this spring. The company had been out for blood against the unions, which are concentrated in the wireline (landline and FiOS broadband) division, aiming to further gut the shrinking union workforce. Instead, the strike forced Verizon to back down from its “last, best and final offer,” a litany of giveback demands ranging from pension concessions to attacks on job security that would have led to layoffs and more outsourcing.

The company was also forced to relent on work-rule changes that would have let management deploy workers far from their homes at whim. Several workers told *Workers Vanguard* that they were happy to see that the hated Quality Assurance Review (QAR) program, which the company had used to enforce discipline, was done away with. Undoubtedly the company will try to implement a new draconian discipline system that the workers have to be ready to confront; as one veteran union steward told WV, “You can have a contract and the company can violate it all the time. They always try that,” adding, “You always have to fight.”

In the end, the one big concession obtained by Verizon was hundreds of millions of dollars in health care cost savings. Union officials had offered this giveback long before the strike began. The additional cost to workers will eat up much of the 10.9 percent increase in wages agreed to over the four-year life of the contracts.

Verizon was also hell-bent on blocking union inroads into its highly profitable wireless sector, which is dependent on the infrastructure of the unionized wireline business but is virtually unorganized. The company had rebuffed all attempts at negotiation with nearly 80 retail workers in Brooklyn and Everett, Massachusetts, who voted for union representation by the CWA in 2014. Now, as a direct result of the strike, these workers have finally won their first contract, timed to expire with the wireline contracts and the contract of 100 wireless technicians who were already CWA members. This common expiration date backs up the handful of organized wireless workers with the leverage of the entire unionized workforce. Union tops say they “plan to build on this foothold” to unionize the wireless workers. In fact, if this Rottweiler of a company is to be kept at bay, every wireless worker must be organized, making all of Verizon a union shop. The future of the CWA and IBEW at Verizon is on the line.

But the strategy of the union bureaucrats is to rely on the agencies of the capitalist class enemy and its state, including mobilizing votes for Democratic politicians who would putatively appoint “pro-labor” officials to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). After the 2000 contract, union officials touted a “neutrality agreement” with Verizon that supposedly ensured that the company would not interfere in organizing efforts. But the bosses are *never* neutral when it comes to profits, and Verizon flouted that agreement from day one. After nearly 16 years of “neutrality,” the unions have managed to organize fewer than 200 wireless workers. It took a strike to win a contract for the wireless store workers, and it will take

## Verizon Strike Beats Back Company Attack



WV Photo

Manhattan strike rally, May 5. Verizon strike was widely popular among working people.

unions flexing their muscle and relying on their power and organization—not appeals to the capitalist government and the bosses—to organize and win decent contracts for Verizon’s 70,000 wireless workers.

The success of the Verizon strike demonstrates that the only way to repel the vicious attacks of the capitalist bosses is through class struggle. This point was underscored on the first day after the strike ended, when workers at multiple garages returned to work wearing the CWA’s signature red T-shirts instead of regulation Verizon gear. The color red is meant to memorialize CWA chief steward Gerry Horgan, a member killed on the picket lines in the 1989 strike when the daughter of a plant manager hit him with her car (see “CWA Striker Murdered on the Picket Line,” WV No. 484, 1 September 1989). Acting as if the recent strike had never happened, Verizon man-

agers demanded that the workers take off the shirts. Instead, they walked out.

However, if the union tops have their way, that militancy will be channeled into stumping for the Democratic Party in the presidential elections. The pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy has time and time again pushed the strategy of electing “friend of labor” Democrats who, once in power, would supposedly act in the interest of the workers. In reality, this strategy has served to demobilize the power of the workers and their unions, resulting in one defeat after another and helping to lay the basis for the decimation of the unions.

Union officials timed the strike to coincide with the April primaries in New York and elsewhere on the East Coast. Last year, the outgoing president of the CWA, Larry Cohen, became a senior campaign adviser to Bernie Sanders. Months afterward, the CWA endorsed this capitalist politician who is touted as “socialist.”

Both Sanders and Hillary Clinton stated that they supported the strike, though Clinton’s “support” was far more muted. Now, with the Sanders campaign folding, union members will be told that they must mobilize to defeat Republican reactionary Donald Trump at all costs—i.e., to vote for Clinton. But reliance on the Democrats, or on any capitalist party, is a losing strategy. The Democratic Party is a bosses party no less than the Republicans. Democratic claims to be the “friends of labor” are merely aimed at hoodwinking working people into supporting a party that represents the interests of the capitalist exploiters.

CWA and IBEW officials expressed gratitude that Obama’s labor secretary, Thomas Perez, and federal mediators got Verizon to negotiate with the unions. In fact, Perez only intervened because the strike was hurting Verizon’s bottom line. Despite months of preparation by the company, including training a scab army of 20,000 managers and non-union workers, the strike began to bite a few weeks in. The scabs did not have the skill sets to do the work of the strikers, and Verizon ran up a backlog of installs, new orders and customer complaints. The profit-hungry giant burned through cash reserves. With the strike hurting Verizon, Perez moved to broker negotiations to end the labor action and prevent further damage to the company. All the actions of the mediators were in the long-term interests of Verizon investors and the American capitalist class as a whole.

Or take the actions of the NLRB early on in this strike. When CWA pickets at hotels, backed up by Teamsters and honored by Hotel Trades Council members, caused scabs to be evicted from New York hotels from which they were being dispatched, the NLRB got a federal judge to slap the CWA with a picket ban. The capitalists’ labor boards, along with their courts and their cops, are on the side of the bosses. Having Democrats in power does not change this basic truth.

Speaking to *Jacobin* (15 June), CWA political director Bob Master told a rather telling joke: “Remind us never to go on strike again unless it’s a week before a contested New York primary when a socialist is running for president.” In reality, it was the defiance and resolution of the 39,000 striking workers that staved off Verizon’s anti-union assault. Picketers remained determined to fight and win, despite having their health insurance cut off by the company and experiencing up close and personal the scabherding by the police, for whom strikebreaking is a job description.

The political program of the union bureaucracy is based on the lie that there is a “partnership” between the workers and their capitalist class enemies. At bottom, these misleaders promote the myth that capitalism can be “fair” to working people, and that companies like Verizon

*continued on page 5*



“The running of the scabs” in Garden City, Long Island: Cops clear way for strikebreakers to cross picket line, April 20.

### NOTICE

**Workers Vanguard skips alternate issues in June, July and August.**

**Our next issue will be dated July 29.**



Muhammad Ali, heavyweight champ of the world, and by his own words, “the greatest,” died on June 3 after a lengthy battle with Parkinson’s disease. Despite the vast distance between his political outlook and ours, we hail Ali, arguably the most prominent sports figure of the 20th century, for his courageous refusal to be drafted into the anti-Communist U.S. war in Vietnam and for his struggle against racist oppression of black people at home. After the government changed his draft status in 1966 to make him eligible for induction, Ali famously responded to reporters demanding to know if he would serve if called up:

“I ain’t got no quarrel with them Viet-cong.... My conscience won’t let me go shoot my brother, or some darker people, or some poor, hungry people in the mud for big, powerful America. And shoot them for what? They never called me n----r, they never lynched me, they didn’t put no dogs on me, they didn’t rob me of my nationality, rape and kill my mother and father. Shoot them for what?... How can I shoot them poor people? Just take me to jail.”

This searing indictment of racist U.S. imperialism resonated not only with the growing movement against the Vietnam War but spoke for a generation of black youth.

For refusing induction, Ali was convicted of draft evasion in June 1967 and sentenced to five years in prison. Though he remained free pending appeal, the racist boxing authorities immediately revoked Ali’s heavyweight title and barred him from boxing in the U.S. Stripped of his passport, Ali was unable to earn his livelihood anywhere else.

Ali’s bold opposition to the war had reverberations among black GIs walking point through the rice paddies of Vietnam. A big reason the U.S. Army lost on the battlefield was that the troops increasingly saw no reason to fight and die, and that was doubly true for black soldiers.

With antiwar sentiment growing and a wing of the American bourgeoisie wanting to cut its losses and get out of Vietnam, Ali’s boxing license was reinstated in 1970. The following year, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Ali’s conviction by an 8-0 vote. (Thurgood Marshall, the Court’s first black justice, had led the initial prosecution against Ali and recused himself.) After a three-year hiatus, Ali was finally allowed to box again. In 1974, bereft of his trademark speed of hand and foot, an aging Ali upset the heavily favored George Foreman to recapture the title in the “Rumble in the Jungle.” It is a testament to the brutality of this blood sport, whose U.S. origins were in the slaveholding South, that the onset of Ali’s Parkinson’s disease came soon after he retired in 1981—most likely a consequence of the punishment he took in the ring.

The legacy of Ali’s struggles inspired young activists in the 1960s and beyond. As one of our comrades recalled:

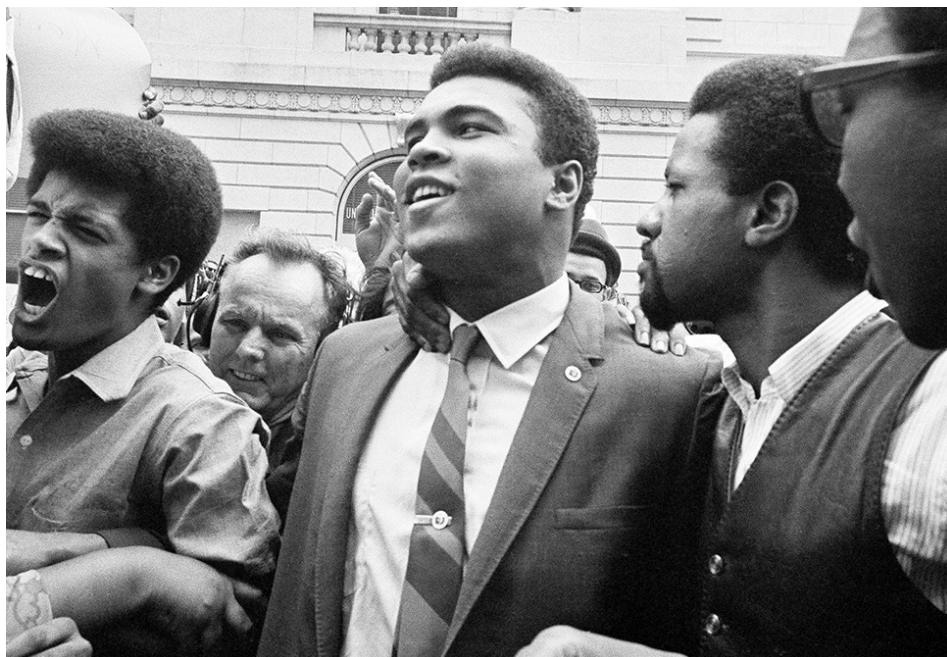
“I grew up in a mostly white working-class neighborhood, and I spent a lot of time with my cousins, who lived in a ghetto across the bay. Muhammad Ali was our hero. And he, first among others, was beautiful, black and proud. “Ali played a big role molding consciousness of myself as a black man different than had been the case for those who came before me. The civil rights struggles and the Black Power movement had changed racist American society—not in any fundamental way—but I did not have the same demeanor as my father’s generation, nor was I expected to by my black friends and family. I did not have to keep my head down, be deferential or say, ‘yessuh.’ Thanks to Ali and others like him, I could be black and proud and not beaten down.”

### Ali Feted by Bloodstained Imperialists

It is a slap in the face to those inspired by Ali’s courageous struggles to see his death used as campaign fodder for the same Democratic Party that—under Lyndon Johnson as president—prosecuted him in order to pursue the dirty war in Vietnam. Speaking at Ali’s memorial was Bill Clinton who, as president, carried out imperialist slaughter in Serbia and Somalia and engineered the starvation blockade of Iraq, which caused the deaths of over a

# Black, Defiant and Proud

## Muhammad Ali: An Appreciation



**Above: Ali thronged by supporters after refusing to be drafted to fight in Vietnam War, Houston, 1967. Below: Vietnamese National Liberation Front addressed black GIs: “U.S. Negro Armymen: You Are Committing the Same Ignominious Crimes in South Vietnam that the KKK Clique Is Perpetrating Against Your Family at Home.”**



million people through disease and malnutrition. President Obama issued a statement saying Ali made him believe that a “mixed kid with a funny name” could become president of the United States. In that capacity Obama rains down death—predominantly on Muslims—the world over and persecutes truth-tellers like Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden for exposing U.S. imperialism’s contemporary war crimes.

Little noted in the mainstream press coverage of Ali’s funeral is the tribute made by Malcolm X’s daughter, Attallah Shabazz—perhaps too much a reminder of the true Ali that the oppressed around the world revered and the racist American bourgeoisie despised. Still known as Cassius Clay, Ali became a marked man in 1964 when, after defeating Sonny Liston to capture the heavyweight title, he appeared with Malcolm X at his side and announced that he was joining the black separatist Nation of Islam (NOI). Shortly after, he was given the name Muhammad Ali by NOI leader Elijah Muhammad.

Ali captured the title at the height of struggles against Jim Crow segregation and a growing polarization within the civil rights movement. His association with Malcolm X was outside the bounds of what was deemed acceptable for a

black sports figure in racist America. As young civil rights activists were becoming increasingly disillusioned with the pacifist liberalism and ties to the white ruling class of Martin Luther King, they found in Malcolm X the voice of the angry black ghetto. He was black America’s truth-teller, intransigently opposed to the racist Democratic Party as well as the

“white man’s puppet Negro ‘leaders,’” as he called MLK, Bayard Rustin and others.

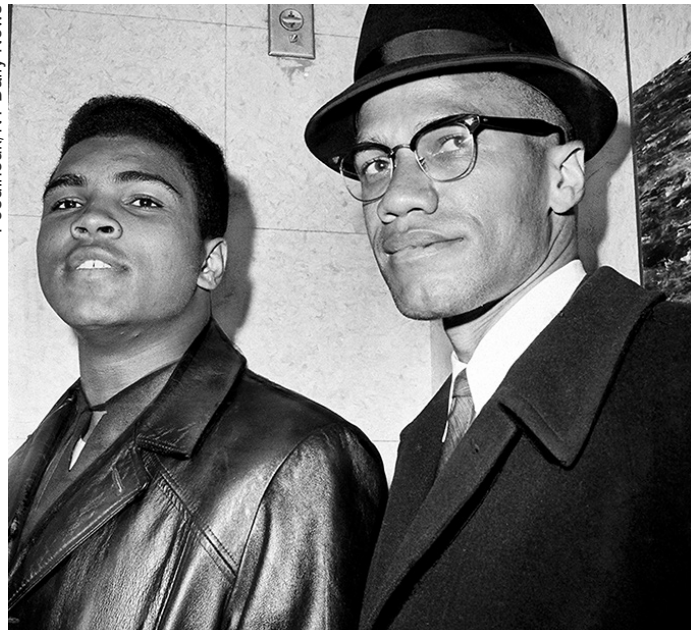
The NOI, a conservative religious cult, was opposed in principle to struggle against racial oppression. Malcolm fell into disfavor with Elijah Muhammad with his publicly known aspiration that the NOI abandon this abstention. When, in 1963, he refused to express sorrow after JFK’s assassination, commenting acerbically that it was a case of “chickens coming home to roost,” Malcolm was suspended by the NOI. Malcolm split from the NOI in 1964 and Ali broke relations with him. On 21 February 1965 Malcolm was assassinated in Harlem’s Audubon Ballroom. “Turning my back on Malcolm was one of the mistakes that I regret most in my life,” wrote Ali in his 2004 autobiography. “I wish I’d been able to tell Malcolm I was sorry, that he was right about so many things. But he was killed before I got the chance.”

Thanks in large part to sportscaster Howard Cosell, Ali was a regular feature on weekend sports shows, giving him a platform to condemn racist oppression and confront the torrent of abuse by the press who, for years, refused to even call him by his chosen name. Cosell continued to stand by Ali in the lean years. Through 1970, the *New York Times* had an explicit editorial policy of calling him Clay. Robert Lipsyte, a reporter for the *Times*, recalled apologizing about the insulting policy, to which Ali replied, “Don’t worry, you’re just a little brother of the white power structure.” In the absence of any credible white contenders, the boxing establishment threw at Ali a series of black boxers as their “great hope” to recapture Ali’s crown for the Christian red white and blue. Ali’s most famous response to those fighters who addressed him as “Clay” was when he stood over a prostrate Ernie Terrell during their February 1967 bout demanding, “What’s my name? What’s my name?”

Abandoned by the NOI after he was stripped of his title, in 1968 Ali spoke at 200 campuses throughout the nation in defense of black rights and in opposition to the Vietnam War. This became his prime source of income. Protests against Ali’s conviction took place around the world. When black sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their black-gloved fists on the medal podium in the 1968 Olympics, one of their demands was to restore Muhammad Ali’s title. During his long imprisonment on Robben Island, Nelson Mandela regarded Ali as a symbol of hope and courage. For his part, Ali was active in the defense of Rubin “Hurricane” Carter, a middleweight boxer who was framed on murder charges because of his advocacy of black self-defense. Ali also supported Lauren Mozee and Ray Palmiero, a racially integrated couple victimized for defending their picket line during the 1983 phone workers strike.

Ali truly was the greatest and his greatness had much to do with the fights that he waged outside of the ring. He should be remembered when he was at the peak of his power, when workers and oppressed people throughout the world hailed him for his opposition to racist U.S. imperialism’s bloody war in Vietnam. ■

Peodineuk/NY Daily News



**March 1964: Malcolm X with Muhammad Ali in Harlem.**

# Pasadena Black Activist Railroaded

Black Lives Matter Pasadena founder Jasmine Abdullah (Richards) was released on June 18 after spending a month behind bars for speaking out against police violence. In August last year, following a protest against the 2012 police killing of black youth Kendrec McDade, Abdullah was among a group who objected to the arrest of a black woman accused of not paying for a meal at a restaurant. For supposedly interfering in the arrest of a police suspect, Abdullah was charged under California penal code 405, which outlaws “the taking by means of a riot of another person from the lawful custody of a peace officer,” which the law formerly called “lynching.”

As news sources report, Abdullah has now become the first black person to be tried and convicted for “lynching.” Convicted by a jury with no black people, Abdullah, who faced a maximum term of four years in prison, was sentenced to 90 days as well as three years of probation and mandatory attendance at 52 “anger-management” courses! She is the first Black Lives Matter (BLM) activist to receive such a serious sentence for political protest. As her lawyer Nana Gyamfi pointed out, “She was persecuted and jailed because of her political beliefs.”

Abdullah was followed by cops throughout her ordeal and was fired from her job. Her apartment was ransacked and her lawyer has received death threats. Some 88,000 people signed a ColorofChange.org petition asking the judge that Abdullah not get any jail time. The morning she was sentenced, WV supporters joined hundreds of others gathered outside the Pasadena Courthouse to demonstrate against this racist railroading. Now Abdullah, who is planning to appeal the conviction, has a felony branding her for life and faces charges from other protests as well. We demand: ***Overtune the conviction! Drop all the charges!***

In a grotesque demonstration of the twisted, capitalist “justice” system, the state law that Abdullah was convicted under was enacted as an “anti-lynching” statute in 1933, a year in which 24 black people in the U.S. were officially reported lynched. Between the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the dismantling of Jim Crow in the 1960s, at least 3,000 black people were lynched. Many times, working hand in hand with local sheriffs, racist mobs removed the victims from police custody to murder them with guns, ropes or fire. Far from being used to go after racist vigilante terror, the California law was basically a dead letter until 1971, when a state court expanded the definition of lynching to include any protest



**Above: Black Lives Matter Pasadena organizer Jasmine Abdullah (Richards), center, with attorneys before May pretrial conference. Below: Hundreds protest at Pasadena Courthouse demanding freedom for Abdullah, June 7.**



against police arrest “by means of a riot,” comprising two or more people, that disturbs the peace. It has been used repeatedly to target a range of political protesters, including Occupy activists.

Less than two months before Abdullah’s arrest, the word “lynching” was excised from the law, but the substance of the statute was kept intact. The change in wording resulted from widespread outrage when the same charge was used against black activist Maile Hampton in Sacramento last year. (The charges against her were later dropped.) As the Partisan Defense Committee noted in a March 2015 letter protesting the “lynching” charges against Maile Hampton: “A law supposedly intended to criminalize the extralegal murder of black people, Mexicans

and others by the racist terrorists of the KKK and their ilk, is now wielded by the police against those who actively protest the modern-day legal lynchings carried out by the racist cops” (see “Cops Charge Black Activist with ‘Lynching,’” WV No. 1064, 20 March 2015).

The history of California’s “anti-lynching” law provides a warning to activists who support “hate crimes” laws and other measures that strengthen the repressive powers of the capitalist state under the pretext of prosecuting racism. Such laws are inevitably used against the left and labor and black militants, as the rulers seek to put down any challenge to capitalist exploitation and black oppression that is woven into the fabric of American society.

Black Lives Matter activists in the Los

Angeles area have recently been subjected to a barrage of harassment, surveillance and judicial persecution. While those in and around this milieu courageously stand up to cop brutality, leaders of the BLM movement have repeatedly promoted the false notion that the police can be reformed to be less abusive and violent toward black people. A case in point is their appeals to “prosecute killer cops,” or the recent call by L.A. BLM leader Melina Abdullah on U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch for federal investigation and intervention into the LAPD over its long, bloody record of brutality.

Marxists understand that the police are the guard dogs of the capitalist profit system, and it is the federal government that oversees the entire rotten system that the cops “serve and protect.” The cops form the core of the repressive state machinery, along with the courts, prisons and military. On June 23, another one of the Baltimore cops who killed Freddie Gray last year walked free—yet another message that for the cops, killing black people is just part of the job. The capitalist state cannot be reformed to serve the interests of the workers and oppressed—it must be swept away through workers revolution.

No matter which capitalist party is in office, the function of the police is the same. The current mayor of Pasadena, Terry Tornek, is a Democrat, as was the previous mayor, Bill Bogaard, who presided during the state-sanctioned cop killing of Kendrec McDade four years ago. When BLM activist DeRay Mckesson sought the Democratic nomination for mayor of Baltimore this year, he was running to be the one in charge of the very same police force that killed Freddie Gray.

Jasmine Abdullah’s conviction and sentencing is part of the capitalist rulers’ attempt to stifle dissent and intimidate leftist and anti-racist activists and militant workers. Only the overthrow of this violent and exploitative system by the multi-racial working class can pave the way for black freedom. What’s needed is to build a revolutionary workers party that stands at the head of all the oppressed, imbuing the working class with the need to fight in its own class interests and inscribing on its banner: Black liberation through socialist revolution!

Abdullah’s supporters are calling on people to contact the office of the Pasadena city attorney, Michele Beal Bagneris, to demand that the remaining charges be dropped: City Hall, 100 N. Garfield Ave., Room N-210, Pasadena, CA 91109 or via [cityofpasadena.net/CityAttorney/Contact\\_Director](http://cityofpasadena.net/CityAttorney/Contact_Director). ■

## Verizon...

(continued from page 3)

should give workers their “fair share.” But capitalism is a system of production for profit, and that profit comes from the exploitation of the working class. That’s why Verizon has been determined to scuttle organizing efforts of its wireless workers: the weaker the unions, the lower the wages and benefits, the greater the profits.

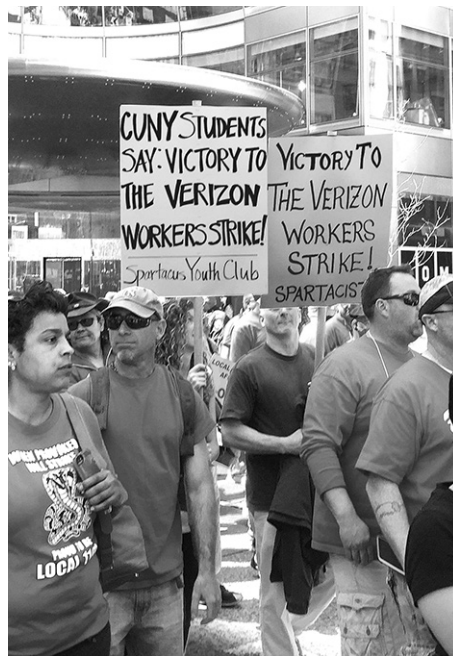
The company did not win this battle. But as American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon, who played a key role in the 1934 victory of the Minneapolis Teamsters strikes, observed in 1936, any settlement between the employers and the workers “is only a temporary truce and the nature of such a settlement is decided by power” (see *Notebook of an Agitator*, 1958). The four-year contracts between Verizon and the unions represent such a truce between two forces whose interests are irreconcilable. Skirmishes between the workers and the bosses will continue, whether there is a piece of paper with signatures on it or not.

What’s key is the relative strength of the opposing forces, and this depends in large part on the leadership of the unions. The track record of the CWA and IBEW labor bureaucrats is written in the contracts themselves, each of which preserves the core of previous settlements. Like many labor agreements, they carry a no-strike clause forbidding labor action until the contract expires. This shackles the membership’s ability to defend itself, and the workers should fight to scrap it. Even when contracts expire—along with their no-strike clauses—the union bureaucrats try mightily to avert strikes. When Verizon workers went on strike in 2011, the labor tops sent them back to work after two weeks without a contract. When the last contract expired in August, the workers were itching to strike but the union misleaders held them back until April. This time around, the workers were brought back to work before voting on the contract, or even seeing it.

The union tops point to the promised creation of 1,300 new union call center jobs, which were won in exchange for granting management more flexibility in routing customer calls. Assuming the

company even creates these jobs, they will come with a big asterisk. In the 2003 and 2012 contracts, the CWA and IBEW negotiators made concessions that created a second tier for new hires. At the time, Verizon was not hiring. But now new jobs will fall into the second tier. New hires will not enjoy the same job security provisions as existing workers. Even if they make it to retirement, they would not receive retiree health care—instead, getting a stipend—nor would they get the defined benefit pension that retirees who were on the payroll in 2003 get. The bureaucrats have built in the basis for corrosive divisions in the ranks, which will be an obstacle to future organizing. What is vital is for the unions to fight for equal pay and benefits for equal work.

America’s union movement can only be rebuilt through persistent, clear-eyed class battles waged against the bosses, with no illusions in the capitalists’ parties and their state. It will be in the course of such battles that union militants will be able to forge a new, class-struggle leadership in the unions. Such a leadership will be crucial in the building of a workers party that fights for a workers government, whose



WV Photo

**SL and SYC supporters at strike rally, NYC, April 18.**

task will be to expropriate the capitalist exploiters and build a planned, socialist economy. ***Those who labor must rule!*** ■



# Roots 40 Years Later

We reprint below our 1977 article “Behind the ‘Roots’ Craze,” reviewing the original *Roots* television miniseries. A multigenerational saga of the horrors of black chattel slavery in America, when *Roots* first aired some 40 years ago it was a political phenomenon and was watched by what was then the largest audience in U.S. television history. The story centers on the lives of Kunta Kinte, an African warrior who was captured and sold into slavery, and his descendants. A remake of the miniseries was produced for the History channel and was shown in late May, but without as much impact as the original. Nonetheless, although the particulars of the times in which *Roots* has played have changed, the brutal reality of black oppression in America has not.

When the original aired in 1977, a Southern Democrat, Jimmy “ethnic purity” Carter, was President. A former governor of Georgia, who had pandered to vicious segregationists of the ilk of Lester Maddox and George Wallace during the civil rights movement, Carter rode into the White House with the backing of black Democratic Party politicians and the AFL-CIO trade-union bureaucracy. The racist backlash against the gains of the civil rights movement, which began in the late 1960s, was in full swing. The Black Panther Party had been destroyed years earlier by the combined blows of murderous state repression and internal factionalism. In 1974-75, school busing had been defeated by racist mobs on the streets of Boston and by liberals in Congress.

In this context, as our 1977 article notes, the central political message of *Roots* was the glorification of “African heritage” as a substitute for social struggle against the increasing misery of life for the masses of the black working class and poor. *Roots* reflected the accommodation to the racist status quo of the black cultural nationalism of the 1960s—which was pushed as a supposedly radical alternative to bankrupt liberalism of the civil rights movement leadership.

The original miniseries ended by showing the success of Kunta Kinte’s descendants, following the defeat of the slavocracy in the Civil War, in securing positions as prosperous, small business owners, (the remake ends the story earlier). It was a modern-day version of Booker T. Washington’s *Up from Slavery*: that black people can overcome the conditions and heritage of racial oppression by working hard and playing by the rules of racist American capitalism. This message has been echoed by President Barack Obama throughout his nearly eight years in the White House.

A review of the new *Roots* in the *New York Times* (29 May) celebrates it as “a Black Lives Matter ‘Roots,’ optimistic in focusing on its characters’ strength, sober in recognizing that we may never stop needing reminders of whose lives matter.” Off screen, the bitter reality is that for the capitalist ruling class black lives remain as cheap, if not even cheaper, than ever. The mass protests against the killer cops who continue to gun down black youth have largely ended, with many of the leaders of the Black Lives Matter movement being wooed by Hillary Clinton in her campaign for Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism.

As opposed to the backward-looking cultural celebration of “African heritage,” the finest pages of black history in America will be written in the struggle to smash the racist, capitalist system, which will open the road to genuine black freedom. Won to the cause and the party of proletarian revolution, black workers, the most



Scene from original *Roots* miniseries depicts slaves enduring horrors of Middle Passage.

combative element in the American working class, will stand in the front ranks of the fight for a socialist America.

The following originally appeared in WV No. 147 (4 March 1977).

\* \* \*

One hundred thirty million viewers, courses in almost 300 colleges, 1,400,000 copies in print, crowded a recent Doubleday ad. They were talking, of course, about *Roots*. Twelve years ago, professional journalist Alex Haley set out to create a

opera. No, *Roots* struck a nerve.

The current intensity of the *Roots* craze will be short-lived, but the television series and book have tapped an authentic, widespread and seething reservoir of social passion. The passion is in the first instance over the subject: the brutal history of chattel slavery in America, the resurrection of an ancient form of labor for the enrichment of the commercial capitalists and textile lords of Europe and the masters of New World plantations. There is no more explosive subject

## For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

novel based on his research into the oral and written histories of his own family. By the time the saga was dramatized and transmitted to the largest television audience in U.S. history, it had become more than just the popularization of some interesting (if not wholly accurate) research. *Roots* had become something of a social phenomenon.

The furor over *Roots* was not just the usual public relations hoopla, though there is plenty of that (New York’s Mayor Beame and no less than twenty mayors in the South proclaimed “Roots Week” and the Texas legislature voted Haley an “honorary Texan”). Nor was it simply that *Roots* made effective use of the tested clichés of popular culture: a heady mixture of violence and suggested sex focused through the lens of the best-known melodramatic techniques of soap

in the U.S. than this. Only *Gone With the Wind* with its “magnolia, moonlight and banjos” version of the antebellum South has come close to equaling the audience which sat riveted before TV sets to follow the generational saga of a black family from West Africa to Tennessee.

Unlike *Gone With the Wind*, *Roots* is sympathetic to the victims of slavery, and seeks to view through their eyes the anguish of human beings who have become property. Even the sentimentalized, one-dimensional characterizations of *Roots* challenge the racist ideology of slavery: that blacks are subhuman and therefore do not feel as deeply or with as much complexity as their white masters. By presenting slave characters of obvious human worth and dignity uprooted, degraded, punished beyond human endurance, *Roots* breaks with the

debasement “Sambo” traditions of ignorant but happy “darkies” stumbling into paint buckets and singing in the rain.

It is this psychological identification with the slaves which in part explains the impact of *Roots*. For over 100 pages (or two and a half hours on screen) the audience has followed the story of the hero, Kunta Kinte, as he grew to young manhood in his idyllic African homeland. It would be an unusually callous viewer or reader who could thrust aside the vivid image of young Kinte amid the blood, vomit, feces of the sick, starving, terrified blacks who lie shackled on the slave ship. It is one thing to know that it was far from uncommon for a third of the kidnapped Africans to die on board the ships carrying them to captivity. It is another to see it happen.

“There is no arguing with pictures,” said Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which is certainly the moral precursor of *Roots*. Published in 1851, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* made an equally sensational entrance into public life. And like *Roots*, it was passionate in its partisanship of the slaves. It presented an upside-down moral universe in which the victims were infinitely good and the slaveholders the personification of evil. It was a weapon in the service of the abolitionist movement.

But that was 1851. The book’s political purpose was clear, its political imperatives unmistakable to its friends and foes.

Moved by the personalized indictment of slavery as an institution, the reader was meant to work for its abolition. But what is the political point of *Roots* in 1977? Is it intended as a model for struggle against the continuing oppression of black people in the U.S.? No, *Roots* is a testament to liberal accommodationism and a declaration of personal escapism. It

is a sentimental American success story and a celebration of the usefulness of the themes of black nationalism to the racist status quo.

### “Consciousness-Raising”?

The media responded to this media event with white guilt and “black pride,” while the fake-radicals scurried along behind. The SWP’s *Militant*, for instance, dubbed *Roots* “one big consciousness raiser” and thinks that perhaps its creators fooled themselves: “Certainly it wasn’t in the minds of [ABC’s] board of directors to encourage black pride or militancy. But I’m afraid that they may have succeeded in doing exactly that.” And the *Militant* recounts this anecdote to illustrate what the SWP means by “consciousness”:

“A young brother stopping in a coffee shop before work said, ‘I tell you one thing, those white folks better not mess with me today. I just might have to stomp one.’”

The *Militant* approvingly reports a racial incident at a mostly black high school in which black youth, chanting “Roots, Roots, Roots,” scuffled with whites. The SWP looks hopefully to *Roots* to “increase Black pride.”

But the clue to the political meaning of *Roots* is precisely the incorporation of themes generally associated with cultural nationalism into the liberal melting pot of cultural pluralism. That is what the fuss is all about. That is why Haley “dedicated *Roots* as a birthday offering to my country.”

The *New York Times* (February 2) showed that it understood the real political thrust of *Roots* better than the *Militant* when it tried to pass *Roots* off as perhaps “the most significant civil rights event since the Selma-to-Montgomery march of 1965.” But *Roots* is not a “civil rights event.” It poses no perspective for



Spartacist contingent at protest against racist cop terror, NYC, December 2014.

social action of any sort. It prescribes the search for black “roots” as a substitute for struggle.

*Roots* flows directly from the failure of the liberal civil rights movement to provide anything more than the token gains which are coming under increasing attack under the pressure of a worsening economic situation. Now more than ever black people are being told that nothing can be done to alleviate their miserable oppression. Carter’s government is not even making promises about the amelioration of the actual conditions of ghetto life. Instead of jobs, housing and social services, the blacks are being offered “black pride.” This is Jimmy Carter’s formula for a successful election and a moral America, applied to blacks.

The “black pride” which is being cynically pushed as an ersatz program is a diversion from struggle. Marxists’ quarrel with the idea of “black pride” is not with the individual’s feelings of dignity and self-worth that come from understanding. The internalization by blacks as well as whites of the racist stereotypes is a most pernicious effect of racism; Marxists solidarize with every genuine effort to expose the racist ideology which presents oppression as “natural” and even just. But it is through participation and leadership in social struggle against that oppression—not in nostalgic individual escapism—that black people will find their source of pride.

Cultural Nationalism in the Service of Liberalism

*Roots* was hailed by black capitalist politician Barbara Jordan:

“Everything converged—the right time, the right story and the right form. The country, I feel, was ready for it. At some other time I don’t feel it would have had that kind of widespread acceptance and attention—specifically in the 60s. Then it might have spawned resentments and apprehensions the country couldn’t have taken. But with things quiet, and with race relations moving along at a rate that’s acceptable to most Americans, we were ready to take in the full story of who we are and how we got that way.”  
—*Time*, 14 February

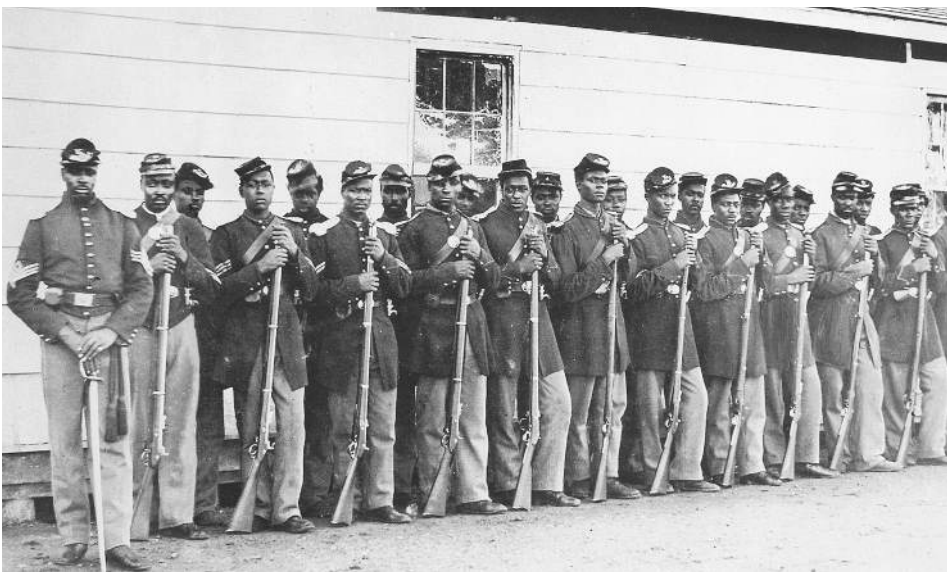
The contrast with the 1960’s—a period of significant black militancy—is important. For Jordan, the *Roots* phenomenon heralds not only a general acceptance of that liberal capitalism which she rep-



Alex Haley, author of the book *Roots*.

resents in Congress, but the opportunity for black liberalism and cultural nationalism to get back together on the terrain of demoralization.

In the 1960’s it was not so easy to see that liberal integrationists and black nationalists were offering only different varieties of bourgeois ideology. The widespread black nationalist mood of a decade ago was a response to the manifest failure of the liberal-pacifist civil rights movement. Many young blacks, recoiling from the blatant accommodationism of liberal gradualism, identified militancy with separatism and racial solidarity. Black nationalist and vicarious “back to Africa” sentiment was an illusory “solution” born of hopelessness in the face of the evident bankruptcy of integration struggles. But what was once a kind of political statement soon became simply a matter of style.



Company E, 4th U.S. Colored Infantry at Fort Lincoln, District of Columbia. The nearly 200,000 black troops who served in Union Army during Civil War were key to defeating Southern slavocracy.

At the outset, mainstream liberals accepted the nationalists’ identification of dashikis and African names with ghetto revolts and quivered with apprehensions that blacks in their mass might break from the traditional liberal organizations. But the usual techniques—tokenistic handouts combined with a virtual cop manhunt against black militants like the Panthers—prevailed. Soon it was not unusual to see the head of a government poverty program dressed like an African, administering the crumbs of capitalism to the impoverished ghetto population.

*Roots* closes the book on the apparent war between black nationalism and liberalism. Cultural nationalism, in its most vicarious and backward-looking form, has been rendered not only manageable but fully respectable. *Roots* is the pop-culture counterpart of cultural nationalism’s smooth slide from radical rhetoric to tool of the poverty pimps and black elected officials.

The Romance of African Heritage

*Roots* treats the elements of “African identity” formerly associated with radical nationalism and black separatism as a sort of romantic genesis myth. The political and imaginative core of both the book and the TV series is the life and legacy of Kunta Kinte, the African warrior who represents resistance to slavery and whose memory sustains his descendants.

Kunta Kinte’s “black pride” is based on the sense of tribal identity and “manhood” instilled in the ordered and idyllic world of his native Africa. He refuses to abandon his heritage: the Mandinka language, the Muslim religion, the customs he learned in Africa. The American-born blacks who are his fellow slaves are rootless and broken; he despairs of teaching them “why he refused to surrender his name or his heritage.” When his daughter is born, he insists that she be given the Mandinka name Kizzy rather than “bear some toubob [white man’s] name, which would be nothing but the first step toward a lifetime of self-contempt.”

The proud African warrior refuses to accommodate. Confronted with the hideous reality of enslavement, he tries four times to escape. When he is recaptured the fourth time, the whites take horrible revenge by chopping off half his foot with an axe. Now crippled, he will never be able to escape. From this point on in *Roots*, resistance to the slave regime becomes symbolic rather than a matter of organized rebellion or even overt acts of individual resistance. It is the symbol of resistance, captured in a few African words and transmitted from generation to generation, which becomes the subject of *Roots*.

After the failure of his last attempt to escape, Kunta Kinte determines to pass on his heritage. He marries and has a child. He teaches her some Mandinka words and tells her stories of her ancestors. Kizzy in turn, as mother and grandmother, retells these bits and pieces of Africa to her family.

The TV script even invents some scenes to highlight the importance of the

African tradition in resisting the degrading effects of slavery. A character who was not in the book, Kizzy’s suitor Sam, is refused because “Sam wasn’t like us. Nobody ever told him where he come from. So he didn’t have a dream of where he ought to be goin’.”

Haley has become the target of several black historians (notably Willie Lee Rose, *New York Review of Books*, 11 November 1976) for inaccuracies and anachronisms in his portrayal of the Mandinka village of Juffure (as well as of the antebellum South). But it is the ideal which is intended—a Garden of Eden world ritualized around the cult of manhood. *Roots* is not even myth, but romance: a deliberate idealization of the past to escape an unbearable present.

The Legacy of Slavery

There is some truth in the image of a rebellious African taken into slavery. Compared to blacks born into slavery in the U.S., those slaves transported directly from Africa prior to 1808 (when the slave traffic to the U.S. was officially closed) were quite “troublesome.” They spearheaded the earliest slave revolts; the significant uprisings of the nineteenth century (led by Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner) were organized by freedmen or skilled craftsmen whose daily work brought them into contact with free laborers. Haley’s acceptance of the centrality of the African heritage engages the old debate over the effects of slavery on the consciousness of blacks.

The relative absence of organized large-scale slave revolts in the U.S.—compared for instance with the massive 1791 rebellion which overthrew slavery in Haiti—precipitated a heated controversy among radical academics in the 1960’s. The CP’s Herbert Aptheker sought—mainly by redefining the category of “revolt”—to demonstrate a presumably “hidden history” of black resistance. Aptheker’s antagonists, spearheaded by Eugene Genovese, advanced a plethora of factors to account for American slaves’ relative quiescence—among them the overwhelming military superiority of the white American state power, the small size of most American plantations, the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the Africans who became the slave population and their systematic deculturalization, etc.

Underlying the 1960’s heat over a historical dispute was the closer-to-home ideological battle over resistance vs. accommodation, posed in terms of separatism vs. integration. The black nationalists saw the pacifist liberalism they hated as a carryover from slavery. They argued that it was in giving up their African heritage and aspiring to equality in white-ruled America that blacks had gone wrong. Dumping their “slave names,” they accused the black liberals of accommodation to white “Eurocentric” culture and demanded “black history.” This debate ended as liberals and ex-militants clasped hands over the academic tokenism of Black Studies departments.

The radical nationalists who rejected “Uncle Tom” and proclaimed an unbroken tradition of black resistance reaching back

to slave times were making a fundamental mistake. The line between accommodation and survival in a militarily hopeless situation is not so easy to draw. If, faced by overwhelming odds against them, most blacks could express their seething hatred of slavery only by sabotage, malingering, petty theft, attempted escape, etc., this is a historical fact of previous centuries and not a prescription for the future.

*Roots* does more than acknowledge the blacks’ need to accommodate to survive. It embraces it. Following the slave revolt led by Nat Turner, Kunta Kinte’s grandson “Chicken George” and his master “both hoped fervently that there would be no more black uprisings.” But the real highpoint of black resistance to slavery is the one which is left out of *Roots* almost entirely: the civil war, in which 200,000 blacks joined the Union army, despite its vicious racism, and took up arms against the slave South.

An All-American Success Story

*Roots* incorporates cultural nationalism into the “American dream.” In the old Horatio Alger stories, even the poorest among the downtrodden can become rich through the work ethic and the beneficent workings of divine providence and capitalism. It is an old theme: the good are rewarded and the evil punished. In Alger stories the moral differential can be easily measured by an accountant. The moral implication of a fair market is clear enough: if you work hard, keep your wits about you and are decent you will succeed. So people who have prospered are obviously good folks, and there are some obvious implications about the poor.

*Roots* is a Horatio Alger myth on two levels. First, there is the token—Alex Haley, the former marine cook and struggling writer who is making a fortune. But the example of an individual black who goes from rags to riches is not likely to have much social impact among the black masses of Harlem and Watts. The myth of upward mobility has little credibility among the black masses, and Haley’s life story is an obvious exception to the general rule.

But as a family saga, *Roots* can make a similar pitch and get away with it. Haley wants *Roots* to become “all of our stories.” He himself says he identifies most with “Chicken George”—after his grandfather, Kunta Kinte, the most important character in the book. “Chicken George” becomes a trainer of gamecocks, a sporting man and entrepreneur. He conceives of the project of accumulating—through the crumbs which trickle down to him from his master’s high-stakes cockfighting ventures—enough money to buy himself and his family out of slavery.

Still a slave, “Chicken George” is sent to England to train birds for a lord. When he arrives back at his own plantation with money in his pocket, he finds that his family has been sold. His son Tom takes over as the patriarch, struggling to reunite the

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# Free NATO 3 Activist Jared Chase Now!

This past April, the last imprisoned member of the NATO 3, Jared Chase, was sentenced to an additional year in prison on bogus charges of aggravated battery against a guard while he was awaiting trial. This additional time is purely vindictive, especially in light of his serious health problems. Chase has been diagnosed with Huntington’s disease, a degenerative hereditary neurological condition, as well as hepatitis C. Prison authorities have repeatedly refused to provide him with adequate health care.

In May 2012, the NATO 3 were swept up in a wave of state repression targeting the thousands who were gathering in Chicago to protest a summit meeting of the NATO imperialist military alliance. The summit took place against the backdrop of the U.S./NATO occupation of Afghanistan and the bombing of Libya the year before. To ensure this gathering of war criminals in Commander-in-Chief Obama’s hometown went off without a hitch, Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Obama’s former chief of staff, mobilized thousands of National Guardsmen, active-duty troops and cops from as far away as North Carolina.

Four days before the summit, on May 16, Chicago cops raided an apartment housing out-of-town protesters and arrested Jared Chase, Brent Betterly and Brian Church. Undercover cops who were living in the apartment at the time of the police raid alleged that the three were plotting to make four Molotov cocktails and hurl them at police stations and

other targets. They were slammed with frame-up charges of conspiracy to commit terrorism, providing material support for terrorism and possession of an explosive or incendiary device. As we said at the time, “the arrests of Betterly, Church and Chase have all the earmarks of a classic case of police entrapment and provocation” (“Defend Anti-NATO Protesters!” WV 1003, 25 May 2012).

The Illinois anti-terror statutes under which the NATO 3 were charged had been enacted as part of the “war on terror” in the wake of 9/11. From the beginning, we have warned that while the first targets of the “war on terror” were mainly immigrants, particularly Muslims and those from the Near East, the ultimate targets would be the labor movement, black people, the left and anyone who dared to protest the depredations of U.S. imperialism.

In February 2014, after having spent nearly two years in jail awaiting trial, Chase, Betterly and Church were convicted of possessing Molotov cocktails and of misdemeanor mob action. They were sentenced to prison terms of eight, six and five years respectively.

Chase received the longest sentence after a guard testified that Chase had thrown human waste at him. According to a professor of neurology who testified at Chase’s trial, it is common for people with Huntington’s to throw urine and feces. Other symptoms of the disease include personality changes, impulsiveness and impaired judgment, as well as slurred



Jared Chase

Free the NATO 3

speech and involuntary, jerky movements. In April, Chase pleaded guilty to the alleged assault, fearing he would receive another three to five years if convicted. He has effectively been punished twice for the same incident.

We print below a June 13 letter by the PDC—a legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League—to the Acting Director of the Illinois Department of Corrections.

\* \* \*

The Partisan Defense Committee writes to protest the inhumane treatment of prisoner Jared Chase, the last member of the “NATO 3” to remain behind bars.

His inhumane treatment includes repeated beatings and harassment by prison guards, denial of needed medical treatment, and being stripped of good time credits.

Chase, along with Brent Betterly and Brian Church were victimized in a sting operation as part of the Chicago cops’ efforts to quash protest against the May 2012 gathering of NATO in Chicago. Although the jury rejected trumped-up charges of “conspiracy to commit terrorism,” the NATO 3 were convicted in 2014 on felony charges of possessing Molotov cocktails, as well as misdemeanor “mob action” charges.

On April 11, Chase was sentenced to an additional year in prison based on a new set of bogus charges, claiming that he committed “aggravated battery” against a Cook County guard while he was awaiting trial. Chase, who turned 32 years old this month, has also lost a year of good time based on a series of incident reports he received for persistently demanding treatment for Huntington’s disease, an incurable hereditary degenerative neural condition. Although Chase is rapidly deteriorating, he has faced inhuman conditions in prison, including beatings by guards and long periods in solitary confinement without access to visitors or necessary medical treatment.

Chase should never have spent a day behind bars. We demand his immediate release. We also demand that his good time be reinstated and that he receive all the medical care he urgently needs. ■

## Roots...

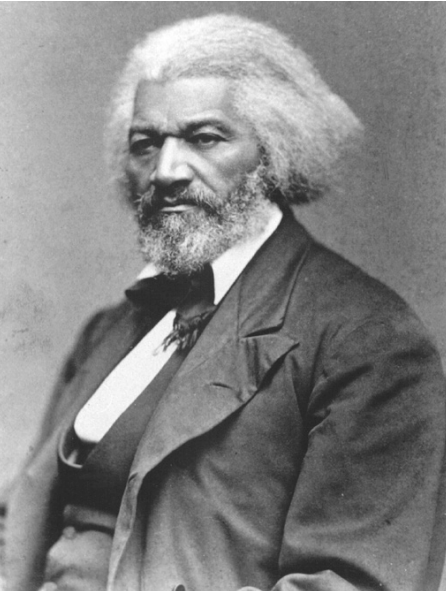
(continued from page 7)

family. Tom manages to get his master to apprentice him to a blacksmith and uses the proceeds from his tireless skilled work to reunite the partially scattered family.

After emancipation, “Chicken George” and Tom move the family to Tennessee. When Tom finds that he will not be permitted to own a shop, he sets up as a traveling blacksmith and he prospers. His daughter marries a hard-working manager of a lumber company owned by an incompetent drunk. His probity and sobriety are rewarded; he eventually takes over the company. The final link in the chain is this man’s grandson, Alex Haley.

The route to success in *Roots* is entirely personal and familial. This presumably inspirational saga is an almost perfect contrast to the real life of a real black hero, Frederick Douglass, as he describes it in his autobiography. The *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* is the story of the development of *social* consciousness. Douglass learned to read by applying a simple rule of survival: the slave and the master had opposite social interests. So when Douglass heard his master give instructions that under no conditions must a slave be taught to read, Douglass set out to learn to read.

And when he learned to read, Douglass began to teach other slaves to read. He was committed not only to free him-



National Archives

**Leading black abolitionist Frederick Douglass.**

self, but to a social movement against the system of slavery. After escaping to the North, Douglass became a leader of the abolition movement. Rather than seeking to recover a lost African heritage, he learned to absorb the master’s culture in order to change society. For him, historical identity meant not an inquiry into his genealogical antecedents but social struggle in the present and for the future.

It is ironic that Haley’s real literary achievement is not the maudlin if sometimes powerful *Roots* but his collabora-

tion on the gripping and socially important *Autobiography of Malcolm X*—a work which, like that of Frederick Douglass, starts from personal experience as the raw material from which to generalize a social vision.

Malcolm X was a contradictory figure who personified the break with Martin Luther King-style liberalism, arguing for an African-separatist ideology and black self-defense. When he was gunned down on 20 February 1965 as he addressed a public meeting, he had broken from the religious obscurantism of the Black Muslims and was moving away from black separatist ideology. Had he lived, Malcolm X might have had enormous impact on the development of political consciousness among blacks. But for Haley, “Malcolm died tragically, but perhaps if there was a right time to go, for him, that was probably it” (*Penthouse*, December 1976). Haley’s spitting on the example of Malcolm X is of a piece with *Roots*.

### Rootlessness and Roots

For all its promises, *Roots* provides no real historic identification for American blacks. White and black liberals are saying to ghetto blacks that the rediscovery of an African heritage can make them “real Americans.” The trouble, they presumably believe, is that blacks have had no Mayflower. But a “Mayflower tradition” is of use perhaps only to that tiny minority of blacks who, like Alex Haley, “make it” as individuals.

This is why the *Roots*-fed interest in genealogy is primarily a fad. It is no more helpful in the fight against racial oppression than the dashikis were in the 1960’s. Lineage is important in feudal societies in defining an individual’s position in the society. For the owners of private property in bourgeois society, genealogy is a matter of some legal as well as ideological importance. But for the virtually propertyless black masses, it has no point and is certainly not a form of struggle against the white-dominated status quo. At best it is a hobby, bearing approximately the same relation to the fight for black freedom as stamp collecting does to internationalism.

The longing for an African heritage in *Roots* is artificial but the nostalgia for rural Tennessee rings truer. Near the end of the book, “Chicken George” tells his family:

“De lan’ where we goin’ so black an’ rich, you plant a pig’s tail an’ a hog’ll grow... you can’t hardly sleep nights for de watermelons grown’ so fas’ dey cracks open like firecrackers! I’m tellin’ you it’s possums layin’ under ’simmon trees too fat to move, wid de ’simmon sugar drip-pin’ down on ’em thick as ’lasses...!”

More than any other group in the U.S. the black masses have indeed been uprooted—not only from Africa, but from their roots in the rural South. But this same rootlessness has made them potentially a vanguard element of the future American socialist revolution. Twice severed from his roots, the urban black worker is a motor force of an integrated proletarian revolution.

Certainly the *Roots* phenomenon shows a longing for historic identification. But that identification cannot center on nostalgia for the past. It may well be that for the Haley family, the mythologized memory of their African warrior ancestor and a few words of his language were a consolation in time of deep trouble and an effective source of “black pride” as a survival mechanism against the internalization of racist ideology. But what was perhaps a source of resistance in 1850 becomes a buttress for reaction in 1977. With the economic integration of the blacks into capitalism’s factories, their future is bound up decisively with their white class brothers. U.S. blacks, more than any other group in this country, have truly “nothing to lose but their chains.” ■

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# Northern Ireland: Women Prosecuted over Abortion Pill

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 235 (Summer 2016), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League.

In April a 21-year-old Northern Ireland woman who had had an abortion when she was 19 was slammed with a three-month jail sentence, suspended for one year. With abortion outlawed in Northern Ireland, she could not afford the trip to Britain for an abortion. So she bought tablets over the internet and ended the pregnancy. When her housemates despicably reported her

## WORKERS HAMMER

to the police, what should have been a safe, private undertaking of no concern to anyone else became a traumatic ordeal paraded in public view. Another Northern Ireland woman who is accused of buying abortion pills online for her teenage daughter faces prosecution imminently.

The abortion pills mifepristone and misoprostol taken in combination will terminate a pregnancy by inducing a miscarriage. Safe and effective, these drugs are included on the “essential medicines” list by the World Health Organization. They should be easily available to any woman wanting an abortion. Yet while 21st century science has produced this simple, non-surgical method to terminate

an unwanted pregnancy, and the internet has made it widely available, women risk being prosecuted and imprisoned for it under Victorian legislation.

According to recent figures, just over half of all terminations in England and Wales are carried out using a pill, often under the supervision of healthcare professionals. Yet the risk of women breaking the law is now greater than at any point since the 1967 Abortion Act was passed. Under that Act, women must get the approval of two doctors to terminate a pregnancy. As a statement titled, “The Campaign to Decriminalise Abortion Across the UK” points out: “No other routine medical procedure demands legal authorisation by doctors in addition to the normal requirements of obtaining informed consent” (We Trust Women, 2016).

Furthermore, abortion after 24 weeks of pregnancy is illegal unless the woman’s life is in danger, or in some cases of foetal abnormality. Last Decem-

ber, a young County Durham woman, Natalie Towers, was sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison for inducing her own abortion 32-34 weeks into her pregnancy. Currently, less than 0.1 per cent of all abortions take place after 24 weeks gestation. But anti-abortion bigots have whipped up a reactionary crusade to turn back abortion rights for all women, including by brandishing ultrasound images of fetuses supposedly smiling, waving and even walking, to further restrict the time limit on legal abortion. We defend a woman’s right to have an abortion at any stage. We reject the notion pushed by bible-thumpers and other anti-women reactionaries that a foetus is a person, with a “soul.” We say: *Natalie Towers committed no crime and should be freed immediately! For free abortion on demand!*

Recently Cathy Warwick, the head of the Royal College of Midwives (RCM), faced a furore by Christian “pro-lifers,” includ-

ing a minority within the RCM, when the organization came out for decriminalising abortion. Together with the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, the largest abortion provider in Britain, the RCM is calling for the removal of the 24-week limit as well as scrapping the requirement for doctors’ permission. As Warwick put it, “let’s give this to women to decide and let’s put it in the general field of healthcare” ([independent.co.uk](http://independent.co.uk), 21 May).

The fact that abortion pills are available on the internet is a lifeline for women not only in Northern Ireland, where the 1967 Act does not apply, but also in the South [of Ireland], where the clericalist state enforces a near total ban on abortion. Outraged protest erupted in 2012 in Dublin and elsewhere when Savita Halappanavar died in hospital because staff declaring “this is a Catholic country” refused to carry out an abortion that would have saved her life. According to research carried out by the Detail, an investigative news website based in Belfast, some 25,000 women from Ireland, North and South, travelled to England or Wales for an abortion from 2010 to 2014. But for the many women too poor, young or vulnerable to make the trip, buying the abortion pill online would rescue them from the hell of an unwanted pregnancy. The Abortion Support Network (ASN) is a charity that helps women from Ireland,

*continued on page 11*

## Brexit...

(continued from page 1)

decisive vote for a British exit. This is a stunning defeat for the City of London, for the bosses and bankers of Europe as a whole as well as for Wall Street and the U.S. imperialist government. The vote to leave is an expression of hostility from the downtrodden and dispossessed not only to the EU but to the smug British ruling establishment, whose devastation of social services and industry has plunged whole sections of the proletariat into penury.

As we wrote in *Workers Hammer* (No. 234, Spring 2016), calling for a leave vote: “Amid the growing chaos besetting the EU, a British exit would deal a real blow to this imperialist-dominated conglomerate, further destabilising it and creating more favourable conditions for working-class struggle across Europe—including against a weakened and discredited Tory government in Britain. But the failure of Labour and the trade union bureaucracy—like the social democrats and trade union misleaders throughout Europe—to mobilise against the EU has instead ceded the oppositional ground to openly anti-immigrant reactionaries and fascists.”

With anti-EU sentiment running high among working people in France, Spain, Italy and Greece, the vote for Brexit will encourage opposition to the EU elsewhere in Europe. The main purpose of the EU is to maximise the profits of the imperialist ruling classes at the expense of the workers, from Germany to Greece, and of the weaker countries of Europe. The exit of British imperialism could sound the death knell for this inherently unstable capitalist club. *Down with the EU! For workers revolution to smash capitalist rule! For a Socialist United States of Europe!*

The far right and fascist forces—including UKIP [UK Independence Party] in Britain and the National Front in France—are today rejoicing over “their” victory. UKIP blatantly whipped up vile anti-immigrant racism, including with a disgusting poster implying that thousands of dark-skinned refugees were at Britain’s door. But UKIP hardly has a monopoly on racism: Cameron invoked the spectre of migrant camps similar to the Calais “Jungle” in France moving to England in



Workers Hammer

**Parliament Square, London: Spartacist supporters at rally for Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, June 27.**

the event of a British exit. And Labour governments have whipped up anti-immigrant racism just like the Tories. We say: *No deportations! Full citizenship rights for all who make it to Britain! Down with racist Fortress Europe!*

Those who voted for Brexit did so for a variety of reasons. But only the wilfully blind in the workers movement will see the vote for Brexit as simply a boost for UKIP and the Tory right wing. Cameron has resigned, the Conservatives have been bitterly divided, the capitalist rulers of Europe are in shock. The time is ripe for workers struggles to begin to claw back decades of concessions to the bourgeoisie on wages, working conditions and trade union rights by the reformist union bureaucrats. For a start, the multinational and multiethnic workforce of the NHS [National Health Service] should tear up the wretched agreement imposed on junior doctors and mobilise to fight for a revitalised and expanded national health service to provide quality care to all totally free at the point of service. At least the junior doctors fought [see WV No. 1084, 26 February], unlike Len McCluskey and the rest of the pro-capitalist trade union tops who refused even to mobilise their ranks to fight Cameron’s pernicious new anti-union law. What is needed is a fight for a class-struggle leadership of the unions.

In the wake of the EU’s ravaging of Greece, the “left” Brexit camp, including the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Socialist Party offered a half-hearted campaign for a leave vote. From their reformist “old Labour” standpoint, the EU is a barrier to achieving their maximum programme: renationalising British industry under a left Labour government. Faced with closures of the steel plants, this ultimately boils down to a protectionist call to “save British jobs,” which fuels anti-foreigner chauvinism and is counterposed to a class-struggle perspective. The morning after the Brexit vote, the SWP’s crowning demand is: Tories out—for a general election.

A year ago, the same outrage and discontent at the base of society that propelled the vote to leave the EU also fuelled the election of Jeremy Corbyn to the leadership of the Labour Party, opening the possibility of reforging Labour’s historic links to its working-class base and thus reversing two decades of Blairite schemes to turn Labour into an outright capitalist party. But in campaigning for a remain vote, Corbyn trampled on the interests of the many working people and minorities who looked to him for a change. Crime does not pay: when the results of the referendum came in, Corbyn’s enemies began plotting to remove him from the leader-

ship as soon as possible. It is in the interests of the working class to repulse any and every attempt by Labour’s right wing to regain control of the party.

Today the country is divided—by class, and along regional and national lines. England—outside London—and Wales voted to leave the EU. A majority in Northern Ireland voted to remain, reflecting fears among Catholics that border controls between North and South would be reinstituted. Scotland too voted to remain in the EU, and the SNP [Scottish National Party] has declared that a second referendum on independence is on the agenda. The bourgeois nationalist SNP are committed to maintaining an “independent” Scotland’s membership of the major Western imperialist clubs—the NATO military alliance and the EU. Corbyn’s capitulation to the imperialist EU has deprived working-class opposition to the EU in Scotland (and elsewhere) of a political voice.

The Brexit vote is the second time in the space of a year that the working masses in Europe have voted to repudiate the EU. Last July’s vote in Greece against EU austerity was utterly betrayed by the bourgeois Syriza government, which crawled on its knees before the European banks. The burning question posed is what kind of party does the working class need to represent its interests. The fundamental problems facing the working class cannot be solved within a parliamentary framework. We need a government based on workers councils, which expropriates the capitalist class.

As part of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) we seek to build revolutionary workers parties, in Britain and around the world, rooted in the understanding that only through the mass mobilisation of the working class in struggle can the workers fight for their own interests and act in defence of all the oppressed. Socialist revolutions especially in the economically developed countries of Europe, including Britain, will establish rationally planned economies based on an international division of labour. The overthrow of the capitalist ruling classes and the development of the productive forces under a socialist united states of Europe will open the road to a global socialist society. ■

# Elections...

(continued from page 1)

Israeli massacre of Palestinians in Gaza in 2014 (see “Bernie Sanders: Imperialist Running Dog,” WV No. 1083, 12 February). Like Trump, Sanders also pushes chauvinist protectionism, which serves to set workers in the U.S. against their class brothers and sisters abroad.

Many of those who support Sanders believe that his primary bid has launched a “movement” that represents some kind of challenge to the political establishment. In fact, Sanders has done everything to rein-

outbreaks such as the Verizon strike (see article, page 3)—as well as internationally with the victorious steel workers strike in Mexico or the upsurge of class battles in France. The key lies in making the working class conscious of its historic role as the gravedigger of the capitalist system, and of class society as a whole.

Such consciousness does not emerge spontaneously from the day-to-day struggles of the working class, which do not in themselves challenge the capitalist mode of production, but must be brought into the proletariat from the outside, through the instrumentality of a revolutionary workers party. The forging of such a

to pressure the Democrats from inside or outside this capitalist party.

The ISO’s Jen Roesch zoomed in on how ridiculous it is for SAlt “to say you’re campaigning for Sanders, and supporting Sanders, but that you’re not helping to sign people up for the Democratic Party.” The ISO hastened to make clear that they, too, “felt the Bern.” As one ISOer put it, “Not endorsing Sanders has not stopped us from engaging with the campaign.” Like SAlt, Roesch made clear that the ISO’s main problem with Sanders is not his program or the class he represents, but only his running on the Democratic Party ticket.

by its composition and control. The Wallace party is bourgeois on all these counts.... We have to stir up the workers against this imposter, and explain to them that they will never get a party of their own by accepting substitutes.”

For more on Wallace, see “On Bourgeois ‘Third Parties’ and the 1948 Henry Wallace Campaign,” WV No. 918, 1 August 2008.

## The Fight for Socialism

While hypocritically condemning Trump’s racist poison against blacks, Muslims and immigrants, the Democrats are actually carrying out much of what he spouts. Obama has deported millions of immigrants, more than any other president. His warplanes, drones and special forces have butchered thousands (mainly Muslims) in the American “national interest,” while at home his administration has been leading the assault on democratic rights under the guise of the “war on terror.” Trump raves against China in the name of “America First,” but it is Obama who has slapped massive tariffs on Chinese steel and is ramping up military and economic pressure with the aim of destroying this most powerful of the remaining deformed workers states.

Unlike every other major industrialized country, the U.S. has never had a mass workers party representing even a deformed expression of the political independence of the proletariat. As Gore Vidal, the late great American author (and no Marxist), put it in 1972: “We have only one political party in the U.S., the Property Party, with two right wings, Republican and Democrat” (*Imperial America*, 2004).

The central enduring feature of American capitalism, shaping and perpetuating this backward consciousness, is the structural oppression of the black population as a race-color caste, the majority of which is forcibly segregated at the bottom of society. Black oppression, with its profound and pervasive ideological effects, is fundamental to the American capitalist order. Obscuring the fundamental class division between the capitalists who own the means of production and the working class who must sell their labor power to survive, racism and white supremacy have served to bind white workers to their capitalist exploiters with the illusion of a commonality of interest based on skin color.

Today the Black Lives Matter current is enmeshed in a strategy of lobbying the Democrats, whether Sanders or Clinton, in a futile attempt to reform the police—which exist precisely to *enforce* racist, capitalist rule. The road to black liberation lies rather through mobilizing the social power of the multiracial working class, which cannot liberate itself from wage slavery without fighting to end the racial oppression of black people. In this struggle, black workers, heavily represented in the most militant ranks of organized labor and forming a human link to the impoverished ghetto masses, are slated to play a leading role.

The party we fight for is a multiracial, internationalist, proletarian party capable of leading the working class, at the head of all the oppressed, in the struggle for a victorious socialist revolution. On an international scale, working-class rule would lay the material basis for a global society without classes, in which material plenty has made poverty a thing of the past, imperialist wars are no longer possible and race and ethnicity have ceased to have any social significance. Such a party will be forged over the political corpses of those who pervert “socialism” into a tool to defend the current outlived social order. ■



The way they were: Socialist Alternative’s Kshama Sawant with Bernie Sanders, Seattle, August 2015. Right: International Socialist Organization, now joined by SAlt, endorses small-time capitalist Green Party.



During the discussion, a Spartacist supporter pointed to Sanders “supporting bloody American imperialism to the hilt,” a topic delicately avoided by the sundry reformists. He declared:

“Your debate is actually a farce because you both push illusions in bourgeois democracy, which is a screen for the brutal class exploitation inherent in capitalism; you both push illusions in incremental reforms of the capitalist state, which is fundamentally unreformable; and while you both talk about independence, for Marxists independence is a class question, and you both support capitalist politicians year after year, the ISO no less.”

While there is plenty to fear from a Trump presidency, to throw one’s vote to another competing capitalist politician is treason to the fight to defend the interests of working people and the oppressed.

In the end, both SAlt and the ISO came out for backing the Green Party candidate, Jill Stein, as “a step toward building an alternative to the two-party system” (socialistworker.org, 25 May). The ISO has been deep in this small-time capitalist party for years. They not only campaigned for the anti-union populist Ralph Nader when he ran for president on its ticket in 2000, but also have themselves campaigned to be Green Party candidates (see “ISO Goes All the Way with Capitalist Greens,” WV No. 866, 17 March 2006). Although it may sound more radical than Sanders’s, the Green Party’s platform is nothing but bourgeois liberalism, devoted to a utopian-reactionary fantasy of small-scale capitalism hostile to economic growth.

For those disgruntled liberals who won’t hold their noses and vote for Clinton, the Greens provide a way station on the road back into the Democratic Party, typical of “progressive” bourgeois third parties in the U.S. An example can be found in 1948, as the Democratic Harry S. Truman administration was spearheading the anti-Soviet Cold War. Henry Wallace’s Progressive Party ran on a “pro-labor” stance and called for “friendship” with the Soviet Union. Wallace, who had been vice president under Franklin D. Roosevelt, was supported by the Stalinist Communist Party under the rubric of the “anti-monopoly” coalition.

James P. Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism, refuted the argument that Henry Wallace was not a capitalist candidate because the capitalists did not support him. At a 1948 Central Committee plenum of the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party, Cannon remarked:

“The class character of the party is determined first by its program; secondly by its actual policy in practice; and thirdly

workers party will result from convulsive class battles and social protests and the intervention of Marxists who underline that the interests of labor are directly counterposed to those of the capitalist class. The support offered by the trade-union bureaucracy and its reformist left tails to even the most “progressive” capitalist politician represents *not* a step in that direction but a fundamental *obstacle* to the necessary political independence of the working class from its class enemies.

## Reformists Debate How Best to Betray

Sanders is a capitalist politician, but the reformist left is ecstatic about him because he “got socialism on dinner tables across the country,” as Charles Lenchner of People for Bernie put it at the recent Left Forum in New York. Socialist Alternative (SAlt) spent months doing donkey work inside the Sanders campaign. Throughout the primaries, SAlt continued to issue pro-Sanders propaganda while suggesting politely that it might behoove him to run as an independent rather than as a Democrat.

As the end loomed, SAlt’s Seattle city council member Kshama Sawant launched a petition pleading with Sanders to run as an independent. She shamelessly suggested that “if electing a Republican is really Bernie’s main concern, there is no reason he could not at least run in the 40+ states where it’s absolutely clear the Democratic or Republican candidate will win, while not putting his name on the 5-10 closely contested ‘swing states’” (movement4bernie.org). In other words, according to SAlt’s scheme, even running as a supposed independent, Sanders wouldn’t threaten an electoral win for the Democrats. SAlt’s pleas to the contrary, Sanders made clear before, during and after the primary battle that he refused to play the role of “spoiler.”

In his June 16 webcast effectively conceding the nomination, Sanders announced: “The major political task that we face in the next five months is to make certain that Donald Trump is defeated and defeated badly.” On June 24, he explicitly stated that he would vote for Clinton in November. Sanders’s fake-socialist backers are now left to figure out how to “fight the right” while trying to attract Bernie supporters repelled by the idea of voting for Clinton. Some of the contortions that result were on display at a May 21 debate at New York’s Left Forum between SAlt and the slightly more circumspect International Socialist Organization (ISO). The only substantive difference was whether

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Orlando...

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unionists, black people, immigrants and everyone else, too.

Significantly, the heavy mobilization of police force to supposedly protect vigils for the Orlando victims as well as this year’s Gay Pride events has met with angry protest from people outraged over cop violence. When NYC police commissioner Bill Bratton addressed thousands gathered outside the Stonewall Inn the night after the massacre, a portion of the crowd shouted, “You kill people!” and chanted, “End police brutality!” Black Lives Matter pulled out of its role as a grand marshal of San Francisco’s Pride parade, protesting plans for an increased police presence—at an event in which police contingents have long been prominent—as well as metal detectors that would help enforce “discretionary admittance.” Citing the cops’ “recent track record of racist scandal and killings of people of color,” the group declared in a statement:

“For us, celebrating Pride this year meant choosing between the threat of homophobic and transphobic vigilante violence and the threat of police violence. We had a tough decision to make, and ultimately we chose to keep our people safe by not participating in any event that would leave our communities vulnerable to either.”

Janetta Johnson, a black transgender woman who also withdrew as a grand marshal, put it bluntly when she told the *Guardian* (24 June): “I’m more afraid of police than terrorists.”

The cops—currently gunning down some 1,000 people a year, many for the “crime” of being black—are the armed guardians of a system based on vicious exploitation and racial oppression. American history is chock-full of examples of black people and Native Americans massacred by government forces and of strik-



Pink Pistols gun rights activists at 2011 Long Beach, California, Gay Pride parade.

ers shot down for asserting labor’s right to organize. The most recent domestic government pogrom was perpetrated in 1993 against the racially integrated Branch Davidian religious sect in Waco, some 80 of whom were incinerated upon the orders of Janet Reno, Bill Clinton’s attorney general, for the “crime” of possessing arms...*in Texas*.

Repression at home and military attacks abroad are integral to American imperialism’s drive to maintain and expand its power and profits. The U.S. military juggernaut has been involved, since the end of World War II, in an almost continuous series of wars, generating millions upon millions of corpses. With the decline of once-paramount American economic power in recent decades, the carnage overseas has found

an echo in this country in the erosion of jobs, wages and living standards. Working people have, in this context, lost their appetite for sending troops to fight wars against their supposed enemies. They have also acquired a distinct distrust of those who rule, or aspire to rule, over them, as well as some revulsion for the mayhem passed off as law enforcement.

It has only been in recent years that gays have made progress in their struggles to obtain democratic rights. While welcome, these gains will not erase their stigmatization as threats to the nuclear family, which, along with religion, is one of the social bases of the capitalist order. Only three decades ago, government officials responded to the AIDS epidemic by condemning its victims as they lay dying. Having recently emerged from the

Abortion...

(continued from page 9)

North and South, as well as from the Isle of Man, to access terminations, either by travelling to Britain or by obtaining pills via the internet. “Are we giving them information about something that’s illegal? Absolutely. But do we feel it’s wrong? Absolutely not. I totally hold the law in contempt,” said Mara Clarke, director of ASN. Abortion pills, Clarke asserted, are “a lot safer than overdosing on all the medicine in your bathroom cabinet, or trying to figure out how to crash a car to cause a miscarriage but not kill you, or taking three packs of birth control with gin” (telegraph.co.uk, 12 June 2015).

In late May, three Derry women in their 60s and 70s handed themselves in at a police station as a protest after seeing women prosecuted for using abortion pills in Northern Ireland. “It is unforgivable how women are being treated,” said Diana King. The women are challenging the law by demanding to be prosecuted for procuring abortion pills for women who need them but are afraid to have them delivered to their homes.

Women on Web, a Dutch charity which dispenses the abortion pill by post to women in places where the law forbids it, reportedly receives 10,000 emails a month from women seeking an abortion. But even where the pill is legally available, it isn’t always accessible. As Women on Web director Rebecca Gomperts says of some of the appeals for help that come from Britain: “If you’re a 16-year-old with religious parents and you can’t leave the house without a chaperone, you can’t go to a clinic” (telegraph.co.uk, 12 June 2015). Courageous organisations such as Women on Web are saving the lives of women that are put at risk by religion, bourgeois morality and the state.

The right to abortion, and for a woman to decide if and when to have a child, is a simple democratic right, denied in much of the world. We Marxists fight for abortion to be legal and free on demand everywhere, as part of our struggle for free, quality healthcare for all. But this right is also integral to the fight for women’s equality and therein lies the explosiveness of the question.

For women to have control over their own reproduction is seen as a threat to the institution of the family,

which is fundamental to maintaining the system of capitalist exploitation. Together with organised religion, the family reinforces authority and social conservatism. The institution of the family arose with the advent of private property as a mechanism for transmitting wealth to “legitimate” offspring through inheritance. Guaranteeing the paternity of the heir required that the woman be monogamous. The oppression

miasma of hostility and contempt that was long endemic in god-fearing America, gays, lesbians, transgender people and others deemed “deviant” are still victimized and oppressed, as Orlando only too gruesomely demonstrated.

At the same time, the LGBT milieu has been particularly susceptible to the fawning pitches emanating from Democratic politicians, most of whom (e.g., Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton) are recent converts to the notion of equal rights for gays. This is an all-too-easy game to play for those running against the likes of Donald Trump. But it was only two decades ago that the anti-gay Defense of Marriage Act swept through Congress and was signed into law by Bill Clinton. Attorney General Loretta Lynch’s pious invocation in Orlando that “we stand with you today because we grieve together, and long after the cameras are gone will continue to stand with you as we grow together in commitment and solidarity and in equality” is an unctuous gloss on the government’s real intent. Faced with increasing discontent at the base of society, the capitalist rulers seek to strengthen their repressive apparatus in order to be able to extinguish outbreaks of working-class and social struggle.

It is necessary to break the political ties binding the working class and minorities to the capitalist class enemy—ties maintained primarily through the “lesser evil” Democrats. What must be done is to build the proletarian party necessary to lead the working masses and the oppressed to overturn rotting American imperialist rule through socialist revolution, sweeping away the entire capitalist state apparatus and replacing it with a workers state. That revolution will expropriate the bourgeoisie and construct a social order providing material well-being and justice for all, putting to an end the horrors produced by the decaying capitalist-imperialist system. ■

of women is rooted in this social subordination, which is also expressed in the foisting of the burden of child-rearing and housework onto women in individual family units.

Anti-woman bigotry cannot be eradicated under this system that requires the oppression and subjugation of women for its very functioning. Marxists therefore call for *women’s liberation through socialist revolution!* ■

Oaxaca...

(continued from page 12)

must clean their own house, throwing out the pro-capitalist union bureaucrats and replacing them with a class-struggle leadership. In contrast, the logic of the declarations at the time by the dissident currents in the SNTE, including the CNTE, was to demand greater state intervention! This attack against the teachers union left Peña Nieto’s government in a much better position to continue with its privatizing and anti-labor plans.

In order to fight effectively against this onslaught, it is necessary to combat the widespread illusions in the bourgeois populism of [Andrés Manuel] López Obrador and his Morena [Movement for National Regeneration], that today pose as “defenders” and “allies” of the CNTE. This posture is transitory. The intention of these populists is to divert struggle and social discontent in the direction of illusions in the democratic reform of capitalism, in order to thus perpetuate this system of exploitation and oppression. López Obrador himself didn’t hesitate to use the bourgeois state to repress social struggle while he occupied the post of mayor of Mexico City. Morena is a bourgeois party, as much an enemy of the victory of the proletariat as are the PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party], the PAN [National Action Party] and the now discredited PRD.

The proletariat, because of its strategic position in the productive process, has the objective interest and the social power to

lead the oppressed masses in struggle for their liberation, putting an end to this inhuman and irrational system, which is based on the search for profits, and establishing a workers and peasants government. The Grupo Espartaquista de México fights to build the Leninist-Trotskyist workers party that is necessary to lead the working class to victory in a socialist revolution, the only way to finish once and for all with brutal capitalist repression against the workers and the poor. ■

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NUMERO 45 MAYO 2016

## El caos imperialista alimenta la crisis de los refugiados

12 de septiembre: A las 10:00 horas se celebró una manifestación en la Plaza de la Constitución en la Ciudad de México. Los participantes exigieron la liberación de los presos políticos y la abolición de la pena de muerte.

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## No to Gun Control! No to Anti-Muslim Bigotry!

# Orlando Anti-Gay Massacre

The toll of Omar Mateen's June 12 rampage at the Pulse gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, was monumental: 49 dead, 53 injured, many grievously, the victims overwhelmingly Latino. Terrified patrons sought refuge in restrooms, with some throwing their bodies in front of their companions to protect them—this while the cops took three hours to assure they were maximally protected from the lone gunman.

The brutal crime was the act of a man/monster who was a hybrid of the reactionary forces that abound in the U.S.: a wannabe cop who deeply resented the attentions the authorities paid him as a Muslim in post-9/11 America; a man educated in hatred for gays who was himself more than a little attracted to their scene; a subject of bullying who metamorphosed into a bully. And just as surely as the massacre was the product of the deep sickness of this racist, Puritan-rooted capitalist society, the rul-

ing class and its political parties have seized on it to further their assault on democratic rights, as they did over the San Bernardino shootings six months ago and many other times before.

With the campaign for the presidency in high gear, Donald Trump accused Muslim citizens (almost 25 percent of whom are black) of being terrorist sympathizers and reiterated his proposal to ban immigration from Muslim countries. Last year, Trump's anti-immigrant demagoguery was followed by a spike in attacks on Muslims, with more of the same anticipated after Orlando. If the racist targeting of Muslims in this country is unopposed, it will lead to an increase in black people and others being gunned down by the racist police. Notably, efforts by media and political figures of both capitalist parties to whip up anti-Muslim bigotry in the wake of Orlando do not seem to have gained much traction among gay activists and spokesmen.

For her part, Hillary Clinton, sounding every bit like a neocon leftover from the Bush II presidency, pledges to go all out against U.S. imperialism's enemies in the Near East. Hoping to follow President Obama as the Commander-in-Chief of the "war against terror," she calls to add barriers to the right to buy guns by targeting those on the government's "no fly" list—some 64,000 people. This is but a fraction of the more than one million people on government "terror suspect" databases who would be barred from gun ownership under a bill pushed by Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein, which Clinton supports. Who goes on these lists is anyone the government says belongs there.

In Congress, Democrats staged their sit-in on the Capitol floor in order to push for stronger gun control. All attempts to use the Orlando massacre as a pretense to disarm citizens or increase the gov-

ernment's surveillance and control over its subjects must be opposed, without exception. The basic truth that used to be common wisdom is that if guns are outlawed, only cops, criminals and fascists will have them. That includes security guards like Omar Mateen, an employee of the G4S outfit of "anti-terror" contractors that has tortured and brutalized people the world over.

Had some Pulse patrons carried guns and been ready to use them, Mateen's rampage might have been quickly stopped. In "The L.G.B.T. Case for Guns," Nicki Stallard of the Pink Pistols gun club wrote in the *New York Times* (22 June): "If you're gay or transgender, you can't simply hope that laws will protect you. They won't. And you can't rely on the police." Reporting a recent surge in gun sales to gays, Stallard called on "L.G.B.T. people to take their own defense seriously." That goes for trade

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## Cops Gun Down Protesters in Oaxaca

# Defend Mexican Teachers Union!

We print below a translation of a leaflet issued by our comrades in the Grupo Espartaquista de México initially on June 16 and then updated with an introduction on June 20.

\* \* \*

JUNE 20—Once again the bloody capitalist rulers have unleashed massive repression against the CNTE [opposition within the teachers union]. Yesterday [June 19], federal and state police attacked the teachers of Local 22 who were blocking a road in Nochixtlán, Oaxaca. The police used firearms as well as tear gas against the teachers and the local residents who were supporting them. According to official figures, six people died, more than 50 were injured and 21 were arrested. Below we reproduce a leaflet that we published on June 16 in defense of the CNTE.

Early last Sunday morning [June 12], the General Secretary of Local 22 of the SNTE/CNTE [National Union of Education Workers/National Coordination of Education Workers], Rubén Núñez Ginés, was violently arrested in Ecatepec, State of Mexico. Francisco Villalobos Ricárdez, Organizational Secretary of the same Local, had been apprehended the day before in the State of Oaxaca. These detentions come on top of that of Aciel Sibaja Mendoza, Financial Secretary, which took place on April 13. The charges against this CNTE leader [Núñez]



Riot cops attack protesting teachers union members and supporters, Nochixtlán, Mexico, June 19.

include money laundering, the same crime that the PGR [attorney general's office] attributed to Elba Esther Gordillo, the previous leader "for life" of the teachers union. Núñez has been transferred to the federal penitentiary in Hermosillo, Sonora, and the PGR has announced that 24 arrest warrants are pending against leaders and other members of Local 22. We Spartacists demand: *Freedom now for*

*all those detained! Drop all the charges!*

In recent years, the teachers organized in the CNTE have been fighting tenaciously all over the country against the Education Reform, which attacks union control over hiring and threatens the jobs of teachers through continuous evaluations. Just since August last year, 9,200 teachers have been fired for not appearing for evaluations or for participating in

protests. Faced with the mobilizations by the teachers, the federal and local governments, including the PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution] government of Mexico City, have responded with brutal repression and violent evictions [from protest camp sites]. Aurelio Nuño, Secretary of Education, has threatened that "we will not tolerate any more intimidation" from the CNTE, while he orders the teachers "to get out of the way and not continue with this adventure." The Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the International Communist League, solidarizes with the teachers in struggle. The attack against the teachers and against public education is an attack against the workers movement and the poor as a whole. From the destruction of the SME [electrical workers union] in 2009 and the disgraceful "Pact for Mexico" in 2012, the government has sought to destroy the large unions in this country, and unfortunately it has made progress in that direction. Enough! It is in the interest of the working class to defend the teachers. *The industrial proletariat should mobilize its powerful muscles through strike actions in defense of the CNTE!*

The government of [President] Enrique Peña Nieto had already made clear that it was prepared to smash any opposition to the education reform when it arrested Gordillo at the end of February 2013, after she had declared herself to be against that reform. "La Maestra" [the teacher, i.e., Gordillo] was widely hated for her corruption and murderous violence against dissident members of the union. But these were most certainly not the reasons that the state, which she had so loyally served for decades, was prosecuting her. We had a unique position in opposing her arrest and explained: "State intervention into the unions has nothing to do with 'democratizing' them; the bourgeoisie's goal is to place them ever more firmly under its control. Defending the union movement must include the demand for the *immediate release of Gordillo and all arrested union officials*" [see "Hands Off Mexican Teachers Union!" WV No. 1019, 8 March 2013]. It is the workers who

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