

We Need a Multiracial Revolutionary Workers Party!



WV Photo

Thousands have protested against Trump in cities across the country, including New York City on November 12.

Democrats Paved the Way for Trump

The victory of Donald Trump recalls the old curse, said to come from China, "May you live in interesting times." The sinister implication is that such times will be ones of suffering and disaster. Who can say what Trump—a demagogic real estate tycoon liable to do anything as long as it benefits him—will do exactly? What he has promised will mean much misery and terror, particularly, but far from only, for undocumented immigrants and Muslims. Since his election, there have been reports of sharp increases in harassment and intimidation of Latinos, Muslim women, black people and gays, along with graffiti reading, "Make America White Again."

At the same time, integrated protests of thousands of youth have broken out in cities across the country under the slogan #NotMyPresident. These have been met with state repression and mass arrests. **Free the arrested protesters, drop all the charges!**

Trump's election is bad news. But the election of Hillary Clinton, a woman with the evident willingness to launch World War III, would not have been good news. Don't buy the lie that the alternative is refurbishing the capitalist Democratic Party! It means that the working class and all those at the bottom of this society will remain trapped in the thoroughly rigged system of American capitalist democracy, which is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

The election made it clear that there is plenty of anger against the Washington elites, but it is not expressed along class lines. It is high time that some genuine *class hatred* be mobilized against the politicians of the Republicans and Democrats, whatever their race or sex, and the capitalist rulers they serve. The power to resist the depredations of capitalism lies in the hands of the men and women—black, white and immigrant—whose labor keeps the wheels

of production turning and produces the capitalists' wealth. We need a multiracial revolutionary workers party that champions the fight for black freedom, for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, for women's rights and for the liberation of all the oppressed in the struggle for a socialist America.

While the Republicans revel in bashing unions, black people, immigrants and the poor, the Democrats lie and do the same thing. But this time around, Hillary Clinton didn't even bother making a pretense of throwing a bone to working people. The Democrats figured that they didn't need to, given that Trump was their competitor. After kicking Bernie Sanders's supporters to the curb—with that supposed leader of a "political revolution against the billionaire class" going on to campaign for Wall Street's favored candidate—Clinton went all out to win the endorsements of generals, spies, neocons and other operatives of U.S. imperialism. And, as a proven hawk, she had great success in this endeavor.

Nonetheless, Trump took the White House and the Republicans maintained control of both houses of Congress. Demonstrating that there is no honor among thieves, Republicans who had feigned disdain for Trump's open racism and sexism are now rallying around their president-elect. It didn't take long for Clinton's pals

on Wall Street to change the channel either; less than 48 hours after Trump's victory the Dow Jones soared to record highs.

Clinton won the popular vote, but Trump took the Electoral College, an institution created by the "founding fathers" to give more power to the slaveowning states. Clinton isn't contesting Trump's victory. All wings of the bourgeoisie are united over the "peaceful transition of power" to maintain the myth that "the people" choose their rulers. As Obama put it the morning after the elections, "we're actually all on one team." True enough.

Clinton's "Superpredators" and "Deplorables"

Sobbing Democratic Party liberals and the smug (though now temporarily chastened) bourgeois media, which overwhelmingly took up the banner "we're with her," are blaming Trump's win on white workers and poor who don't share what they call "our values." To be sure, Trump cornered the market on white Christian fundamentalists as well as the former Confederate South and rural areas. But he also won a lot of the working-class vote in former manufacturing areas of the Midwest Rust Belt. Since many of these voters were part of the base that swept Obama to victory in the same states in both 2008 and 2012, it's

difficult to proclaim this was just a revolt of white racist "deplorables." In fact, the Democrats and their lackeys in the union officialdom paved the way for Trump's victory.

Upon coming to office following the 2008 financial meltdown, Obama, a consummate Wall Street Democrat, set to work saving the hides of the high-rolling bankers and hedge fund managers who authored the misery of so many. This time around, the Democrats countered Trump's slogan "Make America Great Again" with boasts that "America is great." Small wonder that this didn't strike a chord among workers whose unions, jobs, wages and living conditions have been devastated.

Trump gained the support of many of these workers by promising to "save American jobs," threatening trade war against China and further imperialist plunder of Mexico. Even if more overtly wrapped in racism against immigrants and foreign workers, this rhetoric simply echoed the protectionist poison peddled by the AFL-CIO bureaucracy. The union tops have long subordinated workers' interests to the profitability of U.S. capitalism and denounced foreign-owned companies and foreign-born workers, all the while presiding over the decimation of the unions.

Campaigning hard for Clinton, Obama told black people that anyone who didn't get out and vote for her was betraying his legacy. While there was a sense of racial solidarity with the first black president, the truth is that during his administration conditions for black people continued to worsen: wages flatlined and the median wealth of black families crashed while cops continued to wantonly gun down their sons, fathers, mothers and sisters. In the end, many black people simply sat out these elections.

They remembered Clinton branding inner-city youth "superpredators," her support to her husband Bill's anti-woman destruction of "welfare as we know it" and his anti-crime bill, which vastly increased racist mass incarceration and the number of cops on the streets. When Trump rightly

continued on page 2



Mathieson Sr./Rex Shutterstock

Trump and Obama meet in Oval Office, November 10. Capitalist rulers and both their parties are intent on ensuring smooth transition of power.



Trump...

(continued from page 1)

noted that the Democratic Party sees black people as little more than voting cattle and described life in the ghettos as hellish, it was a completely cynical maneuver (not to mention delivered to a suburban Wisconsin white audience while segregated Milwaukee was in flames over yet another racist cop killing). But the response of the Democrats was the lying claim that conditions for black people have vastly improved.

Of course, to see what Trump has in mind for black people, one need look no further than his endorsement by the national Fraternal Order of Police. What lies in store under Trump’s administration is as clear as the ghoulish smile on the face of former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani as he embraced the heavily armed NYPD thugs in front of Trump Tower. Throughout his campaign, Trump boasted of the support he got from immigration agents and U.S. border guards, who have desperate immigrants lined up in their sights. But while Trump has made virulent anti-immigrant racism his stock in trade, Obama himself has deported a record number of immigrants. In fact, Obama has expanded the repressive machinery of the capitalist state that Trump will inherit, from imprisonment of whistleblowers and preventive detention to assassination by drone.

Contrary to the liberals’ cries, Trump is not America’s Hitler. The soil in which the Nazis grew was that of an imperialist power that had been defeated in World War I and faced the challenge of



Reuters

GM’s Willow Run factory in Michigan, shuttered in 2010. Capitalists’ destruction of manufacturing jobs and trade-union tops’ betrayals pushed many workers to embrace Trump’s right-wing populism.

an insurgent working class that the rulers had to crush. In contrast, the U.S. is not a defeated imperialist country but rather remains the “world’s only superpower.” Nor does the U.S. ruling class currently face a challenge from the working class. On the contrary, thanks to sellouts at the head of the dwindling ranks of organized labor, the bourgeoisie has been waging a one-sided war against labor for decades.

Trump has arrived at the pinnacle of the capitalist state through the mechanisms of bourgeois democracy, not the mobilization of fascist gangs. However, his election has certainly emboldened the fascists. The KKK in North Carolina has

announced that it will hold a “victory” march in December. Similarly, during the presidency of Republican Ronald Reagan, the official racism of the White House encouraged the Klan and Nazis. When the fascists tried to hold rallies in major urban centers, the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee initiated calls for mass labor/black mobilizations. From Washington, D.C., where the Klan threatened to stage a provocation especially aimed at immigrants, to Chicago, where the Nazis took aim at a Gay Pride demonstration, and elsewhere, we succeeded in sparking protests of thousands that stopped them. Based on the social power of the multiracial unions standing at the head of the black poor, immigrants and all the intended victims of fascist terror, these mobilizations provided a small example of the leadership and forces needed to build a party of *our class* in struggle against the capitalist class enemy.

Beware Snake Oil “Socialists”

The lie that the way to stop Trump is to build a more “progressive” Democratic Party or another capitalist party like the Greens isn’t being pushed just by liberals, but also by self-proclaimed socialist organizations. One example is Socialist Alternative, one of the biggest promoters of Bernie Sanders. In a November 9 leaflet distributed at anti-Trump protests, they argue that “despite his mistake of running inside the Democratic Party and endorsing Clinton, Bernie Sanders’ campaign proved it is possible to win mass support for a bold left-wing program to challenge big business for power.”

Far from making a “mistake,” the Vermont Senator was a collaborative participant in the Democrats’ Congressional Caucus for over 20 years, not to mention an avid supporter of U.S. imperialism’s wars of conquest and occupation. He never had any intention of challenging “big business for power.” Now Sanders argues in a *New York Times* (11 November) op-ed piece that if Trump “is serious about pursuing policies that improve the lives of working families, I’m going to present some real opportunities for him to earn my support.” Wow! However unpredictable Trump might be, the one thing you can be sure of is that he will protect the interests of America’s

capitalist rulers because they are his class. The International Socialist Organization (ISO), which welcomed the election of Obama as an opening to mobilize for “change,” now complains that his administration threw away “the opportunity to marginalize the Republicans for a decade at least” because it “devoted itself to bailing out the banks.” Back in 2008, these reformists argued that with sufficient pressure “from below” Obama would be made to fight. Indeed, he did fight—for the ruling class that he represented. In the wake of Trump’s victory, the ISO points to “the potential for building a stronger grassroots resistance.”

The purpose of genuine socialists is not to build a classless “grassroots” movement, which would sow the seeds of a refurbished Democratic Party or another capitalist “third party,” but to uproot the entire decaying system of American capitalism. Our aim is to build a workers party that will lead a socialist revolution. When the workers get their hands on the tremendous wealth of this country, it will be put to use in making life livable for black people, immigrants and all those now treated like outcasts in this society. Thanks in part to the betrayals of the union misleaders, this seems like a pipe dream to many people, who can’t imagine that the working class could ever be a force for social change.

The rulers and their labor lieutenants in the union bureaucracy cannot extinguish the class struggle that is born of the irreconcilable conflict of interests between workers and their exploiters. The very conditions that grind down workers today will propel them into battle in the future. The capitalists’ pitting of black and white workers against each other can be overcome in integrated class struggle, in which the multiracial working class will see its common interests. These renewed labor battles can also lay the basis for reviving and extending the unions, ousting the sellouts and replacing them with a new, class-struggle leadership.

With millions unemployed or scrambling to get by through miserably paid part-time and temporary work, with many thrown out of their homes and reliant on food stamps, with pensions and health benefits slashed, there is a pressing need to build a workers party based on the fundamental understanding that the workers have no common interests with the bosses. Such a party would unite the employed and unemployed, the ghetto poor and immigrants in a struggle for jobs and decent living conditions for all. It would also win the working class to oppose the military adventures of U.S. imperialism and to fight in solidarity with workers and oppressed around the world.

Regardless of who occupies the White House, the president is the chief executive of the American capitalist state, which exists to defend the rule and profits of the bourgeoisie. This state cannot be pressured into serving the interests of the working class and oppressed, but must be swept away through a socialist revolution that establishes a workers state where those who labor rule. Only a revolutionary, internationalist workers party can lead such a revolution on the road to an international planned, socialist economy. ■



TROTSKY

On the Anniversary of the Russian Revolution

November 7 was the 99th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, a historic victory for working people and the oppressed internationally and the only successful proletarian revolution to date. Later undermined by nearly 70 years of Stalinist betrayal, the workers state that issued from the revolution was ultimately destroyed by capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92. Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon emphasized that a critical

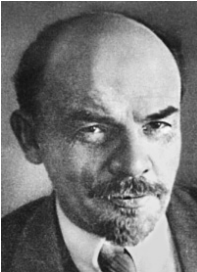
element for the success of the revolution was that the Bolsheviks maintained a revolutionary program even during the most difficult conditions of the period.

The party that made the Russian revolution didn’t begin with victory. The Bolsheviks really began with the defeat of the 1905 revolution and persevered through the long years of the tsarist reaction from 1906 to 1917. It was precisely in that period, when all the fainthearted people, when all the disillusioned, ran for cover, when they all gave up the fight and renounced it as hopeless—it was precisely in that period that Bolshevism showed its caliber. In the depths of darkest reaction and defeat the Bolsheviks forged the party that was destined to lead the victorious revolution in 1917....

The Russian revolution of November 1917 showed the workers of the whole world the way to power, to the overthrow of the capitalist property system, to the reorganization of economy on a rational basis. There is no other way to save mankind on an international scale than the Russian way. From that point of view we salute the great revolution tonight, as the initiator and inspirer of greater things to come. Therein lies its greatest significance....

Just as the Russian Bolsheviks gave us the model of a victorious revolution, so also they gave us the model of a party fit to lead and organize the revolution. If we take the Russian Bolshevik party for our model—and there is no other model worth even talking about—this means a party that is orthodox Marxist in its theory, that is firm in principle, and strong in its unity and its discipline. Only such a party is fit to organize and lead a revolution.

—James P. Cannon, “The Russian Revolution—Twenty-eight Years After” (4 November 1945), reprinted in *The Struggle for Socialism in the “American Century”* (1977)



LENIN

WORKERS VANGUARD

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

DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Liz Gordon

EDITOR: John Blake

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

EDITORIAL BOARD: Elizabeth Johnson (managing editor), François Donau (production manager), Blandine Hauser (letters editor), Bruce André, Ray Bishop, Bonnie Brodie, Jon Brule, Ed Clarkson, Paul Cone, Michael Davisson, George Foster, Walter Jennings, Michael Joyce, Jane Kerrigan, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour, Alan Wilde, Laura Zamora

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. 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 November 15.

No. 1100

18 November 2016



NV Photo

Spartacists raise revolutionary opposition to all capitalist parties at November 12 anti-Trump protest in New York City.

Right-Wing Anti-Gay Mobilizations in Mexico

The following is a translation of an article from *Espartaco* No. 46 (October 2016), publication of the *Grupo Espartaquista de México*, section of the *International Communist League*. On November 9, Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto’s proposal to allow same-sex marriage and adoption nationwide was rejected by a Congressional committee and will therefore not be voted on by Congress. As of now, same-sex marriage is legal in fewer than one-third of Mexico’s states.

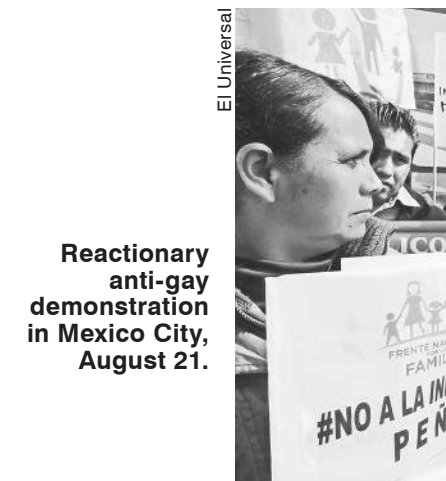
ESPARTACO

In an attempt to refurbish his brutal government’s tattered image a little, Peña Nieto presented Congress with a proposal for constitutional reform in May to establish the right of gay people to get married and to adopt children—even though he had expressed unambiguous opposition to the latter in 2010. Outside of Mexico City and the states of Coahuila and Quintana Roo, where it is legal, gay marriage is possible in the remaining states, but only by filing a petition in court. We are for the right of marriage and adoption for LGBT people. We defend the right of anyone, regardless of sexual preference, to have a family *or not*. We are for full democratic rights for gay people, including the right to *divorce*. We are also for the right to free abortion on demand

throughout the country as a *fundamental* democratic right for women.

Faced with Peña Nieto’s initiative, it was not only the PAN [Catholic clericalist National Action Party] who screamed bloody murder; the Congressmen of the PRI [currently ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party] itself made clear that the measure was not a “priority,” and they have “frozen” it. A shadowy organization backed by the Catholic church, the National Front for the Family, called a myriad of marches around the country in September with the ever-present demand that the family be “like that of Nazareth” (that is, virgin mother, credulous father and son of the Holy Spirit). Rodrigo Iván Cortés, spokesman for this organization and a former PAN Congressman, maintained that Pope Bergoglio [Francis] himself—who considers gay marriage the product of “the Devil’s envy”—advised him to go out into the streets to protest (lastampa.it, 1 September). The official publication of the Archdiocese of Mexico, the weekly *Desde la fe* [From the Faith] (29 May), resorted to the expert opinion of an exorcist, who pointed out that none other than Asmodeus is “the demon which today attacks the family” (see the biblical Book of Tobit; a more detailed description of Asmodeus is available in the *Dungeons & Dragons Monster Manual*).

These hysterical fantasies notwithstanding, the reactionary clericalist show



Reactionary anti-gay demonstration in Mexico City, August 21.

of force should be taken seriously. The anti-gay mobilizations were especially sizable—tens of thousands—in the cities of Monterrey and Guadalajara and the Bajío region, as well as in Mexico City, where the campaign culminated in a national march on September 24. Alongside the motley crew of Catholic fanatics were openly neo-Nazi gangs giving Hitler salutes and menacing counterdemonstrators. These demonstrations by right-wing fanatics are a *threat* to LGBT people, to women, to the separation of church and state and, ultimately, to everyone’s democratic rights.

The right to gay marriage will not in itself put an end to bigotry—often murderous—against LGBT people, nor to the pain

they experience in this anti-homosexual society which is so totally hypocritical regarding sex. But this pain makes it even more important to struggle for each democratic right, for each measure of social and political equality that can be gained in this society. The vanguard of the workers must stand up as the champion of all the oppressed; the realization of the proletariat’s historic task—the abolition of class society through socialist revolution—contains the seed of *universal* human liberation. The struggle against anti-gay and anti-woman prejudices is crucial for the construction of a genuine Leninist workers party capable of leading the working class in this colossal task.

Our defense of the right to adoption and marriage for LGBT people reflects our opposition to all discrimination based on sexual preferences; it has nothing to do with accepting the family as the basic economic unit that it represents in contemporary society. Many people have no choice but to fit themselves into the straitjacket of the monogamous nuclear family in order to gain basic rights such as housing, medical insurance and citizenship, or simply to survive. The institution of the family, together with the church, is the principal source of women’s oppression. Anti-gay fanaticism flows from the need to punish any deviation from this patriarchal structure.

We fight for a future society in which the necessary functions of the family—child-rearing, food preparation and other housework—will be socialized, that is, the responsibility of society as a whole. A person’s destiny will not be determined by the degree to which his or her family is rich or poor. The “alternative family,” so idealized by the bourgeois PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution], feminist organizations and LGBT activists, is still an economic unit to which its members are bound. Anyone who wants to fight for full democratic rights for LGBT people and for women’s liberation would do well to recognize the conservatizing force that the nuclear family represents, and its key role in capitalist society. ■

On the Iranian Left and the Kurdish Question

Bay Area
September 2016

On Sept. 17, 2016, the elite Iranian Revolutionary Guards using phosphorus bombs began shelling the Iraqi border region of Kurdistan where Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) forces are based, destroying structures in remote villages, killing several civilians, and injuring several Peshmergha (Kurdish soldiers). These atrocities against the Kurds are similar to and in footsteps of Turkish bombardment of Iraqi Kurdistan. The bombardments of the KDPI positions are retaliation against KDPI’s new surge of military attacks against Islamic Regime. The attacks were launched in June just as WV raised the call “For a

United, Independent Kurdistan.” (“Syria Quagmire,” WV No. 1091, 3 June 2016.)

The political significance of the above declaration is very unique as the KDPI declares that its military attacks have nothing to do with Kurdish independence, not to say a unified independent Kurdistan.

The KDPI upholds the ascendancy of Kurdish nationalism. It calls the rebirth of its armed struggle “Rasan” or the struggle to free all of Iran from the tyranny of Islamic Republic. But the anticommunist KDPI and its sister party KDP in Iraq are both parties of Kurdish feudalism and landowners. After unilaterally declaring a truce with Teheran in 1996, KDPI moved its forces to the Iraqi Kurdistan, then governed by Kurdish parties that had

forged trade and political relations with the Ayatollahs, not to mention the Iraqi KDP’s decades’ long military ties with the US military and intelligence services. The KDPI left Iranian Kurds defenseless while it continued to enforce its own patriarchal Islamic codes like the anti-woman bride price. KDPI pursues a federated Iran and sees itself as a player, as the KDP in Iraq was, after the overthrow of the Islamic tyranny, with the intervention of the imperialists of course.

The theocratic rule that came to power in 1979 [in Iran] showed its true nature when only after two months it dispatched the former monarchist army and air force to attack cities and mountainous regions of Kurdistan that had declared autonomy. Iranian Kurdistan has been under military occupation ever since.

The Iranian left claims to be for Kurdish “freedom.” But nothing but hostility or indifference can be detected or expected from them when it comes to the struggle for a united and independent Kurdistan; not even a hint of opposition to Persian chauvinism. They oppose the breakup of Iran, and see no difference between nationalism of the oppressed and the chauvinism of the oppressor nation.

Having rejected Leninism the Iranian reformist left has no need for the right of oppressed nations to independence as essential for the fight to unite the workers against dominant Persian, Turkish and Arab chauvinism, as a struggle in the here and now. This perspective can only come about from a revolutionary program based on the proletarian internationalism that Lenin fought for.

Communist Greetings,
Avetis

CORRECTION

The photo of Leon Trotsky rallying Soviet Red Army troops that accompanied the archival article “Theses on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” in WV No. 1098 (21 October) was incorrectly dated 1920. In fact, the photo was taken in 1918.

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.

Local Directory and Public Offices

Website: www.icl-fi.org • **Email address:** vanguard@tiac.net

National Office: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, (212) 732-7860

Chicago.....Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680, (312) 563-0441
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: 1st Sat. of every month, 2-5 p.m., and by appointment, 222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)

Los AngelesBox 29574, Los Feliz Sta., Los Angeles, CA 90029, (213) 380-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: Sat. 12-3 p.m., 3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

New YorkBox 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008, (212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net
Public Office: 1st Sat. of every month, 1-4 p.m., and by appointment, 299 Broadway, Suite 1618, Manhattan

Oakland.....Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604, (510) 839-0851
slbayarea@fastmail.net
Public Office: Sat. 1-4 p.m., 1904 Franklin (Buzzer #407)

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

Montréal.....CP 83 Succ. Place-d’Armes, Montréal, QC H2Y 3E9, (514) 728-7578
trotskyste.montreal@gmail.com

TorontoBox 7198, Station A, Toronto, ON M5W 1X8, (416) 593-4138
spartcan@on.aibn.com

Vancouver.....Box 2717, Main P.O., Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2, (604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

ESPARTACO

NUMERO 46

¡Defender a la CNT!

El estado se ensaña con el magisterio

El gobierno federal impulsa el desmoronamiento del magisterio. Los maestros se enfrentan a la violencia y a la represión. Los estudiantes se enfrentan a la violencia y a la represión. Los maestros se enfrentan a la violencia y a la represión. Los estudiantes se enfrentan a la violencia y a la represión.

¡Bajo la reforma educativa! ¡Romper con AMLO/Morena!

Capital de México: El centro ambientalista...
El gobierno de México: El centro ambientalista...
El gobierno de México: El centro ambientalista...

In Honor of A Revolutionary Labor Militant

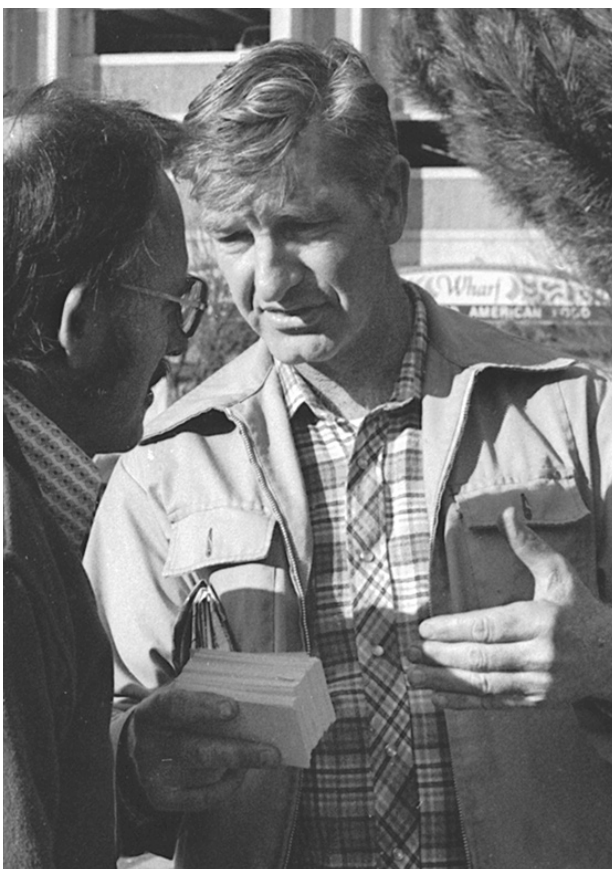
Stan Gow, a lifelong socialist and trade-union activist, co-founder and editor of *Longshore Militant* and member of the executive board of Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) from 1974 to 1986, died in July at the age of 88. Stan had been a supporter of the Spartacist tendency from its inception. Though we had lost touch with him in the last decades of his life, when he also suffered the devastating effects of Alzheimer's disease, we mourn his passing and honor his contributions to our movement and to the ILWU. He was an exemplar of a revolutionary socialist working-class militant.

Comrades who knew Stan well overwhelmingly described him as patient, gentle, solid. He was a big man, over six feet tall, with an unassuming, aw-shucks demeanor that masked a keen intelligence. After a hard upbringing in coastal Maine, he joined the Air Force shortly after WWII. Later, he attended UC Berkeley on the GI Bill, receiving a degree in biochemistry. It was at Berkeley at the height of the McCarthy witchhunt that Stan was won to Marxism, defying the stultifying conformity and pervasive anti-communism of that era. Initially a supporter of Max Shachtman's Independent Socialist League (ISL), he was part of the left wing, centered in the ISL's student-youth group, which opposed the organization's rightward trajectory and eventual liquidation into the American Socialist Party in 1957. Rejecting Shachtman's anti-Sovietism, this left wing came over to the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP). As the SWP politically degenerated in the early 1960s, Stan went on to support the politics of the Revolutionary Tendency which, expelled from the SWP in 1963, went on to found the Spartacist League.

After receiving his degree, Stan got a job as a chemist in the C&H Sugar refinery in Crockett, on the northern San Francisco Bay. He hated the smug white-collar managers who were his co-workers and he jumped at the chance to join the ILWU in 1959. Stan told comrades how much happier he was to occasionally work at C&H as a longshoreman, unloading the sugar boats. He maintained his interest in science and, with the ability to explain complicated concepts (whether scientific or political) in simple language, he was a powerful educator. When he wanted to emphasize a point, he would incline his head, squint slightly and speak firmly. Making good use of his chemical knowledge, Stan became known for his attention to on-the-job safety, especially regarding the dangerous materials longshoremen often had to handle.

Stan campaigned against U.S. imperialism's dirty war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants and called for the labor movement to take up the fight for black rights. In an open letter to Bay Area longshoremen, Stan took the ILWU's *Dispatcher* to task for its blanket condemnation of "violence"—equating police repression with the protest actions of black and Latino youth. Stan argued that systematic cop violence was at

Stan Gow



WV Photo

1928–2016

the root of the ghetto rebellions then sweeping the nation. He concluded:

"Both the economically exploited working-class and the oppressed color minorities must join together to form a new political party responsive to the needs of both and opposed to the policies of their exploiters, the capitalist class. We don't need a Peace party, or a Civil Rights Party, or an expanded Poverty Program Party, or even any combination of these, but a party that starts with a drive for the centers of power in our economic-political structure."

Distributed as a leaflet on the waterfront, Stan's letter was reprinted in *Spartacist* (No. 11, March-April 1968) under the headline "How Does Violence Start?" The

fight to break the labor movement from its abject prostration to the capitalist Democratic Party and take up the fight for black liberation and a revolutionary workers party was at the center of Stan's work in the ILWU. He was one of the editors of *Workers' Action*, an early and trial effort of Bay Area *Spartacist* supporters to address the working class. (The journal was later transferred to New York and subsequently incorporated into *Workers Vanguard*.) One comrade recalled that Stan revealed himself as a firebrand during the 1969 Berkeley People's Park protests, grabbing the crowd's attention as he roared out over the bullhorn the need for the students to link up with the power of the working class.

Stan entered the longshore workforce as containerization was just being introduced. He was one of the first "B-men," a new category established by the Harry Bridges leadership. Having no union rights or benefits, B-men only worked during peak periods when all the A-men who wanted to work had been dispatched. This provision was central to the 1961 Mechanization and Modernization Agreement (M&M), which allowed the shippers of the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) to slash jobs and working conditions while supposedly insuring a guaranteed income to remaining longshoremen (PGP or Pay Guarantee Plan). As work became scarcer over the following two decades, many B-men—unable to get much work and given only paltry PGP—were forced to leave the industry. Others were deregistered (lost their right to work as longshoremen) for minor infractions.

Stan was one of those who made it to A status. But he never ceased to see the second-class B category as a threat to the union and the hiring hall, where union dispatchers equalize work opportunity by distributing jobs on the basis of rotating lists of available longshoremen. He firmly opposed the lawsuit filed against the union by some of the deregistered men, organized by Stan Weir, a former ISL comrade of his. The suit, which threatened ILWU Local 10 with financial ruin, wound its way through the courts for 17 years and was eventually thrown out. Opposition in principle to bringing the capitalist courts into the affairs of the union movement was a central plank in the program on which Stan and fellow Local 10 member Howard Keylor ran for office in 1974. So too was the demand, "*Full A status for B-men, now*" as well as the call to abolish the "steady man" provision which Bridges forced through in the second M&M contract in 1966 (allowing heavy equipment operators to work directly for individual PMA companies as opposed to being dispatched out of the hiring hall).

These demands were touchstones of the program of *Longshore Militant*, which grew out of Gow and Keylor's joint fight against the 1975 contract—yet another link in Bridges' long chain of M&M betrayals. Longshore jobs coastwide had been cut by two-thirds, with the Bay Area hit particularly hard as container work migrated to the bigger ports in Los Angeles and Long Beach. While the shippers were tripling their tonnage and raking in profits, A-men in San Francisco counted themselves lucky to work three days a week. Their supposed guaranteed income was continually cut back, and the proposed contract allowed an arbitrator to cancel it as punishment for any "unauthorized" work stoppage. The ILWU membership rejected this sellout twice, and Bridges only forced it through on the third vote because many despaired of him negotiating anything better.

Longshore Militant was the only opposition grouping to call for ousting the discredited Bridges bureaucracy by building elected strike committees. Such committees were needed to run a solid coastwide strike to abolish the steady man clause and fight for a *shorter workweek at no loss in pay* in order to spread the available work among all longshoremen. Over the next decade, *Longshore Militant* continued to counterpose this class-struggle perspective to the M&M contracts brokered by Bridges and his heirs. Gow and Keylor were repeatedly re-elected to the Local 10 executive board, running on a platform that called for a revolutionary workers party to fight for a workers government. Stan was elected as a Local 10 delegate to ILWU conventions in 1979 and 1983.

Longshore Militant published some 70 issues between 1975 and 1986 and worked in solidarity with the Militant Caucus of ILWU Local 6, which published *Warehouse Militant*. The warehouse division was also hemorrhaging jobs as the distributors fled to low-wage Nevada. Both the Militant Caucus and *Longshore Militant* fought for an aggressive campaign to follow the runaway houses

LONGSHORE MILITANT

Issue no. 8 Published by Stan Gow & Howard Keylor June 25, 1975
(415) 824-0439 P.O. Box 33 El Cerrito, CA 94530 labor donated

Bridges Declares War On Longshoremen!

He proposes to starve us out!

We need a special local meeting before the contract expires to discuss what to do!

We have to take a strike vote!

We must elect a strike committee and prepare to run a winning strike!

We have to act now to keep the International from sabotaging us!



I.L.W.U. — Local 10

**RE-ELECT the ONLY
class struggle candidate.**

**STAN GOW 19-A
Caucus &
Convention**

For labor action to bring down Reagan.

LONGSHORE MILITANT

Issue No. 43 Published by Howard Keylor and Stan Gow Nov. 5, 1978
(415) 534-6290 P.O. Box 863, Oakland, Ca. 94604 labor donated

Break With Strikebreaking Democrats! Build A Workers Party

LONGSHORE MILITANT

Issue No. 56 Published by Stan Gow January 7, 1983
(415) 534-6290 PO Box 863 Oakland, CA 94604 labor donated

Labor/Black Mobilization Stops The Klan! Mass Labor Action To Bring Reagan Down!

On November 27, 1982 the Ku Klux Klan planned to march from the Capitol to the White House in Washington D.C. They had a permit and thousands of cops to protect them. They had the approval of the Reagan administration to parade their racist filth.

But on November 27 the KKK did not march, did not even put on their robes. Instead more than 5,000 protesters, mainly black and unionists, blocked off their starting point, took over their march route and occupied their rally site. The thousands who came out to show their determination to militantly stop the cross-burners and lynchers from marching responded to the call of the Labor/Black Mobilization to Stop the KKK, initiated by the Spartacist League.

Longshore Militant newsletter put forward a class-struggle perspective in opposition to the pro-capitalist ILWU union tops, including former president Harry Bridges. Stan Gow was repeatedly re-elected to Local 10 executive board on a platform of fighting for a revolutionary workers party.

and *organize the unorganized*. Arrested with several other militants on a Local 6 picket line during the 1976 warehouse strike, Stan was slapped with the all-purpose charge of assaulting a police officer. The charges were later reduced and Stan received a 30-day suspended sentence. He gave a minority report on warehouse to the union’s 1979 convention.

The Fight for Genuine Labor Solidarity

In the ILWU, the influence of the Stalinist Communist Party (CP)—an early and uncritical backer of Harry Bridges—remained strong into the 1990s. Anyone familiar with the union’s history knows that its leadership’s rhetoric of labor solidarity was most often belied by inaction and abject class collaboration in practice. Stan was known above all else for his persistent fight to marshal the ILWU’s significant social power not just in words, but in solidarity *action*.

Over the years he fought for hot-cargoing military goods to the bloody Pinochet regime in Chile; for honoring picket lines set up at West Coast ports during strikes by the East and Gulf Coast International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA); for a 24-hour work stoppage in defense of the 1978 U.S. coal miners strike; and for a solidarity strike to defend the PATCO air traffic controllers union against President Ronald Reagan’s union-busting in 1981. The criminal refusal of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy to use its power to shut down the airports in defense of PATCO was a watershed, opening up a series of labor defeats, which went along with Reagan’s renewed Cold War offensive against the Soviet Union. It was at this time that Keylor cowardly deserted *Longshore Militant* and the Militant Caucus which had recently been formed in Local 10.

Stan continued the fight. In 1983, when Reagan announced a major military escalation of his dirty war to prop up the military junta in El Salvador, Stan initiated the call (signed by 23 other ILWUers) for a 24-hour port shutdown. The call was so popular that the Local 10 executive board was forced to recommend it to the ILWU convention, where International President Jimmy



Bancroft Library

San Francisco, 1934: Solid strike by maritime unions, culminating in citywide general strike, laid basis for founding of the ILWU as industrial union.

Herman (who had taken the reins when Bridges retired in 1977) did a full-court press to squash it. With protests over El Salvador filling the mall in Washington, D.C., Stan and his supporters tried to spark union action by picketing an El Salvador-bound ship. The Local 10 leadership ordered ILWU longshoremen to work the ship, then brought Stan up on charges of “conduct unbecoming a union member” in June 1983. The Local 10 trial committee, which refused to hear most of Stan’s witnesses, delivered a guilty verdict. But it was overturned at the membership meeting, as angry members turned out by the hundreds to shout, “No! No! No!” The attempt to muzzle Stan was defeated by a ten-to-one margin.

Fighting for boycott of South African shipping in solidarity with anti-apartheid struggle, Stan and other union militants picket the *Nedlloyd Kimberley*, November 1984.



WV Photo

Two days before his sham trial, Stan and other union members had attempted to stop the loading of the *Nedlloyd Kimberley*, bound for South Africa, in protest against the execution of three anti-apartheid fighters. Once again, the Local 10 leadership ordered longshoremen to cross the picket line and work the ship. But they didn’t dare bring Stan up on charges for this action, understanding that the largely black membership of Local 10 strongly identified with the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

Longshore Militant had been fighting to put teeth in the bureaucracy’s empty anti-apartheid resolutions since 1976. In the fall of 1984, with tens of thousands of black workers in South Africa on strike and anti-apartheid struggle exploding, Stan again issued urgent calls for Local 10 to boycott all ships to and from South Africa. He had been severely injured in an on-the-job accident the previous June, requiring several operations and years of recuperation during which he was unable to work. But that didn’t stop him. The bureaucrats at the head of Local 10 were feeling the heat, and when the *Nedlloyd Kimberley* docked at Pier 80 in late November they undertook a one-shot action, with a policy to work the ship but not the South African cargo.

Stan was there, fighting to throw the full weight of the ILWU behind the action. But the Local 10 leaders (with the active assistance of Howard Keylor and CP supporter Leo Robinson) refused to give official union sanction even for this token action. Longshoremen were left to go it alone, dispatched to the ship where they refused to work South African cargo and were fired for the day. In the guise of protecting the union from sanctions by the PMA and the courts for an “illegal” work stoppage, the bureaucrats purveyed the fiction that the ILWU members implementing the boycott were carrying out individual “acts of conscience.” But, as Stan pointed out, “Maybe we’re not real smart. We thought it was the job of the union to protect its members, not the members’ job to protect Herman’s cozy relationship with the PMA.” (For the full story, see “The Truth About the *Nedlloyd Kimberley* Boycott,” WV No. 873, 7 July 2006.)

The spineless attempt to “hide” this union action didn’t fool anyone—least of all the PMA and the capitalist courts, which slapped the union with an injunction. The ILWU leadership immediately caved in, calling off the boycott after ten days. Even this token use of union power won the ILWU international acclaim. How much more powerful if Stan’s program had won and the union had boycotted *all* South Africa-bound ships, defying court injunctions and Taft-Hartley threats—an action with the potential to strike a blow against hated anti-labor laws and galvanize similar actions by unions around the world.

Stan’s injuries were debilitating, and when he came back to the job he transferred to clerks Local 34, from which he eventually retired. In one of his last actions in Local 10, in April 1986, he presented the following motion calling on the Local’s executive board to protest Reagan’s terror bombing of Libya:

“ILWU Local 10 supports the cause of Libyan independence and territorial integrity against assaults by U.S. imperialism. We condemn U.S. imperialism’s policy of anti-Soviet provocation and its act of aggression, criminal assassination and mass terror against Libya.”

The motion passed, punching a hole in the anti-Soviet stance which the ILWU had taken under Jimmy Herman, who sought to line the union up behind U.S. imperialism’s renewed Cold War drive in the early 1980s. This was a sharp break with the ILWU’s pro-Moscow Stalinist stance under Harry Bridges. The CPers in the union hadn’t raised a peep when Herman threw the ILWU behind the U.S.-backed mullahs in Afghanistan and hailed Polish Solidarność, the reactionary movement that eventually led the capitalist counterrevolution in Poland. It was left to *Longshore Militant* to explain that it was in the interests of the working class to militarily defend the Soviet Union and the other states in which capitalism had been overthrown, despite their treacherous Stalinist misrulers. Stan had been won to defense of the gains of the 1917 Russian Revolution when he quit Shachtman’s ISL as a young man. He well understood that those who refuse to defend the past gains of the working class will never win new ones.

Stan can have no better epitaph than the one *Longshore Militant* published to draw the lessons of the sabotage of the *Nedlloyd Kimberley* boycott:

“For a long time, Stan Gow has been arguing that there are two counterposed political programs at work in the ILWU and other unions. Stan and the Militant Caucus have fought for the program of militant class struggle and political action independent of the capitalist parties, courts and government. This program is based on the fact that the bosses own the government, and together they are the enemies of working people and always will be until the working people take over society. The other program, represented by the International officers and the revolving door of Local 10 ‘leaders’, is class collaboration, a legalistic strategy that says there is a partnership between labor and the bosses, and that the government can be pressured to be a friend of the working man—as long as we obey its laws. This is a lie.”

After decades of defeats with labor misleaders bowing and scraping before the capitalists’ anti-labor laws, insisting that the election of some Democratic “friend of labor” is the only possible road forward, many union activists today despair of anything else even being possible. Stan Gow and his *Longshore Militant* fought for a different path. His life is rich with lessons that can and will be carried forward by a new generation of labor militants. ■

A Spartacist Pamphlet

1934 Strikes
Class-Struggle Leadership
Made a Key Difference

Then and Now

Minneapolis, May 1934: At the Battle of Dupes Run, thousands of strikers and supporters routed cops and overwhelming special deputies.

AUSTRALIA...81 BRITAIN...750 CANADA...C091 EUROPE...01 SOUTH AFRICA...82 USA...1001

A Spartacist Pamphlet

Includes:

1934 Strikes: Class-Struggle Leadership Made the Difference

Then and Now

Leon Trotsky on “Workers’ and Farmers’ Parties

The Minnesota F.L.P.

by Vincent R. Dunne

Revolutionary Teamsters

The Minneapolis Truckers’ Strikes of 1934, by Bryan D. Palmer

A Review and Commentary by E. Tanner

\$1 (24 pages)

Order from: Spartacist Pub. Co.
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League

☐ \$10/22 issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist* and *Black History and the Class Struggle*) international rates: \$25/22 issues—Airmail \$10/22 issues—Seamail

☐ \$2/6 introductory issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist*)

☐ \$2/4 issues of *Espartaco* (en español) (includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)

☐ I would like to contribute \$_____ to the production of *Workers Vanguard*.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____ Email _____

Apt. # _____

1100

Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116



Partisan Defense Committee

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

CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

Holiday Appeal...

(continued from page 8)

we have supported dozens of prisoners on three continents, among them militant workers railroaded for defending their unions during pitched class battles—including coal miners in Britain and Kentucky.

The 1980s were a time of waning class and social struggle, but the convulsive battles for black rights in the 1960s and '70s still haunted America's capitalist rulers, who thirsted for vengeance. Among the early recipients of PDC stipends were members and supporters of the Black Panther Party, the best of a generation of black radicals who sought a revolutionary solution to black oppression—a bedrock of American capitalism. Other early stipend recipients were members of the largely black Philadelphia MOVE commune. Among those prisoners to whom we continue to provide stipends are Mumia Abu-Jamal, America's foremost class-war prisoner, and Ed Poindexter, a leader of the Omaha, Nebraska, Committee to Combat Fascism, whose comrade and fellow stipend recipient Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa died in March after 45 years in prison.

There is every reason to believe that the period we are entering will be no less reactionary than the one we faced 30 years ago. Class-struggle legal and social defense, including support for class-war prisoners—those today behind bars and any militants who join them—is of vital importance to labor activists, fighters for black rights and immigrant rights and defenders of civil liberties. In a small but real way, our prisoner stipend program expresses the commonality of interests between black people, immigrants and the working class. The struggle to free the class-war prisoners is critical to educating a new generation of fighters against exploitation and oppression—a schooling centered on the role of the capitalist state, comprising at its core the military, cops, courts and prisons. Join us in generously donating and building our annual Holiday Appeal. An injury to one is an injury to all!

The 12 class-war prisoners receiving stipends from the PDC are listed below.

* * *

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a former Black Panther Party spokesman, a well-known supporter of the MOVE organization and an award-winning journalist known as “the voice of the voiceless.” Framed up for the 1981 killing of a Philadelphia police officer, Mumia was sentenced to death explicitly for his political views. Federal and state courts have repeatedly refused to consider evidence proving Mumia's innocence, including the sworn confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not

Mumia, shot and killed the policeman. In 2011 the Philadelphia district attorney's office dropped its longstanding effort to legally lynch Mumia. In a significant development in the decades-long battle for his freedom, on August 7, attorneys for Mumia Abu-Jamal filed a new petition under Pennsylvania's Post Conviction

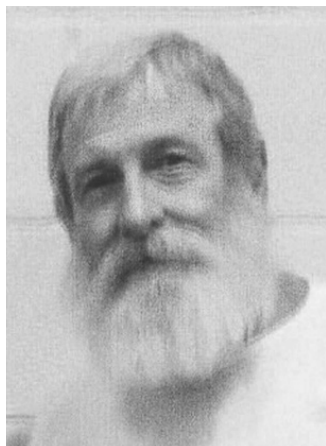
Janet Africa, Janine Africa, Delbert Africa and Eddie Africa—are in their 39th year of imprisonment. After the 8 August 1978 siege of their Philadelphia home by over 600 heavily armed cops, they were sentenced to 30-100 years, having been falsely convicted of killing a police officer who died in the cops' own

ings. This year Eddie, Debbie, Janet and Janine were all denied parole.

Jaan Laaman and Thomas Manning are the two remaining anti-imperialist activists known as the Ohio 7 still in prison, convicted for their roles in a radical group that took credit for bank “expropriations” and bombings of symbols of U.S. imperialism, such as military and corporate offices, in the late 1970s and '80s. Before their arrests in 1984 and 1985, the Ohio 7 were targets of massive manhunts. The Ohio 7's politics were once shared by thousands of radicals but, like the Weathermen before them, the Ohio 7 were spurned by the “respectable” left. From a proletarian standpoint, the actions of these leftist activists against imperialism and racist injustice are not crimes. They should not have served a day in prison.

Ed Poindexter is a former Black Panther supporter and leader of the Omaha, Nebraska, National Committee to Combat Fascism. He and his former co-defendant, Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa, were victims of the FBI's deadly COINTELPRO operation, under which 38 Black Panther Party members were killed and hundreds more imprisoned on frame-up charges. Poindexter was railroaded to prison and sentenced to life for a 1970 explosion that killed a cop, and he has now spent more than 45 years behind bars. Nebraska courts have repeatedly denied Poindexter a new trial despite the fact that a crucial piece of evidence excluded from the original trial, a 911 audio tape long suppressed by the FBI, proved that testimony of the state's key witness was perjury.

All proceeds from the Holiday Appeal events will go to the Class-War Prisoners Stipend Fund. This is not charity but an elementary act of solidarity with those imprisoned for their opposition to racist capitalism and imperialist depredation. Send your contributions to: PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013; (212) 406-4252. For more information about the class-war prisoners, including addresses for correspondence, see: partisandefense.org. ■



Anarchist Black Cross



American Indians and Friends



Facebook



Justice for the MOVE 9



CSDN

Some recipients of PDC class-war prisoner stipends. Top, left to right: Tom Manning; Leonard Peltier; Ed Poindexter. Bottom, left to right: Debbie (Sims) Africa, Janet (Holloway) Africa and Janine (Phillips) Africa; Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Relief Act (PCRA). Mumia's application seeks to overturn the denial of his three prior PCRA claims by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. If successful, he would be granted a new hearing before that court to argue for reversal of his frame-up conviction. In the meantime he remains condemned to life in prison with no chance of parole. Mumia also faces a life-threatening health crisis related to active hepatitis C, which brought him close to death in March 2015. On August 31, eight months after oral argument in Mumia's lawsuit to obtain crucial medication, a federal judge rejected his claim on the pretext that the lawsuit should have been directed against the members of the state's hepatitis committee—a secretive body which Mumia's attorneys had no way of knowing even existed at the time the suit was initiated! The Pennsylvania prison authorities have adamantly refused to treat his dangerous but curable condition.

Leonard Peltier is an internationally renowned class-war prisoner. Peltier's incarceration for his activism in the American Indian Movement has come to symbolize this country's racist repression of its Native peoples, the survivors of centuries of genocidal oppression. Peltier was framed up for the 1975 deaths of two FBI agents marauding in what had become a war zone on the South Dakota Pine Ridge Reservation. Although the lead government attorney has admitted, “We can't prove who shot those agents,” and the courts have acknowledged blatant prosecutorial misconduct, the 72-year-old Peltier is not scheduled to be reconsidered for parole for another eight years. Peltier suffers from multiple serious medical conditions and has received a confirmed diagnosis of an abdominal aortic aneurysm—a life-threatening condition which the federal officials have refused to treat. He is incarcerated far from his people and family and is currently seeking executive clemency from Barack Obama.

Seven MOVE members—**Chuck Africa, Michael Africa, Debbie Africa,**

cross fire. In 1985, eleven of their MOVE family members, including five children, were massacred by Philly cops when a bomb was dropped on their living quarters. After nearly four decades of unjust incarceration, these innocent prisoners are routinely turned down at parole hear-

31st Annual PDC Holiday Appeal

Free All Class-War Prisoners! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

NEW YORK CITY

**Friday, December 2
6 to 9:30 p.m.**

Featured speakers:

**Albert Woodfox
Robert King**

(former Angola 3 prisoners)

District Council 1707 Auditorium
420 West 45th Street, Manhattan
(between 9th and 10th Avenues,
take A, C or E train to 42nd St. stop)
Information: (212) 406-4252

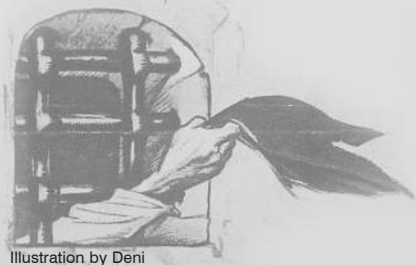


Illustration by Deni

Sponsored by the Partisan Defense Committee

(212) 406-4252 • partisandefense@earthlink.net • partisandefense.org

CHICAGO

**Sunday, December 11
3 to 7 p.m.**

U.E. Hall
37 S. Ashland (at Monroe)
Information: (312) 563-0442

OAKLAND

**Saturday, January 21
4 to 8 p.m.**

Oakstop, West Wing Gallery,
2nd floor, 1721 Broadway
(at 19th St. BART stop)
Information: (510) 839-0852

**This is not charity—
it's an act of solidarity
with those in prison.
Their fight is our fight!**

Partisan Defense Committee

CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

Number 39 50¢ FALL 2015

**Court Blocks Medical Treatment
Mumia's Life
in Danger—
Free Him Now!**

**Unbroken and Unbowed
Fighter for the Oppressed
Hugo Pinell
Assassinated**

Phil Allen 1995/2015 9 Let the Five Star: A Powerful Documentary
Albert Woodfox Must Be Freed! 10 on the 1985 Bombing of MOVE 27
Hanging Off Asante Shabazz! 11 Abolish the Racist Death Penalty! 24
20th Annual Holiday Appeal 12 Victory for South African Human Rights 25
Drawings from the Class-War Prisoners 15 Resistance Against School Cuts 26
Open Change Sheet: Action with "Upstream" 28 Union Leaders Lead! 29

No. 39, Fall 2015

\$.50 (32 pages)

Order from/pay to:

PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal St. Station
New York, NY 10013-0099

NYC Subway: Death Trap for Transit Workers

Just after midnight on November 3, an oncoming G train slammed into two transit workers as it rounded a blind curve near Church Avenue station in Brooklyn. Unable to get out of the way in time, 53-year-old Louis Gray Jr. was crushed to death. His partner Jeffrey Fleming, 49, survived with severe injuries, including nine broken ribs. The responsibility for Gray’s death lies squarely with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), whose crumbling transit system is a deathtrap for its predominantly black and minority workforce.

Members of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100, Gray and Fleming were working as construction flaggers, one of the most important and dangerous jobs in transit. They had been assigned to mark out a safe work zone for maintenance workers. More often than not, the MTA does not suspend service for routine track work. Until successfully setting up a series of lanterns to warn train operators that crews are on the tracks, flaggers are like sitting ducks in the dark, slippery tunnels, exposed to speeding trains and the live 600-volt third rail that powers them. More than a week after the deadly incident, the MTA remains tight-lipped, but few transit workers doubt that the company will try to pin the blame on the victims or other transit workers involved.

For America’s rulers, public infrastructure and services are subordinated to their drive for profits, and spending on them is willfully starved. Measures that protect the lives and safety of transit workers and

others who make society run are kept to a minimum. The overseers of the MTA plantation are determined to see wheels turn, whatever safety platitudes they spout. For the transit bosses, if keeping the trains running leads to a few deaths on the tracks, well, workers’ lives are cheap.

The 41,000 members of TWU Local 100, a historically militant, integrated union, have plenty of potential power to fight for the installation of modern safety technology to replace the antiquated system of flags and lanterns. But they are blocked by a union leadership firmly committed to a supposed partnership between labor and capital. Following Gray’s death, TWU president John Samuelson commented in an interview on the NY1 news channel: “The work environment is so incredibly dangerous that industrial accidents like this are bound to occur.” What he hides is that the union can fight to change the work environment. This “accident” was entirely preventable industrial murder.

In an email to Local 100 members, the TWU tops offer for the union to serve as an adjunct to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), which is investigating. But by design this agency of the capitalist government can only issue recommendations. Where the NTSB has advised the introduction of technology that would save the lives of workers and passengers alike, the bosses have balked and stalled. For example, despite a series of deadly train derailments including on the MTA’s Metro-North in the Bronx in 2013 and on Amtrak in Philadelphia in 2015, positive



train control has still not been widely adopted because U.S. rail lines do not want to cover the costs.

With contract negotiations swinging into gear, Samuelson proposed to the MTA to trade blood for money, declaring: “You can’t protect us, so you better damn well pay us in this contract.” But any union leadership worthy of the name would *link* a fight for worker safety to the fight for better pay and benefits. That message could have been sent if there had been an immediate call for the entire

membership to stop work in response to the death of Louis Gray.

Flagmen should never have to put their lives on the line. If power must be removed from the third rail, so be it. When track work is about to begin, no train should move through the area until flaggers have deemed it safe. The union must enforce the right of every worker to shut down any unsafe work site on the spot. Union safety committees, made up of elected reps and completely independent from management, would fight against hazardous conditions on the job. Union control over safety would go a long way toward preventing injuries like that suffered by Monique Brathwaite, a 36-year-old signal helper and single mother who recently had her forearm amputated after she fell onto the third rail. For workers involved in accidents, the union should at minimum ensure they receive *full* pay and benefits for the duration of their recovery.

Industrial atrocities underscore how much the working class needs a class-struggle leadership—one committed to the understanding that the interests of the workers and the capitalists are counterposed and irreconcilable. The only way workers ever won anything was by wielding their social power against the bosses, including in defiance of anti-union laws like New York’s Taylor Law. A class-struggle leadership would understand that the enemy is capital and its system of production for profit, and would broaden the fight against the bosses into a fight against the capitalist system itself. ■

Chicago...

(continued from page 8)

CTU had plenty of potential allies. The 500-member teachers union at UNO charter schools was also poised to strike in October, and 9,000 Chicago transit workers have been working under an expired contract.

The answer has a lot to do with the trade-union bureaucracy’s embrace of the capitalist Democratic Party as the “lesser evil” (or “friend of labor”), even as the Democrats wage war on the CTU and other unions. Take Randi Weingarten, head of the American Federation of Teachers, to which both the CTU and UNO teachers union are affiliated. This Democratic Party loyalist and big-time Clinton supporter flew into Chicago to personally push through a deal to head off a UNO teachers strike that could well have reignited the ranks of the much larger CTU. In 2012, she pressured the CTU tops to avoid a strike because it threatened to rock the boat too much during Obama’s re-election bid.

No less than Weingarten, “progressive” bureaucrats like Lewis and Sharkey and their Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) seek to boost the Democrats and falsely portray the capitalist rulers and working people as sharing common interests. Indeed, ever since the CTU contract expired in June 2015, Lewis & Co. have taken great pains to avoid strike action and rehabilitate Emanuel’s image. Despite provocations and attacks by the mayor and his flunky Claypool, the CORE leadership refused to even take a strike vote until mid December (when the vote was overwhelmingly in favor). With Emanuel on the ropes amid widespread calls for his resignation over the McDonald cover-up, it was a perfect time for city labor to launch some real struggle (see “We Need a Multiracial Workers Party!”, WV No. 1081, 15 January).

In order to avert a strike, in January Lewis tried to push through a rotten sell-out that would have gutted pension benefits and jacked up health care costs. That offer was unanimously rejected by the CTU bargaining committee. To justify delaying a strike, Lewis and Sharkey hid behind the anti-union SB7 law (which, in



Above: Over 10,000 Chicago public school teachers and supporters at one-day strike and rally, April 1. Below: UNO charter school teachers protest on October 13 in advance of projected strike that union tops called off.



2012, Lewis herself had signed off on), claiming that the union was compelled to wait months until a pro-management arbitrator had rendered an opinion. With anger bubbling in the ranks, on April 1 the CTU tops staged a one-day walkout designed to let off some steam and convince the state government to cough up more money for public education.

At the time, Lewis tellingly aimed her fire at Republican governor Bruce Rauner, giving a pass to the Democrats who control the state legislature. Meanwhile, Sharkey openly pushed class collaboration, calling

for “public pressure” so that “CPS and CTU can come together with some joint solutions down at the capital.” It is not the job of the unions to “find the money,” i.e., to help the capitalists balance the budgets that reflect the priorities of the bosses.

CORE’s capitulation to Emanuel in advance of the elections is bound up with years of CTU endorsements and millions of dollars of financial support to Illinois Democrats up and down the line, from former governor Pat Quinn and legislative party boss Mike Madigan to 2015 mayoral candidate Jesus “Chuy” Garcia.

Time and again, CORE has staked the union’s future on “fair treatment” by so-called “friends of labor,” with the result that the union has been slapped around by these representatives of the capitalist class enemy and their party.

Much of the reformist left has sought to put a shine on CORE. If there were a prize for slimy cheerleading, it would have to go to the International Socialist Organization (ISO). In an 18 October *Socialist Worker* article, the ISO with shameless cowardice dodges taking a position for or against the sellout contract. In fact, the only firm position taken by these waterboys for the union bureaucrats is endorsement of Lewis/Sharkey. The ISO gushes that the CTU leadership’s actions in 2012 and “in this contract round—can serve as a guide in the ongoing struggle for the schools our children and our teachers deserve, in Chicago and around the country.” This gloss on betrayal is a big middle finger to the teachers.

While *Socialist Worker* has on several occasions raised objections to the CTU officialdom’s support of this or that Democrat, the matter is presented as an unfortunate blemish on the face of the CORE “union reformers.” Sharkey, who is deeply involved in the union’s backing of Democratic Party politicians, for years was a regular contributor to *Socialist Worker*. In an interview with *Chicago Magazine* (February 2015) during last year’s mayoral elections, Sharkey bragged of working eleven straight hours for “Chuy” and hugging the Democrat at his primary election celebration. This bowing and scraping for the Dems has merited not a mention from the ISO fake socialists, a silence entirely consistent with their championing of the capitalist Green Party as a liberal pressure group on the Democrats.

Decades-long political subservience to the Democrats has gutted the power of the unions. What is needed is a class-struggle labor leadership—one based on complete independence from the bosses and their political operatives. The money and resources exist to provide quality, integrated education for all, but to seize that wealth requires breaking the bourgeoisie’s hold on power. To that end, a workers party must be forged to lead the struggle to overturn this decaying capitalist order through socialist revolution. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

31st Annual Holiday Appeal Free the Class-War Prisoners!

“The path to freedom leads through a prison....

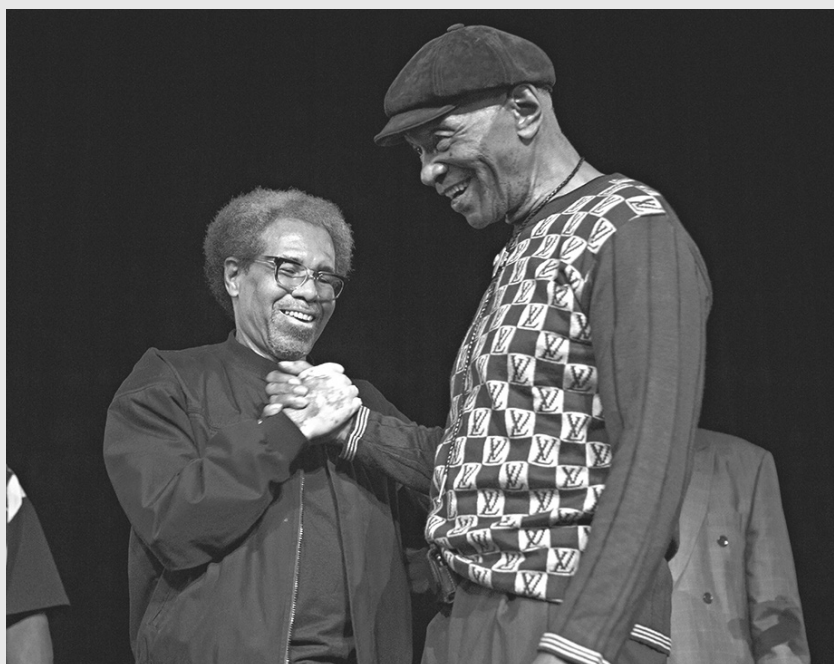
“In one sense of the word the whole of capitalist society is a prison. For the great mass of people who do the hard, useful work there is no such word as freedom. They come and go at the order of a few. Their lives are regulated according to the needs and wishes of a few. A censorship is put upon their words and deeds. The fruits of their labor are taken from them. And if, by chance, they have the instinct and spirit to rebel, if they take their place in the vanguard of the fight for justice, the prisons are waiting.”

—James P. Cannon, “The Cause that Passes Through a Prison,” *Labor Defender*, September 1926

As the Partisan Defense Committee mobilizes for its 31st annual Holiday Appeal to raise funds for monthly stipends and holiday gifts to class-war prisoners, the capitalists’ jails are being filled with hundreds of young activists who have protested the election of racist demagogue Donald Trump, adding to the many more who have been jailed for protesting racist cop terror over the past couple of years.

At this year’s New York City benefit, featured speakers will be Albert Woodfox and Robert King, who along with Herman Wallace were known as the Angola 3. These intransigent opponents of racial oppression spent decades in prison, victims of a state vendetta for forming a Black Panther Party chapter in Louisiana’s notorious Angola prison. Woodfox and Wallace were falsely convicted of the 1972 killing

Featured NYC Speakers: Albert Woodfox and Robert King of the Angola 3



February 19: Hours after his release from prison, Albert Woodfox (left) joins Robert King at the Ashe Cultural Arts Center in New Orleans.

of prison guard Brent Miller. King, who was framed up for the killing of a fellow inmate in 1973, was released in 2001, and dedicated himself to fighting to prove the

innocence of his imprisoned comrades. Wallace was released in October 2013—just three days before dying of liver cancer! Despite seeing his conviction over-

turned twice, Woodfox spent nearly 44 years in solitary confinement—the longest stint of any prisoner in the U.S.—before being released this past February, on his 69th birthday.

The PDC stipend program is a revival of a tradition of the International Labor Defense (ILD) under its first secretary, James P. Cannon (1925-28), an early leader of the Communist Party who went on to become the founder of American Trotskyism. Like the ILD before us, we stand unconditionally on the side of the working people and the oppressed in struggle against their exploiters and oppressors. We defend, in Cannon’s words, “any member of the workers movement, regardless of his views, who suffered persecution by the capitalist courts because of his activities or his opinion” (*First Ten Years of American Communism* [1962]). In its early years, the ILD adopted 106 prisoners—socialists, anarchists, union leaders and militants victimized for their struggles to organize the working class and for opposition to imperialist war.

The PDC started our class-war prisoner stipend program in 1986, during the Reagan years, a period of rampant reaction. Those years were marked by vicious racist repression, brutal union-busting, anti-immigrant hysteria, malicious cutbacks in social services for the predominantly black and Latino poor as well as government efforts to equate leftist political activity with “terrorism.” Over the decades since, *continued on page 6*

Chicago Teachers Get Sold Out

As the clock ticked down to midnight on October 10, Chicago public school teachers were ready and prepared to strike. Four years ago, determined strike action by Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) members had held the line against Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s union-busting offensive. Widely popular among parents of the overwhelmingly black and Latino student population, the 2012 strike resonated nationwide as a crucial fight in defense of public education and labor rights. This time though, CTU officials pulled the plug just prior to the strike deadline, announcing a deal riddled with concessions. In so doing, the union bureaucrats also threw the despised Emanuel a lifeline, helping him keep labor peace for the Democrats ahead of the national elections. The CTU membership—worn down by a leadership that refused to do battle over the course of 16 months without a contract—voted by a large margin on October 31 and November 1 to accept the pact.

There is plenty to hate in the new contract. CTU president Karen Lewis is touting “no school closings for years 1-2” of the four-year contract, but it is retroactive, so the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) will have a free hand to start shuttering schools and laying off teachers next July. Veteran teachers will receive



Sanchez/Chicago Tribune

October 10: CTU president Karen Lewis, flanked by vice president Jesse Sharkey (right), sells out teachers by accepting rotten deal and calling off planned strike.

no wage increase in the first two years and only meager raises after that. Health care plan changes and premium increases will shift costs onto union members. And CPS has stolen “steps and lanes” wage increases (based on seniority and teacher education level) for the period teachers worked without a contract.

The major giveback is the elimination of the “pension pickup” for new hires as

of January 1. Under the pickup, teachers pay 2 percent of their salaries toward their pensions and CPS covers the rest of the mandated employee contribution. Now an ever-growing section of the union membership will have a full 9 percent taken out of their paychecks. That is a formula for disaster, sowing division between new and veteran teachers and opening the floodgates to scrapping the pickup

altogether—if those with seniority aren’t first disciplined or harassed out of their jobs. CPS is so anxious to dump veteran teachers, and usher in a cheaper workforce, that the board is offering a bonus if enough agree to retire by March.

Much was made by the CTU tops of a supposed cap on the growth of privately run charter schools, whose proliferation in Chicago and nationally has been a centerpiece of Democratic Party-sponsored education “reform” (read union-busting). However, as soon as the deal was ratified, CPS head Forrest Claypool bragged that CPS had not agreed to any cap. “There’s not a charter moratorium,” he revealed, adding: “There’s plenty of room for high-quality charter operators to apply.” In response, CTU vice president Jesse Sharkey whined that he was “dismayed.” A union leadership worth its salt would undertake a class-struggle drive to organize the charter schools as an elementary act in defense of the livelihoods of all teachers and to combat the privatization of education.

Why did this sellout go down? After all, the union was well positioned for a fight. Emanuel’s City Hall was still shaken by the mass protests following the release a year ago of the video of the racist cop shooting of Laquan McDonald, and the *continued on page 7*