

Capitalist Democrats and Republicans Bleed Mexico

Mexico: Mass Protests over Gas Price Hike

Hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets across Mexico since January 1 in protests against the *gasolinazo*—the imposition of an increase in gasoline prices of up to 20 percent by the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) government of President Enrique Peña Nieto. This attack on Mexico's workers, peasants and poor has resulted in the largest mobilizations in history in several states and cities. Protesters in the states bordering the U.S. have repeatedly shut down toll booths and border crossings.

The almost complete media blackout of the protests in the U.S. is not an accident. The U.S. imperialist rulers are clearly worried about continuing instability south of the border and want to keep working people in the U.S. ignorant of the struggles by their Mexican class brothers and sisters. Helping to fuel the protests in Mexico is the enormous fear and loathing provoked by newly elected president Donald Trump, who has missed no opportunity to revile the Mexican people. Trump's protectionist tirades have already caused Ford and GM to reconsider investment in Mexico, while the Mexican peso, already on a slide, has hit all-time lows in recent weeks following anti-Mexico pronouncements by Trump and his new secretary of commerce. The multiracial U.S. proletariat has a particular obligation to oppose the depredations of the U.S. imperialist behemoth, which has condemned millions of Mexican workers and peasants to hun-



Mexico City, January 9: Mass protest against fuel price hikes.

Reuters

For Socialist Revolutions on Both Sides of the Border!

ger and joblessness under *both* Democratic and Republican administrations.

The *gasolinazo* is a result of the phasing out of price controls as part of the union-busting energy reform approved by the Mexican Congress in 2013, which opened up PEMEX, the nationalized oil industry, to foreign investment. The moves to sell off PEMEX are part of a wave of privatizations demanded by the U.S. rulers to open up the country to untram-

meled imperialist plunder. The NAFTA free trade agreement has long served this purpose, devastating the Mexican countryside and massively increasing urban poverty. Workers in the U.S. must oppose NAFTA out of solidarity with Mexico's exploited and oppressed. Such proletarian internationalist opposition to NAFTA has nothing in common with the chauvinist protectionism pushed by both Trump and the AFL-CIO officialdom.

The struggles for workers revolutions in Mexico and the U.S. are intimately linked, including through the agency of the millions of Mexican immigrants who are an important component of the U.S. proletariat. In order to overcome the divisions between native-born and immigrant workers, which hamstringing the working class, it is necessary to struggle against the vicious anti-immigrant bigotry promoted

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“Fight the Right” Rallies Serve Democrats

Defend Arrested Anti-Trump Protesters!

On Saturday, January 21, in Washington, D.C., and around the country, more than a million people demonstrated in “women’s marches” against the coronation of Donald Trump. These protests were thoroughly pro-Democratic Party and their watchword was “I’m with her,” the slogan of the failed Hillary Clinton campaign. The previous day, during the inauguration, thousands also protested in Washington. Friday’s protesters were met with a massive mobilization of some 28,000 cops from dozens of agencies to seal off a restricted zone around the inauguration parade route.

Parts of D.C. were on virtual lockdown, with bridges, tunnels, streets and Metro stops closed. Protesters had to first pass through airport-style anti-terror security at choke points around a barricaded perimeter

Washington, D.C.,
cops viciously
attack anti-Trump
protesters,
January 20.



if they hoped to get anywhere near the ceremonies.

Some 230 protesters, mostly anarchists, were arrested and at least 217 of

them face felony riot charges that carry maximum sentences of ten years in jail and \$25,000 fines. Dozens of anti-Trump protesters were also arrested elsewhere,

including at least 16 in Chicago and 29 in San Francisco. We demand: **Drop the charges now!**

Much of the capitalist media justified the cop violence against demonstrators by presenting Friday's actions as “violent” because the windows of a Starbucks and a McDonald's were broken and an empty limo was trashed. Sensationalist headlines that blared “Violence Flares in Washington” (Reuters, 21 January) and “Inauguration Protesters Vandalize, Set Fires, Try to Disrupt Trump's Oath” (*Washington Post*, 20 January) were typical.

The worst of the state repression was reserved for the few hundred masked anarchists who had mobilized for “direct action” under the slogan #disruptJ20. This “black bloc” was met with tear gas, flash-bang grenades, water cannons and pepper spray deployed by cops in full riot gear. In their glowing reports about

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On Trump and the Election

Democrats, Liberals and the Union Tops

[Received 19 December 2016]
Inherent in bourgeois rule is maintaining “class peace”: a high-rate of exploitation, with social oppression. WV #1100 [18 November] wrote a pointed article of capitalist machinations in We Need a Multiracial Revolutionary Workers Party!

The bi-line “Democrats Paved the Way for Trump” can only be a truism, and not a link to struggle. Obama, “consummate Wall Street Democrat” (WV) bailed-out GM at union/worker expense; deported immigrants en masse; tripled arms sales to Israel over the next decade, i.e., carried

through as administrator for Wall Street. In turn, one could conclude: Republicans Paved the Way for Obama. Liberals around the publication, The Nation, were some of the loudest for Obama in 2008. By 2012 they squealed like gutted pigs that Obama “failed the people”. With Trump, Liberalism (a bourgeois ideology), and its variants, is “bleeding-out”! From mainstream Hillaryites to the Revolution Now/Vote Bernie-crowd, many proclaim Inauguration Day promises a “Fascist State”! Cooked into this is the alibi that Trump ran a “brilliant campaign”. Rather, it was crass, and the lowest common-denominator of racist, sexist, backward reaction! Trump’s “base”?

A leaderless working class reeling under “Republican” rule. This bi-line feeds the Liberal frenzy; and, the despair of a population justifiably frightened of the surreal and vicious declaration for an “up-tick” of capitalist assault. Obama’s mission to “make imperialism work again” guaranteed an increase of oppression of the black population, whereby the State via its thug-cops carry out summary executions in its “impulse toward genocide” (a role the State and Klan seek to resurrect as the “New, New South” of Jim Crow). Nonetheless, to much of the bourgeoisie/ Tea Party Obama remained the “House ‘N’”! In mid-term elections of 2010, e.g.,

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TROTSKY

No to Unity with Class Enemy!

Today, the reformist left calls for “unity” to fight against Trump. This boils down to uniting behind the Democratic Party, political representatives of the class enemy. Writing in 1918, as the German Revolution was unfolding, revolutionary leader Karl Liebknecht warned against the dangers of unity with those defending the capitalist order. Liebknecht, along with Rosa Luxemburg, be-latedly split with the socialist conciliators who wanted to unite with the Social Dem-

ocratic Party (SPD), which had betrayed the working class by supporting German imperialism during World War I. In January 1919, shortly after founding the German Communist Party, Liebknecht and Luxemburg were murdered by right-wing paramilitary forces at the behest of the SPD government and the revolution was defeated.

Unity! Who could yearn and strive for it more than we? Unity, which gives the proletariat the strength to carry out its historic mission.

But not all “unity” breeds strength. Unity between fire and water extinguishes the fire and turns the water to steam. Unity between wolf and lamb makes the lamb a meal for the wolf. Unity between the proletariat and the ruling classes sacrifices the proletariat. Unity with traitors means defeat.

Only forces pulling in the same direction are made stronger through unity. When forces pull against each other, chaining them together cripples them both.

We strive to combine forces that pull in the same direction. The current apostles of unity, like the unity preachers during the war, strive to unite opposing forces in order to obstruct and deflect the radical forces of the revolution. Politics is action. Working together in action presupposes unity on means and ends. Whoever agrees with us on means and ends is for us a welcome comrade in battle. Unity in thought and attitude, in aspiration and action, that is the only real unity. Unity in words is an illusion, self-deception, or a fraud. The revolution has hardly begun, and the apostles of unity already want to liquidate it. They want to steer the movement onto “peaceful paths” to save capitalist society. They want to hypnotize the proletariat with the catchword of unity in order to wrench power from its hands by reestablishing the class state and preserving economic class rule. They lash out at us because we frustrate these plans, because we are truly serious about the liberation of the working class and the world socialist revolution.

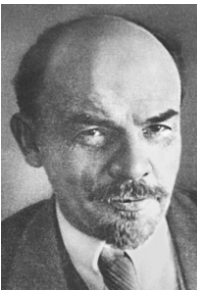
Can we unify with those who are nothing more than substitutes for the capitalist exploiter, dressed as socialists?

Can we, may we join with them without becoming accomplices in their conspiracies?

Unity with them would mean ruin for the proletariat. It would mean renouncing socialism and the International. They are not fit for a fraternal handshake. They should be met not with unity, but with battle.

The toiling masses are the prime movers of social revolution. Clear class consciousness, clear recognition of their historic tasks, a clear will to achieve them, and unerring effectiveness—these are the attributes without which they will not be able to complete their work. Today more than ever the task is to clear away the unity smokescreen, expose half measures and halfheartedness, and unmask all false friends of the working class. Clarity can arise only out of pitiless criticism, unity only out of clarity, and the strength to create the new socialist world only out of unity in spirit, goals, and purpose.

—Karl Liebknecht, “The New ‘Civil Peace’” (19 November 1918), printed in *The German Revolution and the Debate on Soviet Power* (Pathfinder Press, 1986)



LENIN

The Left and the Fight Against Racial Oppression

30 November 2016

Dear Comrades,

Your statement that “Democrats paved the way for Trump” obfuscates the fact that most of what’s left of the American “Left” outside of the Democratic party just as much, and in important ways more so, paved the way for this psychopathic demagogue.

Most of the American “Left” long ago abandoned class-based internationalist politics for identity politics.

In other words, they abandoned an approach that recognizes the contradiction between the proletariat, whatever the color, gender, or sexual orientation of its individual members, and the bourgeoisie, whatever the color, gender, or sexual orientation of its individual members, as the major contradiction driving world history today, but that at the same time also recognizes the special oppression suffered by racial and sexual minorities, women, and other groups, and that seeks to address this special oppression in the context of resolving that major contradiction.

In the place of such a class-based inter-

nationalist approach, most of the American “Left” has adopted identity politics, an approach that denies or ignores the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and recognizes *only* the special oppression of racial and sexual minorities, women, and so forth. It explicitly or implicitly disavows any interest in white male workers, as the Maoists openly did long ago by declaring the American proletariat a part of the bourgeoisie. In its own way, the American fake “Left” declared white male workers “deplorables” long before Hillary Clinton did. Small wonder, then, that some of these white male workers (and not a few of their female counterparts, who didn’t have much to gain from bourgeois feminism, either) found their own identity politics in anti-black and anti-Hispanic racism and anti-Chinese protectionism, although I suspect that these attitudes, except perhaps for the last, are more prevalent among the declassed lumpenproletariat than the true proletariat. Small wonder, also, that even more of them turned to Trump, who

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Spartacist



Black History Month Forums

Race, Class and American Populism

**Democrats, Republicans:
Class Enemies of Workers and the Oppressed**

For a Revolutionary, Multiracial Workers Party!

CHICAGO

Saturday, February 18, 3 p.m.
Quaker House, 5615 S. Woodlawn Ave.
For information: (312) 563-0441
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net

BAY AREA

Sunday, March 5, 2 p.m.
Oakland Public Library—
Main Branch, 125 14th Street
Bradley C. Walters Community Room
(downstairs)
(between Oak and Madison,
8 minute walk from Lake Merritt BART)
For information: (510) 839-0851
slbayarea@fastmail.net

NEW YORK CITY

Saturday, February 25, 3 p.m.
322 West 48th Street, First Floor
(Between 8th and 9th Avenues—
Take A, C or E to 42nd Street)
For information: (212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net

LOS ANGELES

Saturday, March 4, 4:30 p.m.
Metropolitan Community Church
4607 Prospect Ave.
(One block east of Vermont, near the
Vermont/Sunset Red Line Metro Station)
For information: (213) 380-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net

WORKERS VANGUARD



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No. 1104

27 January 2017

After Years of Torturing Chelsea Manning, Obama Grants Clemency

On January 17, Barack Obama announced that he was commuting all but the next four months of Chelsea Manning's remaining sentence, scheduling her release on May 17. We welcome the freeing of this heroic whistle-blower, but we also recognize that this was a cheap and cynical move by Obama to burnish his "legacy." For the past seven years, the Obama administration has persecuted and tortured Manning, driving her to two suicide attempts. Arrested in 2010, she was sentenced in 2013 to 35 years in prison for leaking to WikiLeaks military documents and diplomatic cables that exposed U.S. war crimes and sinister machinations—an unprecedented sentence for a whistle-blower. Manning is a courageous and self-sacrificing truth-teller who did a service to humanity.

Sadistically, Obama's Department of Justice had pushed for a 60-year sentence following Manning's conviction by a military kangaroo court. The day after her conviction, Manning announced that she wanted hormone treatment for gender reassignment. She has since been locked away in the military prison at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where she has been subjected to brutal treatment, isolation and humiliation, and has had to wage one battle after another to continue her transition. Even in commuting Manning's sentence, Obama set the release date for May, giving the ghouls of the incoming Donald Trump administration four months to continue torturing her.

From the perspective of the work-

ing class, the real crime was the prosecution and imprisonment of Manning in the first place—a crime for which Obama has pardoned himself by now ordering her release. The government's torment of Manning and its continuing witchhunt of Edward Snowden, Julian Assange and other whistle-blowers are aimed at silencing those who dare expose or oppose its atrocities and mass surveillance. The Obama administration prosecuted nine cases involving whistle-blowers and leakers, three times the number prosecuted by *all* previous administrations combined. Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, remains in the Ecuadorian embassy in Britain, the government of which has vowed to arrest him if he steps outside, while National Security Agency whistle-blower Snowden is in exile in Russia. ***Hands off Assange! Drop all charges against Snowden!***

The same day that Obama announced Manning's commutation, he also commuted the 70-year sentence of Oscar López Rivera, a 74-year-old member of the Puerto Rican Armed Forces of National Liberation. López Rivera is now set to be released in May after over 30 years behind bars. In 1981, López Rivera was convicted of "seditious conspiracy"—a thought crime—for struggling for the independence of his native Puerto Rico from U.S. colonial occupation.

Another 15 years were added on in 1988 for conspiring to escape from prison. A courageous fighter, López Rivera refused President Bill Clinton's offer of clemency in 1999 out of solidarity with Marie Haydée Beltrán Torres and Carlos Alberto Torres, two of his comrades who were not included in the clemency offer. (Beltrán Torres was released in 2009 and Alberto Torres in 2010.) It is the duty of the U.S. proletariat to stand for Puerto Rico's right of self-determination.

Presidential pardons and commutations are often issued by the capitalist rulers to bail out their cronies—for example, President Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon in 1974. Obama has continued that tradition by issuing a full pardon to retired general James Cartwright. In October, Cartwright had pleaded guilty to lying to federal agents investigating a government leak, and he was scheduled to be sentenced this month. In contrast to Manning, this former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the blood-drenched U.S. imperialist military faced a maximum of a \$500 fine and six months in prison.

Not on Obama's list for "mercy" was class-war prisoner and American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier, despite tens of thousands having petitioned for clemency. He is internationally renowned as an unbowed fighter who

symbolizes resistance against this country's racist repression of American Indians, the survivors of centuries of genocidal oppression. Peltier was convicted of the

killing of two FBI agents shot during a 1975 government assault on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota—a crime the Feds know he did not commit. Even a former U.S. attorney who was a central player in Peltier's frame-up, James Reynolds, joined the call for clemency. Peltier, an innocent man who never should have spent a day in prison, has spent over 40 years in prison and as a result has numerous health problems. As his attorney put it, Obama's refusal to grant Peltier clemency amounted to "a sentence of death." ***Free Peltier now!***

As Marxists, we understand that the capitalist state, including its courts, exists to defend the rule and profits of the bourgeoisie. While pursuing all legal means to win freedom for class-war prisoners like Peltier, we put no faith in the "justice" of the courts. We look to the social power of the multiracial working class, which must be mobilized independently of and in opposition to the capitalist state and its political representatives, whether Republican or Democrat.

Obama wants to secure his "legacy," including through the commutations for Manning and López Rivera. But for the world's oppressed and working masses, it is war, drone strikes, mass surveillance, repression and economic inequality that define the real legacy of Barack Obama.

Drop All Charges Against Palestinian Activist Rasmea Odeh!

Federal prosecutors have dangerously escalated the government's political witch-hunt against Palestinian activist Rasmea Odeh. For more than three years Odeh, the Chicago-based associate director of the Arab American Action Network (AAAN), has been fighting bogus charges of immigration fraud. Last month, after her earlier conviction on those charges was overturned, her original trial judge, Gershwin Drain, ruled that Odeh must face a new trial. The Feds, hell bent on seeing her jailed and deported, have hit Odeh with a new indictment accusing her of having been involved in "terrorism."

The government persecution of Odeh comes in the context of the ongoing "war on terror" witchhunts of immigrants, especially those of Near Eastern descent and Muslim background. The "terrorism" charges against Odeh, no less than the initial immigration charges, are simply a pretext to attack this prominent 69-year-old Palestinian rights activist and community organizer. In the words of the Rasmea Defense Committee, "The government is prosecuting Rasmea as part of a broader attack, the criminalization of the Palestine liberation movement."

This has been a political hit job from Day One. Initially, Odeh's alleged crime was failing to disclose on her 2004 naturalization application her 1969 frame-up conviction by an Israeli military tribunal. At her 2014 trial, federal prosecutors were given free rein to rehash the Israeli charge that Odeh had been involved in planting bombs at a supermarket and the British consulate in Jerusalem. Jurors were presented with scores of Israeli documents, including an alleged confession by Odeh. That "confession" was secured through prolonged torture, including rape and

electric shock. However, at her trial Odeh was prohibited by federal judge Drain from testifying to her innocence of the Israeli charges—or even alluding to the torture—when she took the stand in her defense. Widespread torture by Zionist troops is well documented and it is obvious that there is no justice for Palestinians in Israeli military courts. According to *Haaretz* (29 November 2011), in 2010 such courts convicted **99.7 percent** of Palestinians brought before them.

In particular, Drain barred expert testimony that Odeh suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) because of her brutal treatment at the hands of the Israeli state. That ruling sabotaged Odeh's intended legal defense that her PTSD had caused her to omit the wrongful Israeli conviction when replying to the question on the naturalization form about prior imprisonment or arrest. But it also caused the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals to vacate Odeh's conviction and send the case back to Judge Drain in February 2016. In December, Drain ordered a

new trial, scheduled for May in Detroit, at which Odeh could present evidence of her PTSD. That would allow the heretofore-excluded testimony of Dr. Mary Fabri, a clinical psychologist who specializes in the selective memory loss associated with PTSD.

It was in response to the decision to allow such testimony that the Feds decided to make the case against Odeh no longer about allegedly false paperwork but about "terrorism." Odeh is now accused of having "engaged in a terrorist activity" and having "associated with" the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a secular-nationalist organization designated by the U.S. State Department as "terrorist." Never mind the fact that the PFLP was not deemed by Washington to be "terrorist" until 1997—twenty-eight years after Odeh's alleged "association" with the organization.

Odeh has never sought to hide her past. After she was released in 1979 as part of a prisoner exchange, Odeh testified about her torture before a United Nations spe-

cial committee in Geneva and various human rights organizations and media outlets. It was widely known by U.S. authorities that she had been convicted by an Israeli military court. As Odeh's lead attorney, Michael Deutsch, stated: "The U.S. Embassy knew it, the State Department knew it, and Immigration should have known it."

Odeh came to the attention of the Feds during a 2010 "war on terror" dragnet in Chicago and Minneapolis. The FBI raided the homes of a number of leftists and union activists, including supporters of the AAAN and Freedom Road Socialist Organization, for alleged "material support to terrorism"—in this case, solidarity with the struggles of the oppressed Palestinian people. Some two dozen people were subpoenaed to testify before a federal grand jury, and all continue to live with the fear of indictment hanging over their heads. The campaign of intimidation and repression uncovered Odeh's naturalized citizenship, leading Eric Holder's Justice Department—with help from the Israeli government—to turn its fire on her.

The Obama government's prosecution of Odeh will now be pursued by the administration of the openly anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim demagogue Donald Trump. Her ordeal underscores how "anti-terrorism" has been a pretext for the capitalist rulers' attacks on basic democratic rights and is ultimately aimed at the left and labor movement.

We defend Odeh and other targets of such repression as part of our defense of the Palestinians as well as our opposition to the assault on democratic rights waged under the "war on terror," even though as Marxists we do not share her Palestinian nationalist politics. We urge trade unions, activists and others to demand that all charges be dropped immediately! Funds are urgently needed for Odeh's legal defense, to which the Partisan Defense Committee (a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League) has contributed. To donate, go to justice4rasmea.org/donate. ■

Rasmea Odeh
outside Detroit
federal courthouse,
March 2015.



Mexico...

(continued from page 1)

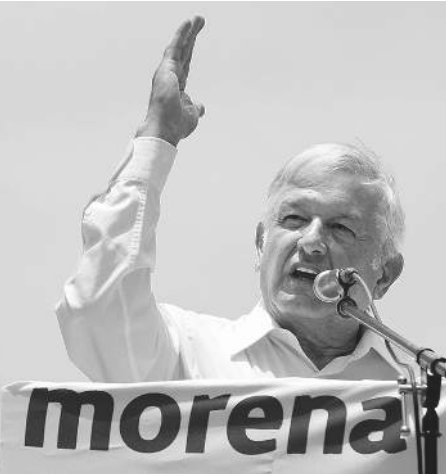
by the capitalist Democrats and Republicans. No deportations! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

We print below an article written by our comrades of the Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the International Communist League.

* * *

The up to 20 percent increase in the price of fuel imposed by the hated government of Enrique Peña Nieto is the result of privatization and condemns the already impoverished masses of Mexico to misery and hunger. The government had the support of the PAN [right-wing clericalist National Action Party] and the majority of PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution] legislators. Relative to the minimum wage, gasoline in Mexico is now more expensive than almost anywhere else in the world. The cost of basic foods is expected to rise significantly. Public transportation fares, already exorbitant especially outside of Mexico City, have increased, as have electricity rates.

Together with the precipitous fall of the peso against the dollar, the *gasolinazo* seems to have been the straw that broke the camel's back. Outrage has spread throughout the country since January 1. There have been mass protests in dozens of cities—for example, 20,000 people in Monterrey on January 5, 40,000 people in



Reuters

Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), president of left bourgeois-nationalist Morena party.

Mexicali on the 15th and 60,000 in Guadalajara on the 22nd. Also on January 22, over 5,000 workers, mostly of Local 271 of the miners and steel workers union, marched in the port city of Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán. PEMEX terminals have been blockaded in at least nine states. The railroad crossing at the Sonora-Arizona border was obstructed, impeding the flow of imports and exports for several days. The government has responded with a huge deployment of police, the guard dogs of the bourgeoisie. The brutal repression has resulted in over 1,500 arrests and at least five deaths. Free all the arrested now!

In order to fight against this crisis unleashed by the Mexican capitalists and their imperialist patrons, the power of the working class must be mobilized at the head of all the oppressed against this inhuman system of exploitation and oppression. The working class, which operates all the machinery of modern industrial capitalism, has enormous social power deriving from its relationship to the means of production. The Grupo Espartaquista



AP

Residents of Veracruz State help themselves to fuel from a gas station following protests against price hikes, January 3.

de México fights to build a revolutionary workers party like the Bolshevik Party of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, which led the proletariat to power in Russia in the 1917 October Revolution. As part of this perspective, today we advocate a program of proletarian action based on demands linking the fight for the urgent and immediate needs of the masses to a struggle to destroy the whole capitalist system through socialist revolution.

Against austerity and unemployment, workers must fight for: A sliding scale of wages to keep up with the cost of living! Jobs for all through a shorter workweek with no loss in pay! Against the *gasolinazo* and rampant deprivation: for price-control committees composed of delegates from the factories, unions, cooperatives, peasant organizations and the urban poor! Against imperialist plunder, the working class must fight for the nationalization of key industries like energy. Expropriate the banks, utilities, transportation and the ports!

Confronted by such a struggle, the bourgeoisie will say that it is impossible to provide jobs for all, or to ensure that all families have sufficient food, housing and decent living conditions, given that it would hurt profits. This will show the masses that the capitalist system deserves to perish and that the imposition of such simple and rational measures requires the expropriation of the expropriators, the entire bourgeoisie. In this way, we seek to advance revolutionary consciousness among workers and to destroy the illusions promoted by the bourgeois-populist PRD and Morena [former PRD presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador's Movement for National Regeneration] that the capitalist system can be reformed to serve the interests of the exploited and oppressed. It is necessary to abolish private property in the means of production through a socialist revolution that establishes a workers and peasants government.

Trump and Peña Nieto: The Master Repudiates the Lackey

For decades, the Mexican bourgeoisie and its governments have obsequiously followed imperialist diktats. They have opened up the Mexican economy to unrestricted pillage by the U.S. bourgeoisie through massive privatizations, elimination of agricultural subsidies, anti-union attacks and, above all, through NAFTA, a treaty for the rape of Mexico. At the same time, a handful of Mexican capitalists have enriched themselves in the shadow of their masters. The result for the masses has been a devastated countryside and growing desperation among the remaining millions of peasants, many of them utterly miserable and oppressed indigenous people; massive unemployment poorly disguised as the “informal economy”; an increasing dependence on the import of basic foodstuffs. The purpose of NAFTA is to strengthen the North American imperialists against their European and Japanese rivals. While in Mexico it has brought abject and generalized misery, in the U.S. and Canada it has served the bourgeois imperialists as a means to attack the standard of living of

the working class, provoke mass layoffs and severely weaken the unions.

Not content, the imperialist masters demand more. The racist demagogue Trump now seems to want to abandon his Mexican bourgeois lackeys to their fate by demanding to renegotiate NAFTA in order to make it even more beneficial to the imperialists, on the basis of rabid protectionism. But let us not forget for a single moment that it was Democrat Bill Clinton who pushed for and rolled out NAFTA. His wife Hillary, as secretary of state under Obama, was the one who devised the scheme to privatize Mexico's oil. And it was Obama, until recently the “Deporter in Chief,” who broke the record for deportations by a single U.S. president—more than two million. Democrats and Republicans are both parties of U.S. imperialism.

In a joint statement issued by the Spartacist League/U.S., the Trotskyist League of Canada and the Grupo Espartaquista de México, sections of the International Communist League, we explained, “The fight against the FTA [NAFTA] is a battle against American imperialist domination of Mexico” and declared: “We call on Mexican, U.S. and Canadian workers to join in opposing this anti-labor pact” (WV No. 530, 5 July 1991). A quarter century later, this call not only remains valid but is even more urgent.

Trotskyists do not equate protectionism in neocolonial countries, where it constitutes a measure of national self-defense, with the protectionism of the imperialists, which pushes chauvinism and seeks to bolster the domination of one or another imperialist bourgeoisie. We are opposed to the oil privatization, which took legal effect three years ago, although imperialist investment has been slow in arriving. We say: Down with the privatization of the energy industry! In the context of the 1938 nationalization of oil, James P. Cannon, founder of American Trotskyism, said during a speech he gave in Mexico that same year:

“We know that we cannot overthrow the imperialists of America without the aid of [the] Latin American people who are oppressed by the same imperialism....

“The expropriation of the oil companies is an action which inspires the workers of the entire world. It is too bad that you have to pay these robbers who have been robbing Mexico of its natural resources. In principle the Fourth International is in favor of expropriating the capitalists without any compensation at all. If the Mexican people have to pay compensation it is because they have not yet received enough support from the workers of the U.S.”

The Mexican bourgeoisie and the imperialists have been trying to smash the oil workers union through privatization, which the union's pro-capitalist bureaucracy criminally supported. This points to the urgency of the struggle for new leadership of the unions, a class-struggle leadership that maintains its independence from any bourgeois party, whether it be the PRI, PAN, PRD or Morena.

For a Workers and Peasants Government!

The main slogan during the current protests, as it has been for some years now, is “Peña Nieto Out!” Peña Nieto *should* fall. But his replacement by some bourgeois populist like AMLO [Andrés Manuel López Obrador] or his former colleagues of the PRD (not to mention the reactionary clerical and neoliberal PAN) will not bring any substantial improvement to the exploited and oppressed masses. In fact, the fundamental reason Peña Nieto gave for the *gasolinazo* was that Mexico, an exporter of petroleum, imports more than half the gasoline it consumes. This is an example of the inherent incapacity of the Mexican bourgeoisie to develop the industrial forces of the country.

Regardless of who governs and on what program, capitalist Mexico will continue to be a neocolonial country subjugated by imperialism, subject to market crises and wild fluctuations in the price of crude oil. As Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution explains, it is not possible to break the imperialist yoke or to satisfy the needs of the population under capitalism.

The bourgeoisie of every country of belated capitalist development is absolutely incapable of breaking with imperialism. As Lenin taught, imperialism is a worldwide system of exploitation and oppression dominated by the big monopolies of finance capital backed by their respective nation-states, with their armies and navies. Due to imperialist penetration, Mexico is a country of combined and uneven development, where modern production techniques coexist with miserable rural backwardness.

Regardless of their ideological differences, the bourgeoisies of the Third World are tied to the imperialists by thousands of threads and are too weak to break their own subordination. The bourgeoisie's interest is always the generation of profits—the whole capitalist system is aimed at fattening the pockets of a handful of the super-rich. The working class is the only class with the social power and *class* interest to destroy capitalism. Under the leadership of a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party, the working class will be able to carry out a socialist revolution

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and replace the capitalist system with a regime that seeks to fulfill the needs of the population.

The bourgeois state consists centrally of armed bodies (the police, the military, the courts and prisons) to defend the capitalist system of exploitation. It is necessary to destroy the capitalist state and construct a new state power that defends the rule of the working class at the head of all the rural and urban poor. Only a government of workers and poor peasants councils can satisfy the masses’ aspirations for social and national emancipation.

As part of our perspective of permanent revolution, we understand that in order to defend such conquests and proceed on the road to socialism it is necessary to fight for the international extension of the revolution, especially to the U.S. imperialist colossus. A revolution in Mexico would electrify the multiracial U.S. proletariat. Just as Mexican workers must break with the craven bourgeois nationalists of their own country and see the U.S. proletariat as their class brothers, the U.S. proletariat must understand that its interests coincide with those of the Mexican proletariat—and those of the workers of the world—and break with the politics of its bureaucratic misleaders who are loyal to the imperialist Democratic Party.

Unleash the Power of the Working Class!

The bulk of advanced and heavy industry in Mexico—with the exception, for now, of petroleum and electricity—is the product of imperialist investment and destined for export, overwhelmingly to the U.S. As Trotsky explained in “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay” (1940): “Inasmuch as foreign capital does not import workers but proletarianizes the native population, the national proletariat soon begins playing the most important role in the life of the country.” The bourgeoisie creates its own gravedigger: NAFTA has enlarged the ranks of the industrial proletariat—for example, Mexico is today the fourth-largest exporter of automobiles. The Mexican and U.S. economies are profoundly interpenetrated, something the working class can use to its advantage. If Mexican auto workers exercised their social power, they could paralyze the whole complex of U.S. automotive production.

The unions are currently weakened by the long-running neoliberal offensive, including historic defeats such as the destruction of the Mexican Union of Electrical Workers and massive privatizations. At the same time, today’s protests are politically dominated by bourgeois populists and, especially in Mexico City, by elitist, petty-bourgeois elements. It is necessary for the unions to mobilize in defense of their own interests and those of all the poor. Strike action by powerful sectors of the Mexican proletariat—such as the miners and oil workers unions—could make the weak Mexican bourgeoisie tremble and could challenge the bourgeois state’s starvation attacks and repression. This requires a political struggle against the pro-capitalist bureaucracies, which tie the unions to the bourgeois parties and *caudillos*, and for their replacement with a class-struggle leadership. For the political independence of the workers movement! To begin to reverse the anti-union attacks, it is necessary to fight to organize the unorganized, including subcontracted workers.

Internationalist Group Joins Bosses’ Drive Against Oil Workers Union

The government, which is trying to sell the rights to the oil platforms, has launched the current attack to undo petroleum price controls in order to increase the profitability of the oil assets they are putting on the auction block. They need to demonstrate that their imperialist masters will be able to make enough money from the blood, sweat and tears of the Mexican masses. This is also an attack against the oil workers union. Carlos Loret de Mola of Televisa [giant media company] ranted that behind the “chaos” caused by the



Mexican steel workers march in Lázaro Cárdenas shortly after victorious strike against ArcelorMittal, April 2016. Social power of proletariat must be mobilized to beat back capitalist offensive against workers, poor.

“blockades and looting” was the hidden hand of the oil workers union. According to the newspaper *El Financiero* (16 January), the union “has become a liability to national development.”

The Grupo Internacionalista (GI) [Internationalist Group] has joined the bourgeois spokesmen who support the campaign to destroy the oil workers union. Far from defending the union against the bosses’ new offensive, in a recent leaflet (misdated January 2016), the GI affirms

that it is necessary to destroy the corporatist unions from within—i.e., do the bosses’ dirty work for them. The GI also explained in its revised leaflet, “Local 22 of the dissident teachers can be instrumental in making a joint struggle of diverse guilds of workers against the government offensive a reality.” The CNTE teachers of Local 22—which the GI has tailed for years—is tied to the bourgeois *caudillo* AMLO through *its own* bureaucracy. Of course, the GI does not mention the



Left: President Clinton signs NAFTA into law, December 1993. Right: Joint statement by U.S., Canadian and Mexican sections of ICL denouncing start of “free trade” negotiations, 1991.

“the *bourgeois* character of the *charro* ‘unions,’ which are nothing other than labor fronts integrated into the capitalist state, that serve as veritable labor police to repress all attempts at resistance on the part of the workers.” Whatever its rhetoric, for the GI the class character of the Mexican unions is determined by which bourgeois party they are tied to. Thus, according to the GI, the supposedly “bourgeois” unions are those that support the PRI, whereas those that support the bourgeois-nationalist PRD or Morena are quite “genuine.” But the bureaucracy of the telephone workers union, for example, to this day led by the everlasting Francisco Hernández Juárez, who cheered the privatization of his own industry 25 years ago, is just as *charro* [sell-out] as that of the oil workers union. Nonetheless, for the GI, the telephone workers union is a “genuine” workers union. How to understand the GI’s nonsense? The key detail is that Hernández Juárez supports the PRD; Romero Deschamps [leader of the oil workers union] supports the wrong bourgeois party (the PRI).

The GI had to surreptitiously “correct” a previous, almost identical version of its leaflet by making a few changes. Among these was its inadvertent reference to the corporatist unions as “unions” [*sindicatos*], which the GI subsequently changed to “guilds” [*gremios*]. The GI goes on to say, “It is necessary to overcome all guildism” [*gremialismo*]. This is the GI’s politically cowardly way of saying

CNTE’s support to Morena and AMLO when it nominates the dissident teachers to occupy the “instrumental” position in organizing other workers. So for the GI, the “complete independence from the bourgeoisie” will be realized once powerful sectors like the oil workers also tail AMLO. And perhaps *then* the GI will grant the union its imprimatur as a “genuine” workers union.

In spite of the fact that the unions are under pro-capitalist leadership, the defense of the unions (the elementary organizations of the working class) against the attacks of the bosses and their state is a minimum condition for a struggle for the political

independence of the workers movement. We don’t identify unionized workers with their bureaucracies, nor do we identify the bureaucracy with the bourgeoisie. *The working class should clean its own house!* As Trotsky taught in “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay”: the fight for union democracy “presupposes for its realization the complete freedom of the trade unions from the imperialist or colonial state.” He went on to note: “As a matter of fact, the independence of the trade unions in the class sense, in their relations to the bourgeois state, can, in the present conditions, be assured only by a completely revolutionary leadership, that is, the leadership of the Fourth International.”

Bourgeois Hysteria over Looting

During the protests, there were some who took the opportunity to obtain a few consumer goods for free from department stores like Elektra—which belongs to the magnate Ricardo Salinas Pliego, who also owns TV Azteca—and from big grocery chains like Aurrerá and Walmart. Some seem to have managed to recover their own belongings from the infamous pawnshop loan sharks. These acts occurred in some of the country’s poorest towns, including in Veracruz, Hidalgo and the miserable suburbs of Mexico City, like Ecatepec and Zumpango. The mass media and myriad petty-bourgeois types on social media whipped up a lynch mob campaign against “looters.” AMLO came out with the reactionary line that looting constitutes a “fascist strategy.”

Like altar boys from the choir, the bulk of the left has added its voice to the bourgeois clamor. For example, the pseudo-Trotskyist Izquierda Socialista [Socialist Left] and the Movimiento de los Trabajadores Socialistas [Movement of Socialist Workers], which tail Morena and AMLO, speak of infiltration by PRI supporters and acts of vandalism. This hysteria is nothing more than elitist indifference to the generalized misery in which large sections of the population live. The Mexican masses have had their bread, jobs, land and homes stolen, and are now fighting merely to survive. The few acts of looting that occurred at the beginning of January were neither a radical tactic nor a crime from the standpoint of the working class; they were simply a reflection of the desperation of the poor. The real looters are those who have driven the country to misery and humiliation. *Mobilize the social power of the working class against the repression!*

The terrible imperialist oppression suffered by the Mexican masses has fed nationalist illusions of false unity between the exploited and the exploiters on the basis of a supposed common purpose in advancing the interests of the “fatherland.” The GEM fights to build the proletarian vanguard party that seeks to rip the masses’ loyalty away from the nationalist-populist bourgeoisie, combating illusions in democratic reform of the bourgeois state and directing the masses’ struggles toward the seizure of power by the proletariat. Our perspective, like that of Lenin and Trotsky, is internationalist. We Spartacists of the International Communist League fight to reforge the Trotskyist Fourth International in order to carry out new October Revolutions around the world.■

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black House Representative, Sheila Lee stated: “We’ve been called the ‘N’-word. I was asked why my braids were wound so tight?”!

WV presented a case for “revolutionary optimism”: class conscious struggle; revolutionary integrationism/Black Liberation; a Socialist egalitarian society. Social struggle is set to occur, as workers/students are responding. But, the “one-sided class war” prevails until a break from “Republicrats”; until a Multiracial Workers Party is established! Truer still, than that “Friends of Labor” Democrats “paved” the way for reaction, is: AFL-CIO Bureaucrats—Bootlickers for Wall Street—Paved the Way for Trump!

Comradely,
B. Montoya

WV replies: B. Montoya's interest in putting more teeth into WV headlines and his sharp words for the Obama administration are appreciated. However, to make the argument that our printing the self-evident statement "Democrats Paved the Way for Trump" somehow feeds a pathetic post-election liberal frenzy, the letter writer goes out of his way to ignore the main headline below which it ran. Some liberals, stung by Clinton's loss, have used



Hillary Clinton with loyal backer Randi Weingarten, head of American Federation of Teachers, July 2016. Union bureaucracy binds workers to capitalist Democratic Party.

similar phrases in brooding about how best to refurbish the discredited Democratic Party. But we expressed our class opposition to the Democrats with the slogan “We Need a Multiracial Revolutionary Workers Party!”, drawing an unmistakable class line and pointing to a path forward for the working class and the oppressed.

B. Montoya's preferred headline: "AFL-CIO Bureaucrats—Bootlickers for Wall Street—Paved the Way for Trump!" disappears the fact that the trade-union bureaucracy is in fact a key component of the Democratic Party. For decades, the union bureaucracy has substituted voting for Democrats for the class struggle

necessary to defend workers' livelihoods. AFL-CIO officials poured record sums of dues money into the warmonger Clinton's campaign; the time and energy of union members were wasted canvassing for the class enemy. Trump appropriated a part of the playbook of the pro-Democrat union tops: the lie that American workers' jobs could be saved or restored if only they imbibe the protectionist poison against Mexico or China. The enemies of U.S. workers are not foreign workers, but the U.S. capitalists.

Today, with Trump having succeeded Obama as Commander-in-Chief, “progressive” Democrats like Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren are at the center of the latest incarnation of the “fight the right” movement, tailed by various labor bureaucrats. Particularly in this context, it is confusing to subsume, as B. Montoya does, the differences between the two capitalist parties under the term “Republicans.” Trump’s cabinet picks are a chemically pure expression of Republicans reveling in bashing the unions, black people, immigrants and the poor. The Democrats cover up the fact that they do the same thing by posing as “friends of labor.”

We seek to break the hold that the Democratic Party still has on activist youth and workers, and it was correct to underscore its role in the “peaceful transition of power” so highly prized by bloody, racist U.S. imperialism. ■

(continued from page 2)

ludicrously pretends to speak for them, when almost nobody else does, including the fake American “Left.”

The answer, of course, is not to pander to the base instincts of a potentially revolutionary class that however currently lacks a revolutionary class consciousness. The answer is to revitalize the class-based internationalist approach outlined above. The American “Left” would do well if it confronted its responsibility for the rise of Trump and considered what it has to offer to workers everywhere, whatever their other “identities,” and how to tear down any divisions that exist between them and build unity and solidarity among them, wherever they live, whoever they are, so that they recognize their common interest in tearing down capitalism and imperialism and replacing it with a world-wide egalitarian socialist society. I am afraid, though, that much of the American “Left” will instead drown its post-election blues in five-dollar lattes while bemoaning how American white workers have betrayed them, rather than the other way around.

With comradely greetings,
B.R.

WV replies: The crimes of “the American ‘Left’” are plenty, but they are of a different sort than B.R. suggests. He

criticizes the reformists “outside of the Democratic party” for paving the way for Trump, “in important ways more so” than the Democrats. This obfuscates, to use his word, the role of the reformists. They seek to tie the working class to the Democratic Party—no less the class enemy of workers and the oppressed than the Republicans—and to the capitalist electoral system. The various reformist groups are united in their support, whether explicitly or implicitly, to Democratic Party lesser-evilism. The purpose of genuine socialists is to uproot the entire decaying system of American capitalism through the building of a workers party that will lead a socialist revolution.

B.R.'s central condemnation of "the American 'Left'" is that it "long ago abandoned class-based internationalist politics for identity politics." He complains that the reformist left denies or ignores class contradictions and "recognizes *only* the special oppression of racial and sexual minorities, women, and so forth." In fact, the problem with the reformists is that their program cannot lead to the liberation either of black people and women or of the working class. Marxists recognize that the fight against racial and sexual oppression must be linked to the fight for the emancipation of the proletariat through socialist revolution.

The central enduring feature of American capitalism 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. 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 through the illusion of a commonality of interest based on skin color.

We reject “identity politics” not least because it is an obstacle to the liberation of black people, women and all the oppressed. At bottom, “identity politics” holds that each sector of the oppressed should organize separately against the particular oppression it faces. The reformist left’s promotion of “identity politics” is a reflection of its embrace of the Democratic Party and its constituency politics. Under this schema, the oppressed are told to vote for Democrats in exchange for ever-smaller crumbs, while bourgeois politicians play the struggles of the exploited and oppressed off against one another.

Shortly after the election, Bernie Sand-

ers, a darling of the reformist left, made a point of declaring that the Democratic Party must “go beyond identity politics” if it is to address Trump’s white working-class voters. This was about winning back a constituency for the Democratic Party, while telling the oppressed to eat it in the name of boosting the fortunes of that party. B.R.’s letter echoes Sanders’ sentiment of going “beyond identity politics” by reducing special oppression to merely a subset of class exploitation.

B.R. misses the point about special oppression when he writes that it should merely be addressed “in the context of resolving that major contradiction” between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. Black people, not only those who are workers, are oppressed as black people. The struggle for black freedom, while part of the struggle of the working class as a whole, is more than that struggle. The fight against racial oppression is in the vital material interest of the whole of the proletariat—including white and immigrant workers. The liberation of the multiracial proletariat from the bondage of wage slavery will never happen unless it takes up the cause of black liberation. Likewise, racial oppression will not be eliminated short of a socialist revolution that sweeps away capitalist rule.

This perspective requires a struggle to forge a new fighting leadership of the unions. The existing trade-union bureaucracy's allegiance to capitalism and the profitability of its corporations has squandered the gains won through the militant battles of the working class—black, white and immigrant. The union bureaucrats' legacy of betrayals and defeats resulting from their strategy of relying on Democrats helped clear the way for Trump to pose as a defender of workers. The protectionism promoted by the AFL-CIO tops helps breed anti-immigrant prejudices among workers. Indeed, the unvarnished xenophobia expressed by Trump and his "America first" protectionism is simply a stark reflection of the chauvinism that lies at the heart of the bureaucrats' calls to "save American jobs" from foreign competition.

Karl Marx captured the truth about America when he wrote shortly after the Civil War: "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded." Armed with this understanding, we fight to forge a revolutionary, multiracial workers party that, in the words of Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin, acts as "the tribune of the people," championing the cause of all the exploited and oppressed in the fight for workers rule. ■

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The image shows the front cover of a publication. At the top, a black rectangular box contains the title 'Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S.' in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below this box is a small, stylized graphic of a hammer and sickle. The main title of the publication, 'For a Workers Party That Fights for a Workers Government!', is printed in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below this, the subtitle 'For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism!' is printed in a larger, bold, black, sans-serif font. A small line of text, 'SEE PAGE 2', is centered below the subtitle. Further down, the text 'Organizational Rules and Guidelines of the Spartacist League/U.S.' is printed in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below this, another line of text, 'SEE PAGE 30', is centered. The bottom section of the cover features the text 'Opponents of the Revolutionary Internationalist Workers Movement' in a bold, black, sans-serif font, followed by 'SEE PAGE 37' centered below it. At the very bottom, a small line of text reads '52 November 2000 4033-110 Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116'. The entire cover is framed by a thick black border.

Bay Area...

(continued from page 8)

on to the streets unemployed.... In such a society the housing shortage is no accident; it is a necessary institution and can be abolished together with all its effects on health, etc., only if the whole social order from which it springs is fundamentally refashioned.”

From Urban Ghettos to Black Exodus

In capitalist America, where the forcible subjugation of the majority of the black population at the bottom of society is firmly rooted, the desperation facing the working class as a whole is magnified for black workers and poor. Once supplying a “reserve army of labor” to be brought in during economic boom times, the inner-city poor are now considered expendable by America’s capitalist rulers. During World War II, thousands of black people from the rural South were brought in to work in Bay Area shipyards. Those jobs dried up with the end of the war, and today the former factories and warehouses that once thrived in the region are also a distant memory. With the filthy rich gobbling up San Francisco real estate and the attendant spillover of yuppies into Oakland, black people are increasingly being driven out of the metropolitan Bay Area.

More than four decades ago, black people were 13 percent of the San Francisco population. Now that number is about 5 percent and falling, with most black residents living in what remains of the city’s run-down public housing. Black flight from Oakland accelerated during a preliminary gentrification drive initiated 15 years ago under then mayor, and now California’s Democratic Party governor, Jerry Brown. Today, many more are being forced out of historically black urban areas like Oakland and Richmond to inland towns like Antioch and Brentwood in the eastern Sacramento River Delta and Tracy and Stockton in the San Joaquin Valley. Oakland’s black population fell from 47 percent in 1980 to 26 percent in 2013, while Richmond’s has been cut in half since 1990.

Even when the capitalists needed their labor for the war industries during WWII, black people could not rent or buy housing outside of specifically designated areas. Racial segregation was enforced by realtors, racist housing “covenants” and Jim Crow New Deal housing policies. As one black resident of Oakland recalled, there was “such a small part of the city that black folk could live in that they were sleeping on top of each other” (quoted in Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* [2003]). Tens of thousands of units of shoddy “temporary” housing—mostly segregated—were hastily built by the federal government near the shipyards, from West Oakland through Berkeley and Albany to Richmond.

After the war, black workers were the first to be laid off. As unemployment soared, West Oakland—once an integrated working-class neighborhood—became an increasingly poor, overcrowded and run-down ghetto. At the same time, real estate

developers and local commercial interests waged a racist campaign to get rid of wartime housing projects in the name of fighting “urban blight” and “socialized housing.” Hundreds of acres of homes from Oakland to Richmond were torn down to open up land for private development and tens of thousands were evicted.

At the time, the potential for integrated working-class struggle for jobs, decent wages and integrated housing was palpable. San Francisco was a strong union town, forged in large part through the 1934 maritime strike, which culminated in a citywide general strike that laid the basis for the founding of the International

Seeking to widen the racial divide and pit white workers against the black working class and poor, the policies of federal and local governments in league with real estate developers increased segregation. Mortgages offered at a favorable rate to whites under the GI Bill were denied to black people. White workers moved out of West Oakland to better neighborhoods in the east of the city, where a number of industrial plants were located, as well as to new suburban housing divisions. Developers used redlining and Jim Crow covenants to keep blacks out of these areas. When black people began to break through the color bar in East Oakland in

of that movement pushed the program of liberal integration, the idea that black people can find genuine equality without the overthrow of the system of racist American capitalism. That program was and is a myth. It was the failure of the liberal-led civil rights movement to fundamentally challenge the desperate conditions of life for blacks in the inner cities that led to the birth of the Black Panther Party in West Oakland. While they fought with great militancy and heroism, the Panthers dismissed the one force in this society with the social power to challenge the racist capitalist rulers—the multiracial working class. Hounded by murderous state repression, the Panthers increasingly turned to their own liberal programs, such as “breakfast for children.” Many of those who weren’t killed or jailed by the state ultimately found their place in the Democratic Party.

Today, the need for quality, integrated housing and schools, medical care and jobs is all the more urgent. Any real struggle for livable homes must include the demand for low-rent, quality, integrated public housing. This must be linked to a fight for jobs for all through a shorter workweek at no loss in pay and a massive program of public works to repair this country’s decaying infrastructure. The Bay Area’s integrated unions—longshore, transit and municipal—have the ability to mobilize their own members for such a fight. As significant concentrations of black workers, they provide a crucial link to the ghetto poor and can play a leading role in the fight against black oppression. The key to unlocking labor’s power is breaking from the union misleaders’ political subservience to the capitalist class enemy and its political representatives, Democrats as well as Republicans.

The American working class as a whole will not advance in struggle against its exploiters, who wield anti-black racism to divide and weaken the workers, without taking up the fight against the vicious oppression of black people. To secure the vital necessities of life for the working class, black people and the poor will take a massive reallocation of the wealth and resources of this country. That will only be possible with the expropriation of the bloodsucking capitalist class as a whole and the creation of a workers state, where production is based on human need and not profit. What is required to lead this struggle is a revolutionary workers party forged in implacable opposition to capitalist class rule and steadfastly committed to the fight for black freedom.

When workers become the ruling class, the housing crisis, insoluble on the basis of capitalist private property, will be resolved in a straightforward way. Taking the banks, factories, transportation and land away from their profit-driven owners, a workers state will institute a planned, collectivized economy. Homelessness will be tackled overnight, simply by requisitioning the mansions, luxury hotels and real estate holdings of the former capitalist rulers so that everyone has a place to live. As society’s productive forces are rationally developed in the interests of all, poverty and inequality will be overcome. ■



Oakland, 1946: Integrated protest by veterans, including ILWU warehouse workers, demands affordable housing.

Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU). A key to that victory was opposition to the segregationist policies of the AFL craft union bureaucracy by the longshore workers’ leadership, which brought black workers into the union in the Bay Area. But during WWII, the ILWU leaders joined the racist AFL officials in enforcing a no-strike pledge and abandoned the fight for black rights as part of supporting Wall Street’s imperialist war effort.

After the war, workers’ pent-up combativity exploded in a nationwide strike wave. In 1946, a 54-hour general strike erupted in Oakland as employers sought to crush a union organizing drive by mostly white women department store clerks. This fight posed the need for mobilizing black and white workers in struggle for their common needs. Instead, the strike was stabbed in the back by the union tops. Conservative Oakland AFL bureaucrats opposed cooperation with the ILWU and other CIO unions, while Harry Bridges, ILWU leader and the CIO’s regional director, held back the integrated ranks of his union in the interests of his alliance with the Democratic Party. The virulently anti-Communist Teamsters president Daniel Tobin and West Coast vice president Dave Beck effectively destroyed the general strike when they ordered truck drivers back to work.

the mid 1950s, real estate brokers promoted racial fears to goad whites into selling low, and then the brokers resold high to blacks moving in. California’s Rumford Act banning housing discrimination was finally passed in 1963, but it was repealed a year later when developers pushed through Proposition 14.

In 1955, United Auto Workers Local 560, an integrated union of Ford assembly plant workers in Richmond, scored a notable if partial victory against the “whites only” segregation of the suburbs. With the plant moving from Richmond to Milpitas, near San Jose, the union prevailed against the die-hard opposition of big developers in building a cooperative, integrated housing development in the area called Sunnyhills. Nonetheless, Sunnyhills remained only an isolated area of integration surrounded by segregation. Unskilled black production line workers who could not afford even the relatively modest price of these houses had to commute from Richmond, West Oakland and other impoverished urban black neighborhoods.

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Sunnyhills was seen as an example of the promise of the civil rights movement. But the pro-Democratic Party leadership

Protesters...

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the anti-inauguration protests, reformists like the International Socialist Organization (“He Made America Protest Again,” socialistworker.org, 23 January) and the ANSWER Coalition (“Thousands Protest Trump Directly on Inaugural Parade Route,” answercoalition.org, 21 January) didn’t breathe a word about the arrests of the anarchists.

Meanwhile, a new internet meme was born when one masked protester was videoed punching self-proclaimed “alt-right” founder Richard Spencer in the face during an interview that the white-supremacist was giving near a group of anarchists on the inauguration periphery.

Writing on the *Nation* website (22 January), Natasha Lennard expressed the view of many when she characterized the punch as a thing of “pure kinetic beauty.”

The real perpetrators of violence in this society are the forces of the capitalist state—the cops, courts, prisons and military—which exist to defend the rule of the bourgeoisie over the working class. The state daily metes out violence to black people, immigrants and anyone who dares resist the depredations of capital, while it slaughters dark-skinned people overseas.

Broad swaths of the “fight the right” anti-Trump movement, ranging from the “peaceful, legal” wing to the anarchist wing that shows a little more gumption, attempt to paint the racist, chauvinist demagogue Trump as a Nazi. While Trump’s victory emboldened fascists, he

is not himself one. He ascended to the presidency through the routine workings of bourgeois democracy. Today, in a period marked by very little class struggle and a rollback of workers rights, the capitalist class has no need to unleash fascist bands, which they hold in reserve to crush the workers movement when it challenges bourgeois rule.

Accusations that Trump is a fascist serve to prettify the “normal” workings of racist American capitalism, especially when it is run by the Democrats. Even though they express more anger, the anarchists effectively operate within the same liberal political framework. The #disruptJ20 “Call to Action” intones that “Trump stands for tyranny, greed, and misogyny.” But Obama, Clinton and all other bourgeois politicians represent the

same repressive capitalist order, which is based on exploitation and racial and sexual oppression.

Instead of spouting classless appeals to “people of good conscience” to oppose Trump, we seek to mobilize the working class at the head of the oppressed, independent of all capitalist parties and in opposition to the capitalists and their state. As the Trump presidency unfolds in all its viciousness, protests against it will continue, as will state violence and repression. Anger against poverty and racial and sexual oppression must be given an organized political expression aimed at breaking the hold of the Democratic Party over workers, women and minorities. We fight to build a revolutionary workers party that can lead the struggle to get rid of the entire capitalist system. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

Silicon Valley Moves In, Blacks Driven Out

Bay Area Housing Crisis: No Room for Workers, Poor

Last December, a firetrap of a warehouse in Oakland's Fruitvale district burned to the ground, killing 36 people—the deadliest fire in the city's history. Many among the 100 partygoers who had come for a music and dance event were trapped in the upstairs performance space as flames raged through a building lacking sprinklers, smoke detectors and fire escapes. Known as the Ghost Ship, the warehouse, like many other unused buildings, had become home to an artists' collective and others priced out of Oakland's housing market by soaring rents. In the aftermath of the Ghost Ship fire, a nationwide drive was launched, not to make such “illegally occupied” structures livable, but to shut them down and throw their residents onto the streets.

Housing costs in the Bay Area have skyrocketed as tech industry *nouveaux riches* have flocked to San Francisco, where the median home price is nearly \$1.2 million and the median monthly rent is \$4,200; a single room can go for over \$1,000 a month. In San Francisco's Pacific Heights, a/k/a “Billionaires' Row” or “Specific Whites,” Oracle chief Larry Ellison's \$40 million mansion and the similar digs of older-money clans like the Gettys have been joined by the lavish estates of tech moguls. One threw himself a million-dollar 40th birthday party on the theme “Let Him Eat Cake,” with guests dressed up as courtiers of Marie Antoinette. Meanwhile, drivers of the “Google buses” that ferry tech workers to Silicon Valley live in their cars.

Longtime tenants of rent-controlled apartments are being evicted by landlords hoping to cash in on the rental bonanza. In a city where it reportedly takes \$200,000 a year to live comfortably, newly minted yuppies are fleeing across the bay to Oakland. Median rents in this once half-black city have roughly doubled to \$3,000 since 2008. In a recent one-year period, over 11,000 eviction notices were issued. Two-thirds of low-income Oakland renters spend more than half their income on housing.

San Francisco's Democratic Party administrations, which generally present themselves as the most progressive in the country, have viciously persecuted the city's homeless population for decades. Now homeless people face the wrath of tech industry moneybags who want them swept off the streets. As one fat cat ranted in an open letter to Mayor Ed Lee and the city's then police chief last February: “The wealthy working people have earned their right to live in the city.... I shouldn't have to see the pain, struggle, and despair of homeless people to and from my way to work every day.” In November 2016, a ballot initiative, bankrolled by tech billionaires, to ban tents on public sidewalks passed. This adds another measure of pure cruelty that aims to rip away the few shreds of shelter that the homeless



San Francisco, December 2013: Anti-eviction protesters block private bus transporting Silicon Valley techies for Apple. Reuters

For Low-Cost, Quality Housing for All!

have. From Oakland and San Francisco to San Jose and Sacramento, sweeps to demolish homeless camps are the order of the day. In 2015 alone, Oakland authorities under Democratic Party mayor Libby Schaaf closed 162 encampments, trashing personal possessions and chasing the inhabitants from spot to spot around the city. It is a stark expression of the depravity of capitalism that the poor are denied housing and then criminalized for being homeless.

Escalating cop terror is the handmaiden

to gentrification. The current targets in San Francisco are the historically Latino Mission District and the formerly majority-black Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood. Last April, cops who had been called by a so-called Homeless Outreach Team gunned down Luis Gongora, a homeless man from Mexico, near an encampment in the Mission. Four months earlier, a hail of SFPD bullets cut down Mario Woods, a young black man, in Bayview. Mary Ratcliff, the editor of the black newspaper *San Francisco BayView*, told

the paper in regard to ongoing redevelopment schemes: “Police occupation of the community intensified to a fever pitch with gang injunctions, mass imprisonment of our youth and more targeted acts of police violence, all designed, I believe, to further push us out” (11 January 2016).

During the last housing boom swindle manufactured by Wall Street, banks preyed on tens of thousands of home buyers with sub-prime mortgage scams, hard-selling them door to door particularly in black and Latino neighborhoods. The banks made billions for themselves and triggered a global economic collapse. The mass foreclosures and layoffs that followed the 2008 financial crisis hit all sections of the working class hard, but black people and Latinos got it worst. Foreclosure rates for blacks were more than double those for whites on both sides of the San Francisco Bay. For Latinos, the rates were almost triple in the East Bay and five and a half times higher in the West Bay. Meanwhile, heavily minority low-income housing has been displaced by vast developments of luxury apartment towers, corporate offices and the like, generating huge profits for real estate magnates.

The growing desperation of many was reflected in a raft of housing initiatives that were on the ballot around the Bay Area in the November elections, most of which passed. One set of measures established bonds for “affordable housing” that at best would create small islands in the sea of rising prices. Other measures sought to impose or strengthen rent control and limit evictions, offering some protection, if only partial and temporary, to those faced with losing their homes. We support rent control and other measures that would even slightly alleviate the all-sided misery faced by the working class and poor. But the truth is that this viciously class-divided system cannot guarantee decent living conditions to its wage slaves, much less those who have been thrown on the scrap heap of permanent unemployment.

Under the capitalist order, the supply of housing, like the rest of the economy, is determined not by the needs of the many but by the profits of the few. Karl Marx's closest collaborator, Friedrich Engels, explained the shortage of housing in his 1872 pamphlet *The Housing Question*:

“It cannot fail to be present in a society in which the great labouring masses are exclusively dependent upon wages, that is to say, upon the quantity of means of subsistence necessary for their existence and for the propagation of their kind; in which improvements of the machinery, etc., continually throw masses of workers out of employment; in which violent and regularly recurring industrial fluctuations determine on the one hand the existence of a large reserve army of unemployed workers, and on the other hand drive the mass of the workers from time to time

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One of many homeless encampments in Oakland, July 2016. Chinn/SF Chronicle