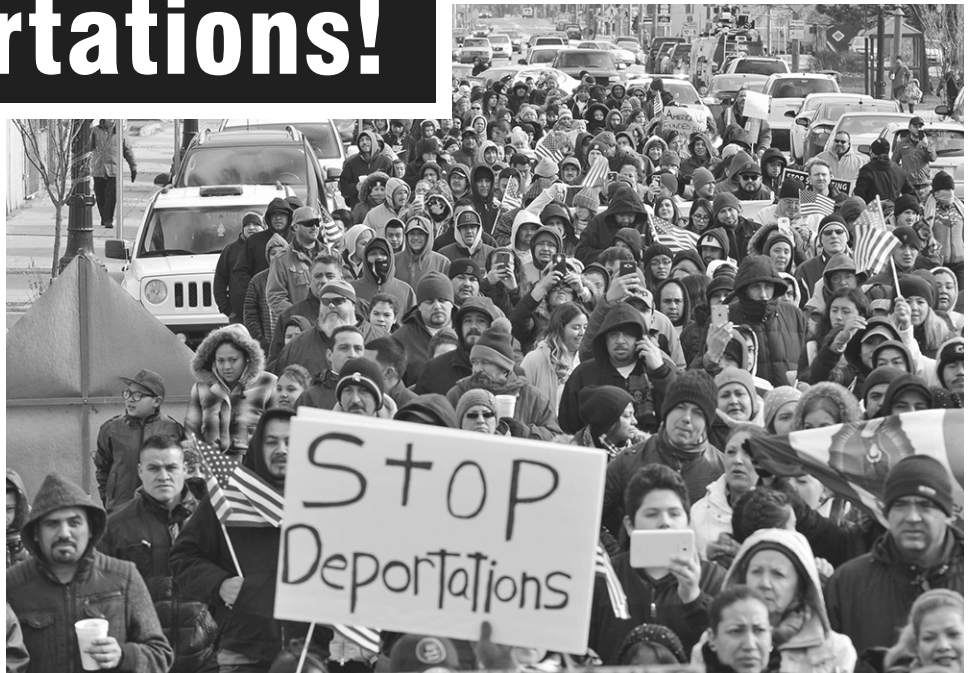


No Deportations!



Immigration and Customs Enforcement



McInturf/Detroit News

Left: I.C.E. agents raid home in anti-immigrant sweep in Atlanta, Georgia, February 9. Right: Detroit march on “A Day Without Immigrants,” February 16.

Down With Racist War on Immigrants!

MARCH 6—A 26-year-old woman with a brain tumor ripped from her hospital bed in Texas and thrown back into detention; a Los Angeles restaurant worker pulled over and handcuffed by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) agents after dropping his daughter off at school; a transgender woman in El Paso arrested after seeking protection from domestic violence. The Trump administration has unleashed I.C.E. and other police agencies in a blitzkrieg of terror against immigrants, racking up hundreds of arrests from coast to coast. Immigrant families are holing up in their homes, refusing to answer the door, afraid to go shopping or to school, fearful of using social media. Kids are being told who to call and where to go if their parents are seized and deported.

Unleashed by Trump, the I.C.E. thugs are now saying that their job is “fun” as they bust into homes in the predawn hours or sweep up day laborers on their way to work, giving them a taste of hell as they fling them into detention centers. Many of these dungeons are run by private corporations that have been big, and powerful, profit-makers under Democratic and Republican presidents alike.

President Trump’s January 25 executive order vastly expanded the pool of those considered a “priority” for deportation to include any undocumented immigrant even suspected of a criminal offense, no matter how minor, or who might “pose a risk to public safety.” Such “risks” apparently include a Mexican mother of two U.S.-born children who was arrested in Phoenix and immediately deported when she showed up for her regular check-in with the immigration office. She is considered a criminal because, like eleven million others, she is in this country “illegally.”

No to Anti-Muslim Crusade!

Although Trump has not (yet) terminated Barack Obama’s DACA program, which gave a temporary reprieve to people brought to this country as children, a number of these “Dreamer” youth have been swept up in the raids and face deportation.

You don’t even have to “fit the profile” to be subjected to the tender mercies of the immigration cops. Last week, Henry Rouso, a French academic and expert on the Holocaust, was held at Houston’s international airport for ten hours and threatened with expulsion on the com-

pletely bogus suspicion that he was trying to enter illegally. Also in February, passengers on a flight from San Francisco were asked to show their IDs as they disembarked at New York’s JFK airport, supposedly so that I.C.E. could nab an undocumented immigrant. Of course, I.C.E. knew everybody on the flight, and no such person was found. The point of the exercise was to cow people into meekly accepting such intrusions by the state—the Bill of Rights be damned.

On top of all this, the White House

today issued a revised anti-Muslim travel ban. Aside from permanent residents and current visa holders, the new executive order bans anyone trying to get into the U.S. from select Muslim-majority countries (with Iraq now removed from that list) as well as all refugees for a 120-day period. Even while the initial January ban was held up in the courts, customs agents in Florida detained Muhammad Ali Jr., son of the late boxing great and a U.S. citizen, for two hours after he returned from Jamaica and grilled him about his religion because of his “Arabic-sounding” name.

While the U.S. imperialists slaughter the peoples of Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, at home, Muslims and immigrants from Islamic countries are portrayed as “internal enemies.” Similar to what happened after the September 11 attacks, the current anti-Muslim hysteria is fueling murderous extralegal terror. Last month, a Navy vet in Kansas shouted, “Get out of my country!” as he gunned down two software engineers from India, killing one. Just two days ago, a Sikh American was shot in the driveway of his Kent, Washington, home by a masked white man snarling, “Go back to your own country.” With fascist gangs emboldened by Trump’s election, Jews are also a target, with bomb threats at over 100 community centers to date and gravesites across the country being vandalized.

White House chief strategist Stephen Bannon, who helped craft both anti-Muslim bans, has described immigrants—and Muslims in particular—as a threat to “the Judeo-Christian West.” You can be sure that for this notoriously racist “white nationalist,” the “Judeo-Christian West” does not include black people (or Jews, for that matter).

Make no mistake: The same forces taking aim at those most vulnerable—undocumented immigrants, Muslims trying to enter the U.S.—also have their sights set on the black masses and the entire working class. Trump’s shock-and-awe campaign is all about ramping up police powers and

continued on page 7



Office of Rep. Henry Cuellar

South Texas detention center, 2014. The Obama administration, which deported more immigrants than any other in U.S. history, detained tens of thousands in nightmarish conditions.



Fascism: What It Is

29 January 2017

Dear W.V.,

Lots of folks calling everyone “Fascists” these days. It might be good to print a very concise definition in W.V. of what the proper definition of “fascist” is. I also meet people who confuse “Nazi” and “National Socialist” and think they are the same as Socialism. Add into that Sanders’ claim to be a “socialist” and Sawant’s claim to be a “socialist” & I spend most of my time explaining the differences. Thus a simple definition list would be useful!

Red Greetings
Lawrence of Seattle

WV replies: Fascists are paramilitary gangs whose purpose is the destruction of the workers movement and carrying out racial and ethnic terror. In the U.S., where black oppression is integral to capitalist class rule, homegrown fascism is embodied in the KKK, Nazis and other white-supremacist outfits like Identity Evropa and similar vermin crawling in the “alt-right.” In addition to targeting black people with lynch mob terror, the KKK and other fascists have mobilized against efforts to organize trade unions—one of the few pockets of integration in this society—as well as against immigrants, Jews and other oppressed sectors.

Historically, mass fascist movements

are extraparlimentary mobilizations of the enraged petty bourgeoisie, lumpen-proletariat and even a section of backward workers, who have been ruined by capitalist economic crisis and embrace murderous, right-wing nationalism. The capitalist rulers hold the fascist shock troops in reserve so that they can be unleashed at times of social crisis against any prospect of revolutionary struggle by the working class. As Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky described: “At the moment that the ‘normal’ police and military resources of the bourgeois dictatorship, together with their parliamentary screens, no longer suffice to hold society in a state of equilibrium—the turn of the fascist regime arrives” (“What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat” [January 1932]).

The defeat of revolutionary struggles by the workers in Germany in 1918-19 and 1923 was a precursor to the rise of Nazism. This, combined with economic devastation and national humiliation resulting from the defeat of German imperialism in World War I, enabled the Nazis to become a mass movement by the early 1930s. The fascists’ adoption of the name “National Socialist German Workers’ Party” was an example of what Trotsky described as fascist leaders “employing a great deal of socialist demagoguery” as “necessary for the creation of the mass movement” (“What Is

Fascism?” [November 1931]). The Nazis, in fact, waged a terrorist campaign against all socialist organizations. The many millions of German workers organized in the Social Democratic and Communist parties and the trade unions wanted to fight Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933. But they were shamefully betrayed by their leaderships, not least by the Communist Party’s failure to fight for working-class rule. This set the stage for the genocidal murder of eleven million people, including six million Jews, in the Holocaust.

In contrast to Germany in the 1930s, the U.S. is not a defeated imperialist country, but is rather the world’s biggest imperialist power. Nor does the U.S. ruling class currently face a challenge from the working class at home. Trump is not a fascist; he came to power within the framework of the bourgeois electoral system, not through the mobilization of a fascist mass movement. When leftist groups like the Revolutionary Communist Party call his regime “fascist,” it is to prettify U.S. bourgeois democracy and to justify “unifying” with so-called progressive forces in the capitalist Democratic Party. To characterize all manner of reactionary, right-wing forces as “fascist” serves to disorient and politically disarm the struggle against the genuine Nazis and other race-terrorists who

have been emboldened by Trump’s win. The fascists must be crushed in the egg by mobilizing the power of the multiracial working class to smash them in an elementary defense of itself and all the oppressed. We are proud of our record of initiating and carrying out successful united-front, multiracial mobilizations, based on the power of the trade unions, which stopped the Klan and Nazis in cities like Boston, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and elsewhere. Emphasizing that the ultimate targets of the fascists are black people and the multiracial workers movement, these were exemplary actions that underscored the role of a revolutionary vanguard in linking the cause of labor with that of all the oppressed.

As for Bernie Sanders, he is not now nor has he ever been a socialist. He is a capitalist politician who has been a member of the Senate Democratic Caucus for over 25 years (see “Bernie Sanders: Imperialist Running Dog,” WV No. 1083, 12 February 2016). For her part, Socialist Alternative’s Kshama Sawant, one of Sanders’s biggest boosters, is a pseudo-socialist, who won a seat on Seattle’s City Council based on a program of liberal reforms that in no way threaten capitalism (see “Reformists Salivate Over Sawant’s Seattle Election,” WV No. 1042, 21 March 2014). ■

On Trump and Liberals

15 February 2017

I am a long time supporter of the SL. I have not been active for years, but read WV, along with a lot of historical works. I live in NYC. The vast majority of my friends and family are liberals and are crazy upset with the election. In fact, some of the more left-leaning of my circles are the most bent out of shape. It has really underscored for me the vast gulf between their politics and the politics of revolutionary Marxism. I have had some rather good friends become enraged by my stating what I consider obvious—the US was an oppressive, racist, rapacious imperialist power before Trump. I have been most astounded at their outrage that Russia might have (still seems pretty speculative to me) had some influence in the presidential election. I assure them that many countries would have been thrilled to have had the US merely release transcripts (that were authentic, no less) to influence an election. The blind nationalism is breathtaking. When I start to tick off a list of places where the US has sponsored coups their eyes go a bit out of focus. When I remind them the US intelligence agencies

routinely lie, they are angry. If nothing else, Trump makes obvious what has always been true—the vicious nature of the US ruling class. They also go kind of blank when I point out that dissenters have been treated brutally by the government. Palmer raids? Sacco and Vanzetti? Jailing of leaders of the SWP and later the CP in the 40s? The attempts to exterminate the Black Panthers? How about Obama’s treatment of information leakers? In the end, unless you have a class perspective, you can’t make sense of history, either while it’s being made or in hindsight.

I spoke with a like minded friend a few days ago and we both agreed that the odes to Obama floating across social media were enough to leave us puking onto our computers. “Oh, but he’s so much classier than Trump.” Yuck!

I attended the PDC Holiday Appeal party. It was a relief to be among people that have some understanding about the world and that are trying to change it. Thank you comrades. And thank you for letting me rant a bit!

Communist greetings,
David



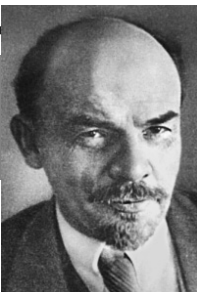
TROTSKY

100



Years

The Bolshevik Revolution and Women’s Liberation



LENIN

On International Women’s Day in Petrograd in March 1917, a mass outpouring of working women sparked the revolutionary upheaval that culminated in the Russian October Revolution. The smashing of capitalist class rule brought unheard-of gains for women in all areas of public and private life. Despite economic backwardness and poverty, the young Soviet workers government sought to undermine the material foundations of women’s oppression, which is rooted in the institution of the family. The Bolsheviks understood that complete social equality could only be attained with the abolition of classes in a world socialist society. In a 1920 commemoration of International Working Women’s Day, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin underscored the fact that the fight for women’s liberation is inseparable from the fight for international socialist revolution.

Capitalism combines formal equality with economic and, consequently, social inequality. That is one of the principal features of capitalism, one that is deliberately obscured by the supporters of the bourgeoisie, the liberals, and is not understood by petty-bourgeois democrats. This feature of capitalism, incidentally, renders it necessary for us in our resolute fight for economic equality openly to admit capitalist inequality, and even, under certain conditions, to make this open admission of inequality the basis of the proletarian statehood (the Soviet Constitution).

But even in the matter of formal equality (equality before the law, the “equality” of the well-fed and the hungry, of the man of property and the propertyless), capitalism *cannot* be consistent. And one of the most glaring manifestations of this inconsistency is the *inequality* of women. Complete equality has not been granted even by the most progressive republican, and democratic bourgeois states.

The Soviet Republic of Russia, on the other hand, at once swept away *all* legislative traces of the inequality of women *without exception*, and immediately ensured their complete equality before the law.

It is said that the best criterion of the cultural level is the legal status of women. This aphorism contains a grain of profound truth. From this standpoint only the dictatorship of the proletariat, only the socialist state could attain, as it has attained, the highest cultural level. The new, mighty and unparalleled stimulus given to the working women’s movement is therefore inevitably associated with the foundation (and consolidation) of the first Soviet Republic—and, in addition to and in connection with this, with the Communist International.

Since mention has been made of those who were oppressed by capitalism, directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, it must be said that the Soviet system, and only the Soviet system, guarantees democracy. This is clearly shown by the position of the working class and the poor peasants. It is clearly shown by the position of women.

But the Soviet system is the last decisive struggle for the *abolition of classes*, for economic and social equality. Democracy, even democracy for those who were oppressed by capitalism, including the oppressed sex, *is not enough for us*.

It is the chief task of the working women’s movement to fight for economic and social equality, and not only formal equality, for women. The chief thing is to get women to take part in socially productive labour, to liberate them from “domestic slavery,” to free them from their stupefying and humiliating subjugation to the eternal drudgery of the kitchen and the nursery.

This struggle will be a long one, and it demands a radical reconstruction both of social technique and of morals. But it will end in the complete triumph of communism.

—V.I. Lenin, “International Working Women’s Day” (4 March 1920)

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WORKERS VANGUARD



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No. 1107

10 March 2017

Trump Invokes Racist “States’ Rights”

Defend Rights of Transgender People!

The bigots in the White House have added transgender people to their hit list targeting Muslims, immigrants, black people and women. In February, President Donald Trump dumped anti-discrimination guidelines issued by Obama in May 2016, which had instructed public schools to allow students to use bathrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identity. A Texas judge had already blocked Obama’s directive last August after 13 states challenged the expansion of restroom access for transgender students. This rollback of protections for transgender students is yet another boost to the religious right, who believe that people are born into the gender God chose for them. But it will also be used as a weapon in the reactionary arsenal aimed more broadly against all the oppressed and working people.

Insisting that the matter of restroom access should be left to states and localities, the Trump administration invoked “states’ rights”—which has long been wielded to enforce the segregation of black people in America. Not surprisingly, the instigator of the ruling was Attorney General Jeff Sessions, a notorious racist who thinks that separation of church and state has gone too far and voted to ban same-sex marriage. His very name conjures up the battle cry of the slavocracy in the Civil War: Jefferson Beauregard Sessions III, in homage to the Confederacy’s president Jefferson Davis and General P.G.T. Beauregard. Co-issuing the ruling was Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, who is dedicated to ending public education and promoting charter schools and vouchers for religious schools as a means to “advance God’s kingdom.”

The revocation of even minimal school protections for transgender and gender non-conforming youth—those whose appearance, dress or behavior doesn’t comply with what capitalist society deems to be the norm—is an ominous threat. It will likely fuel further attacks against this already marginalized group facing high rates of harassment, discrimination and suicide. In light of Trump’s edict, the Supreme Court refused to hear the case of transgender teen Gavin Grimm, who courageously sued his Virginia school board in order to use the male restroom. Grimm’s case, which is now kicked to a lower court, could set a precedent for a number of other “bathroom” cases as to whether Title IX’s prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex extends to gender identity.

Everyone—regardless of the signage on restroom doors—should be allowed to go about their business without interference from busybodies, bigots or bosses. As we stated in a previous article on bigotry over “bathroom bills” (see “Full Democratic Rights for Transgender People!” WV No. 1081, 15 January 2016):

“While sexuality and gender identity are complex, they are essentially personal and *private* matters. We vehemently oppose any government intrusion into private life and consensual sexual activity. Since our inception, the Spartacist League has called for full democratic rights for gays—and the same goes for others targeted for their sexual practices or gender expression. Down with discriminatory laws against transgender people!”

For right-wing bigots, the idea that students can express their gender identity as they please provokes fury because it cuts against the oppression of youth within the family and in society in general. Anti-gay and anti-trans bigotry are not simply by-products of ignorance, but are conditioned and bolstered by rigid gender roles



Getty

Chicago: Protest in defense of transgender people, February 25.

in the monogamous, patriarchal family. The institution of the family, the main source of the oppression of women and youth under capitalism, instills bourgeois codes of morality, obedience and social conformity. Religious ideology further reinforces the straitjackets of “manhood” and “womanhood.”

The real estate mogul Trump, known more for his “New York values” than for his piety, intoned during the Republican

the NBA, shifted events away from North Carolina, and hundreds of celebrities and companies have demanded the law’s repeal. HB2 is not just a “bathroom bill” but a package of draconian legislation targeting the working class, women and minorities. The law also eliminates protections for employees fired on the basis of race, religion, sex or age; prevents cities and counties from setting minimum-wage standards; and overturns laws requiring paid leave for family and medical matters.

These vicious moves pioneered by the Republicans allow the Democrats to hypocritically posture as defenders of the oppressed. Yet for decades the Democratic Party has groveled before the very forces spearheading the attacks on women’s and gay rights, science in schools and secularism in general. The Democrats under Obama, as well as under Bill Clinton, continually pandered to religious reaction, imbibing the “family values” moralism that helped pave the way for the onslaught on abortion and attacks on birth control. The 2014 landmark *Hobby Lobby* Supreme Court ruling used Clinton’s 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act to allow companies to deny insurance coverage for contraceptives on religious grounds, thus turning the separation of church and state on its head.

Obama managed to walk off the presidential stage with something of a reputation for defending transgender rights. One of his final acts was the commutation of all but a few months of the remaining prison time for Chelsea Manning, the heroic transgender whistle-blower sentenced to 35 years for exposing U.S. war crimes. The Obama administration tortured Manning for seven years, forced her to fight relentlessly for treatment in the process of gender transitioning and drove her to two suicide attempts while in prison. Clemency for Manning gave Obama a cheap way to cloak his true “legacy”—that of persecuting whistle-blowers, expanding drone strikes and ramping up mass surveillance.

Any illusion that the capitalist Democrats will do anything other than uphold the capitalist system of wage exploitation and racial and sexual oppression that they oversee is a cruel hoax. In the U.S., the deep-seated racism of a society founded on the oppression of black people also finds expression in anti-transgender bigotry. On top of discrimination in employment, lack of access to health care and undue harassment by the cops, transgender people face horrendous levels of sexual assault and violence. Black transgender women are particular targets, making

up a majority of the 27 reported anti-trans homicides in 2016. This year, in February alone, five black transgender women were murdered, three in the Southern state of Louisiana.

Today’s arguments against transgender people’s access to restrooms echo claims from the Jim Crow South defending separate facilities for black people. Racists railed against integrated restrooms as allegedly dangerous to white women, who would ostensibly become prey to black men if public amenities were not strictly race- and sex-segregated. The myth of the black male sexual predator has long been used to mobilize lynch mob terror. Now, reactionaries rehash this bigotry by invoking unfounded fears that young girls will be raped if “men”—by which they mean trans women—are allowed to use the same toilet. Undeniably, if anyone is in danger in public spaces, it’s trans people who face abuse no matter which restroom they enter.

The revolting stereotype of trans women as rapist interlopers invading women’s spaces was not invented by religious fundamentalists; rather, it has long been common parlance for a brand of petty-bourgeois feminists. While the ubiquitous LGBT acronym implies common unity, in fact transgender people were excluded and defamed by many of their gay and lesbian supposed “allies.” The historic 1969 Stonewall rebellion in NYC’s Greenwich Village was led by a multiracial and mainly poor group of drag queens and transgender people. Yet these activists—many of whom considered themselves part of a broader liberation movement—were soon ostracized from a gay milieu that was increasingly focused on bourgeois respectability, as seen today in the conservative fixation on marriage equality.

As Marxists, we defend any legal advances that gays, lesbians and transgender people can obtain, including the right of marriage and divorce, and we oppose discrimination in housing, employment and education. At the same time, we recognize that, particularly in the absence of social struggle, the capitalist rulers will always seek to reverse any gains that have been won. While trans people have become more visible in the media and on campuses, it will take a fundamental social and economic transformation to change the institutions that are the source of deeply rooted attitudes toward gender roles and sexuality. Any genuine fight for the liberation of women, gays, black people and all of the oppressed must be directed to the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system. We seek to imbue in the multiracial working class its historic mission as fighters for the socialist liberation of all humanity. ■



@OhioFeminist

JoJo Striker, 23-year-old transgender woman, murdered in Toledo, Ohio, in February.

National Convention last year that he would “protect our LGBTQ citizens.” He added the qualifier, “from the violence and oppression of a hateful foreign ideology,” a statement intended to whip up anti-Muslim hysteria in the wake of the terror attack on the Pulse nightclub in Orlando. In fact, Trump was the candidate of choice for those promoting homegrown “hateful ideology,” white Christian evangelicals, 81 percent of whom cast their votes for him. An array of bible-thumping conservatives occupies senior posts in the Trump administration. Freshly grooving on the resurrection of the Christian right in Washington are organizations like the Alliance Defending Freedom, which is the legal powerhouse dedicated to criminalizing the “homosexual agenda,” and which is behind much of the anti-transgender school legislation.

The Obama-era guidelines revoked by Trump were introduced last year in response to North Carolina’s passage of House Bill 2 (HB2), which bars transgender people from using bathrooms that match their gender identity. Former Republican governor Pat McCrory’s reactionary legislation has been met with sustained opposition and protest. Several sports organizations, including

Women and Revolution

The Marxist Approach to Women's Liberation Communism and the Family

Workers Vanguard two-part article Nos. 1068 and 1069 (15 and 29 May 2015)

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The Nat Turner Rebellion and the Fight Against Slavery

We print below, edited for publication, the concluding part of a presentation given by Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee member Alan Wilde to the New York Spartacus Youth Club on January 28. Part One appeared in WV No. 1106 (24 February).

PART TWO

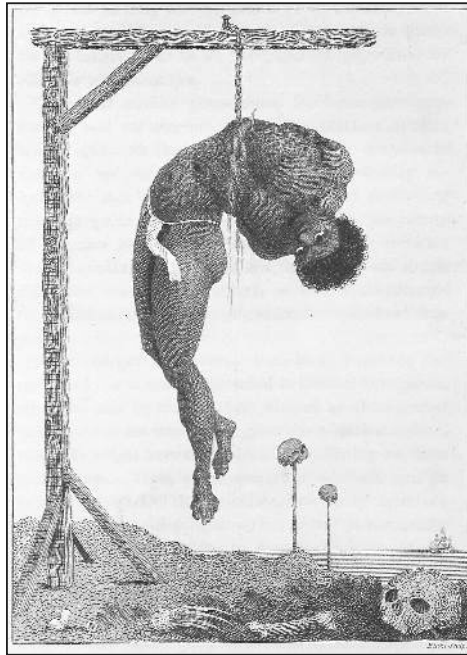
Nat Turner's 1831 revolt in Virginia tears apart the myth that there is no history of slave rebellion or resistance in colonial America or the United States. This is a lie often promoted by racist apologists for American slavery. But it is also untrue to think that the U.S. has a history of slave rebellions similar to the massive uprisings that convulsed the Caribbean, most notably the Haitian Revolution.

As historian Eugene Genovese put it in his work *From Rebellion to Revolution* (1979): "Were the slaves in the United States unwilling or simply unable to rise in large numbers? The question ultimately collapses into absurdity. If a people, over a protracted period, finds the odds against insurrection not merely long but virtually certain, then it will choose not to try." In fact, "the wonder," he later writes, "is not that the United States had fewer and smaller slave revolts than some other countries did, but that they had any at all. That they did, in whatever proportions, demonstrated to the world the impossibility of crushing completely the slaves' rebellious spirit."

It is useful to contrast American and Caribbean slavery. The slavery of the Caribbean's sugar plantations was notorious for its brutality. It was also marked by absentee landlords who did not live on their plantations: they hired overseers to lord it over a population that was overwhelmingly black and slave. In fact, prior to the American War of Independence (1775-83), the center of slavery for the British Empire, which dominated the slave trade, was not the American colonies but the Caribbean. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, 10 to 12 million Africans were "traded" as slaves; 95 percent of them ended up in the Caribbean or Latin America, especially Brazil. A relatively small fraction went to North America.

Slavery in the U.S. was horrific, but it also differed from the Caribbean. Slavery in Virginia, the birthplace of the American slave system, was initially largely based on white indentured servants brought over from the British Isles—in fact, it was not until the 1660s that you started to see laws that significantly differentiated between black and white indentured servants. The problem for the rulers with the system of indentured servitude was that as the term of service expired (usually after five years), a layer of dissatisfied, unruly and impoverished white former servants was being created, destabilizing the colony.

A clear example of this was the 1676 rebellion led by Nathaniel Bacon. While Bacon's Rebellion had a clear anti-Indian component, it also included an alliance of white indentured servants and black slaves (as well as free blacks). There was another similar uprising in Maryland later that year. It was in the wake of such disturbances that the ruling class hardened the racial caste of slavery in an attempt to divide the two races and forestall subse-



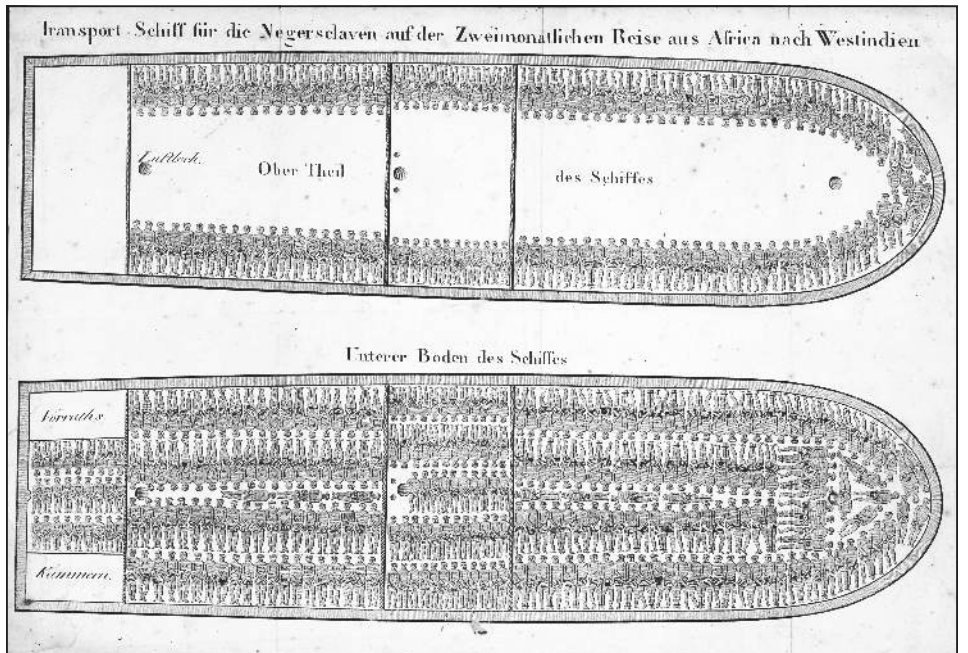
William Blake

Left: Illustration by William Blake depicts slave being tortured in Surinam, 1796. Right: Diagram of slave ship.

quent united uprisings. At the same time, it should be noted that the number of Europeans coming to America as servants was declining—due to both economic development in Britain and news spreading of the brutality of the indenture system.

By the end of the 17th century, Virginia began importing African slaves—i.e., slaves for life—in greater numbers, so that by the first decade of the 18th century, it went from a society in which slavery existed to one in which slavery was the central mode of production—a slave society. As brutal as slavery was in North America, it had a certain stability that did not exist in the Caribbean—the unspeakable conditions of slavery in Jamaica, for example, meant that the average slave died within seven years of arrival. As Jacob Zorn noted in "Slavery and the Origins of American Capitalism" (see *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 22, July 2012), "The slave population in North America became a lot more stable, tended to live a lot longer and have more children" than in the Caribbean. The slave trade provided North America with about half a million people; by the time of the Civil War, that population had grown to four million.

In the Caribbean, slaves lived on great estates of 100 to 200 slaves. In the U.S., half the slaves lived on farms, not planta-



Schomburg Center

tions, and another quarter lived on plantations of 50 or fewer slaves. Thus, the common, popular perception of a sharp division between house and field slaves was really only true in the big plantations of the Deep South—like Mississippi, South Carolina and Georgia. In Virginia, most plantations were of medium size, where the necessities of fieldwork demanded the labor of all. All able-bodied adults went to the fields. Other tasks in the master's house and slave quarters were assigned to those either too young or too old for demanding farm work. At the same time, within the slaves' own social ranking, literate slaves were held in the highest regard. Thus, Nat Turner, who worked the fields, was a highly admired leader among his fellow slaves.

The fact that America was colonized en masse by Europeans meant that, unlike in the Caribbean, the overwhelming majority of slaveowners lived on or near their plantations. Every contingent of slave gang labor must be policed lest it rebel. The American slave population was among the most policed of the New World's slaves—from slave patrols and local and state militias to the federal Army and Navy. This is really important, because it rendered a slave revolution akin to Haiti very difficult to conceive.

As Genovese pointed out, "As they came to view revolt, under the specific conditions of life in the Old South, as suicidal, they centered their efforts on forms of resistance appropriate to their survival as a people even as slaves."

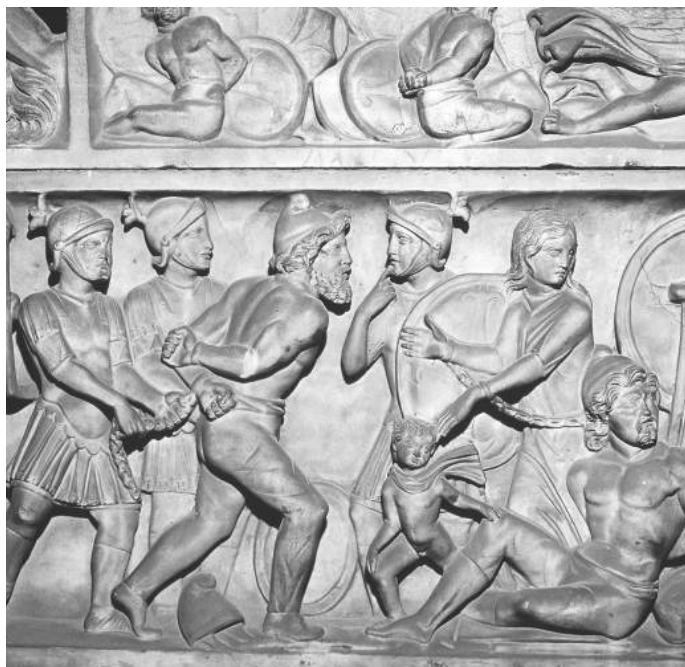
Another important factor is that the U.S. stopped the importation of slaves through an act of Congress in 1807. In December 1806, as the bill was moving along, President Thomas Jefferson, a slaveowner, spoke before Congress to declare with his usual eloquence and hypocrisy:

"I congratulate you, fellow-citizens, on the approach of the period at which you may interpose your authority constitutionally, to withdraw the citizens of the United States from all further participation in those violations of human rights which have been so long continued on the unoffending inhabitants of Africa, and which the morality, the reputation, and the best interests of our country, have long been eager to proscribe."

In reality, this bill had little to do with "human rights." First of all, it was based on the perception—common at that time—that slavery was in decline in the United States, and rulers like Jefferson did not want any more black people in this country. Eli Whitney's cotton gin was invented in 1793, but was not really produced until the early 1800s. It would take time for its effects to be felt: as late as 1830, cotton production was at 750,000 bales, compared to 2.85 million in 1850. Moreover, the 1807 law in effect gave American slave-traders exclusive access to the lucrative *internal* slave trade, which produced huge profits for slavers in states like Virginia.

There was also a political calculation to Jefferson's humanitarian facade. America's rulers learned something from events like the Haitian Revolution: It was far better for them to have slaves who were born in bondage, who knew nothing else but slavery, than slaves imported from Africa.

In fact, North American slavery saw far greater destruction of the various African cultures the first slaves brought with them than was the case in the Caribbean. It is fashionable today for the black petty bourgeoisie to dress up black American culture in African garb. In many ways, this is a disservice to the unique culture created by black Americans and its profound impact on the U.S. As veteran American



Frieze of Roman soldiers capturing slaves.

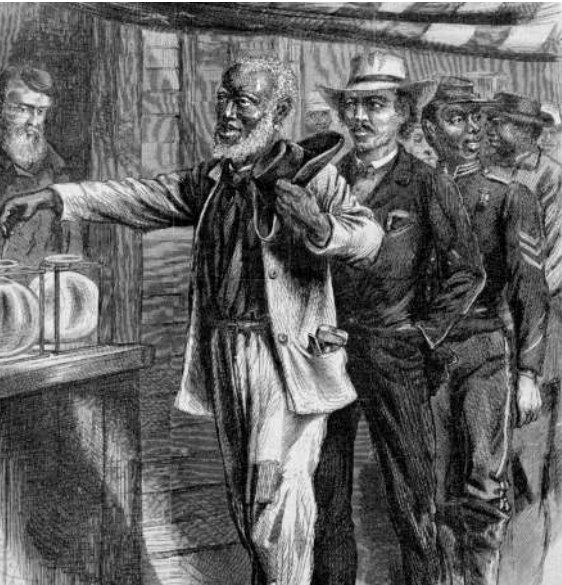
Trotskyist Richard S. Fraser put it in “The Negro Struggle and the Proletarian Revolution” (1953), black people, forced to this continent as slaves, “came to know no other homeland than the United States, knew no other language than English, held no foreign allegiance.... They are essentially American.” Fraser continued: “In this position, the Negroes developed a powerful folk culture. But this culture did not take the road of an independent national development. Because it was virtually the only real American folk culture, the slaves’ music, ‘accent,’ folklore and religion filled a cultural need for the American people as a whole. First the slave culture inundated the original Anglo-Saxon culture of the South, virtually destroying it. From there it went on to fuse with the whole national culture until today those aspects of the national culture which are considered to be ‘typically’ American are largely the result of Negro influence.”

—“In Memoriam—Richard S. Fraser,” *Prometheus Research Series* No. 3, August 1990

Slavery, New World and Ancient

In his book, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (1956), Kenneth M. Stampp noted, “An essential point about the South’s peculiar institution was this: its slaves were Negroes.” Indeed, it is with modern slavery—and only with modern slavery—that race as a concept really develops. There is no biological basis for race—we are all *Homo sapiens*. But race as a social fact is real and is embedded into every aspect of this country’s past and present.

As Marxists, we are historical materialists. We recognize that ideas and concepts do not simply emerge from the heads of people, but are rather a reflection of their material reality. Racism is not an inherent idea that developed out of the minds of evil people. Rather, it is an ideological expression of a material reality that equated black skin with slavery. It came to serve as the justification for slavery, equating a class status—slave—with skin color: not all black people were slaves, but all slaves were black people. In turn, slaves were deemed to be not simply unfortunate people who had lost



Black men voting in the South in 1867 during Radical Reconstruction, the most egalitarian period in U.S. history. With Reconstruction dismantled by Northern capitalists, racist reaction (depicted in 1874 cartoon) was given free hand against black people.

Harper’s Weekly

their freedom, but inherently “inferior” beings suited for nothing else.

As a contrast, one can look at ancient slavery, which had nothing to do with skin color. For those interested, the late historian Frank M. Snowden Jr. wrote two books on “race” in the ancient world that are worth reading, *Blacks in Antiquity* (1970) and *Before Color Prejudice* (1983). One of the points he underlines in these books is that the view of, say, the ancient Romans toward dark-skinned Africans was conditioned by the fact that most of the black people they encountered were warriors, traders, statesmen, mercenary fighters—not slaves. As such, there was no particular social status attached to skin color.

Though Roman slavery was largely based on agricultural production—while also including mining, quarrying and other industries—it was an all-encompassing social order. In other words, it had a far more variegated caste system than anything you would have found in the New World—from *latifundia* or plantation slaves to household servants to physicians



Library of Congress

Soldiers of the 4th U.S. Colored Infantry at Fort Lincoln, near Washington, D.C. Black soldiers were key to Union victory in the Civil War.

and educators. For example, it was fashionable for Roman aristocratic families in the late Republic and early Empire to have their children taught by highly educated Greek slaves. I don’t think it’s conceivable that an American slaveowner would have had a slave teach his children Aristotelian logic.

Notwithstanding these caste divisions within the ancient slave population, the bulk of slaves lived brief and miserable lives. In the city of Rome in the first century A.D., the average age of recorded deaths for slaves was only about 17.5 years. Even worse were conditions for those in the mines. In Roman Hispania—roughly modern-day Spain and Portugal—untold numbers of slaves labored under appalling conditions extracting minerals; most of those forced into the mines lived the remainder of their short lives underground, without ever seeing daylight again. The Romans designated the slave, especially in the agricultural field, an *instrumentum vocale*—i.e., a speaking tool. Most slaves were acquired through conquest. Ancient sources estimate that Julius Caesar during the period of the Gallic Wars (58-50 B.C.) enslaved over one million people—i.e., these wars brought in more slaves than lived in the

concept of race; slavery simply was the dominant form of production. When slave rebellions broke out, like the First Servile War (135-132 B.C.) and the Second Servile War (104-100 B.C.), the slaves who managed to set up their own colonies in Sicily essentially replicated the Roman system—they became the new slaveowners or traders.

I want to make a brief digression here. In the first issue of *Spartacist* (February-March 1964), we explained that we call ourselves Spartacists “after the name, Spartakusbund, taken by the German revolutionary left wing led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht during the First World War.” Luxemburg and Liebknecht adopted that name from the leader of the Third Servile War (73-71 B.C.), Spartacus. Spartacus, most likely from Thrace (in what is now the Balkan region of East Europe), was enslaved as a gladiator. He led a heroic rebellion that recruited some 120,000 slaves from the countryside of the Italian peninsula and defeated multiple Roman armies before his forces were ultimately crushed. The slaveowning aristocracy in the U.S. saw itself as the inheritors of Roman slavery. This was not just a literary allusion. I mentioned earlier (see Part One) that the heads of suspected partici-



Thomas Nast

pants in Nat Turner’s rebellion were put on pikes at crossroads in Virginia. This harks back to the suppression of the Spartacus uprising, after which some 6,000 slaves were crucified along the Appian Way—the main road to Rome—to terrorize any potential slave rebels.

But for the Romans, none of this had anything to do with skin color: even when they referred to others as “barbarians,” it was not based on skin color. It had to do with class status. In fact, the absence of any kind of color bar in ancient slavery meant that as the system collapsed with the demise of the Western Empire in the fifth century A.D., the former slaves were able to become serfs as decentralized feudal economies emerged. A comrade recently made the point that that option was not available to the former black slaves given the entrenched centrality of the color bar in America. One can view the period of Reconstruction following the Civil War as such an attempt, but it could not overcome anti-black racism. Behind this failure lay the fundamental fact that once slavery was overthrown through the

war, the Northern capitalist rulers and the former slaves no longer shared any common interests.

The Fight for Black Liberation Today

I have repeatedly asserted that slavery in North America was fundamental to the development of American capitalism. In fact, New World slavery was fundamental to the development of the world capitalist system. Slavery and capitalism were two different social systems. But they were deeply interrelated.

The slave order had a dialectical relationship with capitalism, helping to unleash its growth while also restraining that growth and being restrained by it. The key role played by slavery and all-around bloody plunder in the primitive accumulation of capital was powerfully captured by Karl Marx in *Capital*: “The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins, are all things which characterise the dawn of the era of capitalist production.” Concluding that capital comes into this world “dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt,” Marx asserted: “The veiled slavery of the wage-labourers in Europe needed the unqualified slavery of the New World as its pedestal.”

“King Cotton”—the key crop of the Southern plantation system, which provided some 75 percent of the cotton for the British textile industry—supplied the principal exports for the early American bourgeois state, providing the financial resources for the growth of mercantile and industrial capitalism in the North. At the same time, it must be emphasized that the Southern plantation system acted as a brake on the growth of industrial capitalism. A number of historians and academics have challenged some of these assertions; they point to the “profitability” of slave production. Some of them do so to highlight the brutal exploitation suffered by slaves, which is beyond question, and to point out that slavery was key to the forging of American capitalism, which is also undeniable.

But the issue is not simply one of “profitability”; it is of interrelated but, in the end, competing social systems. At a fundamental level, slavery acts as a brake on development. It degrades all labor by equating it with the status of bondage. Historian Perry Anderson captured this when speaking of the ancient slave system in his work *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (1974). While noting that “no mode of production is ever devoid of material progress in its ascendant phase,” he nonetheless asserted, “Slave relations of production determined certain insurmountable limits to ancient forces of production, in the classical epoch. Above all, they ultimately tended to paralyze productivity in both agriculture and industry.” He later underlined that “no major cluster of inventions ever occurred to propel the Ancient economy forward to qualitatively new forces of production.”

Anderson’s observation about ancient slavery was also true about slavery in the American South. For example, take the invention of the cotton gin, which strengthened the economic foundation of American slavery. It was not invented by a Southern plantation owner, but by Eli Whitney, born in Massachusetts.

The American War of Independence, far from resolving the issue of slavery, enshrined in the very root of the new republic the contradiction of two social systems. Each social order, capitalist and slaveowning, sought expansion. For the South, expansion was a question of life and death, not least because slave-based plantation agriculture often overworked the soil, requiring the acquisition of new land to maintain crop production. Hence, the long history of “compromises” and the 1846-48 Mexican-American War,

continued on page 6

Mosul...

(continued from page 8)

to shreds, killing hundreds of thousands. Having overthrown the regime of Saddam Hussein, whose bonapartist rule was based on the Sunni minority, the U.S. put in place a government based on the Shia majority. From unleashing Shia death squads to rounding up Sunnis associated with the previous regime, the Baghdad government poured gas on the exploding sectarian powder keg. Al Qaeda in Iraq, parts of which later morphed into ISIS, gained support from many aggrieved Sunnis amid the communal warfare. ISIS expanded its operations into Syria and captured Mosul in 2014 as Iraqi army troops fled.

Since then, predominantly Sunni cities and towns up and down the country have been razed to the ground by government counteroffensives. As Patrick Cockburn wrote in the *Independent* (15 February): “Some 70 per cent of the houses in Ramadi, the capital of the overwhelmingly Sunni Anbar province are in ruins or are badly damaged. Even where many houses are still standing, as in Fallujah 40 miles west of Baghdad, the people who come back to them have to live without electricity, water, jobs or medical care. In practice, the Shia-dominated Iraqi government wants to break the back of Sunni resistance to its rule so it will never be capable of rising again.”

Marxists are hostile to all forces in the intercommunal conflict in Iraq, and in Syria’s squalid civil war between the dictatorial regime of Bashar al-Assad and various Islamist-dominated rebels. But we do have a side against the U.S. and the other imperialist powers involved in the region, including Britain and France. A military setback for Washington in the Near East could also stimulate domestic opposition to U.S. capitalism among a populace that has been ground down by years of frontal attacks on wages, jobs and working conditions. We aim to turn disillusionment and anger among working people in the U.S. into class struggle against the capitalist rulers.

Marxists are implacable opponents of everything the ISIS cutthroats stand for, including their slaughter and forcible expulsion of Shias, Kurds, Yazidis, Christians and others. But we recognize that when they carry out military strikes against the U.S. occupiers and their proxies—the Iraqi army, Shia militias and Kurdish armed forces in Iraq and Syria—such acts coincide with the interests of the international working class, including in the U.S. At the same time, we do not imbue these repugnant forces with “anti-imperialist” credentials.



Getty

January 2007: U.S. and Iraqi troops with captured detainees in Ramadi. U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 devastated that country, unleashed carnage throughout Near East.

It is in the nature of imperialism to subjugate, oppress and exploit the world’s toiling masses, and the U.S. imperialists are the greatest enemy of the workers and oppressed worldwide. While our main opposition is to the American and other imperialists, we also oppose the other capitalist regional powers (Russia, Iran, Turkey) that have become involved in the conflict and demand that they, too, get out.

For a United, Independent Kurdistan!

The machinations of U.S. imperialism have set the stage for a bloody unraveling of the region, in particular by sharply intensifying the conflict between Shia Iran and the Sunni Persian Gulf states (especially Saudi Arabia) as well as Turkey. Iranian-funded militias are operating to the west of Mosul, while Turkey has 2,000 military personnel on a base to the northeast, where it has been training Iraqi Kurdish *pesh merga* and Sunni opponents of ISIS. After the Iraqi prime minister protested the presence of Turkish troops, Turkey’s strongman president Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned him to “know your place!” Earlier this month, Turkish-allied Kurdish forces engaged in armed clashes with ethnically Kurdish Yazidi militias linked to the nationalist Kurdistan Workers Party, which Turkey and the U.S. label a “terrorist” organization.

The Kurdish people, whose homeland is in the mountainous region straddling the borders of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, are

the largest nation in the Near East without a state. We call for a united, independent Kurdistan. This is part of the fight for a socialist republic of united Kurdistan in a socialist federation of the Near East. We also support Kurdish independence from individual capitalist states—e.g., the right of Kurds in Turkey to secede. However, in Iraq and Syria, the Kurdish nationalists have currently subordinated the just fight for self-determination to their alliance with U.S. imperialism.

Such betrayals by Kurdish nationalist leaders are not new. During the 2003 invasion, Iraqi Kurdish forces actively collaborated with U.S. forces and then provided military auxiliaries for the occupation. A year later, Kurdish *pesh merga* were mobilized alongside the U.S. troops in the assault on Falluja. More recently, Kurdish forces acting in concert with Washington and the Baghdad government have ethnically cleansed Arab villages, including near Mosul. Kurdish militias also played a major role in the initial offensive, but have agreed not to enter the city of Mosul itself at the behest of the Iraqi government forces, who are determined to take control over the city through even more systematic sectarian atrocities.

By selling their souls to the imperialists and various regional bourgeois regimes, the Kurdish leaders have helped to perpetuate the divide-and-rule stratagems that inflame communal, national and religious tensions and reinforce the oppression of the Kurdish masses. Their crimes will redound against the long-oppressed Kurdish people.

Imperialist Atrocities Shatter Near East

“I think west Mosul will be destroyed,” Hoshiyar Zebari, a Kurdish leader and Iraq’s former foreign and finance minister, told the *Independent* in a February 15 interview. An article by Turkey-based reporter Adnan R. Khan described the grim situation:

“Liberating Mosul now has little to do with reclaiming Iraqi territory from a brutal interloper; it is a matter of revenge. “The grotesque signs of payback are rapidly emerging in east Mosul: mutilated bodies left to rot on the rubble heaps of the city, men with hands bound behind their backs, legs lashed together, faces half blown off....

“Mixed in with the incoming soldiers, according to reports gleaned from Iraqi officials, are members of the Popular Mobilisation Units, a paramilitary force made up of Shia militias, some of whom harbour apocalyptic visions of an imminent, world-ending battle between Shia and Sunnis. In their eyes, everyone in Mosul is an ISIS sympathizer.”

—“What Went Wrong in Mosul,” macleans.ca, 23 February

The historical backdrop to the current

communal carnage is the carve-up of the Near East by the British and French imperialists, who seized the region from the collapsing Ottoman Empire following World War I. The imperialists amalgamated different peoples in artificial colonial or semicolonial states, forcing together those who wished to live apart while dividing those who sought to be united. This fragile system of capitalist rule could only be maintained through naked brutality, whether under direct imperialist control or through a local strongman such as Saddam Hussein or Bashar al-Assad.

Given the all-sided devastation of Iraq as well as Syria today, the future of the masses there hinges on working-class struggle in nearby countries with strategic concentrations of proletarian power—centrally Egypt, Turkey and Iran. What is vital is the forging of Marxist workers parties committed to the struggle for a socialist federation of the Near East. We have no illusions that it will be an easy task to win the workers of the region, ground down by their capitalist rulers and imperial overlords and under all manner of reactionary ideology, to the program of proletarian revolution. But there will be no end to ethnic and national oppression, no freedom from imperialist subjugation, no emancipation of women and no end to the exploitation of working people short of overthrowing the capitalist order. This perspective must be linked to the fight for working-class revolutions in the imperialist centers.

The cycle of imperialist wars and occupations underscores the barbarity of the global capitalist order. The task of Marxists here in the U.S. is to instill in the working class the understanding that it has the social power and historic interest to destroy capitalist-imperialist rule from within, through socialist revolution. To realize this task requires forging a revolutionary workers party, U.S. section of a reformed Fourth International committed to the fight for workers rule over the entire planet. As we wrote in “Imperialist Rape of Iraq” (WV No. 800, 28 March 2003):

“Mass slaughter is the concentrated expression and ultimate logic of the ‘normal’ brutal workings of the capitalist system, which daily condemns countless numbers around the world to death by malnutrition, lack of medical care and industrial murder. “If there is to be a choice for coming generations of working-class and minority youth other than one of grinding exploitation, joblessness, mass imprisonment or military servitude, if the impoverished masses of the world are to have a future other than starvation and slaughter, this whole system must be torn up by its roots through a socialist revolution and replaced by a rational, planned economy internationally.” ■

Nat Turner...

(continued from page 5)

which was basically a land grab by the slaveowners.

The contradiction came to a head with the Civil War of 1861-65. As Marx underlined, the war was “nothing but a struggle between two social systems, the system of slavery and the system of free labour,” adding that it “can only be ended by the victory of one system or the

other.” The Northern victory in the Civil War effected one of the greatest acts of expropriation in history—the freeing, without compensation, of four million people branded as property—an act *necessary* for the further development of American capitalism.

Shortly after the Civil War came the period of Radical Reconstruction, the most radical period of interracial democracy in U.S. history. But the Northern bourgeoisie was not interested in a thoroughgoing social revolution in the South.

By 1877, the last elements of Reconstruction were dismantled by the capitalist ruling class, consolidating the black population as an oppressed race-color caste. With that, the potential for black equality in capitalist America was gone. It was this period of the Civil War—the Second American Revolution—and Reconstruction that shapes the fundamental contours of modern capitalist America.

So, what lessons to draw today from Nat Turner’s heroic rebellion? The fight for black liberation cannot be separated from the struggles of all the exploited and oppressed in America. Fighters against slavery like Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner and John Brown lit the embers that eventually became the fire of abolition. But they did not succeed until the intervention of a social class, the capitalist class, which mobilized the war that smashed slavery. Key to that victory was the 200,000 black soldiers and sailors who helped ensure Northern victory, and also the multitudes of black slaves who, with the coming of the Union armies, fled the plantations and thus destroyed the very foundations of the South’s slave economy.

Today, the fight for the full integration of black people into the country they built and the society they defined cannot be achieved within the framework of a social system based upon their oppression. Black

liberation demands the intervention of a social class, the multiracial proletariat. It demands a socialist revolution to smash capitalist rule. Key to that victory will be black people. While it also contains prisoners, declassed proletarians, petty-bourgeois elements and a thin layer within the bourgeoisie, the black population’s central juncture of integration is at the point of production as part of the multiracial working class. Black workers are slated to play an exceptional leadership role in an American social revolution.

Black oppression is the bedrock of U.S. capitalism and to touch it in any serious way is to touch the question of revolution. As a caste, black people face oppression regardless of their social class. At the same time, black oppression is deeply and fundamentally intertwined with class in this country. For the bourgeoisie, racist poison is an invaluable tool to keep the working class—white, black, immigrant—divided and its potential revolutionary power checked. For the American proletariat to free itself from wage slavery, it must answer the unresolved question of racial oppression by fighting for black liberation through socialist revolution. Our aim is to build the revolutionary multiracial workers party that will fight to complete the goals of freedom and equality of the “First War” launched by Nat Turner. ■

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Immigration...

(continued from page 1)

sowing fear and loathing in the population. Trump may have a long way to go to break Barack Obama’s record of more than 2.5 million deportations, but he does promise to throw a lot more money and manpower into I.C.E. and police agencies and to unshackle them from whatever nominal restraints they might have felt.

This was the message Trump delivered in his address to Congress last week when he announced the creation of the Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement office (V.O.I.C.E.). After railing yet again at the murder rate in Chicago, Trump introduced the program by shining a spotlight on Jamiel Shaw, the token black point man from his campaign whose son was killed by an undocumented immigrant. With this bit of theater, Trump declared his intent to give the cops even freer rein to enforce “law and order.” As the black population knows all too well, this means a war on them. No wonder the cops cheer

in defense of immigrants have included a sizable number of black protesters, who understand that the cops’ guns are loaded and aimed at them. A vocal supporter of racist “stop and frisk” police tactics, Trump is pumping up not only the immigration cops but also county and city police forces. He has even threatened to “send in the Feds” to combat “crime” in Chicago.

It is crucial to link defense of immigrants to the fight for black rights in this country, where the capitalist system, founded on chattel slavery, is rooted in the forcible segregation of the majority of the black population at the bottom of society. As the Spartacist League/U.S. and the Grupo Espartaquista de México wrote in a joint declaration during a wave of immigrant rights protests more than ten years ago (printed in WV No. 867, 31 March 2006):

“Opposition to anti-immigrant racism in the U.S. is directly intertwined with the struggle against black oppression. It is particularly important to combat anti-immigrant chauvinism among U.S.-born black and white workers, while immigrant workers must grasp that anti-black racism remains the touchstone of social reaction in the U.S.”

The integrated trade unions should be in the forefront of the defense of immigrant workers. But the American labor movement is crippled by a flag-waving leadership whose fundamental loyalty is not to the workers but to the profitability of U.S. capitalism. And this “America First” chauvinism plays right into the capitalist bosses’ divide-and-rule schemes, to the detriment of all workers.

There is no better example of this treachery than AFL-CIO chief Richard Trumka. The morning after Trump’s address to Congress, Trumka told Fox Business Network that he was pleasantly surprised by the speech, saying, “This was the first time the president has talked about legal immigration being used to drive down wages. We’ve been saying that for a long time.” Trumka & Co. sure have, and it’s a lie. It’s the capitalist bosses, not any sector of the working class, that drive down wages, and it is the labor tops’ class collaborationism, politically expressed mainly through their ties to the Democratic Party, that has disarmed workers in the face of the bosses’ relentless anti-union drives.

Back when Obama was trying to push through his bogus immigration “reform” package, Trumka gave his backing to the E-Verify program, a database of everyone legally permitted to work in the U.S. that has facilitated the mass firing and deportation of immigrants, including those involved in union organizing. Trumka’s vile immigrant-bashing is part and parcel of his program of “American jobs for American workers,” as he hails Trump’s calls for aggressive economic protectionism. The labor tops’ chauvinist protectionism poisons the consciousness of U.S. workers, preaching the lie that their



Washington Post

Labor/black mobilization organized by Spartacist League stopped anti-immigrant provocation by KKK in Washington, D.C., November 1982. The fight for black freedom and the struggle for immigrant rights must go forward together.

class interests lie with American capitalism against foreign competition and pitting them against their class brothers and sisters south of the border and overseas.

For a Multiracial Workers Party!

To get the unions back on their feet will take some hard struggle based on the understanding that the interests of the American working class are *counterposed* to those of their U.S. bosses, at home and abroad. To unite workers for such struggle, the labor movement must take up the fight for immigrant and black rights against the capitalist rulers’ attacks.

Black people remain that section of the population that is most keenly aware of the vicious nature of racist America. And along with black workers, who have a higher rate of union membership than white workers, immigrants are bound to play a leading role in future class battles. The throwing together of workers from different lands in the factories and workshops of the capitalist economy serves to break down national divisions as well as the parochialism of native-born workers. The foreign-born often bring with them a keen understanding of the depredations of U.S. imperialism in their homelands, as well as experience in hard-fought class battles. Indeed, the tiny handful of union victories over the last couple of decades were in the main delivered by predominantly immigrant labor in the service industries and meatpacking.

Labor needs a new leadership committed to class struggle and proletarian internationalism. That requires breaking labor’s ties to the Democrats, Trump and all capitalist parties and politicians. While Trumka dances with the devil, Maria Elena Durazo, head of the UNITE HERE’s immigration and civil rights committee, has just been re-elected vice chair of the Democratic National Committee. There she will work to keep union activists and immigrants wanting to fight Trump reaction shackled to the other party of racist U.S. capitalism.

The starting point for defending immi-

grant rights must be *opposition* to all the political parties and state agencies of the capitalist rulers. A number of Democratic mayors have responded to the anti-immigrant crackdown by declaring their domains “sanctuary cities,” where cops have discretion to not check on immigration status. For the likes of New York City’s Bill de Blasio, waging the racist “war on drugs” and “war on terror” are higher priorities than checking papers. For undocumented immigrants, any arrest—including for minor offenses—can prompt I.C.E. detention and deportation. Fingerprints are automatically shared with federal immigration authorities, regardless of the city’s professed “sanctuary” status. As we warned in “Trump Escalates Obama’s War on Immigrants” (WV No. 1105, 10 February), “It is downright delusional to believe that local agents of the capitalist state will establish oases of refuge for immigrants. The cops who gun down black and minority youth with impunity will not protect immigrants from the Feds.”

Today, as the government sets its sights on immigrants, Muslims and many others, the Democrats are working to refurbish their false credentials as friends of workers and the oppressed, including by playing a leading role in organizing the protests against Trump. The crying need is to forge a revolutionary leadership—a 70 percent black, Latino and other minority workers party that will champion all the exploited and oppressed in a fight for a workers America. By seizing the productive wealth of society and building a new order of material abundance and social equality, the multiracial working class in power will put an end to poverty, joblessness and other miseries produced by the capitalist profit system. With our comrades of the Grupo Espartaquista de México and other sections of the International Communist League, the Spartacist League/U.S. works for the victory of this cause internationally by struggling to reforge the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. ■



AP

Daniela Vargas, a “Dreamer,” was detained by I.C.E. and faces deportation after speaking out at March 1 press conference against anti-immigrant roundups.

Trump’s battle cry to “make America great again,” a slogan that conjures up an earlier time of U.S. supremacy when black people supposedly “knew their place.”

Immigrant Rights and the Fight for Black Freedom

The current anti-immigrant drive makes abundantly clear that *an injury to one is an injury to all!* It is the duty of the labor movement and of all fighters against racist oppression to defend immigrants with or without papers. We oppose all racist, nationally discriminatory immigration laws and regulations. We demand: No deportations! Full citizenship rights for everyone who has made it to this country!

It’s notable that recent demonstrations

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All U.S. Forces Out of the Near East Now!



NurPhoto



U.S. Army

Left: Hospital in Mosul destroyed by U.S. airstrike in December. Right: U.S. forces fire artillery barrage near Mosul in February.

Imperialist Bloodbath in Mosul

In October, Iraqi government troops, “advised” by the U.S. military and supported by American artillery and aerial bombardment, launched their assault to “liberate” Mosul, the largest city in the north of the country, from the reactionary Sunni fundamentalist Islamic State (ISIS). Iranian-backed Shia militias as well as Kurdish *pesh merga* forces joined in besieging the city. They were met with stiff resistance, and only depopulated villages and the eastern part of Mosul had been taken by January.

Last year, the American bourgeois media ran lurid, daily headlines denouncing the siege of Aleppo by Syrian government forces and their Russian allies, which were fighting the largely Islamist opposition forces that then controlled that city. In contrast, the barbarity of the U.S.-led siege of Mosul has been systematically covered up. By early January, at least 130,000 civilians had been displaced from Mosul to nearby refugee camps. In that month alone, U.S.-led forces killed at least 200 civilians. But these figures are merely the tip of the iceberg.

The UN mission in Iraq has stopped releasing even heavily doctored casualty reports and those issued by the Pentagon are pure fiction, but some of the truth about ongoing U.S. atrocities has nonetheless filtered through. On December 7, an American airstrike hit the Al Salem hospital complex in east Mosul. Three weeks later, an imperialist warplane struck the Ibn al-Athir hospital compound, killing up to 16 civilians. Another 22 civilians were killed in a January 3 airstrike, while up to 30 more were slaughtered on January 12.

The U.S. has since greatly stepped up its military support to the Shia regime in Baghdad, with some 50 airstrikes a day. The Iraqi government’s armed forces are now moving in on densely populated west Mosul with its 750,000 overwhelmingly Sunni inhabitants, setting the stage for a massive bloodbath. Already, some 45,000 people have been driven out of the city since this offensive began on February 19. This was one day before U.S. secretary of defense James “Mad Dog” Mattis arrived in Iraq to meet with the prime minister

and defense minister. In 2004, Mattis, then a Marine Corps general, commanded the U.S. assault on Falluja, which led to the slaughter of at least 600 civilians and reduced much of the city to rubble. During that attack, U.S. soldiers shot down civilians holding white flags of surrender and targeted ambulances trying to carry the

under Republican and Democratic presidents alike. The UN sanctions introduced under the first Bush administration in 1990 continued throughout Bill Clinton’s Democratic Party administration, which also carried out numerous airstrikes against the country. The sanctions led to the deaths of some 1.5 million Iraqis

private military contractors while other armed forces units rotate in and out. As journalist Patrick Cockburn noted in the *London Independent* (28 February): “Aside from closer involvement of US troops in the fighting, the Trump administration has so far changed very little in operations against Isis initiated under President Obama.”

As it again escalates its involvement in Iraq, the U.S. has also stepped up its attacks in Yemen. American fighter jets pounded alleged Al Qaeda targets in the country in early March. These attacks came several weeks after a widely publicized Navy SEAL raid that killed some 30 civilians, including nine children. At the same time, the U.S. is militarily backing Saudi Arabia—a theocratic monarchy whose social strictures are similar to those of ISIS—in its murderous war against the Houthis in Yemen. *U.S. out of the Near East now!*

Down With U.S. Imperialism!

The escalation of U.S. intervention in the Near East underscores the need for class-conscious workers in the U.S. to oppose the wars, occupations and depredations carried out by their “own” imperialist rulers. As we noted in “Syria Quagmire” (WV No. 1091, 3 June 2016): “It is not ISIS or some other Islamist force that has taken income inequality in the U.S. to virtually unprecedented heights. The same U.S. capitalist ruling class that wreaks death and destruction abroad gorges itself on profits while the workers it exploits have their jobs axed and their health and pension benefits torn up. This same ruling class unleashes its cops to kill black youth on the streets, holds nearly one-quarter of the world’s prison population in its dungeons and rounds up desperate immigrants for deportation.”

ISIS is itself the imperialists’ creation. Its precursors include those who cut their teeth as *mujahedin* (“holy warriors”) in the CIA-backed war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. In Iraq, it emerged out of the intercommunal slaughter triggered by the 2003 U.S. invasion, which ripped the country’s social fabric

continued on page 6



Reuters

Iraqis flee their homes in western Mosul, February. More than 200,000 people have been displaced by U.S.-led assault.

wounded and dying to the few medical facilities not destroyed by U.S. bombs.

U.S. forces in Falluja also used white phosphorus, a chemical weapon that burns deep into muscle and bone. Last fall, the *Washington Post* (23 September 2016) reported that the U.S. was again using white phosphorus during military operations east of Mosul. The depravity of the American imperialists, who rail against ISIS (and the Syrian regime) for the purported use of chemical weapons, is matched only by their hypocrisy.

Iraq has been turned into a killing field

through preventable disease and starvation. The 2003 U.S. invasion was launched by another Republican president, Bush Jr., and the occupation continued apace under the Democrat Barack Obama. Now Donald Trump’s viscerally anti-Muslim regime is further pulverizing Iraq. The two capitalist parties share a common interest in maintaining American supremacy in this strategic, oil-rich region.

The U.S. currently has more than 5,000 troops in Iraq and at least another 500 special forces operating in neighboring Syria. They are backed by thousands of