

NAFTA/USMCA

Down With U.S. Pillage of Mexico!

Last November, Donald Trump was joined by the leaders of Canada and Mexico in signing an update to the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). For 25 years, NAFTA has served as a key tool in the economic plunder of Mexico by the imperialist U.S. and its Canadian junior partner, laying waste to the countryside and brutally exploiting Mexico's working class. The new version of NAFTA—in the U.S. dubbed the United States-Mexico-

No to Protectionism!

Canada Agreement (USMCA)—will, if ratified by lawmakers in all three countries, enable the U.S. ruling class to squeeze ever more superprofits out of the Mexican proletariat, while also undercutting the economic viability of Canadian small farmers.

The NAFTA agreement finalized by Democratic president Bill Clinton wiped out the livelihoods of a great mass of poor rural workers, peasants and others in Mexico, as technologically advanced, highly productive and subsidized U.S. agribusiness gained unfettered access

to its markets. Before NAFTA, Mexico was largely self-sufficient in food production, but by 2014 it had become a net importer of food, buying much of its corn, meat, dairy products, eggs and poultry from the U.S. In addition, NAFTA was a great impetus to the explosive growth of the maquiladora industry and set off a wave of union-busting, wage-gouging and privatizations of nationalized industry demanded by the U.S. imperialists.

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Mexico: Strikes Sweep Maquiladora Factories

FEBRUARY 18—Over the past month, a series of strikes involving some 30,000 manufacturing workers crippled production in more than 70 of 115 maquiladoras in Matamoros, across the Río Bravo from Brownsville, Texas. In at least 48 plants, striking workers, organized in affiliates of the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM), won their demands for a 20 percent wage increase and an annual bonus of 32,000 pesos (about \$1,600). Known as the 20/32 Movement, this militant struggle in defiance of the union leadership continues to spread from factory to factory. The strike action has given expression to wide discontent, including among supermarket and sanitation workers, in a city where over 70 percent of the population lives in poverty, and it is beginning to catch fire elsewhere in the maquiladora zone.

Amid the strike wave, Susana Prieto Terrazas, a lawyer from Ciudad Juárez, is posing as an alternative to the reviled leadership of the CTM, which has historically been tied to the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), the bourgeois party that ruled Mexico for most of the 20th century. Prieto announced that she is going to sue the CTM in the capitalist courts and demands government audits of the unions—a grotesque call for state intervention in the mass organizations of the working class. The only reason that state authorities intervene into the unions is to tighten their control over them. Workers must oppose any and every intervention by the courts into the union. It is up to labor to clean its own house.

Brutally exploited by predominantly U.S. corporations, the maquiladora workers often earn less than \$1 an hour and toil in extremely hazardous conditions. Some are routinely exposed to lethal temperatures and molten metal, as strikers described to our comrades of the Grupo Espartaquista de México. At the same time, these workers are crucial to manufacturing production. By withholding their



Notigape.com

Mass rally of striking maquiladora workers in Matamoros, January 16.

Concentración masiva de huelguistas de las maquiladoras en Matamoros, 16 de enero.

labor, they threatened the profits of titans of U.S. industry, forcing the maquiladora owners to concede to their demands, even as the bosses have retaliated with hundreds of firings, intimidation and now police repression. This poses the need for joint struggle on both sides of the border against the capitalist exploiters.

We print below a translation of a leaflet issued on February 2 by the GEM and distributed to striking workers in Matamoros.

* * *

It's now been three weeks since tens of thousands of workers at 45 maquiladoras [mainly foreign-owned factories] in the border city of Matamoros, organized in the Sindicato de Jornaleros y Obreros Industriales de la Industria Maquiladora (SJOIIM) union, initiated wildcat strikes against the industry's despicable bosses.

The 100 percent increase decreed by the López Obrador government to the ridiculously low minimum wage in the northern border zone yielded few benefits for most maquiladora workers in a region that has one of the country's highest costs of living. Nevertheless, the capitalists, who don't want to see their profits reduced by even one iota, seized on the increase to attack previously won benefits. The striking workers have brought the maquiladora bourgeoisie to its knees; as of today, their demands—a 20 percent increase in wages and an annual bonus of 32,000 pesos—have been agreed to at 32 plants. These are without a doubt the most important strikes in decades, and the outcome could mark the course of the workers movement in the near future.

The local labor arbitration board declared the strikes illegal, but they none-

theless continue. It also gave the green light for mass firings of striking workers. The intimidation by the [right-wing clericalist Partido Acción Nacional] PAN state government has been unrelenting; but strikers have successfully repelled its police agents. A couple of days ago, a federal judge provisionally rescinded the local board's decision on the legal status of the strike. The workers should use whatever loophole bourgeois legality offers them to defend their strike. But they should have no faith whatsoever in the capitalist state, which is not an impartial arbiter between the classes. The bourgeois state, whose nucleus is the police, the army, the courts and the prisons, has as its task the defense of the capitalist system of production through the systematic repression of the exploited and oppressed.

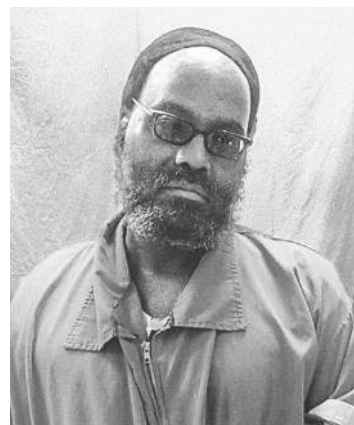
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Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now!

“Progressive” D.A. Continues State Vendetta



CSDN

On January 25, Philadelphia district attorney Larry Krasner announced that his office was appealing the December 27 ruling of Judge Leon Tucker of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, in which Mumia Abu-Jamal won the right to challenge his frame-up conviction. A former Black Panther spokesman, MOVE supporter and award-winning journalist, Mumia has been in prison hell for 37 years—30 of them on death row—falsely convicted of killing Police Officer Daniel Faulkner in December 1981. Tucker’s ruling threw out the Pennsylvania Supreme Court decisions from 1998 to 2012 that rubber-stamped Mumia’s frame-up, because a judge on that court gave an “appearance of bias.” The judge, Ronald Castille, had been the D.A. during Mumia’s first appeal of his conviction and death sentence.

We welcomed Judge Tucker’s ruling and protest Krasner’s appeal, a further demonstration of his commitment to keep Mumia entombed for life. The ink was barely dry on Tucker’s decision when a host of liberals, radical activists and reformist socialists stepped up their campaign calling on Philly’s top prosecutor “to do the right thing.” Krasner is “doing the right thing”—for the capitalist class that he was elected to serve. The D.A.’s office, no less than the cops, courts and prisons, is at the core of the state machinery of repression whose purpose is to defend the profits and rule of the bourgeoisie.

An online petition to the D.A. initiated by Mobilization 4 Mumia, which includes Workers World Party’s International Action Center, demanded that Krasner not appeal, lauding his supposed “concern for justice.” It also declared: “It was a people’s movement that paved the way for your election,” as if the “people” could take over the instrument of their own repression and wield it for their purposes. Even after Krasner filed the appeal, his supporters were undeterred. A February 6 letter sent to Krasner, now another online petition, calls on him to drop the appeal, grotesquely groveling that he could “be the one to end this pattern of racism in Mumia’s case.”

The Spartacist League and the Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle, non-sectarian, legal and social defense organization associated with the SL, will not sign these appeals to the D.A. The petitions sow illusions that the Democrat Krasner could run the apparatus of the capitalist state in the interests of the oppressed.

In racist capitalist America, a key function of the state is and has been to terrorize, frame up and kill those fighting for black freedom, foremost among them members of the Black Panther Party, the best of a generation of black radicals who subjectively saw revolution as the road to black equality. The Panthers were met with surveillance, harassment, disruption, frame-up and assassination. As a teenager, Mumia was placed on the FBI’s Adminis-

trative Index designating him to be rounded up in case of a “national emergency.”

By filing the appeal, Krasner broke the hearts of those who envisioned him at the head of a class of “progressive” prosecutors. Workers World Party, which gushed that “Krasner’s election victory was significant” (workers.org, 15 November 2017), now laments: “It appears the new DA is the same as the old DAs” (30 January). Indeed! There is no such thing as a progressive D.A. Whether a liberal like Krasner or a more mainstream Democrat like Kamala Harris, who, as San Francisco D.A. and then California Attorney General, fought tooth and nail to uphold wrongful convictions, D.A.s administer capitalist “law and order,” packing people off to prison.

Last October, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) hailed Krasner’s campaign as a blueprint for how activists can help elect “progressive” D.A.s nationwide on the Democratic Party ticket. ISO leader Paul D’Amato responded that he prefers to “apply mass pressure without offering any political support” (socialist-worker.org, 19 October 2018). The ISO’s strategy is pressure politics, whether helping Democrats win elections or demonstrating in the streets to beg them. Or, for that matter, attending monthly meetings of local activists with Krasner “to keep the DA aligned with the perspectives of the movement organizers” (socialistworker.org, 1 October 2018). As Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky said of the activity of such reformists, it is directed toward “training of the masses to become imbued with the inviolability of the bourgeois state.”

Krasner’s “progressive” credentials were based largely on his campaign promise to reduce mass incarceration. The reformists alibi the Philly D.A. by pointing to the pressure he is under from the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), with the ISO inventing “the contradictions of his job” (4 January). Krasner has made absolutely clear that there are no contradictions; a D.A. doesn’t have to be tight with the FOP to be on the same side. In a 9 February *Intercept* article, Krasner defended his decision to appeal Tucker’s ruling for the “celebrity” Mumia out of concern “about all of the unfamous, poor, nameless people whose cases deserve individual justice.” Krasner is “concerned” that those victims of capitalist injustice might

go free if Mumia prevails, as the D.A. bemoaned the possibility of “having to rehear possibly thousands of cases.”

While supporting Mumia’s use of every available legal means, our approach is one of class-struggle defense and our demand is for his freedom. Ever since we took up his case in 1987, we have fought for broader social forces, centrally the multi-racial proletariat, to champion Mumia’s struggle while aiming to dispel any illusions in the “justice” of the racist capitalist courts. We seek to imbue the working class with the understanding that ending capitalist exploitation and racial oppression necessitates sweeping away the ruling class and its state apparatus and establishing a workers state.

We urge our readers to donate to Mumia’s legal defense. Checks payable to the National Lawyers Guild should be sent to the Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, Johanna Fernandez, 158-18 Riverside Drive W., Apt. 6C-50, New York, NY 10032, earmarked “For Mumia Abu-Jamal’s Legal Defense.” ■



WV Photo

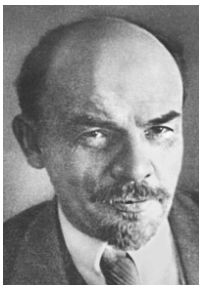
Philadelphia, October 2018: SL warns against illusions in D.A. at protest outside Mumia’s hearing.

Slavery and American Capitalism

Four hundred years ago, the first black African slaves were brought in chains to Virginia. In a 1953 speech excerpted below, veteran Trotskyist Richard S. Fraser explained the central role played by slavery and its legacy in the development and maintenance of American capitalism. As fighters for black liberation through socialist revolution, we stand on Fraser’s pioneering work on the material roots of black oppression in the U.S.



TROTSKY



LENIN

The racial division of society was born with capitalism and will die only with the death of this last system of exploitation. Before capitalism there was no race concept. There was no skin color exploitation, there was no race prejudice, there was no idea of superiority and inferiority based upon physical characteristics.

It was the advent of Negro chattel slavery in the western hemisphere which first divided society into races. In a measure the whole supremacy of western capitalism is founded upon this modern chattel slavery. The primary accumulation of capital which was the foundation of the industrial revolution was accrued largely from the slave trade.

The products of the slave system in the early colonies formed the backbone of European mercantilism and the raw materials for industrial capitalism. The three-cornered trade by pious New England merchants, consisting of rum, slaves and sugar cane, was the foundation of American commerce. Thus Negro slavery was the pivotal point upon which the foundations of the U.S. national economy were hinged.

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

WORKERS VANGUARD



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22 February 2019

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Black Liberation Struggle: The Key to American Socialist Revolution

In observance of Black History Month, we are pleased to publish the conclusion of an educational presented in December by comrade Jacob Zorn at a gathering of the Spartacist League in New York. Part One appeared in WV No. 1148 (8 February).

PART TWO

It is important to contrast how the race concept in the U.S. incorporated the “one-drop rule,” which was not the case elsewhere in the Americas. In Puerto Rico, there is a famous poem by Fortunato Vizcarrondo, “¿Y tu agüela, aonde ejtá?” whose title translates as, “Where is your grandmother?” In it, a black Puerto Rican responds to racist taunts by a white Puerto Rican, pointing out that both of them have black grandmothers, but his is a proud part of the family while the other’s is hidden. The poem is powerful because many “white” Puerto Ricans have black ancestors whom they deny. But such a poem wouldn’t work in the United States. Anybody in the U.S. with a black grandparent—or great-grandparent—is black, no matter his or her physical appearance.

For the overwhelming majority of slaves in the U.S., slavery was a permanent condition. Manumission was much less common than in other countries, so there was a much smaller population of free black people. There was at the same time a much larger white population than in much of the Caribbean.

Here it is important to keep in mind that about 500,000 African slaves ended up in the U.S.—out of 12.5 million enslaved Africans who were brought to the Americas between 1525 and 1866. More than a third of all these slaves ended up in Brazil—about ten times the number who ended up in the U.S. In Brazil by the time of abolition in 1888, there was a significant non-slave black population. According to the 1872 census, at least three-quarters of all black and mixed-race Brazilians—some 4.25 million people—were free. They constituted 40 percent of the entire population in Brazil.

Thus, the neat equation of black skin and being a slave broke down in Brazil in a way that it did not in the American South. I would argue that unlike in the United States, black people in Brazil do not form a caste. In fact, the term “black Brazilian” means something different in Brazil than it would to an American, since the “one-drop rule” does not exist in Brazil. Racial mixing is much more common—and accepted—in Brazil. There is a saying in Brazil, “money whitens.” This means that wealth and status can to some degree offset racial discrimination. In the U.S. it is usually the opposite: the caste nature of black oppression means that even the most distinguished black person is still subject to racist abuse.

Black oppression is central to Brazilian society, and black and mixed-race people are specially oppressed—but it takes a different form than in the United States. The prevalence of racial mixture—sometimes referred to as “racial democracy”—is used to *obscure* black oppression in Brazil. Of course, a revolutionary party in Brazil would crucially need to take up the banner of black liberation.

In the U.S., the free black population was much smaller. According to the cen-



Spartacist League contingent at “Millions March NYC” demonstration against racist police killings, December 2014.

sus of 1860, there were slightly less than 500,000 free black people in the United States—mostly in the Mid-Atlantic region or the Upper South—compared to almost four million slaves. In the U.S., people of mixed race were considered black, and the free black population was much more marginal. Southern states tried to force free blacks to leave, and many Northern states passed laws trying to prevent them from settling there. Some whites who opposed slavery supported the colonization movement, which held that free blacks could not live alongside whites and that former slaves would have to “colonize” places in Africa or Central America.

The largest number of free blacks in the country before the Civil War lived in the North, and as C. Vann Woodward observed, Jim Crow segregation “was born in the North and reached an advanced age before moving South in force” (*The Strange Career of Jim Crow* [1974]). The Democratic Party in the North was dedicated to segregation. During the Civil War, a Democratic Party propagandist even invented a word, “miscegenation,” to describe the rampant race-mixing that was sure to follow if black people achieved equality.

This treatment of free black people was the “prototype” of caste subjugation: that a population, officially free and not slave, could be segregated, discriminated against, and at times violently attacked for no reason other than their skin color. The first use of the term “caste” that I am aware of was in the front page of the first issue of William Lloyd Garrison’s *Liberator* in 1831, referring to free black people in Washington, D.C., as “continuing, even as free men an unenlightened and degraded caste.” In 1850, Frederick Douglass referred to “the *malign* feeling which passes under the name of prejudice against color” as a “mean spirit of caste.” He added: “Properly speaking, *prejudice against color* does not exist in this country.” Douglass then gave a pretty good description of race-color caste oppression of black people who were not slaves:

“We are then a persecuted people; not because we are *colored*, but simply because that color has for a series of years been coupled in the public mind with the

degradation of slavery and servitude. In these conditions, we are thought to be in our place; and to aspire to anything above them, is to contradict the established views of the community—to get out of our sphere, and commit the provoking sin of *impudence*.”

—“Prejudice Against Color” (1850), in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Vol. 2, ed. Philip S. Foner (1950)

After the recent furor over Trump’s appointment of Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, I read one of its classic decisions, *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857). The *immediate* importance of the case was whether Dred Scott should be free because he had lived in Illinois, a free state. The *historic* importance of this decision is that it invalidated the Missouri Compromise (1820), destroying the balance between slave and free states and paving the way for the Civil War. Most of the decision deals with whether black people who were not slaves were citizens of the United States. As Chief Justice Taney put it:

“The question is simply this: can a negro whose ancestors were imported into this country and sold as slaves become a member of the political community

formed and brought into existence by the Constitution of the United States, and as such become entitled to all the rights, and privileges, and immunities, guaranteed by that instrument to the citizen, one of which rights is the privilege of suing in a court of the United States in the cases specified in the Constitution?”

And Taney’s response was clear: Black people “had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race either in social or political relations, and so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” In other words, black people in the United States would forever be marked as inferior because their ancestors had been slaves. In a sense, the Dred Scott decision is an early defense of what would become race-color caste oppression.

The Civil War

This does not mean there was a straight line from the Supreme Court ruling in 1857 to black oppression today. One of the greatest periods of social struggle comes between the two: the Civil War and Reconstruction, which destroyed the entire slave system and opened the possibility of creating an interracial bourgeois democracy. Many academics, including several who are on the left side of the political spectrum, claim that there was no fundamental class difference between the slave South and the capitalist North.

Various leftists echo this. The crown of idiocy must go to Progressive Labor (PL). A 9 March 2018 *Challenge* article called Lincoln “a lifelong and committed racist,” a “white supremacist” and “ethnic cleanser.” Another PL article (16 June 2016) argues that “Juneteenth Hides Truth of Lincoln’s Racist Union ‘Victory.’” It seems pointless to polemicize against people who cannot tell the difference between Sherman’s march to the sea and Hitler’s Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union. To deny the progressive nature of the Civil War is to abandon historical materialism; it also takes capitalist society—and racist ideology—as everlasting. At bottom, it evinces a profound historical pessimism and liberal moralism.

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Spartacist Black History Month Forums

The Bolshevik Revolution and the Fight Against Black Oppression

The Red Summer of 1919: Class Struggle, Racist Terror and Union Busting

NEW YORK CITY

Saturday, February 23
3 p.m.

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

BAY AREA

Saturday, March 2
2:30 p.m.

303 Hudson Street, Lower Level, Oakland
(Berkeley Korean United Methodist Church,
at College and Manila Aves.)
For information: (510) 839-0851 • slbayarea@fastmail.net

LOS ANGELES

Sunday, March 3
4 p.m.

Immanuel Presbyterian Church,* 3300 Wilshire Blvd.
(At Berendo St., 2 blocks west of Wilshire/Vermont stop
on Red/Purple Line. Entrance on Berendo.)
For information: (213) 380-8239 • slsycla@sbcglobal.net

*The views expressed by the participants are not necessarily those of the Immanuel Presbyterian Church.

property. The *New York Times* spelled this out when it warned in June 1867 that “confiscation as proposed by Stevens and [Wendell] Phillips, or a division of land as suggested by Senator Wade, is a war upon property, which, once begun, would not be confined to the South.” The Paris Commune of 1871, which saw the working class seize power for the first time, frightened the bourgeoisie even more.

As we wrote in “Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom” (1966, reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9):

“Capitalist and slave alike stood to gain from the suppression of the planter aristocracy but beyond that had no further common interests. In fact, it was the Negroes themselves who, within the protective framework provided by the Reconstruction Acts and the military dictatorship of the occupying Union army, carried through the social revolution and destruction of the older planter class.”

The bourgeoisie was not going to do what was necessary to finish the historic tasks of the Civil War. The black population lacked the strength to do so (which is not to say that the freedmen and their allies did not fight bravely for their rights, as was clear in their fights for public education and against school segregation). And the working class was too immature—focused on its own struggles and tied to the Democratic Party in the North—to take up these tasks in the 1870s.

The First International, founded by Karl Marx, did have followers in the U.S., but they were not strong enough to win over black militants and workers to a common working-class party. Instead of forming a mass workers party, white workers remained loyal to the Democratic Party and black people remained loyal to the Republicans. The defeat of Reconstruction set the stage for the consolidation of the black population in the South into a race-color caste.

This brings up another slogan that we use: *Finish the Civil War!* This means that the tasks first posed by Reconstruction—the integration of black people into American society on the basis of full social, political and economic equality—remain outstanding 150 years later. And they can only be accomplished through workers revolution.

Black Oppression and the Rise of U.S. Imperialism

Everybody is familiar with Marx’s famous saying, in *Capital*, Vol. 1 (1867), that “labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.” This was more than a moral appeal against slavery. It was a statement of fact: Marx recognized that so long as half the country was dominated by slavery, workers would never be able to fight for even basic trade-union rights. The Civil War paved the way for the growth of American capitalism *and* the labor movement.

Virginia...
(continued from page 8)

political weeks of my life.” Brazile wasn’t so anguished when Barack Obama fired Shirley Sherrod, a black Department of Agriculture official, based upon lying accusations by Breitbart and Fox News.

Even as bourgeois pundits tout polls purportedly showing that black Virginians support Northam staying in office, black people are livid about the racist photo and the governor’s gross statements. Throughout the South, black people burn with indignation over having to walk past the hated symbols of the slavocracy while being told that the “bad old days are over.” Virginia itself was once a center of the raising and selling of slaves and the seat of the Confederacy. Many understand that this so-called “honorable Southern heritage” is bound up with past and present racist terror, lynchings and police brutality. As communists who fight to uproot black oppression through the establishment of working-class rule, we are for tearing down the Confederate rags-on-sticks and all monuments to the system of black chattel slavery.

The hullabaloo in Virginia exposes



Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle/ARS, NY
Panel from Jacob Lawrence’s “Migration Series” depicts Great Migration of black people in early 20th century to the North.

This was shown most clearly by the 1877 railroad strike, the first nationwide strike. The number of production workers in the U.S. rose from 1.3 million before the Civil War to over 5 million at the end of the 1800s. The consolidation of the black population as an oppressed race-color caste took place at the same time the working class was growing; black oppression was imprinted upon the labor movement. This period saw the development of the Populist movement of farmers against their oppression by the banks, railroads, etc. This is covered in comrade Brian Manning’s forum in March 2017 (“Race, Class and American Populism,” reprinted in *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 26, August 2018), so I won’t go into detail.

The Populist movement was not a working-class movement, but it did raise the specter of joint black-white struggle in the South. In order to undercut Populism, the bourgeoisie co-opted a section of the white leadership of the Populists into the Democratic Party, and passed a series of laws throughout the South that disenfranchised black voters and consolidated Jim Crow segregation. This is what Mike Goldfield called “the system of 1896” in *The Color of Politics* (1997).

Black oppression also left its indelible imprint on U.S. imperialism, which developed at the same time. U.S. foreign policy has always been racist, reflecting America’s genocide against American Indians and the domination of U.S. politics by the slavocracy. Nevertheless, there was a big change between the Mexican-American War of 1846-48 and the Spanish-American War of 1898. When the U.S. invaded Mexico, it took over only the section of Mexico that was the most sparsely populated in order to avoid having to incorporate non-white,

non-English-speaking non-Protestants. In 1869, there was a plan to annex Santo Domingo, which failed in part because of racist opposition.

But in 1898, after the *Plessy* decision, the U.S. seized Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Guam. By this time, racism no longer served as an *obstacle* to expansion, but as a *justification* for imperialism. The U.S. occupation of Cuba, which was a former slave society, *reinforced* the oppression of black Cubans. A few years later, the U.S. imperialists imposed strict segregation between black West Indian workers and white Americans in the Panama Canal Zone.

From 1870 to about 1900, only about 3 percent of Southern-born black people lived in the North. Then in the first half of the 20th century came the Great Migration, when millions of black people moved from the rural South to the urban North. This merits an entire class in itself, but I want to highlight two developments. First, the black question ceased to be a Southern question and became a nationwide question. Since black oppression in the North was not mainly a question of law, the conditions that black people faced in the North—residential segregation, police violence, poverty—underlined that black oppression was built into the base of American capitalism, not just its legal superstructure.

Second, black people became integrated into the industrial working class, albeit in the worst jobs and as the last hired and first fired. Religious and ethnic divisions between white workers of different backgrounds over time became subordinated to black-white divisions as the means to keep the working class down. This underscores the importance of the entire working class taking up the fight against black oppression, while also high-

lighting the role that black workers will play in the destruction of capitalism itself.

Race-Color Caste Analysis Complements Fraser

I want to conclude on the question of Richard Fraser and caste. Many comrades have observed that Fraser in his 1953 two-part lecture describes perfectly the mechanisms of *race-color caste* oppression. At the same time, Fraser opposed the term “caste” to describe the black question in the U.S. In his 1984 letter to us, Fraser notes that most of his ideas were based on black intellectuals, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, E. Franklin Frazier and Oliver Cromwell Cox. Later in the letter, he acknowledges an “original thought”: that racial oppression “will be overthrown with the overthrow of the capitalist class, and only by that.” The greatness of Fraser’s contribution to Marxism is just that: not only that he synthesized the disparate strands of black intellectual thought (which is a monumental task in itself) but he did so in the service of a *revolutionary program* to lead the working class to victory.

Rather than contradicting Fraser’s broader analysis of black oppression, the concept of color-caste oppression *complements* it. One of Fraser’s most insistent points is (as he put in his letter) “that the racial structure and race relations in the U.S. are historically unique. That no society has ever been founded upon a division based exclusively upon superficial characteristics.” To be honest, I long stumbled over this argument. The historical uniqueness of the American black question is obvious, but in my travels throughout the world, particularly Latin America, I have seen countries with a history of black chattel slavery in which black oppression today plays an important role in maintaining capitalism. As I hope I explained here, the historical evolution of race-color caste explains the fundamental difference between, say, black oppression in Cuba and Brazil, on the one hand, and in the United States on the other.

Fraser emphasized how the entire weight of American capitalism rests upon black oppression. This means that the bourgeoisie uses its arsenal of state repression to maintain black oppression. But it also means that the entire edifice of U.S. imperialism is built on an unstable foundation, since the struggle against black oppression shakes capitalist America to its core. This is even more true today, as the decaying bourgeoisie spits on its own heritage, defending the Confederacy and attacking the Fourteenth Amendment. This makes even more crucial our task of building a revolutionary workers party, 70 percent black, Latino and other minority, that can “clarify for *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.” ■

and democracy for all.” It is a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie—an overwhelmingly white ruling class that exploits workers of all races and brutally subjugates black people and the rest of the oppressed. Cynical talk about “reconciliation” from Northam and other Democrats is designed to throw sand in the eyes of the masses. Under cap-

italism—a system of private ownership of the means of production and huge profits for a tiny few—there can be no common ground between the oppressors and the oppressed. Democrats are no friends of workers and black people. *Down with the two capitalist parties! For a workers party that fights for a workers America! ■*

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(viene de la página 8)

Los obreros se han impuesto también a la dirección de su sindicato, que ha avalado las huelgas sólo por la enorme presión de sus bases. El hartazgo con respecto a las venales burocracias sindicales cetemistas ha estallado. Los principales crí-



López Obrador welcomes U.S. secretary of state Mike Pompeo after having just won Mexican presidential election, July 2018.

López Obrador es un político burgués y Morena un partido capitalista, como el PRI, el PAN y el PRD. Ofreciéndose como una alternativa al neoliberalismo, los populistas burgueses apuntalan el orden capitalista al reforzar las cadenas que atan al combativo proletariado mexicano. Al pregonar los intereses comunes del “pueblo”, el nacionalismo populista oscurece la línea de clase que divide a los obreros y a la burguesía que explota su trabajo. Buscando apoyarse en los oprimidos, el gobierno de AMLO únicamente ofrece una opción de recambio para administrar el sistema de ganancias capitalistas.

La emancipación nacional que las masas añoran no puede ser conseguida en los marcos del capitalismo. La débil burguesía mexicana se encuentra atada por mil lazos a los imperialistas, y es incapaz de desembarazarse de su yugo. AMLO apoya la profundización del saqueo de México que trae consigo el nuevo T-MEC, por ejemplo. El único camino a la liberación de las empobrecidas masas urbanas y rurales mexicanas es el de la revolución permanente de León Trotsky —vindicada en los hechos por la Revolución Rusa de 1917—. Para satisfacer las demandas democráticas de la población, como la emancipación nacional y la revolución agraria, se requiere que el proletariado tome el poder a la cabeza de todos los explotados y los oprimidos a través de una revolución socialista. Al expropiar a la burguesía, un gobierno obrero y campesino en México sentaría las bases para la construcción de una economía planificada y encararía inmediatamente la necesidad de extender la revolución socialista al coloso imperialista estadounidense. La emancipación de la clase obrera y los oprimidos en México está indisolublemente vinculada a la de los obreros en EE.UU., donde millones de migrantes mexicanos son un componente clave del poderoso proletariado multirracial. Esto subraya la necesidad crucial de construir partidos leninistas-trotskistas alrededor del mundo, tarea con la cual el GEM y la Liga Comunista Internacional entera estamos comprometidos. ■

(continued from page 1)

The implementation of NAFTA 25 years ago put the finishing touches on a capitalist paradise of superexploitation for U.S. and other manufacturers along the border: cheap labor, tax incentives for the blood-sucking foreign investors and a draconian

What is needed is a class-struggle leadership of the unions based on the understanding that the interests of the proletariat are irreconcilably opposed to those of the bosses. The struggle for internal union democracy and independence from the state cannot be separated from the struggle for a revolutionary leadership. As

**Ciudad Juárez,
México: obreros
en la maquiladora
operada por
Delphi Electronics
ensamblan arneses
de cableado
para fabricantes
de automóviles
estadounidenses,
japoneses y
chinos, 2014.**



The national emancipation that the

Having expropriated the bourgeoisie, a workers and peasants government would establish the foundation for the construction of a planned economy and immediately take up the need to extend the socialist revolution to the imperialist U.S. colossus. Emancipation of the working class and oppressed in Mexico is indissolubly linked to that of the workers in the U.S., where millions of Mexican emigrants are a key part of the powerful multiracial proletariat. This underlines the crucial need to build Leninist-Trotskyist parties around the world. The GEM and the International Communist League are committed to this task. ■

6

NAFTA...

(continued from page 1)

In the U.S. and Canada, the NAFTA era has seen an intensification of the bosses’ war on unions and social benefits.

We have opposed NAFTA from its inception. As it was being negotiated in 1991, the Spartacist League/U.S., Grupo Espartaquista de México and Trotskyist League of Canada (now the Trotskyist League in Quebec and Canada) issued a joint statement titled: “Stop U.S. ‘Free Trade’ Rape of Mexico” (see WV No. 530, 5 July 1991). It declared: “There is a burning need for an *internationalist* proletarian opposition which stands with the working class and impoverished peasantry of Mexico against the imperialist assault. The Canadian, U.S. and Mexican sections of the International Communist League are dedicated to building a revolutionary vanguard that can unite the working masses of the continent in common class struggle.”

In contrast, U.S. labor officialdom, in concert with Trump and many Democrats, opposes NAFTA from a position of chauvinist protectionism. The union bureaucrats promote the lie of a commonality of interests between the U.S. working class and the capitalist rulers. In fact, the profits of this country’s capitalists are derived from exploiting both U.S. and foreign workers. By waving the flag of “America first” protectionism, the union tops treacherously set workers in this country against their Mexican, English Canadian and Québécois class brothers and sisters. The scapegoating of foreign workers for the loss of jobs in the U.S. also fosters anti-immigrant prejudices. Against attempts to pit native-born and immigrant workers against each other, which can only benefit the bosses, we say: *Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations!*

The purpose of NAFTA was to increase the flagging competitiveness of U.S. imperialism against its main rivals, Germany and Japan. The modern capitalist world is characterized by the export of capital. A handful of imperialist powers carved out spheres of exploitation, including markets and sources of cheap labor, which they compete to redivide, a process described by Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin in his classic work *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916).

NAFTA/USMCA and other imperialist trade blocs, such as the German-dominated European Union (EU), which the ICL opposes on principle, are reactionary attempts by the great powers to get a leg up on their adversaries. The push by Washington to revise NAFTA and to impose other protectionist measures comes amid the continued relative economic decline of the United States, which still dominates the globe militarily. The USMCA proposes to increase the percentage of auto components that must be sourced from within the territory covered by the agreement. This provision is aimed at U.S. imperialism’s competitors in Europe and Japan as well as China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state.



Reuters

Democratic president Bill Clinton signs NAFTA into law, December 1993. Spartacists denounce U.S. “free trade” rape of Mexico at protest the next month outside Mexican consulate in San Francisco against murderous repression of Zapatista peasant revolt.



WV Photo

Already, Trump has launched a trade war with China and is threatening one with the EU. As history shows, trade wars lead to shooting wars.

Trade-Union Tops Spew Protectionist Poison

The USMCA has yet to go before Congress, but many Democrats have already voiced opposition, primarily on the basis that it is not protectionist enough. False “friends of labor” in the Democratic Party, joined by Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, a darling of the left, wrap their protectionist prescriptions in talk of “strong enforcement mechanisms” for supposed labor and environmental protections. The



Bloomberg

United Steelworkers head Leo Gerard congratulates Trump for signing memorandum that paved way for anti-China steel tariffs, April 2017.

labor bureaucrats have been singing the same fraudulent tune, adding a hypocritical veneer of concern for poorly paid Mexican workers. One so-called worker protection in the new NAFTA that the union tops want strictly enforced is a provision that 40 percent of a car’s components be manufactured in plants where workers make at least \$16 an hour—over four times the current average wage of Mexican auto workers. The concern, though, is not to get Mexican workers better wages but to get Mexican jobs shipped to the U.S.

While the free flow of U.S. capital has wreaked havoc in Mexico, it has simultaneously enhanced the size and potential social power of the Mexican proletariat. The further integration of North American production under NAFTA has increased the opportunities and necessity for united class struggle of workers in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. Witness the massive strike wave that has swept through the maquiladoras in Matamoros and is extending into neighboring cities (see article, page 1). Many of these factories produce parts or do assembly work for General Motors, Ford and other automakers; the strikes idled at least one Ford assembly plant in Canada and threatened production at others.

The strikes in Matamoros come on the heels of the announcement by GM that it will close five plants in Ohio, Michigan, Maryland and Ontario, Canada, throwing thousands of unionized auto workers out on the streets. Militant action by U.S. workers alongside their Mexican and Canadian class allies against the auto bosses is urgently posed. Criminally, the United Auto Workers misleaders, along with Canada’s Unifor union bureaucrats, are calling to boycott GM cars assembled in Mexico! So much for improving the lot of Mexican workers.

The upper echelons of the AFL-CIO chastise some Mexican unions for not being sufficiently independent from the bosses. That’s rich! The U.S. union bureaucrats

right-wing coups. In 2002, the international arm of the AFL-CIO had a hand in the attempted coup in Venezuela against then-president Hugo Chávez, including by channeling CIA funds to the coup plotters. Revitalizing the unions as militant battalions of the multiracial working class requires a fight to forge a class-struggle leadership, independent of and in opposition to the capitalists and their political parties. *Break with the Democrats! For a revolutionary workers party!*

Workers Revolution Will Sweep Away Imperialism

The USMCA also provides the U.S. rulers a new weapon in their counterrevolutionary drive against China, the most powerful remaining country where capitalism has been overthrown. One clause allows the U.S. to pull out of the accord if a signatory pursues a separate trade agreement with a “nonmarket country,” giving Washington a veto over Canada or Mexico negotiating a pact with China.

China is a workers state, albeit deformed from its inception since it has been ruled by a parasitic Chinese Communist Party

bureaucracy rather than organs of workers democracy. The 1949 Chinese Revolution, led by Mao’s peasant-based army, expropriated the capitalists and landlords and liberated the world’s most populous country from imperialist subjugation. Behind the U.S. trade war with Beijing is the goal, shared by Republicans and Democrats alike, of destroying the Chinese deformed workers state and restoring capitalist rule there.

It is in the interest of the international proletariat to defend China against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution. The ruling bureaucratic caste must be ousted through a proletarian political revolution that establishes a regime based on workers democracy and committed to the fight for world socialism.

Another new element in the USMCA is the elimination of Canadian tariffs on a higher amount of U.S. dairy imports, after Trump made opposition to them a battle cry. Granting American dairy interests freer access will almost certainly result in the ruin of many Canadian small dairy farmers, the majority of whom are concentrated in nationally oppressed Quebec. The slashing of these tariffs is overwhelmingly opposed in Quebec. But since Quebec has no national sovereignty, negotiation of the USMCA was carried out by the Anglo-Canadian bourgeoisie, which did not hesitate to sacrifice Québécois dairy and other farmers in hopes of securing Ontario’s auto industry. This underscores the need to struggle against the national oppression of Quebec, which can be a motor force for workers revolution. The ICL fights for Quebec independence and working-class rule.

The U.S. rulers have long oppressed Mexico, including stealing half its territory in the 19th century. A workers government in the U.S. would return to Mexico certain contiguous regions, predominantly Spanish-speaking, of the Southwest that were seized from Mexico in the 1846-48 Mexican-American War. Specifically, the region between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande/Río Bravo will be given back. This land was falsely claimed by Texas after it signed the Treaties of Velasco and seceded from Mexico in 1836. Such a territorial transfer would send a powerful message that U.S. workers in power repudiate the chauvinism of the previous ruling class, bolstering support for proletarian revolution throughout the hemisphere. The International Communist League, in our fight to reforge Leon Trotsky’s Fourth International, seeks to construct the communist parties that are necessary to lead those revolutions. ■



Newscom

U.S. and Mexican ruling classes profit while immiserating the masses. A hovel in desert borderlands of Ciudad Juárez in the shadow of freight trains servicing half-trillion-dollar trade between U.S. and Mexico.

WORKERS VANGUARD
Suplemento en español

Numero 9
10 de agosto de 2018

El despidado Trump y los demócratas hipócritas

¡No a las detenciones!
¡Plenos derechos de ciudadanía para los inmigrantes!

Esquema: mujer hondureña y su hijo son arrestados por la patrulla fronteriza en Texas. **Derechos:** Spartacist League durante una manifestación de protesta de los inmigrantes en Nueva York.

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**por**

The Democrats and the Racist Cesspool in Virginia

If one needed further proof that both capitalist parties are class enemies of the workers and the oppressed, take a look at the current strife in the Virginia Democratic Party. For Democratic politicians like Representative Donald McEachin, the party's internal turmoil is a "nightmare." But for the vast majority of black people and of society as a whole, the real nightmare is the deepening exploitation, brutality and cruelty of racist American capitalism, whether overseen by Democrats or Republicans. As the Dems try to figure out which group of potential voters to throw under the bus, the Republicans, who groove on overt racism, are gleeful.

When the bottom is stirred in the bourgeois political cesspool, all kinds

Master's House in Disarray

of ugly things come crawling out. Virginia governor Ralph Northam's medical school yearbook page features a photo of someone in blackface alongside someone in KKK regalia. After first admitting he was in the photo, Northam then denied it, while admitting he had worn blackface another time. The yearbook photo and Northam's response are sickening and a kick in the face to black people and all opponents of racial oppression. Subsequent "my blackface" revelations, including by state attorney general Mark Herring, have shed more light on the anti-

black racism of both capitalist parties.

Added to the toxic brew, a third top Virginia Democrat, black lieutenant governor Justin Fairfax, has been accused of rape; he maintains his innocence. We do not know what happened between Fairfax and his two accusers. It is notable that only Fairfax has been threatened with removal from office through impeachment proceedings—presumption of innocence and the right to a trial be damned. As one black Virginian told the New York Times: "You're more able to survive as a white man in America who

wore blackface than as a black man that's facing #MeToo accusations" (9 February).

The grime and slime of bourgeois politics always come with bucketfuls of corruption, deceit and hypocrisy. In an attempt to limit the damage to the "Democratic brand," party bigwigs initially demanded Northam's head, before shifting their ire to Fairfax. But they worry about lower black voter turnout in next year's elections if *only* Fairfax is forced out. And if Northam and Herring also go, the governorship will devolve to the speaker of the house—a Republican. For Donna Brazile, former chair of the Democratic National Committee, "This has been one of the most difficult

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Ola de huelgas sacude maquiladoras en México

18 de febrero—A lo largo del mes pasado, una serie de huelgas de unos 30 mil obreros de manufactura afectó severamente la producción en más de 70 de las 115 maquiladoras de Matamoros, que está al otro lado del Río Bravo de Brownsville, Texas. En por lo menos 48 plantas, los huelguistas organizados en la Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM) ganaron sus demandas por un aumento salarial del 20 por ciento y un bono anual de 32 mil pesos (unos \$1600). Conocido como el movimiento 20/32, esta lucha combativa, que ha desafiado a la dirección sindical, sigue extendiéndose de fábrica a fábrica. Las huelgas obreras le han dado expresión al amplio descontento, incluso entre trabajadores de tiendas de autoservicio y colecta de basura, en una ciudad donde más del 70 por ciento de la población vive en la pobreza, y se está empezando a esparcir el fuego más ampliamente en la zona maquiladora.

En torno a la ola de huelgas, Susana Prieto Terrazas, una abogada de Ciudad Juárez, se presenta como una dirección alternativa a la odiada dirección de la CTM, la cual históricamente ha estado atada al Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), el partido burgués que gobernó México durante la mayor parte del siglo veinte. Prieto anunció que va a demandar a la CTM en los tribunales capitalistas y exige que el gobierno haga auditorías de los sindicatos —un llamado grotesco a la intervención del estado en las organizaciones de la clase obrera—. La única razón por la cual los funcionarios estatales intervienen en los sindicatos es para reforzar su control. Los obreros deben oponerse a cualquier intervención de los tribunales en los sindicatos. Le corresponde al movimiento obrero limpiar su propia casa.

Explotados brutalmente por las empresas predominantemente estadounidenses, los obreros de las maquiladoras a menudo ganan menos de \$1 por hora y trabajan en condiciones extremadamente



El Universal

Matamoros, 30 de enero: huelguistas afuera de una de las más de 70 fábricas golpeadas por acciones obreras desde principios de enero.

Matamoros, January 30: Striking workers outside one of over 70 factories hit by labor action since early January.

peligrosas. Como les describieron huelguistas a nuestros camaradas del Grupo Espartaquista de México, algunos trabajadores están expuestos a temperaturas letales y metal fundido. A la vez, estos trabajadores son cruciales en la producción manufacturera. Al negarse a trabajar, amenazaron las ganancias de los titanes de la industria estadounidense y forzaron a los dueños de las maquiladoras a conceder a sus demandas, aunque los patrones se han vengado con cientos de despidos, intimidación y ahora represión policiaca. Esto plantea la necesidad de lucha conjunta en ambos lados de la frontera contra los explotadores capitalistas estadounidenses.

Publicamos a continuación un volante del 2 de febrero del GEM, el cual fue distribuido a los huelguistas en Matamoros.

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Son ya tres semanas desde que decenas de miles de obreros de 45 maquiladoras

en la ciudad fronteriza de Matamoros, agrupados en el Sindicato de Jornaleros y Obreros Industriales de la Industria Maquiladora (SJOIIM), decidieron comenzar huelgas salvajes contra los despreciables patrones de esta industria. El incremento del 100 por ciento al ridículamente bajo salario mínimo en la zona de la frontera norte, decretado por el gobierno de López Obrador, reportó pocos beneficios para la mayoría de los trabajadores de este sector en una de las regiones con el costo de vida más alto del país. Sin embargo, los capitalistas, que no quieren ver sus ganancias reducidas ni un ápice, tomaron como pretexto dicho incremento para atacar prestaciones previamente conseguidas. Los obreros huelguistas han puesto de rodillas a la burguesía de las maquiladoras; al día de hoy, sus demandas —20 por ciento de aumento al salario y un bono anual de 32 mil pesos— han sido aceptadas en 32 de las plantas. Éstas son sin duda las huelgas más importantes en décadas, y su resulta-

do podría marcar el curso del movimiento obrero en el futuro próximo.

La Junta de Conciliación y Arbitraje local declaró ilegales las huelgas que aún continúan y dio luz verde al despido masivo de trabajadores en paro. Las intimidaciones por parte del gobierno estatal panista han sido constantes; sus agentes policiacos han sido repelidos con éxito por los huelguistas. Hace un par de días, un juez federal echó provisionalmente atrás el fallo de la Junta de Conciliación y Arbitraje local. Los obreros deben utilizar cualquier resquicio que la legalidad burguesa les ofrezca en defensa de su huelga. Sin embargo, no deben tener confianza alguna en el estado capitalista, el cual no es un árbitro imparcial entre las clases. El estado burgués —cuyo núcleo son la policía, el ejército, los tribunales y las cárceles— tiene como tarea la defensa del sistema capitalista de producción mediante la represión sistemática de explotados y oprimidos. Sin importar quién lo administre, este estado no puede ser reformado para servir a los obreros y los pobres. Es necesario que el movimiento obrero organizado se solidarice con los obreros de las maquiladoras, flexionando su poderoso músculo. La huelga ya se ha extendido a los trabajadores de Coca-Cola en la misma ciudad, que además pertenecen al mismo sindicato, y el día de ayer a tres maquiladoras más cuyos obreros están agrupados en el Sindicato de Trabajadores de Plantas Maquiladoras y Ensambladoras (STPME). Los espartaquistas decimos: ¡Por acciones huelguísticas en defensa de los trabajadores de las maquiladoras! ¡Sindicalizar a los no sindicalizados! ¡Reinstalación inmediata de todos los despedidos!

Con la entrada en vigor del TLCAN hace ya 25 años se terminó de moldear un paraíso de superexplotación a lo largo de la frontera para las manufactureras estadounidenses y de otros lugares: mano

sigue en la página 6