

Free Julian Assange!

APRIL 15—Last Thursday, Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, was dragged out of the Ecuadorean Embassy in London by British cops and arrested. He is now being held in the maximum security Belmarsh prison on an extradition request from Washington. Assange, an Australian citizen, has been in the crosshairs of U.S. imperialism for years. Both Democrats and Republicans have been howling for his head ever since 2010 when WikiLeaks released a trove of documents provided by Chelsea Manning, then an intelligence analyst in the

U.S. Army, that exposed U.S. war crimes in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. *No extradition! Free Julian Assange now! For unobstructed passage to any country that grants him asylum!*

Assange resided in the embassy for seven years, having been granted political asylum by Ecuador's then president Rafael Correa. At the time, he was facing deportation to Sweden on bogus allegations of "sexual molestation" and "rape," which was simply a step toward handing him over to U.S. authorities. Correa's successor, the U.S. imperialist

lackey Lenín Moreno, revoked Assange's asylum (as well as the Ecuadorean citizenship he had acquired). Trampling on the sovereignty of his country, Moreno threw open the embassy doors to the British cops.

Workers in the U.S. and Britain must fight to keep Assange from falling into the clutches of the U.S. imperialist butchers. The Partisan Defence Committee, a legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League/Britain, wrote to the British

*continued on page 5*



Ruptly

Arrest of Julian Assange, April 11.

Killer Drones and Imperialist Terror

U.S. Forces Out of Somalia Now!



AP

Bodies of Somalis killed in U.S.-led raid last May. AFRICOM head, Marine General Thomas D. Waldhauser (second from right), greeted by U.S. ambassador on visit to Somalia, November 2018.



U.S. Navy

The war waged by the U.S. imperialists against the Islamist forces of Al Shabab in Somalia has been sharply escalated under President Trump, wreaking further havoc on that already devastated country. The U.S.-led terror campaign, which Washington expects to last for years to come, has driven some 2.6 million Somalis from their homes; untold thousands languish in squalid refugee camps. As a result of military terror, drought and disease, famine stalks the population.

The ground war against the Shabab militia is being carried out by imperialist proxies—more than 20,000 African Union troops and the ragtag Somali army—overseen by some 500 U.S. military personnel. Meanwhile, unmanned and manned U.S. aircraft rain death and destruction on Somali villages in areas controlled by the

Islamists. By the Pentagon's own count, over 250 people have been blown away in some 30 airstrikes so far this year.

That carnage is a direct continuation of Barack Obama's drone attacks in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and elsewhere that symbolized his execution of the "war on terror." Apologists for the capitalist Democratic Party claim that the Trump administration has lifted Obama-era restrictions on drone strikes by declaring wide swaths of Somalia "areas of active hostilities." In fact, the rules of engagement had already been loosened toward the end of Obama's presidency. As the *New York Times* (27 November 2016) reported at the time:

"In Somalia, the 2013 rules limiting airstrikes away from 'areas of active hostilities' still apply for now. But in practice, restrictions are being eased there in another way: Over the past year, the military has routinely invoked a built-in exception to those rules for airstrikes taken in 'self-defense,' which can include strikes to help foreign partners even when Americans are not at direct risk."

Layer upon layer of secrecy and deceit—including adamant Pentagon denials of

civilian deaths—keep the sordid reality of U.S. military operations in Africa from the public eye. However, Amnesty International's report *The Hidden US War in Somalia*, published last month, details a number of cases of U.S. drones blowing away farmers in their fields, individuals in their vehicles and other noncombatants. Retired brigadier general Donald Bolduc, who was commander of Special Operations Command Africa until 2017, told Amnesty that individuals are considered lawful targets based solely on four criteria: age, gender, location and geographical proximity to Al Shabab, that is, all military-age males in its territory are fair game. During a review prompted by the report, AFRICOM, the U.S. Africa Command, grudgingly admitted to having killed two civilians a year ago.

Today, the U.S. has at least 7,200 troops and 34 military bases in Africa, including the airfield, Camp Baledogle in Somalia. The U.S. bases are mainly concentrated in West Africa, Libya and the Horn of Africa, serving as launchpads for drone attacks and commando raids against those

designated "terrorists" by Washington. In one August 2017 raid, documented by Christina Goldbaum in two *Daily Beast* articles (29 November and 6 December 2017), U.S. special ops and Somali army troops stormed a village, slaughtered ten unarmed civilians and placed weapons near the bodies to disguise the massacre. Such operations are carried out under the September 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force that was passed with the near-unanimous support of Congress, including "progressive" 2020 Democratic presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders.

The U.S. military presence in Africa can only sow increased instability, violence and desperation throughout the continent, which has suffered over a century of colonial and neocolonial rape by the European and U.S. imperialists. It is in the interest of the American proletariat to demand the withdrawal from Somalia of all U.S. troops, as well as those of the African Union. While we communists oppose everything that Islamist reactionaries like Al Shabab stand for, we recognize that any

*continued on page 3*



# Refuting the Lies

# Yes, Dianne Feinstein Raised the Flag of Slavery

We reprint below a March 23 letter by the Bay Area Spartacist League to the editor of the San Francisco Bay View newspaper. It was published April 2 on the Bay View's website under the headline: "It's True: As San Francisco Mayor, Dianne Feinstein Did Repeatedly Fly a Confederate Flag in Front of City Hall."

\* \* \*

To the Editor:

The *San Francisco Bay View* has been falsely accused of retailing fake news for publishing the article "1984: Confederate flag of slavery taken down from San Francisco Civic Center—3 times!" (2 August 2015). The article first appeared in the 10 July 2015 issue of *Workers Vanguard* (WV), the newspaper of the Spartacist League, under the headline, "We Tore Down the Flag of Slavery!" These events were reported at the time not only in our paper but also in newspapers such as the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *Oakland Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times* and *USA Today*, as well as the national black press, including the *New York Amsterdam News*, *Chicago Defender* and *Oakland Post*.

Apparently, once again, supporters of Democratic California Senator Dianne Feinstein are determined to write out of history the fact that, as mayor of San Francisco at the time, she infamously fought to keep the flag of slavery and KKK race terror flying in front of City Hall. One tack is to claim that the flag was taken down in 1964 and therefore the events described in the article never happened at all.

A slightly less crude approach is taken by a 27 February post on snopes.com, the "fact checking" website of Snopes Media Group (one of whose directors is a former *Wall Street Journal* executive). Snopes admits that militants of the Spartacist League and Labor Black League for Social Defense took down this incitement to genocide in 1984, but rates as "unproven" that Feinstein had anything to do with it being there. They say, "The Confederate battle flag was only replaced once in April 1984, not repeatedly" and that "it's not clear that Feinstein herself, as opposed to another city official or even a rogue employee, was responsible for its replacement." Snopes in all seriousness quotes Thomas Malloy, then general manager of the city's Recreation and Park Department, saying that a Confederate flag was put up the third time "quite by accident"! Snopes does not mention that Doris Ward, a black member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, found this statement as unbelievable as we did, declaring: "I do not accept that it got up there inadvertently" (*Oakland Tribune*, 6 July 1984).

The story does start in 1964. But this only underscores that Feinstein knew exactly what she was doing. At that time, the Civil Rights movement was raging across the country. The Confederate battle flag flew over the Alabama statehouse of George "segregation forever" Wallace and the KKK brutally murdered three civil rights workers in Mississippi. Mass mobilizations against racist discrimination had shaken San Francisco.



WV Photo

**15 April 1984: Spartacist League supporter Richard Bradley climbs flagpole in front of San Francisco Civic Center to rip down Confederate battle flag.**

In June 1964, a display of "historical flags" went up in San Francisco Civic Center including the KKK Confederate battle flag. Within days, Democratic Party mayor John Shelley was inundated with demands to take down this "badge of slavery," as documented recently by Peter Hartlaub in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (25 August 2017). On July 12, 1964, during a 40,000-strong civil rights demonstration protesting the Republican Party convention then taking place in the city, activists pulled it down and put it in the trash where it belonged (*San Francisco Examiner*, 13 July 1964). It had to be removed two more times, as Shelley kept putting it back up. Finally, in late August, Shelley substituted the lesser-known official Confederate "Stars

and Bars," which stayed up for a number of years. (See *San Francisco Examiner*, issues dated 25 July, 22 August and 28 August 1964, 2 May 1967.)

In 1964, Dianne Feinstein had already been active in San Francisco's Democratic Party politics for several years. By 1981, Feinstein had become mayor herself. Confederate-flag-waving Klan and Nazi terrorists, emboldened by Ronald Reagan's racist reaction and war drive against

Board of Supervisors orders it down" (*San Francisco Examiner*, 17 April 1984).

In 1984, the Democratic national convention was coming to town and Feinstein was angling for a spot on the Democratic Party ticket as vice president. To that end, she was eager to "make San Francisco safe for the neanderthal Strom Thurmond types and the current George Wallacites, her Dixiecrat brothers-in-arms who will soon be arriving," as we put it at the time (WV No. 358, 6 July 1984).

After an appeal by Supervisor Ward, Feinstein grudgingly agreed not to put the KKK flag up again. But the city pressed charges against Bradley. As Colin Kalmbacher, writing on the website *Law & Crime* (27 February 2018), put it: "Feinstein's office worked with San Francisco's then-District Attorney Arlo Smith on the prosecution. Of particular concern to Feinstein was that Bradley make 'restitution' to the City of San Francisco for the destroyed flag." Bradley demanded his day in court to put Feinstein on trial for defending the flag of slavery.

On April 29, Bradley climbed the now-bare pole a third time to raise a replica of the garrison flag flown at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, in 1861, when it was attacked by the slaveowners' Confederacy in the first battle of the Civil War (*San Francisco Examiner*, 30 April 1984). Feinstein was furious. At Bradley's trial, the vice-mayor testified that Feinstein had personally ordered the Fort Sumter flag taken down the next day and delivered to the mayor's office, only to be shredded and thrown away (WV No. 357, 22 June 1984).

After Bradley's trial ended on June 4 with the jury deadlocked eight to four for acquittal, the DA moved to dismiss all the charges. But Feinstein wouldn't let it rest. She had promised to replace the Confederate battle flag with the "California Hundred" flag of the volunteers from the state who fought against slavery in the Civil War. Instead, just as Shelley had done 20 years earlier, she had the Confederate "Stars and Bars" run up the bare pole at the end of June, on the eve of the Democratic convention. An "accident"? Let the reader judge. In the early hours of June 29, a group of trusted union brothers cut down the whole pole (WV No. 359, 20 July 1984). Their commendable act finally put an end to Confederate flags flying in San Francisco Civic Center.

This history shows how race terror and its flag are woven into the fabric of capitalist society in the U.S. The Civil War that ended chattel slavery, together with the brief period of radical Reconstruction that followed, were the last progressive acts of a capitalist class that requires the racist oppression of black people to maintain its rule. The Democratic Party is historically the party of slavery and Jim Crow segregation. It remains today one of the two main parties running this racist, capitalist order. The Spartacist League sees the fight for black freedom as central to the fight for workers power in the U.S. That's why we say "Finish the Civil War! For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!"

To learn more, readers can visit the *Workers Vanguard* website at icl-fi.org, where a more recent article, "Confederate Flag in Dianne Feinstein's Attic" (issue No. 1130, 23 March 2018) is posted. The events of 1984 are fully documented in issues of WV published that year dated 27 April, 11 May, 25 May, 8 June, 22 June, 6 July, 22 July, and 14 September. They can be accessed through the website's "archives" link and are also available in bound volumes. ■

the Soviet Union, were on the offensive. At a 1981 Memorial Day ceremony, Feinstein presided over the re-installation of the Confederate battle flag in Civic Center as part of a set donated by the Bechtel corporation, at Feinstein's request, to replace the original flags (*Oakland Tribune*, 19 April 1984). "San Francisco is proud to fly these flags where both visitors and residents alike may see and appreciate the more than 200 years of America's rich history which they symbolize," she declared, as reported by the 21 May 1981 *San Francisco Examiner*.

It did not take long before complaints started coming in to the office of Supervisor Doris Ward. Local 6 of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) passed a motion demanding that the racist banner come down. It did come down in 1982 for a mass labor rally to get out the vote for the Democrats, but went back up within a week (see "Black Militant Puts Dixie Flag on Trial," WV No. 357, 22 June 1984).

On April 15, 1984, black Spartacist League representative Richard (Ritchie) Bradley donned a Civil War Union Army uniform, scaled the 50-foot flagpole and ripped the flag of slavery down. Cheered on by protesters, Pete Woolston, a member of the ILWU Local 6 General Executive Board, burned it. Both Bradley and Woolston were arrested. Like Shelley 20 years earlier, Feinstein put the flag right back up. After Bradley ripped the second flag to shreds the next day, he was arrested again (WV No. 353, 27 April 1984). Recreation and Park Manager Malloy declared that "he will continue to fly the Confederate flag until or unless the

## WORKERS VANGUARD



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TROTSKY

## Fighting for Revolutionary Continuity

*The ideas of revolutionary Marxism do not exist in the abstract; they are carried forward by successive generations of revolutionary fighters. Jim Robertson, the founder of our international tendency, devoted much of his energy to politically arming a new layer of communist militants. That vital concern is expressed in the following quotes from Leon Trotsky, co-leader with V.I. Lenin of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, and James P. Cannon, the founding leader of American Trotskyism. The International Communist League seeks to maintain and extend the proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist tradition of our Marxist forebears in our fight to reforge the Fourth International, the necessary instrument to lead the working class to power worldwide.*

I think that the work in which I am engaged now, despite its extremely insufficient and fragmentary nature, is the most important work of my life—more important than 1917, more important than the period of the Civil War or any other.

For the sake of clarity I would put it this way. Had I not been present in 1917 in Petersburg, the October Revolution would still have taken place—*on the condition that Lenin was present and in command...*

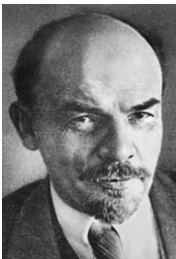
Thus I cannot speak of the “indispensability” of my work, even about the period from 1917 to 1921. But now my work is “indispensable” in the full sense of the word. There is no arrogance in this claim at all. The collapse of the two Internationals has posed a problem which none of the leaders of these Internationals is at all equipped to solve. The vicissitudes of my personal fate have confronted me with this problem and armed me with important experience in dealing with it. There is now no one except me to carry out the mission of arming a new generation with the revolutionary method over the heads of the leaders of the Second and Third International. And I am in a complete agreement with Lenin (or rather Turgenev) that the worst vice is to be more than 55 years old! I need at least about five more years of uninterrupted work to ensure the succession.

—Leon Trotsky, *Trotsky’s Diary in Exile* (25 March 1935)

\* \* \*

I also remember the words Trotsky wrote in his *Diary in Exile*, when he was in Norway and he was bound hand and foot and he was not in good health and he was 55 years old.... He said: I must live another five years to prepare the succession. I’ve often thought of those words [and] that that is the supreme duty of the leaders—to prepare the succession. And some of us went about it consciously, I especially. One man can’t do it all, as quite a few nuts think they can. One man can’t live forever and his greatest contribution is to prepare others to take his place.

—James P. Cannon, Interview with Harry Ring (13 February 1974)



LENIN

# Jim Robertson 1928-2019



Spartacist

Last week, Jim Robertson, a central founder of the Spartacist League/U.S. and the International Communist League, died. He was 90 years old and had been a member of the workers movement for more than 70 years. He remained an active collaborator and an essential component of the leadership of the SL/U.S. and of the ICL up until the very end.

His death is a tremendous loss to the ICL. We extend our condolences to Jim’s family and his numerous friends and comrades.

A thorough appreciation of Jim’s life and work, as well as notices for memorials, will be published in an upcoming issue of *Workers Vanguard*.

## Somalia...

(continued from page 1)

military setback for the imperialists aids the cause of the workers and oppressed peoples of the planet. The U.S. rulers’ wars overseas, under both Democratic and Republican administrations, go hand in hand with their attacks on labor, black people and all the oppressed at home. *U.S. troops, bases out of Africa!*

Imperialism is the most advanced stage of capitalist development, marked by the domination of finance capital. In the imperialist epoch, the advanced powers wage wars of plunder and compete to redivide the world into spheres of exploitation. Opposition to all imperialist wars and occupations is a necessary part of our fight to forge a revolutionary workers party in the U.S. capable of leading the multiracial proletariat to power and sweeping away the capitalist system.

### Decades of U.S. Imperialist Depredations

The 1991-92 counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state, had worldwide repercussions, not least in the Horn of Africa. That world-historic defeat for the toilers of the world eliminated what had been the only real military counterweight to the marauding imperialists.

At the end of 1992, the administration of George Bush Sr., operating under a UN “humanitarian” fig leaf, sent 25,000 U.S. troops to Somalia supposedly to help its starving population. In fact, the famine coincided with the largest one-year fall in grain production in history, engineered by the U.S. to drive up prices. Democrat Bill Clinton intensified the occupation in the guise of saving a “failed state” with the approval of Congress, including then Representative Bernie Sanders. As we wrote at the time:

“The whole U.S./UN intervention has been cloaked in the rhetoric of humanitarian aid. ‘Operation Restore Hope’ has

instead turned Somalia once again into a UN ‘trusteeship,’ with imperialist gendarmes acting on orders from the Pentagon. The American expeditionary force went in when the famine was already dissipating. The real purposes were to allow the U.S. to act as global cops, and let President Bush look tough in the waning days of his presidency. Now with his poll ratings down, Democrat Clinton wants to do the same.”

—“U.S./UN Troops Slaughter Somalis,” WV No. 578, 18 June 1993

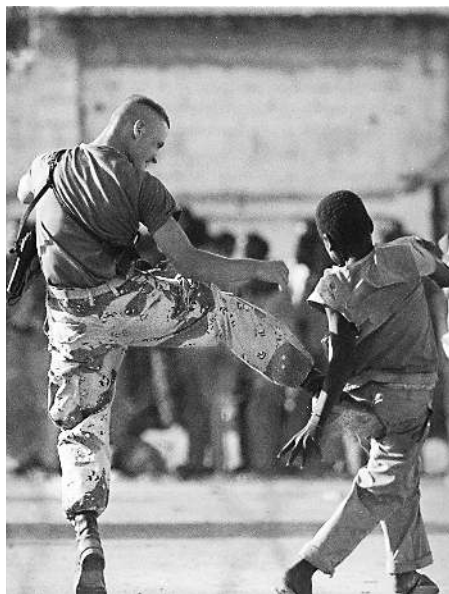
By the middle of 1993, U.S. helicopter gunships were regularly bombing Mogadishu. Somalis were brutalized, shot at roadblocks and massacred when they resisted the occupiers. After Somali militiamen shot down two Black Hawk helicopters on October 3, U.S. Special Forces massacred over 1,000 Somalis. But the Somalis fought back, killing 18 U.S. soldiers. After that humiliating defeat, which sparked an outcry in the U.S. and came to be known as “Black Hawk Down,” the imperialists withdrew from Somalia, their tail between their legs. It is a good illustration of how military blows against the imperialists can spur popular opposition at home against depredations of the U.S. ruling class.

After the U.S. withdrawal, a degree of civil order across much of Somalia was re-established by the *sharia*-based Islamic Courts Union (ICU), an alliance of various Islamists. Its retrograde regime in Mogadishu was toppled in 2006 when Ethiopian troops acting as American proxies—and in the service of the Ethiopian rulers’ own interests—invaded Somalia with the support of U.S. Special Forces and airstrikes. Washington’s stated rationale for the overthrow of the ICU was to prevent the emergence of an Al Qaeda “safe haven.” As it happened, Al Shabab emerged as an offshoot of the ICU out of the fight against the two-year Ethiopian occupation, eventually taking control of Mogadishu and most of southern and central Somalia.

Once again, the imperialists intervened using African proxies. In 2011, an African Union “peacekeeping” force

sponsored by the UN, funded by the European Union and commanded by U.S. military “advisers,” ousted Al Shabab from Mogadishu and, the following year, from the southern port of Kismayo. That force, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), continues to sow terror in the countryside. Al Shabab has retaliated with its own heinous terrorist attacks in Uganda and Kenya, targeting soccer fans, a shopping mall and a university campus. In turn, Somalis in Kenya have been the victims of brutal pogroms.

What explains the U.S. imperialists’ longstanding military engagement in Somalia? The answer begins with that country’s strategic location. Just off Somalia’s northern coast is the Gulf of Aden, which leads to Bab el-Mandeb, the narrow choke point through which all maritime traffic from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean passes. Then there is the continent-wide importance of Africa’s natural resources, from copper and other metals to oil. (Exploitation rights to oil and gas deposits off the coast of Somalia



AP

**The real face of U.S. “humanitarian” occupation of Somalia: Marine kicks boy in Mogadishu, December 1992.**

are to be tendered later this year). And with the rise of militant Islamist forces in Somalia, largely in reaction to imperialist aggression, the U.S. rulers keep waving the banner of the endless, worldwide “war on terror.”

Not least of the imperialists’ concerns in Africa is the influence of the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state, which for the past decade has been Africa’s biggest trading partner. The most powerful of the remaining countries where capitalist rule has been overthrown, China is the central target of the imperialists’ global counterrevolutionary machinations. It is a crime that the Stalinist rulers in Beijing today contribute over 2,000 troops to UN “peacekeeping” missions across the continent. Such missions are undertaken on behalf of the imperialists.

Imperialist subjugation of dependent countries like Somalia is an obstacle to social progress and promises only further slaughter and misery. The way forward for Africa’s impoverished masses is shown by the program of permanent revolution, developed by Leon Trotsky and verified by the Russian October 1917 Revolution. Trotsky recognized that in semicolonial countries modernization and liberation from the imperialist yoke require smashing capitalist rule and opening the way to socialist development. The continent’s proletarian concentrations—from the industrial workers in South Africa and Egypt to the oil workers in Nigeria and the port workers in Kenya—are crucial to this perspective. As we wrote in “U.S. Troops, Bases Out of Africa!” (WV No. 1122, 17 November 2017):

“The task of Marxists is to forge Trotskyist vanguard workers parties—sections of a reformed Fourth International—that would link the struggle for workers revolutions in Africa to the fight for proletarian revolution in the U.S., France and other imperialist centers. With the proletariat in power on a global scale, technology and industrial development will be tapped to lift the world’s masses out of want and misery on the road to building a classless communist society.” ■



# Peter Taaffe's CWI: Correctional Workers International Britain's Prison Hell

We reprint below an article from *Workers Hammer* No. 244 (Winter 2018-2019), publication of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). The Socialist Party addressed in it is an affiliate of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), as is Socialist Alternative in the U.S.

## WORKERS HAMMER

"Some of the most disturbing prison conditions we have ever seen." That was the verdict of the 2017-18 annual report by the Prison Inspectorate covering England and Wales. More than 80,000 men and women are crammed into squalid cells, often for 22 hours a day, in prisons crawling with rats and cockroaches, full of broken glass, exposed wiring and overflowing toilets—conditions in which even animals cannot legally be kept.

The report gives a small window into the lives of prisoners. They are beaten, terrorised and strip searched; denied medical care and fed (or starved) on £2 [\$2.60] a day. Her Majesty's dungeons express in concentrated form the organised violence upon which this nasty, racist, capitalist society depends.

With prisoners driven to the point where they can tolerate their conditions no longer, suicides and incidents of self-harm are rampant. There has recently been a series of prison riots in England, Scotland and Wales, including during summer 2018 at Lowdham Grange prison in Nottingham. Prisoners rebelled after having been subjected to racist taunts and violence from balaclava-clad screws; one handcuffed inmate was thrown down the stairs. The November 2016 riot at HMP Bedford broke out after prisoners there had been locked in their cells 23 hours a day and denied basic items such as toilet paper and soap. In September 2015, on the 25th anniversary of the Strangeways prison riot, the largest in British history, Stuart Horner, serving a life sentence for murder, scaled the roof at Strangeways to deliver the message: "It's not 1990, tell the government we've all had enough, sort the whole system."

As Marxists, we support any amelioration of the horrific conditions for those locked behind bars and barbed wire. However, we understand that the prisons cannot be reformed into humane institutions. They are part of the machinery of capitalist state repression, whose core is the police and the army. The fundamental function of the capitalist state is to maintain through force or threat of force the rule and property of the exploiting class.

The brutal and dehumanising conditions of imprisonment serve only to further degrade those deemed criminals by this predatory society. In fact, the world of lumpen crime merely reflects on a small



Guards rally at Leeds prison during national walkout demanding increased repressive measures against prisoners, September 2018.

## Cops, Prison Guards Out of the Unions!

scale the "ethics" of the big bourgeoisie. As the murderer Macheath says in Bertolt Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*, "What is the crime of robbing a bank compared to the crime of founding one?" The fate of the prison population is linked to the struggle of the proletariat to emancipate itself from the system of capitalist wage slavery.

The Marxist attitude towards crime and punishment is that we are against it. Socialists do not proceed from the standpoint of punishing the offender. Such a vindictive attitude is fundamentally a religious rather than a materialist conception of social relations. Of course, a humane and rational society, which capitalism decidedly is not, may find a need to separate out certain dangerous individuals—for the protection of others as well as themselves. But this would be done without stigma or deprivation and with education, medical care, rehabilitation and the goal of reintegration as productive members of society.

### Money for Guns Not Butter?

England and Wales have the highest incarceration rate in Western Europe. The prisons are filled to overflowing with those at the bottom of society, driven out of the productive economy into a lumpen existence and/or framed up based on class, racial or religious background—including as a result of the anti-Muslim "war on terror." Incarceration rates for black people in Britain are even more disproportionate than in the U.S., as a September 2017

review by a committee headed by Labour [Party Member of Parliament] MP David Lammy reported. Black youth are nine times more likely than white youth to be banged up. Gypsies, Roma and Irish Travellers, who make up 0.1 per cent of the population, make up *fifty times* that proportion of the male prison population. Muslims comprise five per cent of the population, but almost 15 per cent of prisoners.

The Blair Labour governments' "tough on crime" policies produced a rise in incarceration rates, and the construction of a raft of new prisons, many run by private companies. [Labour leader Jeremy] Corbyn's 2017 general election manifesto recycled Blair's slogan "Labour is tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime," and promised more prison guards, cops and immigration police. This manifesto was praised by the Labourite reformists of the Socialist Party as "an important step in the right direction" (*Socialist*, 18 May 2017).

Trampling on the elementary principles of socialism, the Socialist Party likewise demands more money and more screws: "The prison and probation services must be fully renationalised with all staff cuts reversed, and fully funded to ensure the safety of all prisoners and workers" (*Socialist*, 23 August 2018). This is an obscene twist on the shopworn reformist demand for butter not guns.

There may be no lower form of life than private contractors like G4S, who pad their pockets at the expense of prisoners. But whether contracted to private capitalists or directly run by Her Majesty's capitalist government, prisons are hellholes.

Overcrowding in the prisons is a result of deindustrialised Britain casting off huge numbers of the population as surplus to its needs—fit, in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, only for a cage. In particular, black and Asian youth are targeted under the "war on drugs," for purported gang connections or for carrying a knife. Our answer to such racist witch hunts is simple: *Let them go!*

We are against all state measures to disarm the population, which leave weapons only in the hands of the cops and criminals. We also oppose laws against drug use, gambling, prostitution and other "crimes without victims," including mutually con-

sensual sexual relations—*down with age of consent laws!* Such laws extend the reach of the state into the private affairs of individuals and help to buttress the social order by ideologically regimenting the bourgeoisie's wage slaves. The 2017 ban on smoking in prisons cruelly deprived prisoners of one of the few reprieves they were allowed.

### Socialist Party Backs the Jailers

Because prisons are a core component of the bourgeois state, the attitude of ostensible socialists on this question is a key test of their political credentials. Grotesquely, the Socialist Party has taken the side of the jailers. Many recent issues of its newspaper, the *Socialist*, have featured articles promoting the POA [Prison Officers' Association] screws "union" and retailing its demands to make the prisons "safe." The safety of prisoners is endangered by the prison guards themselves! Prison guards, like the cops, have no place in the workers movement. Police and probation officers out of Unison [public service union]! Immigration cops out of the PCS [Public and Commercial Services Union]! POA out of the TUC [Trades Union Congress]!

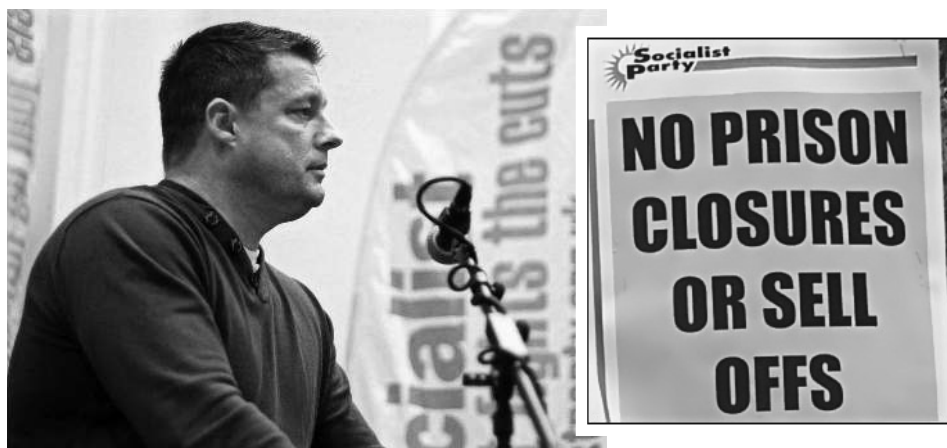
The fundamental purpose of the cops and the prisons is not to protect working people from crime, as the Socialist Party would have us believe, but to protect the power and profits of the capitalist class against its enemies, real or perceived—centrally the working class. That is why an army of cops flooded the coalfields during the heroic 1984-85 miners strike, and why strike militants filled up the jails. And why the Pentonville Five dockers and the Shrewsbury 24 building workers were locked up for picketing during 1972 strikes.

Then there are those who were "innocent until proven Irish"—like the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six, framed up for pub bombings the cops knew they did not commit. Bobby Sands and nine others starved to death in 1981 on hunger strike fighting for Irish Republicans at Northern Ireland's notorious Maze Prison to be recognised as political prisoners. Shamelessly, in 2008 the Socialist Party hailed a campaign by airport security guards—adjuncts of the capitalist state. One of these, Madan Gupta, had previously been a prison guard at the Maze during the hunger strike.

### Never Nearer to Menshevism

Iain Dalton of the Socialist Party's national committee has written a pamphlet hailing the 1918-19 cop "strikes," outrageously titled "*Never Nearer to Bolshevism*"—*The Police Strikes of 1918-19* (2018). Dalton enthuses: "Even at Special Branch, 25 sergeants and 16 constables joined the strike!" This is the very agency dedicated to spying on and persecuting militant trade unionists and leftists, including the Socialist Party!

Inspired by the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, a wave of working-class struggle swept Britain after World War I. In reviewing his own book for the *Socialist* (30 August 2018), Dalton claims: "Nothing terrified the ruling class as much as the thought that the very 'armed bodies of men' making up part of their state machine—the police and army—could become infected with the revolutionary malady." What a perversion of truth! The cops knew they were well placed to demand better terms for their services to the ruling class in suppressing the "revolutionary malady." They had been busy arresting strike leaders, confiscating socialist literature (including 10,000 copies of Leon Trotsky's pamphlet *War and Revolution*), disabling printing presses and attacking protests.



Socialist Party backs the jailers. Left: Prison guard "union" leader Joe Simpson addresses SP's Socialism 2012 conference. Right: SP poster defending capitalist prisons.

(continued from page 1)

Democrats hold particular animus to-

The *New York Times*, the U.S. bourgeoisie's paper of record, praised Assange's

Central to the assault on Assange's reputation were the manufactured Swedish rape allegations. The two women involved, by their own accounts, had consensual sex with him. Neither claimed at the time that she had been the victim of rape or sexual assault. Never formally charged, Assange repeatedly offered to be interviewed by

It is in the interests of the working class and all the oppressed to oppose the witch-hunt of Julian Assange. We Marxists seek to imbue the working class with the understanding that imperialist war, with all its savagery, is inherent to capitalist class rule. The brave acts of truth-tellers like Assange and Manning have lifted the lid, even if slightly, on imperialist barbarities. Ridding the world of imperialist war and pillage requires a series of socialist revolutions internationally to shatter the capitalist order. ■

In place of the Marxist understanding that proletarian revolution is necessary to overthrow the class dictatorship of the exploiters, Taaffe alleges: "A peaceful

## Progress

After the October Revolution, the Bolshevik-led workers in Russia were determined that the penal code of the new proletarian dictatorship would not be based on the principles of retribution. The 1919 Bolshevik programme described the fundamental alteration that had taken place in the penal code, “introducing conditional sentences on an extensive scale, applying public censure as a means of punishment, replacing imprisonment

“Freed from capitalist slavery, from the untold horrors, savagery, absurdities and infamies of capitalist exploitation, people will gradually *become accustomed* to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copybook maxims. They will become accustomed to observing them

The perspective of Marxists is to do away with the whole system of crime and punishment, together with the capitalist prisons and the rest of the bourgeoisie's repressive apparatus. Reorganising the world economy on a planned basis to serve the collective needs of humanity is the necessary prerequisite to establishing a communist society where crime and punishment have become relics of a barbaric past with no place outside the history books. ■

## Spartacist Pamphlet

### Militant Labour's touching faith in the capitalist state

Organizer, 1984: heroic British miners lead anti-bossing cops.

APR. 1984, NEWSP.

Includes Guevara revolutionarism, jeunesse communiste révolutionnaire pamphlet, The Internationalist and the State, with reply by the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

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SUMMER 2017

29

### A Correction to Our *Militant Labour* Pamphlet The Police and the 1918-19 German Revolution

With the military defeat of Kaiser Wilhelm II's forces in November 1918, which ended World War I, the German capitalist order was deeply shaken. A revolutionary wave swept the country, triggered by a mass of sailors in Kiel, who set committees around Germany, raising the working masses and calling on them to set up workers' councils. The German proletarian drive inspired from the example of the Russian October Revolution a year earlier, in which the working class led by Lenin's Bolshevik Party took power, sweeping away the state apparatus and the capitalist class.

The Russian armed dictatorship, which was introduced

sumers, see John Rabinoff, *The German Revolution and the Debate on Soviet Power* (Anchor Foundation, 1962.)

#### The January Events

After the SPD took the helm of the government, Ernst Thälmann, a member of the left wing of the SPD, became the Berlin chief of police, acting on the false view that this role of the bourgeois state could be transformed into a revolutionary instrument. On 4 January 1919, the first issue of the *Workers' Communist* (Kommunistische Arbeiter-Zeitung) was published. A January 6 edition of the KAPD paper

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Michael Jackson...

(continued from page 8)

behind them, which criminalizes any contact between adults and children that is perceived as sexual, casting adults as predators and children as victims.

Dan Reed’s hatchet job presents zero evidence, deliberately omits anyone who could easily rebut the abuse allegations and conceals the accusers’ financial motivations. Howard Weitzman, attorney for the Jackson estate, details in both a 7 February letter to HBO CEO Richard Plepler and a 21 February lawsuit against the company, how the accusers lack all credibility. Between 2013 and 2017, Safechuck and Robson, the latter a self-proclaimed “master of deception,” tried to extort hundreds of millions of dollars from the estate. Their multiple civil cases related to alleged abuse were dismissed with prejudice. Still trying to collect huge sums for damages, the two men’s lawyers pursued a new course: using the court of public opinion to help their appeal gain traction.

Characterizing the network’s hit piece as a “posthumous character assassination,” the Jackson estate’s lawsuit rightly observes:

“Ten years after [Jackson’s] passing, there are still those out to profit from his enormous worldwide success and take advantage of his eccentricities. Michael is an easy target because he is not here to defend himself, and the law does not protect the deceased from defamation, no matter how extreme the lies are. Michael may not have lived his life according to society’s norms, but genius and eccentricity are not crimes. Nothing and no one can rewrite the facts which show that Michael Jackson is indeed innocent of the charges being levied at him.”

And the facts are that in a 2005 criminal trial, Michael Jackson was found *not guilty* of 14 counts related to the alleged molestation of 13-year-old Gavin Arvizo. At that time, Wade Robson, who testified on Jackson’s behalf, was adamant in both his deposition and on the stand that Jackson never touched him or any other child. That trial also vindicated Jackson as to the previous 1993 child abuse accusations against a different 13-year-old. Likewise, the FBI conducted extensive investigations and surveillance of Jackson for over a decade between 1992 and 2005. The Feds and prosecutors, intent on finding any way to frame a black man for molesting white children, could not produce a shred of evidence, including in the over 300 pages of FBI documents published online.

*Leaving Neverland* has begun to receive some blowback as multiple discrepancies come out in the shady tales of Robson and Safechuck, who clearly rehearsed their scripted interviews in multiple takes. Director Dan Reed has gone to the wall over his incendiary piece of fiction, comparing Michael Jackson defenders to religious fanatics, calling them “the Islamic State of fandom.” Such defenders would include Jackson’s longtime friends Macaulay Culkin and Brett Barnes, as well as Diana Ross. Barnes, who the film implies was the “next in line” to be molested by Jackson, denounced the movie in a message online: “Not only do we have to deal

with these lies, but we’ve also got to deal with people perpetuating these lies.”

One of those lies is from Safechuck, who claims that he and Jackson spent their sexual “honeymoon” in the Neverland train station starting in 1988. Yet the station was not built until 1994, when Safechuck was beyond his childhood years (one of the claims is that Jackson dumped kids when they reached puberty) and when Jackson, then married, was not even living there! Meanwhile, Robson claims his first sexual encounter with Jackson took place in 1990 when he was left alone at the Neverland ranch while his family took a trip to the Grand Canyon. But according to his mother’s own sworn statements, Robson accompanied his family on the trip. The timelines of “abuse” for Robson and Safechuck are so illogical that they could only be manufactured.

The liberal bourgeois U.S. media, like the *New York Times*, has promoted salacious headlines of the “predator” Jackson

and encouragement and his unconditional love will live inside of me forever. I will miss him immeasurably.” Just two years later, after Robson failed to nail a choreography gig for Cirque du Soleil’s “Michael Jackson ONE” and his career dried up, he suddenly “realized” through therapy that he had been abused. For his part, Safechuck “discovered” his abuse when watching Robson on the *Today* show, which coincided with the Safechuck family’s financial meltdown.

Moral Frenzies and Mob Justice

In a thoughtful piece called “The New Lynching of Michael Jackson” (medium.com, 27 February), Linda Raven-Woods observed: “That so many prominent journalists and media talking heads have displayed the willingness to accept this film blindly at face value, without raising the much needed questions that need to be asked about its veracity, is a bigger unforgiveable travesty than the film itself.” She



Reuters

That was then: Oprah Winfrey tours Neverland with Jackson in 1993 during live interview—a ratings high point for her career. Today, she seeks to cash in again, promoting slanders of Jackson.

and blacked out any criticism of *Leaving Neverland*. Meanwhile, countless bloggers, YouTube commentators and online communities (as well as a couple of foreign news outlets) have meticulously pieced together the real story. Conservative talk show host John Ziegler, who is no fan of Jackson, was one of the first to interview Michael’s niece Brandi and nephew Taj in search of the truth. Well acquainted with the accusers, they paint a picture of Robson and Safechuck as professional opportunists whose families latched on to Jackson, took advantage of his friendship and generosity, and only turned against him when their own personal fame and fortune took a downturn years after Jackson’s death. Shattering Robson’s pretense as a naive, chaste adolescent who was duped by Michael into hating women, Brandi notes that in her seven-year teenage relationship with Robson, he had sexual encounters with multiple women.

In 2009 Robson, then 27 years old, attended Jackson’s funeral and wrote in a tribute that Jackson is “one of the main reasons I believe in the pure goodness of humankind. He was a close friend of mine for 20 years. His music, his movement, his personal words of inspiration

goes on to note how the backers of *Leaving Neverland* are confident “that the current zeitgeist of MeToo and its ‘don’t question victims’ mentality will create the tunnel vision needed to willfully blind viewers.” In an atmosphere that has junked the presumption of innocence and due process for those accused of sexual abuse, this tale finds a fertile medium.

Up until he died, Michael Jackson firmly maintained that his relationships with children had been platonic, an assertion backed up by forensics and witnesses. But in the #MeToo climate of “believe all survivors,” HBO’s prurient screenplay was “proof” enough to rile up the torch-bearing mob. Numerous radio stations around the world pulled Michael Jackson’s music, clothing lines withdrew their Jackson apparel, and an episode of *The Simpsons* with Jackson’s voice was removed from its catalog.

Even if at any point in his life Jackson did have some kind of romantic relationship with an underage boy, that is no crime in our eyes. He was accused of violating laws that prohibit sexual activity, even when consensual, before an arbitrary age. As steadfast defenders of privacy and sexual freedom, the Spartacist League has always opposed “age of consent” laws, which are intended to stigmatize and punish all intimate relationships between adults and younger people. By branding any sexual act involving a minor as rape, such laws are inherently repressive and promote state interference into people’s intimate lives.

Sexual activity is natural for humans of all ages. The sole guideline for any sexual relationship should be that of effective consent—that is, mutual agreement and understanding by the parties involved, regardless of age, gender or sexual preference. In that light, we have always uniquely stood for the rights of the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), which advocates the legalization of consensual sex between men and boys. We also oppose all legislation against victimless crimes, such as pornography, which is simply images and words intended for pleasure.

In anti-sex witchhunts *a la Americana*, mass hysteria and moral outrage are crucial ingredients to stoke fear and push ideological conformity to bourgeois norms. The “predator” bogeyman is socially useful for the capitalist rulers, who can hypocritically parade as “protecting the children” and divert attention from the social system they uphold, which regularly denies children basic needs like food, shelter and education. Hysteria over “child abuse” does nothing to confront real violence, but merely serves to bolster the institution of the family. The family, the main source of the oppression of women and youth, is key under capitalism to enforcing behavioral roles and the obedience of the next generation.

During the “Satanic sex ring” panic of the mid 1980s and early ‘90s, hundreds of innocent people, especially day care employees, were framed up on fantastical charges of raping and torturing children. Child psychologists, who implanted false “recovered memories” during therapy, assisted in the crusade. The ideological backdrop was the promotion of “good” stay-at-home mothers as against the supposed evils of childcare. A not-so-subtle echo of this “right” vs. “wrong” parenting schema appears in *Leaving Neverland*, with its warnings against leaving kids with strangers or letting them sleep in bed with an adult. The implication is that only the family can offer a safe haven. Yet it is often within the family itself that children, who are confined in the horrible straitjacket of moralism and religious guilt, suffer criminal abuse.

The graphic sexual accounts in *Leaving Neverland*, which come off as rather gentle and innocuous, are manipulatively presented as part of Jackson’s “grooming” process whereby he seduced children into loving him. The film’s intention is to equate entirely harmless affection from adults with assault and trauma. This is the shtick of Dan Reed, a self-declared “gun for hire” who made his name from tabloid movies like *The Paedophile Hunter* that sensationalizes bloodthirsty vigilantism. His “grooming” narrative is the focus of HBO’s follow-up special *After Neverland* hosted by the billionaire Oprah. Parading as an authority on child sexual abuse, she invited an audience of “survivors” to take part in “this moment” that “transcends Michael Jackson.”

There is a deeper agenda at play, not only in terms of boosting profit and ratings, but also in deflecting attention from Harvey Weinstein, whom she considered a close friend during the many years of his alleged serial assaults of women. Oprah’s HBO stunt has earned her deserved animosity from black critics calling her a sellout and a traitor for throwing Jackson’s corpse to the wolves, with trending hashtags #NOprah and #CancelOprah. Appearing on Trevor Noah’s *The Daily Show* last week, Oprah claimed that such “hateration” would not make her waver in her defense of Robson and Safechuck, maintaining that molestation amounts to a “pattern” of sexual seduction. In fact, the

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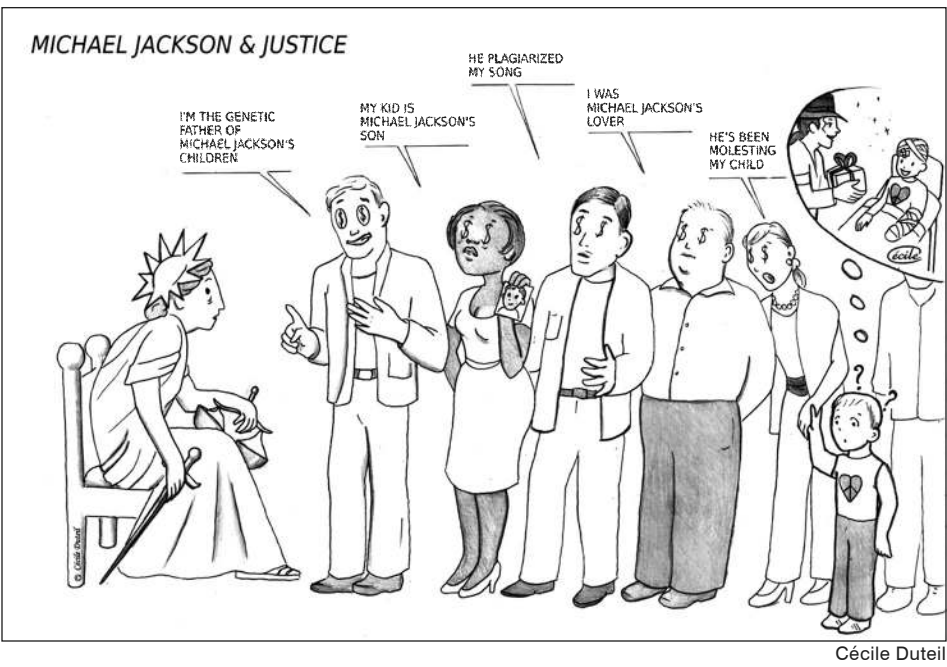
only “pattern” in this entire saga is that of con artists repeatedly trying to shake down an innocent man.

The Man in the Mirror

The legacy of Michael Jackson spans a period from his roots as a working-class black kid in Indiana to his 45 years as a successful entertainer, during which he transformed the face of pop music, broke records, transcended racial barriers and became a celebrated international superstar. Yet his life was no “American dream” but mirrored racist American cruelty. As we commented in our obituary for the artist (WV No. 940, 31 July 2009):

“The tragedy of Jackson’s death is that an extremely influential music career was driven to the brink of destruction by a savagely racist and puritanical witchhunt spanning more than a decade. The mass hysteria whipped up against Jackson over charges of ‘child molestation’ was an indictment of this anti-sex, bigoted capitalist society, where being an eccentric black celebrity is enough for the state to try to frame you up with something.”

From his early years in the Jackson 5, Michael Jackson went on to become a global icon shortly after the struggles of the civil rights movement. Notwithstanding the “lightening” of his physical appearance, in a country where the color-caste nature of black oppression is enforced through the “one drop of black blood” rule, Jackson was always a black man. And for that he was a marked man. Since the days of chattel slavery, in the



U.S. black skin has carried the stamp of permanent servitude, social isolation and “inferiority,” regardless of social status or success and sometimes because of it. Black oppression is the cornerstone of American capitalism, enforced by custom and law and expressed through segregation, cop violence and extralegal terror.

Decades after the racist lynching of Emmett Till, accusations of sexual assault are still used as a pretext to go after black men, including those like Jackson who did not conform to toxic stereotypes of black

male sexuality. Throughout history, anti-sex frenzies, not least the current #MeToo variant, have fanned the flames of racial and sexual bigotry, conjuring up the supposed virtue of white womanhood and purity of white childhood. It is perhaps no coincidence that Jackson’s favorite book was *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the story of a black man ruined by false rape allegations.

As a performer, Michael Jackson helped define American pop culture as a whole, and for that he continues to be both celebrated and crucified. His behavior may

Death Penalty... (continued from page 8)

large numbers. Today, they make up 42 percent of those on death row nationwide, while accounting for only 13 percent of the population.

At the same time, we recognize that even the abolition of the death penalty will not change the violent and oppressive nature of capitalist class rule. It will not free the innocent languishing in America’s dungeons, alter conditions for those suffering the torture of prison hell or change the reality of cops gunning down black and Latino youth who are depicted as inherent criminals by this country’s rulers. Newsom made clear he did not plan to overturn any of the death sentences, pledging that “no one who commits a heinous crime will avoid swift and severe punishment, including a life behind bars.” His successor will have the option of restarting the killing machine.

On April 1, the U.S. Supreme Court reaffirmed its support to the death penalty in the case of Russell Bucklew, upholding the planned lethal injection of the Missouri inmate, who risks choking and suffocating on his own blood due to a rare medical condition. According to the majority opinion, the Constitution “does not guarantee a prisoner a painless death.” The ruling ignited a wave of liberal condemnation of Republican-appointed justices. There was no similar outcry in 2016 when all but one of the liberals on the court supported reimposing the death sentence on two men in Kansas. As these decisions show, the high court of racist American capitalism is a reactionary institution, no matter who sits on the bench.

Exposure of cases of innocent people sentenced to death or executed, combined with a series of botched executions, has stoked growing popular hostility to the death penalty. Significant elements of the ruling class uphold it as the weapon of the state’s ultimate authority. Reactionaries often justify it with reference to religious notions like “an eye for an eye.”

The death penalty also serves as a way for the rulers to exact revenge on those who refuse to be bowed. There is a long history of its use against labor militants, such as the Haymarket martyrs in 1887, and fighters for black rights. Such was also the case with the 2005 legal lynching of Stanley Tookie Williams in California, who had been convicted of four murders. Williams, who always maintained his innocence, became an anti-gang and anti-crime crusader in prison, as portrayed in the docu-

drama *Redemption*. But because Williams refused to confess, the state killed him, sending the message that black life counts for nothing. The authorities were especially infuriated that he had dedicated his 1998 book, *Life in Prison*, to George Jackson, Mumia Abu-Jamal and others imprisoned for their political views.

Newsom’s recent move was hardly a bold initiative. Twenty states and the District of Columbia have abolished capital punishment, and the governors of four other states have issued moratoriums. Two decades ago, George Ryan, the Republican governor of Illinois, temporarily halted executions there and commuted over 160 death sentences.

One can only marvel at the hypocrisy of California politicians fawning over how that “blue state” now shows the way to a more “humane” criminal justice system. Its prisons are among the worst of the worst in terms of overcrowding, lack of medical care and abuse by guards. Horrific conditions in the solitary isolation chambers at the supermax Pelican Bay State Prison sparked a two-month hunger strike by prisoners in 2013. During last year’s nationwide prison strike, California inmates denounced despicable labor conditions as “modern day slavery,” pointing to their enlistment in the dangerous job of fighting wildfires, for which they received \$1 an hour plus \$2 a day.

The death penalty is at the pinnacle of the capitalist class’s monopoly of organized violence against those it subjugates—the working class, black people and all the oppressed. The cops, courts, prisons and military are the core of the capitalist state, whose purpose is to defend the rule and profits of the exploiters. We oppose the entire machinery of state repression.

One week before Newsom announced the moratorium, Sacramento exploded in protest over the decision not to prosecute the police who killed Stephon Clark a year ago. The unarmed 22-year-old black man was gunned down in a hail of 20 bullets while standing in his grandmother’s backyard. California attorney general Xavier Becerra excused the killers on the grounds that they had reason to fear their lives were in “imminent danger.” Becerra has also refused to release the records of crimes committed by the police, as was mandated under a state law enacted last year.

**Democrats: False Friends of the Oppressed**

Newsom’s claim that the death penalty is a “failure” received kudos from a number of “law and order” Democrats. One such is

2020 presidential contender Kamala Harris, who as San Francisco district attorney (2004-11) and California attorney general (2011-17) fought tooth and nail to uphold wrongful convictions and pack black and brown people off to prison. Today, Senator Harris proclaims that she opposes capital punishment because it is “immoral, discriminatory, ineffective and a gross misuse of taxpayer dollars.” Her actual track record, though, is one of defense of California’s death penalty, including by successfully appealing a 2014 federal court ruling that declared it unconstitutional.

Harris was also key in maintaining the racist conviction of Kevin Cooper, a black man framed up and sentenced to death for the 1983 murder of a white family. Repeated requests for advanced DNA testing by Cooper’s defense attorney to prove that the police had tampered with evidence were turned down by Harris and former Democratic governor Jerry Brown. Only after *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof wrote an exposé on Cooper’s case last May did she cynically proclaim: “As a firm believer in DNA testing, I hope the governor and the state will allow for such testing.”

The Democratic Party is nothing but the other party of racist capitalist rule. Liberal darling Bernie Sanders, who is supported by an array of fake-socialist groups like the Democratic Socialists of America, has declared his opposition to the death

have been an enigma to many, but his lyrics reflected his own struggle to overcome the discrimination and hounding he confronted throughout his career. Everyone who personally knew Jackson can testify to his unaffected “Peter Pan Syndrome” and his kindhearted fondness for children, which likely derived from his utter lack of a childhood. He was exceedingly generous with his time and money, as shown by his commitment to help Robson and Safechuck develop their careers. But in this callous society, no good deed goes unpunished.

Our defense of Jackson over the years is an expression of our dedication to the socialist liberation of humanity. As communists who champion the cause of all the victims of this decaying social order, we seek to build a revolutionary party based on the vanguard of the working class—one that can act as a “tribune of the people” against every form of oppression and bigotry. Such a party will lead the struggle for the complete political and economic reorganization of society through workers revolution, which will open the door to rooting out racial and sexual divisions and overcoming material scarcity. A communist world will be one of complete sexual freedom and material abundance, in which every black child, and all others, can grow and develop their talents, and every person can express themselves fully, propelling human civilization to undreamed-of heights. ■

penalty, offering that “the state itself, in a democratic, civilized society, should itself not be involved in the murder of other Americans.” Sanders has made a career out of serving the interests of America’s “civilized” imperialist rulers, who commit mass murder, both at home and abroad.

Sanders voted for Bill Clinton’s 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which vastly expanded the list of federal crimes punishable by death, provided for putting 100,000 more cops on the streets and devoted billions more to prison funding. He voted for the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, which virtually eliminated *habeas corpus* appeals in state courts for those sentenced to death, even in the face of compelling evidence of wrongful conviction or even actual innocence. The prison population exploded and the assembly line of death was kicked into high gear, with 98 executions in 1999.

We Marxists recognize that the brutal and depraved rule of the bourgeoisie cannot be reformed. Our purpose is to forge a revolutionary workers party that can infuse the working class with the understanding that the entire capitalist state apparatus must be swept away by proletarian socialist revolution. When those who labor rule, the racist death penalty will be abolished for good, as one of the initial steps in the emancipation of all the exploited and oppressed. ■

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19 APRIL 2019

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## Leaving Neverland: Lying Hit Piece Down With the Demonizing of Michael Jackson!



Newscom; Reuters (inset)

**March 6, London: Supporters of Michael Jackson protest outside Channel 4 headquarters before broadcast of *Leaving Neverland*. Right: Michael Jackson performs in Vienna during 1997 world tour.**

“The Michael Jackson cacophony is fascinating in that it is not about Jackson at all.... All that noise is about America, as the dishonest custodian of black life and wealth; the blacks, especially males, in America; and the burning, buried American guilt; and sex and sexual roles and sexual panic; money, success and despair.”

—James Baldwin (1985)

Recalling the zombie creatures in the acclaimed music video “Thriller,” there is a renewed feeding frenzy over the deceased King of Pop. HBO’s *Leaving Neverland*, a sensationalist four-hour film by Dan Reed, showcases Wade Robson and James Safechuck, who allege years of childhood sexual abuse by Michael Jackson. Falsely

marketed as a “documentary,” *Leaving Neverland* is based solely on the spurious and uncorroborated testimonies of Robson and Safechuck, two men who for decades were known as ardent defenders of Jackson against sexual abuse charges, of which the singer was fully exonerated. Now the news vultures, with the blessing of the

“Queen of All Media,” Oprah Winfrey, are rehashing the old smear campaign, and the racist, anti-sex and anti-gay witchhunt that encircled the celebrity during his life and hounded him to death. As Marxists, we categorically reject such witchhunts and the moralistic bourgeois framework

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## California Moratorium

# Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

Last month, California, which leads the country with the highest number of prisoners condemned to die at the hands of the state, granted a temporary reprieve to its 737 death row inmates. Democratic governor Gavin Newsom, referring to the death penalty as “unjust” and “wasteful,” signed an executive order that closes the notorious death chamber at San Quentin State Prison and repeals California’s lethal injection protocols for the duration of his tenure. The moratorium on executions takes place against the backdrop of rising public opposition to capital punishment and debates over what constitutes “cruel and unusual punishment.” The order also explicitly cites the high costs associated with capital punishment, reflecting the financial calculations of a wing of the ruling class.

Any measure that stays the hand of the state’s executioners, such as the California moratorium, is welcome. As Marxists, we do not accord the capitalist state the right to decide who lives and who dies, and we oppose the death penalty



AP

**Sacramento, March 13: California governor Gavin Newsom signing death penalty moratorium. Death row inmate at San Quentin prison, 2016.**



Getty

on principle—for the guilty as well as the innocent. The death penalty is cruel and barbaric. Its endurance in the U.S., alone among advanced capitalist coun-

tries aside from Japan, is the racist legacy of centuries of slavery and segregation, the lynch rope made legal. Indeed, the majority of executions have taken

place in states of the former Confederacy, and black people have always been sentenced to death in disproportionately

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