

# CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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## Solidarity with St. Louis Rebellion

# Anti-Racist Workers Fight Back

**ST. LOUIS, MO, October 1**—Weeks after the racist acquittal of kkkop Jason Stockley for the 2011 murder of Anthony Lamar Smith, the fires of anti-racist, working-class fightback are still raging across the St. Louis area. A small collective led by Progressive Labor Party (PLP) joined this militant struggle, offering working-class solidarity and communist leadership.

Anthony, 24, had a one-year-old daughter when he was killed after a high-speed chase. Just before the legalized lynching, based on video and documents obtained by St. Louis media, the racist Stockley said, "Going to kill this m\*therf\*cker, don't you know it." The killer cop then planted a silver revolver on Anthony and claimed self-defense. Though the only DNA on the revolver belonged to Stockley, a judge still found the kkkop not guilty—an outrage that has sparked a widespread uprising and more than 120 arrests in a single night.

Of the thousands of fatal shootings by on-duty U.S. cops between 2005 and 2015, according to a study by the Washington Post (4/11/15), only 54 resulted in officers being charged by the rigged U.S. "justice" system. Most were acquitted; the few who were convicted or pleaded guilty spent an average of only four years behind bars. In a time of rising inter-imperialist rivalry, looming global war, and gaping economic inequality, the capitalist bosses use and protect their killer cops to try to intimidate workers from fighting back. But the rulers' state terror cannot stop the class struggle. It cannot stop us from organizing for communist revolution, to smash the thugs in blue and their criminal masters once and for all.

### Reform and Revolution

Upon arriving in the city, our collective connected with a group of about a dozen people occupying the space in front of the (in)justice Center downtown. They were waiting for two people who had been jailed after the previous night's demonstration. We learned that protestors, including a minister and a wheelchair-bound filmmaker, were both arrested and pepper-strayed.

A number of anti-racists from Lost Voices occupying the space were familiar to our collective as fighters who were active during the Ferguson uprising after kkkop Darren Wilson killed Black teenager Mike Brown. It was inspirational and instructive for us all to observe the sustained commitment in the fightback in this region. With mostly Black leadership, these workers pour their



time and energy into the movement against racist cop murders, often risking their own physical safety. Their anti-racist efforts set a high standard that the entire working class can learn from.

We lent our bullhorn to those fighters spearheading the occupation, and they put it to good use. One leader of the Lost Voices group rapped on the mic and pumped up the growing crowd. Within a few hours, the kkkops had released the two fighters they had locked up overnight.

We made use of the situation to engage in some sharp conversations about reform and revolution. We encountered a point of disagreement with a number of the local fighters, who still trust that the cops and courts can be counted on to "do the right thing" if the working class applies pressure to rewrite some of the bosses' laws.

We struggled with new and old contacts over these reform efforts versus revolutionary goals. We held our line that as long as the capitalist bosses hold state power, they will use it to defend their profit-driven interests. Only workers seizing power under a communist society will guarantee that laws are enforced to serve the needs of the working class, without racism or sexism. Workers showed interest in this line, and we were able to share contact information, CHALLENGE, and fliers.

### The Battle of Galleria Mall

These conversations made us aware of another planned anti-racist demonstration that evening, at the St. Louis Galleria mall in the wealthy suburb of Richmond Heights. The site has been a flashpoint for rallies since Stockley's acquittal on

September 15, and has seen its share of arrests and kkkop violence against protesters. The bosses were ready for our agitation, and blocked off multiple entrances into the parking lot and within the mall itself.

Although our collective was blocked from getting to the action inside, anti-racist fighters soon poured out and began marching through the parking lot to take over a nearby intersection. We instantly joined the march and joined the chants of "No justice, no profits!" and "Racism means, we've got to fight back!" We held the intersection for more than 30 minutes, afterwards taking the opportunity to hand out bottled water, distribute more fliers, and make more contacts.

The action at the mall represented genuine, mass multiracial fightback against racist police terror. Black, Latin, Asian, and white fighters of all different ages raised their fists against the violence of capitalism. It was a reminder that international working class unity is the only force capable of destroying this racist, sexist profit system. Each and every worker won to build our international PLP means another nail in the bosses' coffins, and another step toward a communist world.

### Still Fighting Like Ferguson

Three years ago, the international working class learned what it meant to "Fight Like Ferguson." In nearby St. Louis, anti-racist fighters are boldly carrying on the Ferguson tradition. Communist revolution remains the only way to bury the bosses and their racism forever! Let's build this fight!✊

## JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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## OUR FIGHT

☆Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

☆The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

☆Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

☆While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

☆Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

☆Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

☆Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

☆Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

☆Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

☆Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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## WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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## Editorial

# U.S. Imperialism, Not Hurricane, Devastates Puerto Rico

Under capitalism, a society's first priority is profit, not people. This is all too clear for the workers of Puerto Rico as the United States, the world's richest superpower, has refused to pull resources from the bosses' inter-imperialist agenda and send adequate aid to people whose homes and livelihoods have been torn away, and who now face a public health catastrophe.

On September 20, Hurricane Maria, the most powerful storm there in 80 years, wreaked havoc in Puerto Rico. Even before this disaster, workers there suffered from 45 percent official poverty and 10 percent official unemployment (New York Times, 10/2), with the real numbers far worse. Three weeks after the hurricane struck this U.S. island territory and its long-neglected infrastructure, countless remain without food or shelter, or access to their bank deposits, credit card accounts, or cellphone service. As of October 10, according to the New York Times, 84 percent of the island still lacked electricity; 40 percent had no running water. Hospitals remain closed or barely functioning. For lack of diesel fuel to power generators, dialysis patients have been cut back to 75 percent of their needed treatments. According to the latest government timeline, it will be at least six months before the island's power grid is running to full capacity (CNN, 10/1).

Given the overwhelming breakdown of phone communication, no one knows the true extent of this capitalist disaster. The official death toll of 43 seems sure to grow dramatically.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military is busy expanding its Green Zone security district in Kabul as part of a multi-billion-dollar investment in permanent war in Central Asia and the Middle East (NYT, 9/16). It is clearer than ever that the ruling class values imperialist profits and control over workers' lives.

Without communist leadership and ideas, the workers of Puerto Rico have been left divided and unable to organize to fight effectively for what they need. The working class has been left to die.

### Workers Suffer, Bosses Move

With the hurricane wiping out 80 percent of Puerto Rico's coffee, plantain, and banana crops, (NYT, 9/25), manufacturing and agricultural jobs have been devastated. As per usual under capitalism, the bosses are scrambling to save themselves by firing workers, cutting hours, or simply moving their operations to places where their profits will be safer.

### Collectivity Turns to Nationalism

Over the past two months, as natural disasters have wrecked working-class neighborhoods in Puerto Rico, Texas, Florida, Mexico, and Barbuda, there has been an outpouring of generosity, support, and strength from our class brothers and sisters. We are reminded that individualism is not "human nature," and that in times of crisis, workers will help one another. In Puerto Rico, masses of workers have united to clean their streets and share electricity, medicine, and food (New York Times, 10/2).

We are also reminded, however, that spontaneous working-class solidarity is not enough to fight these disasters at their root. Capitalism is to blame for this death and destruction. Capitalism is to blame for unsanitary living conditions and hospitals. Only communist revolution can stop this carnage-for-profit.

### Jones Act & Legalized Racism

It took Nazi-in-chief Donald Trump a full week to temporarily waive the imperialist Jones Act. Enacted in 1920 to protect U.S. shipping profits and fend off European competition, the law allows only U.S.-built and U.S.-operated vessels to move cargo between U.S. ports without costly tariffs and other fees.

The Jones Act is a keystone of U.S. colonialist oppression of Puerto Rico: "That outdated piece of legislation renders food prices roughly double those of

## Puerto Rico, Conquered by Racism

Puerto Rico's strategic position in the Caribbean makes it indispensable to U.S. imperialism. Here is a short history of the territory:

The Taíno people on the island of Borinquén became targets of Spanish colonialism in 1493, when Christopher Columbus "claimed" the island for Spain. Spanish settlement began fifteen years later, paving the way for genocide of the indigenous people and importation of slave labor from Africa.

The Spanish-American war was an inter-imperialist fight between a declining Spanish empire and the rising U.S. capitalists. Upon the ratification of the Treaty of Paris of 1898, the island, now named Puerto Rico (Spanish for "rich port"), came under U.S. military control. So did Guam and the Philippines.

Puerto Rico has been strategically valuable in controlling of the Panama Canal; as an operations base for U.S. military invasions in the Caribbean, including the Dominican Republic (1965), Grenada (1983), and Haiti (1994); and as a control center for naval operations and armed control of South Atlantic maritime routes, extending to the west coast of Africa.

During World War II, on an island in the Panama Gulf, the U.S. military singled out soldiers from Puerto Rico to be subjected to secret, race-based chemical warfare experiments on 60,000 U.S. troops. These Nazi atrocities were designed to gauge how soldiers from various pseudo-scientific "races" might respond differently to exposure to mustard gas and lewisite, two chemical warfare agents. Black and white soldiers, along with those of Japanese descent, were also exposed to the carcinogens (foxnews.com, 6/24/15).

For several decades into the 1970s, the U.S. government funded a massive eugenics program to eliminate the "socially inadequate" in Puerto Rico. Administered by the International Planned Parenthood Federation, this criminal, racist program sterilized one-third of the women in Puerto Rico by 1968 (Stanford, 10/23/08).

To this day, workers in Puerto Rico are victims of extreme racist inequality. Existing political movements—for Puerto Rican autonomy or statehood—are both lethal, reformist dead-ends for the working class. The alternative is a world without national, state, or "territory" boundaries, without profit or money, without racism or sexism. The alternative is communism.

nearby Florida, even though per capita income in Puerto Rico is less than half that of Mississippi, the poorest of the fifty states" (Jacobin, 10/5). Now that the U.S. has ended a 10-day waiver, the law is once again slowing the delivery of aid to Puerto Rico and driving up costs (Associated Press 9/28). In other words, it's killing people.

### Trump's Racist Response

After a plea from the mayor of San Juan for more help, President Donald Trump attacked the working class of Puerto Rico on Twitter, playing on racist stereotypes used against Black and Latin workers: "[They] want everything to be done for them."

Trump's one-day visit to San Juan was steeped in racism. At a local distribution point, he launched rolls of paper towels into the crowd, then said the devastation in Puerto Rico wasn't a "real disaster like Katrina." In 2005, when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, Black working-class neighborhoods were destroyed and families left to die while the bosses focused on saving tourism and ruling-class profit mills in the city.

### The Poisoning of Vieques

The U.S. plans to send 17,000 soldiers to Puerto Rico and pledges to stay until "all needs are met" (TIME, 9/30). This would not be the first time the U.S. military has taken direct control of Puerto Rico territory.

**Continued on page 4**

## Chicago Airport

# Anti-Deportation Protests Take Flight

**INDIANA, October 6**—Confronted by a fascist police force in military gear, Progressive Labor Party comrades joined over 200 multi-racial anti-deportation fighters today in a demonstration at the city's airport. Our communist contingent made progress in sharing our revolutionary line that safety for our immigrant sisters and brothers won't be achieved through another reform, but only by the destruction of capitalism and its borders, through international working-class revolution.

### It's Not Just Trump— It's Capitalism

The Gary/Chicago International Airport has been a site of racist mass deportations of workers for years. Since June 2013, more than 12,000 immigrant workers have been bused to this site in order to be shipped as prisoners to the Texas/Mexico border (Chicago Tribune, 10/7). Today's rally was another effort made through various regional community organizations, churches, and labor unions to stop the weekly arrival of buses full of immigrant workers slated for deportation.

There were some speeches made linking the attacks on immigrant workers with the attacks on all workers' rights, but the main message was one of support to reinstate the liberal bosses' Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, recently revoked by Trump. Although pro-immigrant rights groups have been stirred to action by the Trump administration's openly racist hate speech, the fact remains that mass deportations were taking place well before his election. During

eight years of Deporter-in-Chief Barack Obama and Democrats holding majority in office, over three million immigrant workers were shamelessly deported from the U.S., violently uprooted and ripped away from family and friends.

The PL'ers in attendance worked to push the political tone of the event more towards communist politics and workers' power. We made signs in Spanish and English that read "Smash All Racist Borders" and "Working People Have No Nations," in order to confront the poisonous nationalism being promoted at the rally and get others thinking about the power of the international working class. We distributed CHALLENGE, along with a Party flier that called out DACA as a liberal reform scheme of the bosses, its main goal being to get undocumented workers to fight and die for U.S. imperialism (See CHALLENGE, 9/27). We reunited with fellow fighters and made even more contacts through these efforts.

### Anti-racist Workers Fight Back

About an hour into the rally, someone called out, "the buses are here!" The 200-plus fighters quickly ran to the side of the fence closest to the runway, pressing close so that our chants could be heard by the immigrant workers inside the vehicles. The kkkops, determined not to let us anti-racists block the buses and interrupt their fascist terror, had sectioned us off in the parking lot behind barricades, barbed wire fences, and officers with assault weapons. We chanted even louder in support of our undocumented sisters and brothers, while blasting the kkkops for being racist and

sexist murderers for the bosses.

Pressed against the fence, we got in more discussions about the need for communist revolution. While hearing chants of "Not One More!" we pointed out that putting faith in the bosses' political and legal system will never get us to a world free of racist deportations. We explained the need of the capitalist class to divide and terrorize the working class. Through fascist terror like deportations and killer cops, the bosses try and prevent us as workers from uniting worldwide to challenge their brutal profit system.

Workers' responses make it clear that many see through the bosses' lies, understanding the connections of all these problems to capitalism and rising in multi-racial fightback against the divisions and state violence. It's on us, PLP, to continue to deepen our roots in the working class to win them to the fact that only a communist world offers an existence free from exploitation, profits, sexism, racism, and war. Only by workers running society based on their collective needs guarantees the right for all working people to lead healthy, productive, and meaningful lives.

### The Struggle Continues

Inspired by the growing fightback of workers all over the world, these local struggles show no sign of dying down anytime soon. We look forward to continue organizing and struggling with our fellow anti-racist fighters. With each struggle, more workers can be won to rejecting the bosses' deadly reform bait and build PLP for the permanent solution of communist revolution. ☺

## DC Protests Capitalist Genocide in Myanmar

**WASHINGTON, DC, September 30**—Today the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) held a rally, march, and protest in solidarity with the oppressed workers of Myanmar (formerly Burma), in particular against the genocidal campaign by the military against the Rohingya Muslim minority workers and farmers. The army has driven hundreds of thousands of Rohingya off their land into neighboring Bangladesh, where they meet rejection of refugee status by the Bangladeshi rulers. Ostensibly the army is acting in response to terrorist attacks on Burmese police stations by an organization of Rohingya jihadists, but the masses are made to suffer.

Refugees from many countries meet similar rejection in Europe and elsewhere, leaving them homeless and without livelihoods, as warring imperialists from the U.S., Europe, Russia, and China fight each other for oil, natural gas, and minerals over the dead and dying bodies of workers and farmers whom they mislead into believing that these wars are in their interests.

Despite the pretense that the root of this genocide is religious oppression against Muslims in a predominantly Buddhist nation, it is mainly the backing by contending imperialists, who cynically jump on any bandwagon to appear to support one group of workers over another, that drives the attacks. Land theft by the military from Rohingya farmers is an additional motivation, but many poor Buddhist farmers have also been subject to the same thefts of land, making unity between both groups against this oppression an absolute necessity for survival. Unity among all groups of workers everywhere is the only possible way to defend ourselves, while capitalists use all kinds of divisions—racism, sexism, nationalism—to set us

against each other and destroy our ability to resist.

PL'ers launched our action with a bullhorn rally in a busy commercial area, handing out over 200 flyers and 50 copies of CHALLENGE. We spoke with passersby about the crisis, as well as the mission of the PLP for revolution to rid the entire world of capitalism and imperialism.

PLP members then marched to the Myanmar (Burmese) Embassy (just blocks away from Obama's \$8.1 million-dollar residence and the \$5.5 million home of Trump's daughter Ivanka and her husband Jared Kushner). We left our leaflets condemning the genocide on the spikes of the fences surrounding the embassy, to put the fascist regime of Myanmar (Burma) on notice that we are fully determined to build support for their Muslim and Buddhist victims and to organize millions of workers and farmers for the day that we can drive fascism, imperialism, and capitalism from the planet.

This modest demonstration is the beginning of a resistance campaign against this genocide and against the reactionary capitalist forces from China and U.S. who seek to exploit, by proxy, ethnic strife and conflict as their imperialist interests clash (see CHALLENGE, October 11, 2107). In particular, we are determined to build sufficient support around the world to force the government of Myanmar and its imperialist backers to allow



the Rohingya, clinging to life in refugee camps in Bangladesh, to return to their homes and farms.

The lead speaker declared "We must remember that the source of this genocide, and indeed of every genocide, is economic imperialism. Every ethnic cleansing can be traced to attempts by capitalists to appropriate the land of workers for their own ends, and to rally one part of the working class against another to maintain the dominance of the bourgeoisie [capitalists]. Even if we can stop this genocide, and save the Rohingya from annihilation, we will see further genocide around the world until the reactionary capitalist forces are crushed, and global worker solidarity is achieved."

We urge all workers, students, and soldiers to join this campaign by contacting the D.C. chapter of PLP at [revolution500@gmail.com](mailto:revolution500@gmail.com). ☺

## Brooklyn School

# Victory for Antiracist Fighters against DoE Fascism

**BROOKLYN, NY, October 10**—After a McCarthy-style investigation that lasted half a year, the New York City Department Of Education's Office of Special Investigations (OSI) has declared that it cannot substantiate accusations of wrong-doing against teachers, some communists, in Park Slope Collegiate. This is a huge victory for the school and its community.

It is also continuing to investigate several minor claims against the principal and a bogus conflict of interest charge against one of the teachers.

### The School that Dared to Fight

In a segregated school system of 1.1 million students, Park Slope Collegiate dared to fight racism with an organized alliance of students, parents, and staff. It is a mainly Black and Latin school in the John Jay campus. In 2010, the DoE fought to install a segregated high school in the building: Millennium, a mainly white and Asian school. While the DoE claimed to not have money for the existing schools in the building, they had no problem starting Millennium. PSC organized against this racist divide but failed.

No matter, for nearly a decade, the students, parents, teachers, and staff continued "fighting the installation of metal detectors in their school, helped organize school assemblies to talk about police violence, and had spoken out passionately against segregation" (NYT, 5/4). For this, the DoE used a Red Scare to strangle workers' fightback against racism.

### Racist Rats in the School

While clearing the charges, the OSI released a document summarizing witness statements, which reveal that suspicions that the union leader initiated the investigation were correct. Now the staff has to face the facts that several co-workers, including the union chapter leader, tried to destroy the lives not only of their

principal, but also of fellow workers.

Even more disgusting is that this was a racist attack on the students of the school, one that targeted student leaders and if successful could have destroyed a bastion of anti-racist multiracial fight back. In the case of the union representative, this lays bare where her true loyalties have always lain.

The course of the investigation has also laid bare the ugly reality that liberal politicians are the main enemy under capitalism. Even though this attack was initiated from three anti-communist staff members inside of the school, the DoE along with the liberal mayor, de Blasio and the school chancellor Farina, were silent during this attack on this integrating school while publically paying lip service to school integration. De Blasio and Farina are doing their part to uphold the state's ranking by perpetuating racist "choice" policies for secondary schools and defending elementary school zones that deliberately segregate students in the service of home real estate values for the middle class and the affluent.

### Parent-Teacher-Student Unity

Many parents that are deeply involved in this anti-racist struggle are the same constituents the politicians depend on to keep them in office. Parents who thought that their ties to these politicians would save the school from the investigation have seen their emails and phone calls mainly ignored. No amount of calls to their representatives fixed the situation, just as similar calls did not integrate the school, provide equity in the building or remove the prison-like metal detectors.

At the same time, the response in the school to the investigation has revealed the true power of the working class united. Teachers, staff, parents and students have stood up and organized like never before while this anti-racist community was attacked. Friends

***The investigation laid bare the ugly reality that liberal politicians are the main enemy under capitalism.***

***At the same time, the response in the school to the investigation revealed the true power of the working class united.***

who have waited for communist teachers to lead the way in proposing actions before, have stepped to the foreground, spear-heading the petition to remove the chapter leader from office last year and the founding of a new leadership committee at the school. Large, visible actions outside the school, on the steps of City Hall and outside the courthouse during attempts to legally stop the investigation definitely had an impact on the decision of the uber-fascist OSI to drop the investigation.

Truly integrated schools are rare in New York City, and schools that fight back against the racist policies that attempt to keep them segregated are even more rare. The John Jay Campus is a microcosm of the racist inequalities in school systems throughout the U.S.

This investigation is clear evidence that the institutions of capitalism are ready and willing to impose fascism on workers. It is also clear evidence that the most powerful way to stop their attacks is multiracial fightback. The multiracial unity this school community demonstrated led to a victory for now.

We must learn from this attack and move forward better prepared for the next one, because there will always be another.☺

## EDITORIAL

*Continued from page 2*

In 1941, the U.S. purchased Vieques, a small island just off the coast of the main island in Puerto Rico, to set up a naval base and conduct military exercises and test its latest bombs and munitions. Over the next 60 years, the 9,000 residents of Vieques got progressively sicker and the land more and more destroyed.

Even before the devastation of the latest storm, people in Vieques were "eight times more likely to die of cardiovascular disease and seven times more likely to die of diabetes..." (Atlantic, 9/1/16). Their health crisis has only been heightened by recent events.

Be it the "war on terror" in Iraq and Afghanistan, the occupation of Haiti, or the brutal gentrification of New Orleans, the U.S. military response to "humanitarian disasters" means little aid and a lot of fascism and death for the working class.

### A Call for Communist Revolution

The recent wave of disasters that have killed so many is a stark reminder of what workers are forced to endure in a capitalist world. While hurricanes and earthquakes may be unpreventable, the condition of a society's infrastructure depends on how the society is organized. A disaster response geared to workers' needs hinges on which class holds state power.

The rulers' profit system will continue to devastate our class until we organize a communist revolution, under the leadership of Progressive Labor Party. Join us!☺

## Mexico Earthquakes

# Capitalism, Nationalism Deadly for Workers

**MEXICO CITY, October** —The hundreds killed in the earthquakes in Mexico show that capitalism is deadly.

The U.S. Geological Survey predicts as many as 1,000 died in the earthquakes of September 7 and 19 in Mexico. Countless are injured or homeless, and two thousand schools are damaged. Natural disasters like earthquakes and hurricanes are inevitable, yet when people's safety is a priority preventive measures can be taken. But under capitalism profits are more important than workers lives.

The earthquakes have affected several states, Morelos and Puebla as well as the Istmo de Tehuantepec in Oaxaca. These are some of the most marginalized communities of indigenous population, who have endured years of oppression and misery. They have suffered social inequality, state violence, corruption and racism. Cities like Juchitán in Oaxaca and Jojutla in Morelos look like war zones due to the devastation. The solidarity of the working-class community is a big contrast to the lack of help from the government. The rebel teachers from the Sección 22 in Oaxaca have been organizing in support of the affected communities.

### Under Capitalism, Workers' Lives Don't Matter

In Mexico City, many men and women workers have been killed. They worked under unsafe conditions, just like the earthquake in 1985. Many more are victims of the building contractors who, in order to maximize their profits, use cheap materials in their constructions. One case in point is Colegio Rebsamen, where the administration is, not only guilty of bad education, but allowed dangerous conditions for its students by colluding with the constructors to endorse the school building. In Xochimilco, in the marginalized zone of San Gregorio, many families lost their homes because of the precariousness of the construction.

These tragedies are examples of how this murderous system works: workers' lives do not matter. The capitalists' never-ending drive for profit leads them to create cities in risk zones regardless of the danger, like in Mexico City, where floods and earthquakes destroy the fragile homes of thousands of workers, and their lives. Contamination and stress destroy thousands of lives and leaves hundreds of thousands with a bad quality of life. Capitalism doesn't worry about having a system to prevent these occurrences, with alarms, secure constructions or a culture of prevention.

### Salute to Young Leadership

The capitalists and their governments can't fix the tragedy, only workers' solidarity has saved lives and embraced those left with nothing. The government intervened just to control the organization and solidarity of the working class. The youth have been at the forefront, they know that this system has given them nothing. The marines, army and police have taken control of certain disaster areas, to which volunteers have resisted, but because there was no organized fight back, they weren't able to stop the government from coming into these areas. The working class has to organize themselves in order to smash this lethal system, no electoral party will do it.

Progressive Labor Party celebrates the thousands of youth who have mobilized to help, it shows the working class potential for social change, even with the whole capitalist system against us. The transformation of the capitalist system can only be realized if we organize a Party that will destroy it and its parasite multimillionaire elite class once and for all. The youth of Mexico are considered the industrial army reserved to fill in the jobs and fight in their wars. They have tried to present them as worthless, interested only on the superfluous, they call them "ninis" (they do not work, don't go to school...) or "millennial," these are racist and anti-working-class insults, which try to hide the fact that capitalism has nothing to offer these youth.

The bosses are also coopting working-class collectivity for their nationalist purposes, turning a good thing into a bad thing. It is on the basis of human need, rather than nationality and ethnicity, that prompted the working class in Mexico to show solidarity and save lives. Nationalism remains a deadly path that seeks to sever our class.

### Capitalism Is Not Forever

Capitalism will not last forever, the working class will rise and change this murdering system. We can turn the terror of the earthquake into hope for the future. A future free of oppression, death, profit, and criminal negligence. That is the message that comrades of PLP have been spreading amongst our friends in the support brigades we have participated. Our challenge is to transform the potential of the spontaneous solidarity among workers, into the reality of the power of a permanent organization for communism.☺

## Kitchen Sink Drama

# Workers, Students Stir Up Trouble for CUNY Bosses

**BROOKLYN, October 10**—As the students, workers, and faculty at Kingsborough Community College (KCC) are learning, this disaster of a racist profit system affects our lives at every level and can only be defeated with multiracial unity. KCC is one of the largest campuses in the country's largest urban university system (see CHALLENGE, 9/27), the City University of New York (CUNY). While KCC's working class is a reflection of the segregation and divisions imposed by capitalism, they're also becoming a model of multiracial fightback.

Members and friends of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) have been routinely selling CHALLENGE outside of campus, and learning and organizing a great deal.

### **How Capitalism Runs and Ruins Cafeterias**

During the summer break, the campus cafeteria changed from one private contractor Panda House to another larger company called Metropolitan Food Services. Panda House left KCC because the prospect of a paltry raise in the New York State's minimum wage to \$11/ hour became too "expense." KCC bosses chose Metropolitan and laid off most of the former workers.

Metropolitan found itself desperate to fill shifts. Advertisements for open positions covered the cafeteria. But, they were unprepared or unable to even respond to the students who filled out job applications. So, a petition was signed by more than 600 students, workers and faculty to pressure Metropolitan into answering applicants.

This was only one example of Metropolitan's utter lack of preparation. Running school cafeterias under capitalism is the same as every business, from your local bodega to multinational oil companies like ExxonMobil: profits first.

Bowing to the pressure of this combined

force, they answered. Success was short-lived; On September 27, the Department of Health closed the cafeteria.

### **Kitchen Sinks Get Lost in the Sauce**

Students were greeted with official closure notices on Kingsborough letterhead that merely stated the cafeteria was "temporarily closed," and "the College is working with the cafeteria vendor to address all concerns immediately."

"Immediately" became several days. The college replaced the cafeteria with food trucks to attempt to satisfy the roughly 8,000 full-time students, and 7,000 part-timers. The bosses provided no public explanation for the closure. As CHALLENGE has learned, the matter had to do with the changeover to Metropolitan.

During the switchover, the Panda House took the sinks that had been used for food cleaning and preparation back. They were never replaced. These sinks cost tens of thousands of dollars, and a kitchen without a sink inevitably led to health code violations.

The new cafeteria has fancy new signs and lights, but Metropolitan illustrates how capitalism's thirst for profits affect every detail of our working-class lives. The bosses are under pressure to cut corners on ensuring things like sinks for sanitation. On a small level, they can seem like mistakes. But as a system, we find these "mistakes" are the norm under capitalism.

Fortunately, the workers continued receiving pay. The bosses tried keeping the reasons for the closure a secret, and told the workers just to clean and scrub the kitchen areas.

Universities like CUNY enable the college food service industry to squeeze \$19 billion per year in profit—more than the fast food giants

## **DACA & Democrats**

CHALLENGE also learned that a Sanctuary Committee on campus has been busy building unity among immigrant students and faculty, and raising antiracist politics.

On October 5, the deadline for application renewal for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students, KCC students and faculty disrupted a Manhattan press conference organized by NYC Mayor de Blasio's office. The press conference featured a circus of Democrats promising to "protect" DACA students, from City Council member Carlos Menchaca to State Senator Jose Peralta.

Standing on chairs at the front of the room while the politicians gave news interviews, the KCC crew unfurled a giant banner that read "Defend DACA, Fight Racism," and started chanting "They say go back, we say fight back!" DACA students in the room picked up the chant. The surprised politicians and their entourages tried to ignore the disruption.

A small army of the politicians' aids surrounded the KCC contingent, demanding them to stop chanting. Apparently they eventually stopped, and the news and politicians treated it like they would a theatre interruption—they just continued like nothing happened.

We hope this KCC contingent returns and disrupts these Democrats with bigger numbers next time. The Democrat fakers and misleaders are no friends to any worker. Scum like senator Peralta cry with fake tears about president Trump canceling DACA. At the same time, he's under investigation for accepting money and power in exchange for supporting pro-Trump Republicans who defeated a state-level version of the DREAM Act in 2014.

*Continued on page 6*

## Las Vegas Shooting

# Capitalism Creates Monsters

In a period of escalating inter-imperialist competition and declining U.S. presidential support, the capitalists will seize every opportunity to use tragedies such as mass shootings for their own purposes. On October 1, a gunman opened fire on a large crowd of concertgoers at the Route 91 Harvest country music festival on the Las Vegas strip, killing 58 people and injuring 489 others. The brutality of capitalism is able to take this tragedy and use it to ramp up support for the police force and increased fascism.

The police have been heralded as heroes of the night and calls for increasing their presence at large events is now abundant. The ruling class has jumped on this opportunity for rising fascism: more searches, SWAT special reaction team sharpshooters in place at large events, and increased calls for a "see something, say something" atmosphere. The capitalist system is what workers really need to "say something" about.

### **Innate Brutality of Capitalism**

The shooter, 64 year-old Stephen Paddock, a white male, was described by the media as a retiree living a quiet life who liked country music and gambling. This is the racism of the system and its media bursting from the seams. Anytime an act such as this is committed by another "race," the story is very different. Blame is placed on an entire "race" or religion and great lengths are taken to dehumanize the person.

In reality, although no proof has emerged of a political or religious affiliation that drove the ideology of this unthinkable act, capitalism creates monsters every day. In the hotel where Paddock eventually took his own life, police found 23 weapons, including 12 rifles with "bump stocks" which allows it to serve as an automatic weapon. In his home, another 19 weapons were found along with explosives and several thousand rounds of ammunition (CNN.com, 10/5). Only under this system of extreme alienation and isolation could an otherwise "regular guy" rationalize an action this heinous against his class brothers and sisters.

You wouldn't know it by the amount of coverage, but this is not the only recent mass shooting. There have been 273 mass shootings this year alone (Business Insider, 10/2). Capitalism and imperialism are inherently violent. It is no wonder that the top imperialist country in the world would have a culture of violence, from movies to video games to rampant gun ownership. The U.S. working class is disaffected, insulated and living in a constant state of fear—fear of losing their jobs, healthcare, homes and more. This is all a tinder box for reactionary acts like the one committed by Paddock.

While this single incident may be the deadliest mass shooting in "modern" U.S. history, it pales in comparison to the over 1,000 mostly Black, indigenous and Latin workers murdered by the

police every year in this country (The Counted, the Guardian). Not to mention that the genocide of Native workers is conveniently left out of U.S. "modern" history. This is compounded by the fact that the U.S. ruling class commits genocide on a daily basis all around the world, especially in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. In March this year alone, U.S.-led coalition air strikes killed 1,484 civilians in Iraq and Syria (Newsweek, 3/31).

### **Altruism is in Nature**

As in all crises created by capitalism, we get to see the true nature of our class. Even though the isolation and dehumanization of this rotten system creates people like Paddock, the working class is resilient. Whether a hurricane hits or a shooter takes aim into a crowd, we have seen time and again the inherent collectivity of our class. In the face of death, workers ran back into the danger zone to administer first aid or pull others out. There are countless stories of workers risking their lives for other workers.

As the working class, our humanity is directly tied to one another. We have nothing to lose but our chains. One day our class will rid the Earth of this violent system. We will create a society where everyone's worth is valued. Our natural sense of collectivity will not only be allowed out during a crisis, but will blossom in our everyday lives. Fight for communism. ☺

# LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

## Learning to Fight in St. Louis

After kkkkop Jason Stockley was acquitted for the murder of Anthony Lamar Smith, the working class of St. Louis rebelled (see front page). A small collective led by PLP recently joined the struggle in solidarity. These are their letters.

For some of those on the trip to St. Louis, it would be their third or fourth time visiting from Chicago since Ferguson. This was my first time.

Upon arriving, we checked for news. The first article that came up from a "St Louis" Google search was an article reporting a banner drop at the Cardinals vs. Brewers baseball game before we had arrived in the city.

The banner depicted a cardinal wearing a jersey with "#Expect Us" in place of the team name. In the cardinal's hand was a sign that read "Racism Lives Here" with the script "Stop Killing Us!!" written below the image. Afterwards, workers took the streets to show their continued discontent with the murders of black workers in the city. Sure enough, tensions were still high, and workers were demanding justice for father and soon-to-be husband Anthony Lamar Smith.

The next day, we arrived at the City Justice Center and met with a member of a grassroots group Lost Voices. They said they had been waiting for two comrades that had been assaulted and mishandled by kkkops the night before.

We made a friend with whom we talked about the notion of black workers being considered three-fifths of a person. We had discussion about how the 13th amendment states that no person can be held as a slave unless they are a criminal.

There were other workers who welcomed us with open arms. One worker had familiarity with the party. He spoke of revolution on the bullhorn. He had said that they "were not a charity" and that money is not what they wanted. In contrast, we attended another community event of churches and charities, and all they wanted was money.

We also visited Ferguson where the majority of rebellion took place after the murder of Mike Brown in 2014.

During dinner with a local friend we made earlier, we discussed reformism and revolution. There was criticism towards how the organizers are approaching the fightback. Some saw non-violent protests as the way to fight without being met with violence from the kkkops. There is talk of reform. Some mentioned revolution, but the overarching solution the workers had was to alter the current system instead of creating a new one.

A lot of self-criticism took place during this trip in regards to my participation in fightback at home. I look forward to being able to have more time for involvement in the fightback after graduation.

★

Workers wear many faces and come from many places. The struggle is all the same though. We saw the same fight against racism, sexism, and classism in St. Louis that we've seen in Chicago. However, it was still a fresh and informative experience.

A community leader showed us around. We had good conversation with him even though we didn't really get to explain our ideas for a better world as communists. Instead, we understood our role as guests and listened. Eventually, he mentioned there was going to be a Black Lives Matter protest at a shopping mall. We arrived to the mall and saw protesters inside the mall shouting "black lives matter!" so we tried to join but the doors were locked.

As we were looking for new friend, protesters started leaving the mall and closed off the intersection outside the mall. There was a small group of leaders at the center of the protest chanting, along with about 40-50 chanting along with them. Towards the end, we all formed a huddle in the middle as one protester gave a speech. "We can't be separated in the fight. Neither of us are allies. We are all brothers and sisters. We will continue fighting racism no matter the opposition." What a way to end the trip.

★

Driving down St. Louis, we saw two tents in front of a courthouse jail. There was a cloth banner with "Shut it Down for Justice because Black Lives Matter" painted on it. Youth and older men gathered to talk about the prior night while their eyelashes painted white with mace. Chests showing taser marks. Two older white males with long beards walked by with their baseball hats and shook hands with one of the older black protesters. I feel it was a conversation to try to understand the other side.

They were waiting for their reverend to come out after the prior night of marching. The cops separated the reverend and crushed his glasses. The two men who tried saving the reverend got maced and tazed. One of the guys had traveled from California and brought his emotional support puppy, which apparently also got maced.

The protesters passed around flyers for a community block party organized by all the churches in the area, free food for anyone, haircuts for the large amount of homeless youth, live music and lots of welcoming people. In a way, it seems like the community helps itself out, it's great, but it's probably done out of need. A man was talking to us about how he had started wanting to help with one thing and it ended up turning into a mentoring program for the youth teaching them how to read.

In conclusion, I feel as if we should contribute and support efforts in this area.

★★★★★

## CUNY Kitchen Fight

Continued from page 5

Burger King, Subway, and KFC. How much of Metropolitan's slice of those profits went into hiring adequate staff and ensuring basic equipment like sinks?

Universities prefer private food vendors because the workers are almost never unionized. Consistent with capitalist cost-cutting, non-union workers make an average of 27 percent less than unionized workers (CNN Money, 2/14/15). Contracting companies like Metropolitan means CUNY avoids paying workers and providing them with benefits.

The students, workers and faculty who circulated the recent petition, however, show how masses can be organized and fight back. PLP fights to connect the cafeteria workers' struggles with the growing fightback elsewhere on campus. The cafeteria is now open with installed sinks.

### Communism: Everything Plus the Kitchen Sink

Students and workers do not need liberal Democrats to "protect" them; they need to fight back and build a mass, fighting PLP. Continue to make CHALLENGE the voice of the international working class. PLP is the only party fighting for revolution for true liberation from capitalism—communism, where the working class will abolish money and borders, and run every aspect of society to better all workers.

The bosses at KCC figured they could keep quiet about their cafeteria "mistake," but they were wrong. The bosses' politicians and media at the DACA press conference thought they could ignore the students and faculty calling for fightback (see sidebar), but they were wrong too! To connect and sharpen these fights, more students, workers and faculty must read and subscribe to CHALLENGE. Join the fight with PLP.✪

## Discussion of Baldwin and Anti-Racism

**Funny how the filmmakers view success as joining with the capitalist power structure.**

We had a movie night with some comrades and friends. We watched, *I Am Not Your Negro* by Raoul Peck. It was an extremely moving depiction of Baldwin and his understanding of racism. We learned a lot about how racism is used against Black people. After analyzing the movie we better understood the divisiveness of nationalism. And it became clear that you can't just talk, you have to get in the struggle and fight back.

In this film we see why Baldwin was very particular about the groups that were promoted for Black people. He couldn't see himself joining the Black Panthers or the Nation of Islam because he

didn't believe that all white people were devils. He also didn't join the NAACP because they promoted Black elites and he was coming from a background of a shoeshine boy. It was clear that he was for multi-racial unity and against class division.

### You Have To Be In It To Win It

Yet several of us felt there was something troubling about Baldwin's course of action. Baldwin thought the best way to contribute to a rebellious consciousness was to be a speaker, a writer, and a watcher of the racist events that persisted. We thought Baldwin should have taken more action in providing leadership to the direction of the movement through practice, rather than taking a passive stance to appeal to the rulers "humanity". At first some friends did not think of Baldwin as being passive, but after a discussion, they couldn't deny it. Luckily, a few CHALLENGEs were on deck. We went over some of the Progressive Labor Party's (PLP) history of fighting the Klan in the 60's and 70's. It is crucial to be involved in the struggle both then and now. You have to be in it to win it, whether it's a small improvement in our lives or a step toward a communist revolution.

### Fight To Learn – Learn To Fight

Once we peeled back the onion and asked some critical questions, our discussion became

intense. Who needs racism? And why? A friend said that the bosses need racism to "divide and conquer" the working class.

Then a comrade raised, "but for what purpose?" As the conversation continued to develop a comrade said, "racism is used to profit, as these bosses use Black and Latin workers to work for lower wages. This then lowers wages for all workers."

We all were in agreement, except one. A friend brought up the question of white supremacy. Many white rulers fall in the category of white supremacist, but they all use it for the purpose to profit. That's why PLP says fight capitalism."

We also found it interesting that the film showed how president Kennedy mentioned that "the day would come, maybe 40 years from now we may have a Black president." Funny how the filmmakers view success as joining with the capitalist power structure.

Although we understand that this is a condensed version of Baldwin's writings, it left a lot of room for questions and conversation. We hope to take the ideas learned from this film with us and use them actively in practice for the fight against capitalism.✪

## NFL Take-A-Knee Protests

# U.S. Anthem and Flag are Symbols of Racism & Imperialism

The Star-Spangled Banner and the American flag are symbols of racism, but they also represent the never-ending wars and mass destruction of U.S. imperialism. When Colin Kaepernick first 'took the knee' during a National Football League (NFL) game last August, he was specifically protesting the racist police killings of Black people. "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses Black people and people of color...this is bigger than football and it would be selfish ... to look the other way. There are bodies in the street...and people... getting away with murder"

But Kaepernick went further: "a system that perpetually condones the killing of people, without consequence, doesn't need to be revised, it needs to be dismantled!"

As the U.S. rulers move ever closer to world war with it's imperialist rivals, China and Russia, we must once again remember those cries from the young Black rebels from Ferguson. "The whole damn system has to go." In the Progressive Labor Party, that means organizing millions of workers to build a multiracial, revolutionary movement to not only 'dismantle' this capitalist system, but also replace it with communism, an egalitarian society that fights to eliminate racism and sexism forever.

### **NFL Owners Promote Racist Patriotism and Imperialism**

The NFL is a huge, profit making, mega corporation run by billionaire owners. As they lie about

free speech, they have conspired to ban Kaepernick from football, hiring many lesser quarterbacks. Yet, when Army and Navy 'honor guards' paraded during halftime 'shows' the NFL was paid by the Army and Navy. As Air Force jets performed aerial shows during halftimes, the NFL collected their 'patriotism' money from the Air Force. Free speech is not free. It's bought and paid for.

And the NFL is perfectly suited to promote this militaristic patriotism. You start with the Star Spangled Banner, written by a pro slavery racist, and originally attacking and degrading slaves fighting for their freedom (TheRoot, 7/7). As Edward Curtin says, it "is a celebration of war, meant to stir martial emotions. And football is the war sport par excellence, extremely violent.... In the 1960s, Brazilian television, in an effort to distinguish football (soccer) from American football, aptly termed it "military football." (Counterpunch, 9/27).

### **Build a Mass Anti-Racist Movement**

As more athletes start protesting, questions arise. How to fight racism? Trump wants all kneelers fired. LeBron James, Cleveland Cavaliers basketball superstar, called him a bum. Many cheered. But when Cleveland cops killed Tamir Rice and were acquitted, James said nothing. "I don't have enough knowledge about it." Some owners are trying to coopt the movement. They are 'joining' their players in a show of 'unity.' Dal-

las Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, a million dollar Trump supporter, exemplified this phony unity. He linked arms with the players and kneeled for a few seconds before the anthem was played, then they stood up. That's no protest at all. Shortly after he announced that players who did not stand would not play. In the PLP we fight for a revolution and an egalitarian, communist world. We welcome people who hate Trump, as we encourage them to join us in the fight for communism. We welcome people who hate racism, but want to 'improve our democracy,' even though we think this 'democracy' is completely phony. We don't welcome the racist, billionaire NFL owners.

There is a history of athletes fighting back. The communist Paul Robeson was a militant fighter against racism. The bosses blacklisted him and took away his passport, so he could not perform in Europe. Sprinters Tommy Lee and John Carlos raised their fists on the medal stand at the 1968 Mexico Olympics. They were vilified, sent home, thrown off the U.S. team, received death threats and had their medals taken away. Muhammad Ali famously said that "no Vietnamese ever called me a ni\*\*er" as he refused to go fight in the Vietnam War. The Government tried to jail him. These athletes, like Karpnick, fought back and paid a price. More must take a stand until we are millions and bringing forth an egalitarian, communist world. Join us!✪



## RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers. Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly, LAT=Los Angeles Times

### **The 'fruits' of capitalism's Great Recession: 1.5 million workers vanish**

NYT, 10/6 — ...The wounds of the recession...[spurred] the disappearance of more than 1.5 million workers from the economy. Research has found that many fell into drug addiction and poverty....

...Danny Yagan, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley...found that [at] the places that had been hit the hardest, the effects have lingered — thousands of workers who lost their jobs struggled to find work and ultimately stopped looking....

"The signals say the recession is over, but employment's not back....

...Large parts of the country, including cities like Cleveland and Memphis, have experienced essentially no recovery at all....Yagan's research...made it "difficult to escape the conclusion" that recessions now do permanent...damage....

Nearly half of the working-age men who are not in the labor force take pain medication daily....Companies had...taken advantage of the recession to replace workers with machines.

### **Obama's presidency pay\$ off, at \$400,000 per speech**

NYT, 9/26 — ...Barack Obama's post-presidential life included...a conference on health care sponsored by the brokerage firm Cantor Fitzgerald — ...his ninth paid speech since leaving office....The speech was Mr. Obama's third to a financial crowd in the past month — he also spoke to clients of the money-management firm Northern Trust Corporation and the private-equity firm Carlyle Group — and gave some indication of how

he has been navigating the money-making opportunities of his newly private life. Since leaving the White House...the former president and his wife have reportedly won a \$60 million joint book deal, and his speaking fees — including to Cantor — have gone as high as \$400,000 per speech. He has also vacationed on an exclusive island and taken up residence in an \$8.1 million home.

### **Amazon pushes workers beyond their limits to reap billion\$**

NYT, 8/16 — Inside Amazon...a bruising workplace. Some workers who suffered from cancer, miscarriages, and other personal crises said they had been...edged out rather than given time to recover....The company...is conducting a little-known experiment in how far it can push white-collar workers....

Bo Olson...lasted less than two years...and said that his enduring image was watching people weep in the office.... "Nearly every person I worked with I saw cry at their desk."

Thanks in part to its ability to extract the most from employees...it eclipsed Walmart as the most valuable retailer in the country, with a market value of \$250 billion, and Forbes deemed [CEO] Jeff Bezos the fifth-wealthiest person on earth.... (He also owns the Washington Post.)

"Organizations are...pushing their teams to do more for less money...just to stay ahead of the executioner's blade"....

In Amazon warehouses, employees are monitored by sophisticated electronic systems to ensure they are packing enough boxes every hour. Amazon came under fire in 2011 when workers in an eastern Pennsylvania warehouse toiled in more than 100-degree heat with ambulances waiting outside, taking away laborers as they fell....

"I would see people practically combust." Liz Pearce, worked on Amazon's wedding registry. "That's when the ulcer started," she said....

...Employees say that the Bezos ideal...[is] where co-workers challenge one another "even

when doing so is uncomfortable or exhausting... [turning] into a world of frequent combat....

"You learn how to diplomatically throw people under the bus," said a marketer who spent six years in the retail division.... "When you're not able to give your absolute all, 80 hours a week, they see it as a major weakness...."

"Purposeful Darwinism":...Amazon's cycle of constantly hiring employees, driving them and cutting them.

### **How capitalism works: robots cut workers, swell profits**

NYT, 6/18 — Imagine this scene...You walk into a store...a computer...directs you to the items you need....In the back, robots retrieve your items from a warehouse and deliver them to your home....Amazon's \$13.4 billion purchase of Whole Foods...could speed that vision along.... [like its] store in Seattle, Amazon Go, that has no salespeople or checkout lines....

...The next jobs to disappear are probably... retail workers and cashiers in stores and restaurants....Amazon kills and maims its workers just like Walmart....Eight million people, 6 percent of American workers, are retail salespeople and cashiers....A report estimated that a quarter of the tasks that salespeople do would be automated this year, and 58 percent by 2020....

Companies won't invest in technology unless it's less expensive than employing people....But in a case study of grocery stores, McKinsey found that the savings from automation were three times the cost, and 68 percent of the savings were from reduced labor costs....

If salespeople and cashiers lose their jobs in large number...it would make the job market even more challenging for a group of workers who already struggle to find stable, well-paid employment and are unlikely to have the education to move into better jobs....

...The idea of a cashier won't be so much automated as just made irrelevant....

**BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION CENTENNIAL SERIES**

# BOLSHEVIKS' WORK IN BAKU OIL FIELDS



*This is the part of an extensive series about the Bolshevik Revolution and the triumphs, as well as the defeats, of the world communist movement of the 20th century. We welcome your comments and criticisms, and encourage all readers to discuss this period of history with their friends, classmates, co-workers, family, and comrades.*

*The following illustrates Bolshevik work under the Czar before the Revolution of 1917.*

Progressive Labor Party is following in the footsteps of Bolshevik leaders Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin in struggling to “fit the reform struggle into the revolutionary struggle,” making revolution primary. This is very hard to do when the bosses still rely on liberalism to fool the working class. But this liberalism is in the process of turning into fascism. If we have followed our line of “revolution and reform” and have prepared a base for communism among the working class, we will be prepared to turn the bosses’ fascism into its opposite—workers’ communist revolution. A look at the history of the Bolshevik party illustrates this.

In *What Is To Be Done?* (1902) Lenin denounced the tendency of putting trade union work around reform issues on an equal or even a higher footing with Party work. The “economist” or reformist outlook Lenin criticized was dominant in the Second International. It turned the German Social Democratic Party, the party of Marx and Engels, into a pro-imperialist, anti-worker party by 1914 (see Schorske, *German Social Democracy*). The Mensheviks, that part of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party with which Lenin and the Bolsheviks split, also practiced it. The occasion for this split in 1903 was Lenin’s insistence upon the primacy of illegal Party (revolutionary) work, and on making sure that communist politics guided all reform activity.

**Baku Under Russian Empire**

A study by U.S. historian Ronald Grigor Suny (published in *Soviet Studies*, 1972) shows how Stalin put Lenin’s strategy or “revolution over reform” into practice in the oil-producing Caspian region around Baku (present-day country of Azerbaijan) from 1907 to 1910. A. V. Williams Jackson of Columbia University wrote in his work *From Constantinople to the Home of Omar Khayyam* (1911):

*Baku is a city founded upon oil... At present Baku produces one-fifth of the oil that is used in the*

*world, and the immense output in crude petroleum from this single city far surpasses that in any other district where oil is found.*

The Czar legalized land ownership in Baku, turning it into the oil capital of the world. Between the 1880s and 1900s, Baku belonged to the Nobels, the Rothschilds and more generally to the British oil bosses. Between 1856 and 1910 Baku’s population grew at a faster rate than that of London, Paris or New York. It is in the flashpoint of imperialism that the Bolsheviks, soon to lead the revolution in the next decade, organized class struggle.

**Organize Among Most Oppressed**

The workers fought hard against the oil bosses. After the workers’ rebellions of 1905-6 the oil bosses of Baku opted for liberalism, raising wages and legalizing unions. They hoped to divert the oil workers’ struggles towards reform, away from socialism at the time. The Mensheviks abandoned Party work and devoted themselves entirely to the Trade Union. Further, they organized only among skilled workers, who were mainly Russians.

A young Georgian leader in his late 20s, born into a struggling family, led the Bolsheviks who, under his urging, concentrated upon the unskilled industrial workers, who were mostly Muslim workers—most numerous, poorest, and most militant. His name was Joseph Stalin.

The bosses used racism to divide the workers: as Suny puts it, “Sometimes ... workers of one nationality ... were used as strikebreakers against workers of a different nationality.” The Bolsheviks insisted on fighting these racist divisions by uniting the separate unions of skilled and unskilled workers (the Mensheviks wanted to keep them separate). These workers were won to revolutionary politics and became fighters for the revolution.

Within five months of Stalin’s arrival in Baku in June 1907, the Bolsheviks had won over enough unskilled workers to capture the city committee of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party from the Mensheviks.

**Leading Class Struggle**

Following their new “liberal” policy, the oil bosses offered to set up a “conference...with equal worker-management representation, to work out a general labor agreement. Stalin was “militant and uncompromising. His attitude was consistently suspicious of compromise, wary of those who expected meaningful concessions from the industrialists in a conference” (Suny).

At first Stalin held out for a general strike and a boycott of the conference. When his position was defeated. Stalin led the Bolsheviks into the “conference” campaign under the platform that the workers’ representatives be the union leaders—mainly, Bolshevik revolutionaries. The Bolsheviks won 19,000 votes to the Mensheviks’ 8,000. Confronted with a workforce united under Bolshevik leadership, the bosses called off the conference, thus showing their true colors. As a result, the Bolsheviks won even more support.

**Primacy of Preserving Underground Work**

Another of Lenin’s tenets was the primacy of preserving illegal, underground Party work. Throughout this period of “liberalism,” Suny writes: “Stalin, while participating somewhat in union affairs, gave most of his strength to party work, of which he was in charge.”

By 1908 the bosses had dropped their liberal facade, outlawed the unions, and arrested their leaders. Stalin stayed out of prison for almost two more years and so was able to preserve Bolshevik organization under this period repression. Suny admits, “Stalin and the Left were vindicated in some sense in the next few years as the unions practically disappeared, and as the only center of Social Democratic activity that remained was hidden “deep in the underground.”

The Bolsheviks fought for the most left politics in a period of liberalism and repression. Though they were small, they embedded themselves in the class struggle, called out lesser-evil politics of the bosses, fought against racist divisions, and organized among the most oppressed group of workers. Only through organizing day in and day out, they recruited workers to join the fight for a better world.

*Next issue, we will look at class struggle forged the Bolshevik Party in Transcaucasia.*

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