

CHALLENGE



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WITH STUDENT & PARENT SOLIDARITY

TEACHERS STRIKE, DEFY BOSSES



WEST VIRGINIA, March 7—33,000 education workers shut down schools in a two-week strike, shaking the entire state, and inspiring workers nationwide to gear up for a similar fight.

In a period when strikes are at a historic low, and class anger has been steered towards the bosses' Democratic Party or participating in passive marches, the education workers in West Virginia flexed their workers' power and set an example for their 270,00 students.

This mainly-women workers' rebellion have not only combatted the state politicians and defied their laws (striking and collective bargaining is illegal in the state), but they have also defied their union misleaders who tried to put a quick end to the strike.

The state conceded to a five-percent raise and a hold on raising health insurance costs.

Workers, students, parents, and communists in Progressive Labor Party should use this momentum to build multiracial unity. We can point to the student-parent-teacher unity as a germ of collectivity. We can win people to the communist idea that the working class doesn't need the bosses, union leaders, or politicians to run society.

Poor working conditions mainly hurt students

Students stood in solidarity with education workers and organized under the hashtag #Secure-OurFuture. Many bus drivers refused to go to work, forcing schools to cancel classes. State Senate President Mitch Carmichael tried to shame workers when she said teachers were "leaving the students out in the cold."

One striker said, "There is nothing that we don't do for our kids here if they need. So, to insult us that we don't care about our kids is way over the line."

The working conditions in schools are students' learning conditions. By rebelling against the boss-

es' state, workers are teaching students a profound lesson: accepting capitalism's retched conditions cannot be an option. We must fight back.

While the demands and outlook for the strike are for basic reforms, the militancy and leadership among the strikers show us the potential the working class has in truly becoming a revolutionary force in the class struggle.

Despicable conditions for mainly white workers

West Virginia is a "Right to Work" state, which means workers can refuse to be a union member. The state, 93 percent white, has one of the lowest standards of living in the country. At a starting salary of \$31,000/year, education workers here are among the lowest paid. After deducting health care costs, many teachers make less than \$15 an hour. "I worry constantly about how I am going to afford my medicine," said a teacher with 20 years on the job. This goes to show that white workers are no exception to the rule of exploitation. It is in our class interest to fight with multiracial unity.

Rank and file defies union misleaders

Shortly after the strike began, union misleaders from the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) tried to stop the strike based on a "promise" by Governor Jim Justice. The workers weren't having it.

"Initially we thought we won...And then the union leaders...talked to us and we realized really quickly we did not win anything. The crowd turned very angry very quickly," one teacher said. Rank and file members, defied their union leaders and continued to strike.

Learning from miners

West Virginia was the site of the largest labor uprising in U.S. history—the Battle of Blair Mountain in 1921. Some 1,000 armed miners battled

Interview with Parent Reveals Worker-Parent Unity

The following report is from an interview on March 5 with a West Virginia parent involved in the strike.

Thousands of the state's striking teachers who massed at the State Capitol today were on line for three hours trying to get into the building and ringed it with a human chain. By noon nearly 9,000 had managed to rally inside. Some stayed over Sunday night to be able to enter today. They are demanding a living wage and fully paid health insurance. A special education teacher with a Master's Degree and 15 years seniority is paid \$45,000 a year. Meanwhile, the state legislators draw the seventh highest salary of all state legislators in the country.

In Cabell County, whose teachers were the first to go out and have been on strike for eight days, over 50 percent of children live below the poverty line. Middle School teachers have traditionally organized food and clothing pantries, and on Fridays send those kids home with ready-to-heat meals to eat on weekends. Many of them are served breakfasts at the start of the school day. Meanwhile, teachers gather leftover untouched meals in the backpacks of low-income students. Teachers deliver meals on school bus routes year round.

In Cabell County, teachers spread out on street corners with signs to give parents and other teachers the latest news on the progress of the walkout. Initially the strike started in this county when the local communications director sent messages via phone to teachers and parents about a "work stoppage," alerting them that the schools would be closed until the government agreed to the teachers' demands.

Teachers, parents, and children are all struggling here, where a large number of schools are in rural areas. This is the first time they all have experienced such a strike.

strikebreakers and private cops. The president sent in the army. Class struggle is nothing new to workers here.

One teacher said, "The union wars, they originated [here] in...Mingo County. We believe we're following in their footsteps."

The Coal Wars saw thousands of coal miners engage in armed struggle against federal troops and strike breakers just to win a union. They wore red neckerchiefs, the original "red necks."

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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

A terrorist system cannot stop individual terrorists

U.S. bosses' hypocrisy has been front and center since the February 14 high school shooting in Parkland, Florida, in which a student murdered 17 of his former classmates and staff members with an assault weapon. This open act of terrorism has further identified splits within the ruling class, as Democrats and Republicans make a show of battling over gun control on a national stage.

Neither demands for gun control—nor, on the other side, for proposals to arm teachers—will save working-class lives. The liberal bosses' calls for perceived safety and control (read: trust the capitalist state, consent to fascism) will never protect the working class—only we can break our own chains. Progressive Labor Party counts on you to join us and build a mass movement against the capitalist rulers' imperialism, by far the biggest killer of working class lives.

Violent system begets violence

The United States was built on systematic murder. It grew out of genocide for indigenous peoples and enslavement and Jim Crow for Black workers. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the ruling class supported gun ownership, freely arming members of the KKK and killer cops who continue to murder workers to this day.

Internationally, the U.S. unequivocally supports the murder of workers to maintain control of resources, people, and land. During both World Wars, the U.S. killed indiscriminately, from the firebombings of Dresden and Tokyo to the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, when the U.S. became the first and only nation to use nuclear weapons in combat. From Syria to Yemen to Afghanistan, U.S. bosses continue to murder workers to protect their control over Middle Eastern oil.

The U.S. ruling class is not for gun control; they will arm people when it suits them. They are for profit control. But while these big terrorists will kill millions without a blink to keep their profits flowing, they also understand that domestic terrorism is bad for their global brand.

Domestic terrorism hurts global credibility

Historically, demands for or against gun control in the U.S. have fallen along party lines. Republicans continue to get re-elected and line their pockets with favorable advertising and funding from the National Rifle Association (NRA). In 2016 alone, this fascist organization spent nearly \$140 million on “legislative programs and public affairs,” including \$30 million on Donald Trump's presidential campaign and at least \$20 million on Republican Senate races (huffingtonpost.com, 11/16/17).

Meanwhile, the Democrats are seizing an opportunity to win allegiance from workers and control a growing mass movement within the limits of electoral politics. Democratic politicians are leading rally cries to slap down the NRA and pass stronger laws to restrict the sales of firearms:

Democrats have scrambled to dust off a raft of gun-control legislation that's sat on the shelf for years: expanding background checks, allowing police and family members to ask judges to disarm gun owners who show signs of violence or instability, prohibiting gun sales to people deemed too unstable to handle their own finances, raising taxes on guns and ammo, changing the gun-buying age from 18 to 21 (Rolling Stone 3/1).

The rulers' main wing, representing finance capital, is now calling for gun control so as to not to lose more ground to its imperialist arch-rivals, Russia and China. China's Global Times recently shamed the U.S. in an editorial titled, “China can offer lessons to U.S. in protecting human rights” (2/22). It reads:

Washington has been pointing an accusing finger at other countries over human rights issue[s]. However, more [people in the U.S.] have been killed by gunfire in the country than [U.S.] soldiers being killed in all U.S. wars. It's

inhumane for the U.S., which boasts about its human rights record, to turn a blind eye to gun violence, [to] snub increasing calls for gun control and risk more innocent lives....The US should learn from China and genuinely protect human rights.

The U.S. ruling class has not controlled violence domestically because it does not want to. In Australia, a capitalist country where more than 17 percent of children live in poverty, the government created stricter gun laws after one mass shooting in 1996. Since then, not a single mass shooting has occurred (BBC, 10/4/17). Gun control or lack-there-of is not a mystery, it's a conscious political decision. Infringing upon workers' rights, in particular their right to live, is the capitalist way.

The rulers' main wing, however, understands these flawed optics and is now striving to control—not stop—national murders in an effort to save face as an international super power and regain the trust of workers within the U.S. As the mostly white students from Parkland call for revised gun legislation, main wing Democrats are seizing an opportunity to get disaffected workers to vote in the coming mid-term elections in 2018.

Reform vs. revolution, rifle edition

Gun violence in the U.S. has disproportionately affected Black and Latin workers. They are the ones brutalized most egregiously at the hands of murderous police, yet no one is calling for legislation to disarm hyper-militarized police forces.

Black youth have been calling for gun control for years. No action was taken in 2012, after racist vigilante George Zimmerman murdered Trayvon Martin in Florida. In 2014, after the murder of Michael Brown, Black working-class leaders in Ferguson organized a militant fightback, which Mass Murderer in Chief Barack Obama dismissed by saying he had “no sympathy at all for [people] destroying [their] own communities” (CNN 11/26/14).

But on February 22, to the students of Parkland, Obama tweeted: “...Marching and organizing to remake the world as it should be. We've been waiting for you. And we've got your backs.”

When Black and Latin workers fight to remove guns from their neighborhoods, they are rejected and reprimanded. But when white students call for reform and appeal for the assistance of opportunistic lawmakers, they are applauded.

Under capitalism, gun control is about controlling the working class, containing their protests, and attempting to lead them like sheep to trust a system that will ultimately orchestrate their own deaths. In recent months, we have seen the bosses mobilize in the Alabama election against Klansman and gun nut Roy Moore. We have seen it throughout the #MeToo movement, and now we are seeing it clearly in the chorus of calls for gun control.

But the fact remains that Black workers are the key to communist revolution, and that none of the bosses' guns—or gun control—can stop a conscious working class.

Freedom from mass shootings is revolution

The U.S. has been built on mass murder of the working class. Conversations about arming teachers and intensified background checks are not about protection; they are about normalizing fascism in schools.

The only freedom workers can have from mass violence and killings is to unite as a class—to form an international, multiracial, revolutionary front against the bosses.

In the hands of the masses, armed with communist class-consciousness and led by the Progressive Labor Party, organized violence can be revolutionary. One day, the international working class will bury these mass slaughterers with the very weapons we have built. ☪

Chinatown workers fight racist displacement



Multiracial group of workers protest luxury housing in Chinatown in 2016

NEW YORK CITY, February 12—Eight Chinese tenants, mainly women and seniors, went on a hunger strike after a forceful eviction from their homes. For five days, they camped outside the city's racist Housing and Preservation Development (HPD), battling freezing temperatures, rain, and hunger to demand the city government repair their building's staircase, and overturn a cruel vacate order that will leave multiple families homeless.

These workers, whose ages range from 50-70, broke their fast healthy, and with a temporary reform, thanks to the collective organizing of nearly 200 multiracial, multi-generational workers. Progressive Labor Party members joined organizing efforts to further unmask the city's racist agenda.

Beat back slumlord Betesh

The strikers, some tenants displaced from 83-85 Bowery, fought slumlord Joseph Betesh for years inside and outside of housing court. The tenants

resisted his attempt to bulldoze the buildings, and convert them into luxury glass boxes for the rich.

"Betesh, who owns the Dr. Jay's clothing store chain, acquired the two buildings in 2013, paying \$62 million for eleven properties along the Bowery. He soon began trying to evict tenants" (The Village Voice, 1/4). Betesh used every crooked scheme possible—from lying about rent-stabilization and purposely letting the building fall into disrepair. He also offered \$15,000 buyouts to tenants. They refused.

He tried evicting one of his tenants in 2015, arguing their apartment wasn't rent stabilized, and he didn't have to renew their lease. That tenant fought back, refusing a settlement and mobilized a tenants' association to get Betesh to address nearly 200 building violations he'd neglected for years. Betesh then sued the tenants in state Supreme Court.

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A City of Segregation

Beginning in World War I, Black workers were forced to migrate into the cities due to labor shortages and war production.

Housing was divided along the color line and the resulting "white flight" to the suburbs in the post-World War II U.S. created cities with segregation and devastating living conditions.

NYC was largely shaped by the arch-racist Robert Moses. He, alongside billionaires and politician, built a city of segregation. "Moses' transgressions [include] acres of sterile public housing towers, parks and playgrounds for the rich and comfortable, and highways that sundered working-class neighborhoods and dispossessed a quarter of a million people" (NYT, 5/6/2007).

As parks commissioner, all except one of the 255 playgrounds were placed out of reach of our class. The one pool in East Harlem was kept at a "deliberately icy" temperature. He designed low bridges to keep buses, carrying inner-city Black and Latin families, away from Jones Beach. To build the highways, 250,000 families were thrown out of their homes and the streets were overrun by vehicles.

Today, fifty years after the federal Fair Housing Act made redlining practices and discrimination in housing illegal, New York City neighborhoods remain acutely segregated.

What the bosses call the melting pot is actually a deep segregation of housing—in some case, over 90 percent isolation of one race from another. Black and white families are the most isolated from other races (NYT, 4/15/15). "Latin families are isolated in Corona and Inwood; Asians are most isolated in Chinatown."

As antiracists, like those in Park Slope, tackle segregation in schools, a byproduct of housing segregation, we must continue to fight racism in our neighborhoods.

The bosses offer us two toxic "choices": deeply segregated housing as in the case of Chinatown, or gentrification, which results in mass racist displacement of working-class families and segregation just the same.

Choose integration and join the fight for communism.

Israel: Mass multiracial demonstration slams government deportation plan

TEL-AVIV, February 24—Over 20,000 demonstrators held a mass rally here against the government's deportation plan—a plan that forces refugees to get out or go to jail. It was a multiracial crowd at the rally—primarily asylum seekers from countries in Africa and Jewish workers. Black and white, citizens and asylum seekers, stood together in solidarity to smash the government's racism.

There are approximately 35,300 African asylum seekers living in Israel. Most fled from genocide in South Sudan and from fascism in Eritrea. The Israeli government sells weapons to both the belligerents in South Sudan and to the Eritrean regime, where it also maintains a covert military base (Haaretz, 12/2012).

In both cases, the regimes use these arms to commit atrocities on a monstrous scale: genocide and systematic rape in South Sudan and fascist slavery in Eritrea. People flee these countries—risking death at the border and along the way—and seek political asylum elsewhere. Israel ignores requests for asylum, and at best, these asylum seekers only gain temporary work visas.

Racism used to divide workers

The Israeli ruling class pushes anti-African racism—it is highly profitable for them. An undocumented African refugee has no real labor rights; bosses often pay them less than the minimum wage and no benefits. Even with a temporary work visa, most are unable to demand their rights

from their employers. Many work in restaurants or housekeeping for very long hours at meager pay. Not knowing the language, many are unaware of their rights. In short, paradise for parasitic bosses looking for cheap wage-slaves.

A large majority of asylum seekers live in South Tel-Aviv, in working-class neighborhoods that have suffered decades of neglect by the ruling class. Drugs and prostitution are very common. Infrastructure is bad and schooling is inadequate. The ruling class dumped the refugees, bused directly from the border, into these slums. The bosses' biggest fear is Black and white residents fighting together for their neighborhoods. Thus, local fascists pushed virulent racist propaganda against Black workers, painting them as "rapists" and "thugs" who "carry diseases." This often involves the n-word and other derogatory terms. This has already led to violent attacks by fascist youth.

With fascist support, Israel now wants to deport these asylum seekers to Rwanda. The government claims that this would be a good place to resettle them. However, in reality, Rwanda also expels refugees, and they end up sold into chattel slavery or murdered (Aljazeera, 11/29). This is the fate awaiting these refugees, including many women and children, if deported. To pressure them into "consenting" to this deportation, the government began to round up refugees and send them to the Holot "residential facility," which is nothing but a

concentration camp in the Negev desert, where conditions are deplorable.

Workers reject racist lies

But the working class has had enough of this racist crap. Contrary to fascist propaganda about "local residents threatened by blacks," the working class from South Tel-Aviv showed solidarity with their neighbors at this Saturday's rally. The people are uniting. Working-class multi-racial solidarity and unity sent a message to the bosses' politicians and pundits, as well as to their fascist thugs. The message is: the people will not accept these racist lies. That multiracial unity is the key to putting fear into the ruling class.

When the working class unites, and sees that workers' struggles have no borders and that workers around the world can fight alongside each other against the ruling classes of every country, then we can win a world run by and for the working class. The ruling class creates the conditions that force workers to flee for their lives, the ruling class creates the borders that allow them to attack workers when they do, and the ruling class pushes the nationalism that convinces us that workers in different countries are enemies. We can and must smash these ideas and fight back. Some of the demonstrators brought red flags—because communism is the way to smash the ruling class once and for all—and their oppression and exploitation of workers. ☺

Tanzania: Amid crisis, students fight against deadly housing

A group of students at Dar es Salaam University in Tanzania have won a victory by standing up to the government and fighting for repairs to dangerous conditions in their dormitory. The struggle of these students to fight back even while coming under extreme attacks from the fascist Tanzanian ruling class is an inspiring example of how our class can gain confidence and overcome fear to unite.

The working class in Tanzania faces worsening fascist conditions. The victory of the students was in their ability to keep fighting for our class interest as much as it was about getting the building fixed. These small struggles are very important as the international working class fights to rebuild class consciousness and a revolutionary communist movement.

Divided ruling class

The Tanzanian ruling class is more divided than at any time since its independence in 1961. Driven by a fight to control the profits from Tanzania's vast natural resources, the ruling clique, under new President John Magufuli, has been using their power to go after the businesses, media outlets and patronage jobs that support the base of the opposition capitalists. These opposition capitalists are led by many people who came out of the current governing party Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM), and had been terrorizing the working class for decades. Changing capitalist parties or leaders will never stop the bosses from using their power to prop themselves up. Building a revolutionary communist movement for workers power is the only way forward for our class.

Magufuli, a fascist ruler

Magufuli rode to power in 2015 campaigning as an honest leader fighting corruption. His nickname is "The Bulldozer" and under the guise of stopping corruption he has tightened his grip on power. He

has changed taxation laws to attack small businesses, outlawed exportation of food leading to a crisis among farmers, left districts without funds to provide food for school children, and forced the closure of community banks.

Magufuli has cracked down on dissent and banned opposition rallies and meetings. He uses a death squad, to abduct, jail or shoot politicians, journalists and others who dare to speak out. Although there was a brief period of mass mobilization against his fascist rule, the working class has mostly been mired in fear. But even in this environment, some students at Dar es Salaam University had the courage to stand up to the bosses.

The Magufuli wing is trying to increase their share of the profits from Tanzania's natural resources by renegotiating contracts with the multi-national corporations that had long been getting the bulk of the profit. At the same time the ruling class is increasing attacks on the working class by cutting jobs and public services to increase investment geared toward their mines and developing natural gas industry.

Deadly dormitory

Using cheap construction methods and materials, Magufuli built a new dormitory to house 3/4 of the 9,000 students at Dar es Salaam University. The students moved into the dormitory last Fall. Shortly after, massive cracks began to appear in the walls. The images of recent deaths from the collapse of similar buildings was causing intense fear and anxiety among students. The media reported that the University Administration dismissed the students concerns by referring to the cracks as "normal expansion joints." A group of student leaders raised their concerns with the government, but they were ordered to keep silent. In defiance, they posted pictures of the walls on social media.

Progressive Labor Party in East Africa is organizing with leaders of workers in a mosquito net factory (owned by the Chinese and Indian governments and the son of the former President Kikwete) where conditions have sharply deteriorated. Two years ago, half of the workers were laid off and the ones remaining were sped up with no increase in pay. Workers have no job security and suffer with poor sanitation, no food service, or time to eat meals. Conditions there, too, are ripe for political action. The factory workers there need the tools of PLP to expand their struggle.

Throughout history, students often sparked the class struggle. Their bold action can go far! PLP in East Africa needs to continue to build a base for communism among students and workers and mobilize support for any eruptions of class struggle, wherever they occur.

Government agents retaliated. They hunted down the student whose computer was used, abducted him to a secret location, and tortured him. Students responded with mass meetings and strikes. The student was released and continued to defy the authorities. Due to the mass unrest, the state was forced to repair the walls, and students were emboldened by the courage of their leaders.

Tanzania is a glaring example of how capitalism is in a spiral of crisis that the rulers try to manage with fascism and war. The bosses constantly try to bail themselves out by attacking the working class and forcing us to fight each other around the globe. The battle to gain confidence in ourselves as a class capable of running society without the bosses will only be won through building a communist movement in the midst of struggles like the students at Dar es Salaam University have been fighting. ☸

Origins of International Working Women's Day



March 8 is celebrated as International Women's Day all over the world. Many people are unaware of the working class origins of this day.

The Second International was the international organization of the socialist movement. Before the First World War, this movement contained some progressive elements. In 1910 the Second Women's Conference of the Second International established International Women's Day. Clara Zetkin, who later became a communist leader in Germany, proposed the following resolution:

In agreement with the class-conscious, political and trade union organizations of the proletariat... the socialist women of all countries will hold each year a Women's Day, whose foremost purpose it must be to aid the attainment of women's suffrage. This demand must be handled in conjunction with the entire women's question according to socialist precepts. The Women's Day must have an international character and is to be prepared carefully.

The date of March 8 was chosen because on that date in 1908 there was a mass demonstration of socialist-led women workers from the needle (textile) trades in New York City. The demonstration demanded the vote and mass organizing of women in the needle trades.

In 1914 in Russia Aleksandra Kollontai, Nadezhda Krupskaya, and other Bolshevik women published *Rabotnitsa*, a Bolshevik journal for working-class women. The first issue was published on March 8. On March 8, 1917, a bold strike of women textile workers was supported by mass demonstrations that led to the overthrow of the Tsar.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, International Women's Day was established as an official celebration every year in the Soviet Union.

International Women's Day became a symbol of resistance

to the oppression of women workers all over the world. On March 8, 1923, the communist-led Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) began a campaign in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU, now called Unite) and other needle trade unions to rebuild militancy and fight for unions controlled by their rank-and-file members.

On March 8, 1927, in Uzbekistan, a republic in the Soviet Union, the Communist Party (Bolshevik) began a mass campaign against the religious custom of forcing women to wear the veil (paranja or burqa). This was really a robe that covered the whole face and body. It was extremely hot and uncomfortable, and hindered a woman's movement. The paranja symbolized the most oppressive aspects of the oppression of women. It had to go.

Finally, with the political work done, the time for action came. There was a mass burning of paranjas amid the playing of *The Internationale*, the communist anthem.

*On that day... tens of thousands of women, huddled in paranjas and chachvans poured like a menacing avalanche through the narrow choked streets, squares and bazaars of the ancient Central Asian cities... The vast multitude, including a number of men and children, gathered round the Lenin monument, which was likewise decked with red banners and native carpets, and the women waited breathlessly for what was to come... All the bands struck up the Internationale. ... The real proceedings began. ... They [the paranjas] were flung aloft into the quivering air, timidly at first, but then with ever wilder and more frenzied speed, these symbols of slavery that the women cast off, paranjas, chachvans and chadras. They were piled in rapidly growing heaps, drenched with paraffin, and soon the dark clouds of smoke from the burning common abjuration of a thousand year old convention, now become unbearable, flared up into the bright sky of the spring day. ... (Hewlett Johnson, *The Socialist Sixth of the World*)*

Although we in Progressive Labor Party understand that winning the right to vote for any worker only helps to keep the capitalists in power by making them look more "democratic", we also recognize the revolutionary side of the history of International Women's Day.

We fight against sexism because it means the super-exploitation of women, and because it divides the working class. It is crucial to attack sexist practices, and to celebrate the vital role played by women communist leaders, as seen in our own Party. We use the name International Working Women's Day in order to help show the interrelationship between capitalism and sexism. ☸

Teacher Strike

Continued from page 1

Clearly, winning a union is not enough, important as that may be. As long as the bosses hold power, no victory is ever secure. It will take communist revolution to end the profit system that thrives on war, racism, and poverty.

Strike fever

It appears that "Strike Fever" may be spreading. 1,400 Frontier Communications workers, members of the Communications Workers of America, went on strike on March 4 in West Virginia and Virginia, after ten months of failed contract negotiations. Since Frontier acquired Verizon's landlines in West Virginia in 2010, the company has cut over 500 jobs.

Teachers in New Jersey and Oklahoma have authorized their union leader to call a strike and have begun making plans. Arizona and Kentucky teachers are also feeling the urge to fight back. The bosses had hoped to keep workers focused on elections in November. A multiracial workers' strike across the country would strike fear into the hearts of this imperialist ruling class.

It is true that many striking workers are thinking about raising their standard of living, not about the potential political might of workers. However, this strike does show the potential of our class to become leaders. Workers will rise to the occasion. With an infusion of communist politics into the struggle, these rebellions can become schools for communism that win more workers to smash capitalism.

Workers will strike again, and every PLP area should be ready to fight in solidarity. We can help connect the dots on the need to build the revolutionary PLP. ☸

Colombia: capitalist peace referendum means fascist terror for workers

COLOMBIA, March 7—The peace referendum deal was that the fake leftist group FARC (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) would surrender their weapons in exchange for the right to run for office.

More than a year has passed, and none of what was agreed on has happened, generating fierce debate and polarization about the agreements signed by the leadership of the FARC and the Colombian government.

Progressive Labor Party knows that capitalism means unemployment, misery, and the death of workers, and under the current dictatorship of the bosses, nothing else is possible.

Last weekend, five community leaders were assassinated in different parts of the country, and the number of murders of leftist leaders is increasing. Last year, we saw the assassinations of 194 people dedicated to social causes, communities, and the defense of human rights.

With the support of U.S. imperialism, paramilitary death squads have been killing thousands of

Colombian workers over decades. These murders have to be counted on top of the more than five million displaced by a war of imperialist pillage. We workers cannot believe in capitalist peace; all politicians want nothing more than to disarm us, so we can be killed without opposition.

Capitalism never completes what it promises and signs on to; all it cares about is that we believe in its rotten bourgeois democracy. The bosses only want to increase their profit margins, and this can be achieved through the misery of millions of proletarians. This is the essence of capitalism. They exploit and deny workers our necessities and do it all through the force of arms and political trickery.

Cops kill & terrorize farmers

In the month of October, members of the repressive police force fired without provocation against groups of workers that were protesting in some mountain towns like the Tumaco municipality, leaving nine dead and 21 wounded. The farmers were protesting the slow implementation of the program meant to switch out illegal crops, some-

thing expected to result from the peace process.

According to the medical examiner, the bodies showed wounds caused from high velocity projectiles, with ballistics experts determining that the shots were fired at close range and by official weapons. Vice president Germán Vargas Lleras has gone on to say that the victims were not from the area. This official lie spread as a smokescreen to divert attention from the accusations of repressive force and paramilitaries in the state, looking instead to blame guerilla dissidents as the parties responsible for these crimes.

CHALLENGE shows us that there are no good capitalists, and that we cannot ally ourselves with any sector of the bourgeoisie. We reject any goals other than the fight to achieve communism. Only the unity of the working class around the revolutionary politics of the PLP and the fight for communism will free us from capitalist murder and its sexism, racism, nationalism, and wage slavery.

Workers on the farms and in the cities, students, and revolutionary soldiers, everything you do matters! Join us. ☺

Black Panther reinforces Black capitalism

No matter how “woke” a film seems, we can’t rely on the cesspool known as Hollywood to be a voice of freedom. Hollywood, controlled by the ruling class, re-writes history, generates racist and sexist stereotypes to shape mass ideas, and broadcasts ideology that supports U.S. imperialism.

Black Panther—which has already grossed \$909.8+ million—is no exception.

Protagonist King T’Challa rules the fictional African country Wakanda. It poses as poor but it’s the wealthiest and most technologically advanced society in the world—with an isolationist policy. Wakanda possesses the most valuable resource, vibranium.

T’Challa’s leadership is tested against the U.S. Black villain Erik Killmonger, who starts off as a bitter antiracist and is determined to replace Western imperialism with his own.

Many antiracists are drawn to this depiction of Black empowerment. After decades of endless racist depictions of the continent of Africa and Black workers in general, finally a movie that shows Black actors at the center of their own narrative. However, representation is not power for the working class.

How to respond to racism?

The examples of anti-Black racism are endless: slavery, lynchings, Jim Crow, mass incarceration, police terror, unequal pay, education, housing, and so on. The U.S. rulers not only mastered racism, but they also exported it worldwide.

But, for every racist attack, there has been a counterattack. This fightback has varied from movements for Black capitalism to organizing multiracial unity to overthrow capitalism.

Black Panther highlights two paths to responding to a racist world. One path is nationalist isolationism, which then morphs into reformism, led by the ruling-class T’Challa. The other path recognizes a need to change the system, promoted by working-class Killmonger.

Rebellion still causes fear in the hearts of rulers—Ferguson and Baltimore are prime examples. The potential for these rebellions to be infused with communist ideology and multiracial unity is the ruling class’s ultimate fear.

Wakandan Foreign Policy

Wakandan society is a Pan-African collective of different ethnic groups. The viewer is drawn to the powerful Black women on screen—warriors, engineers, scientists, agents, and mostly all royalty—whose role are all purposed for nation building. #Wakandaforver. But at the end of the day, they all serve the king in this theocratic monarchy.

T’Challa initially wants to preserve Wakandan rightwing isolationist policy while engaging in secret trade with the world. This position is, “foreigners will ruin Wakanda.”

Antiracist turned imperialist

Killmonger offers the sharpest criticisms of racism. Rather than an enlightened revolutionary, this Black man from Oakland is rendered as a dangerous psychopath. His name Killmonger says it all.

Killmonger’s father N’Jobu was part of the royal Wakandan family. N’Jobu, sent to Oakland to spy on the world it refuses to engage with, quickly learns of the systematic racism Black workers face. The then-King murders N’Jobu for trying to use vibranium technology to foment and arm an antiracist rebellion in the U.S.

One of Killmonger’s best lines is, “Two billion people all over the world who look like us, whose lives are much harder, and Wakanda has the tools to liberate them all. Where was Wakanda?” He reveals the hypocrisy of the Wakandan ruling class who, despite having the power to take action, ignored slavery, colonialism, and worldwide racism in the name of self-preservation.

He wants to use vibranium to execute an all-Black revolution where he is the ruler. His agenda turns out to be a revenge fantasy. Killmonger becomes King and threatens to kill anyone who defies him. This reinforces the myth that being revolutionary leads to a power-hungry brutal dictatorship. His grand strategy of fighting global racism is borrowed from British imperialism’s playbook when he states, “the sun will never set on the Wakandan Empire.”

New global order

After T’Challa kills Killmonger, T’Challa is won to reversing the isolationist policy. His solution is in line with Nakia, a special forces agent and his love interest.

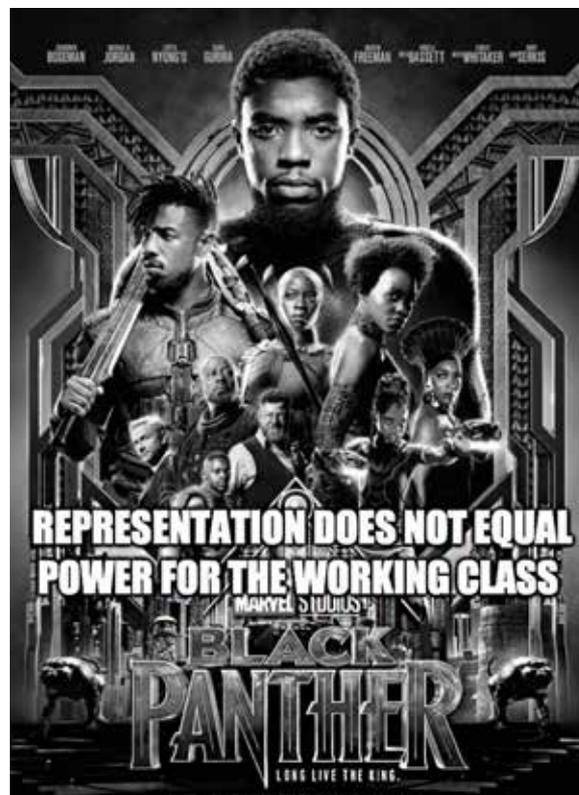
Nakia understands the impossibility of isolationism in a world shaped by inequality. She argues, “Wakanda is strong enough to help others and protect itself.” Nakia’s views of global reform prevail.

T’Challa’s monologue at the UN (of course) concludes the film: “Wakanda will no longer watch from the shadows...More connects us than separates us. But in times of crisis, the wise build bridges while the foolish build barriers.”

They also go to Oakland to open a community center for Black youth. This is the “solution”—Black elites need to provide resources and misleadership to the working class.

The main wing of the U.S. ruling class needs more Black leadership—to save capitalism. The Brookings Institute, an imperialist think tank, wrote a review of *Black Panther*. In addition to calling out “Hollywood, it’s about time,” they wrote:

“Black Panther” has unequivocally become one of many recent inflection points for the African American community, especially following the success of extraordinary black



voter turnout in tough southern elections... [S]ince the end of the historic and groundbreaking Obama presidency, black people have been searching for a superhero, or a “yes we can” leader like T’Challa. For two hours, he becomes more than a comic-book superhero. He transforms into a symbol of hope for African Americans, much like President Obama was during the previous eight years (2/26).

Even before the hot mess that is president Trump, the U.S. bosses have been desperate to win back allegiance to this kill-mongering system. They need T’Challas, Michelles, and Baracks. This is the ultimate message.

Masses, not a superhero, will save the day

Neither T’Challa nor Killmonger are the solutions for the working class.

The working class needs Black, especially Black women, leadership—for communism. Black workers have a long history of fightback. From the slave revolts, rebellions in the workplace and military, to Ferguson and Baltimore, Black workers continue to be the key to worldwide communist revolution and the ultimate liberation of all working people.

Marvel’s *Black Panther* appeals to the anti-racism that many of us share, but co-opts the anger of Black workers and pushes a reformist, Black capitalist agenda. To defeat the real super villain, capitalism, we need a mass communist revolution and millions of working-class heroes. ☺

LETTERS

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

Racism at a restaurant

I always knew there was racism, but I had never really seen it up close until that day. I was coming from my middle school orientation to learn everything I needed to know for sixth grade next year. My mother's boyfriend and I were heading home when Ma called and suggested we go out for some food at Cooper's Hawk. I LOVE it there since they let me sit in the Grown-Ups side. Then the usual, we ordered drinks and food. I ordered the angel hair with a side of a fruit cup.

But something caught our attention. Three cops surrounded these two Black ladies. The cops were asking one of them to leave or she would be arrested, and then they escorted both of them out of the restaurant. We walked out to see what was going on and we saw the two women standing there. My mom talked to them and said "F*ck this shit, it is just fu*king racism" and the two ladies said "Yeah, f*ck this shit" and then apologized for their language around me.

I said "It's ok, I have heard worse."

Then my mom asked who they were and why did they get escorted out by the police? They said they did not even know. They were at the bar just getting a birthday tasting. A stranger gave them his tasting and that is when someone complained about them.

As we were talking, one of the women said "You know what, I want to go find out why I was kicked out." So she went in to ask the bartender why was she kicked out. We followed her. She asked why and the bartender said nothing. Then the manager came and said "I thought the cops escorted you out." My mom was trying to talk to him but he deliberately ignored her.

That day in school we had just learned about people's rights. When they are arrested, they must be read their Miranda Rights. But the manager called the cops and they arrested her without blinking. She kept asking, "Why am I being arrested?" But they ignored her and did not even read her Miranda Rights. You might be thinking maybe they read it in the car, but you would be wrong.

When my mom said you need to read her the Miranda Rights, they said "We don't do that. We don't know what you are talking about."

Then my mom started screaming her butt off, say-

ing the woman needed to know why she was being arrested. The woman was all calm and my mother was shouting, but they arrested the Black woman. They took her away to the Oak Lawn police. As we drove my mom said how this world is messed up and cops don't care about your rights.

She said this is a good lesson to learn. Racism is everywhere and the cops are racist. I didn't think I'd see it or they'd treat women that way. It was very upsetting, but it reminds me why we always have to fight back.

★★★★★

Four women preceded Rosa Parks

Claudette Colvin grew up in segregated Montgomery, Alabama. On March 2, 1955, when she was 15 years old, she refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white passenger. Aurelia Browder, Susie McDonald, and Mary Louise Smith did the same and were arrested, as was Colvin. When Rosa Parks was arrested, the NAACP considered her most suitable for a test court case. But Colvin, Browder, McDonald and Smith have largely been left out of the history books.

Also largely missing from the history books is the 1953 Baton Rouge bus boycott where the riders were 80 percent Black. For eight days Black workers and students rode in free taxis or private cars or walked to protest the segregated busses. Not only was the segregation law significantly weakened, but the Baton Rouge action inspired and was a model for the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott.

Similar to Baton Rouge, in Montgomery over 75 percent of the bus ridership was Black. Parks refused to move on a Thursday. That weekend members of the Women's Political Council stayed up all night mimeographing (old fashioned photocopying) 35,000 leaflets calling for a bus boycott on Monday. Sunday morning the word was gotten out to all the Black churches. By Monday morning the boycott was on and lasted for 381 days.

In February 1956 attorney Fred Gray filed a landmark federal lawsuit (Browder v. Gale). The Parks lawsuit was bogged down in state courts. On December 17, 1956 the U. S. Supreme Court ended segregation on public transportation in Alabama. Claudette

Colvin was a star witness. On December 21, 1956 the Montgomery Bus Boycott ended.

Rosa Parks got experience from the anti-racist struggles of the 1930s led by the Communist Party. The biggest was the worldwide fight to free the Scottsboro Boys, eight young Black men falsely accused of raping a white woman. Parks attended some Communist Party meetings. According to Black historian Robin Kelley "the infrastructure that was laid forward becomes the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama, was laid in many ways, ... by the Communist Party" in the 1930s (NPR, 2/16/2010).

★★★★★

U.S. orchestrated Iran Coup

The March 7 issue of CHALLENGE reports, "in 1953, the U.S. backed a coup in Iran that brought the murderous Shah into power." Actually, the CIA orchestrated the coup.

Prime Minister Muhammad Mossedegh had nationalized the oil industry which had been controlled by the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The British asked senior CIA officer Kermit Roosevelt, Jr. (a grandson of Teddy Roosevelt) to lead a covert operation to force out Mossedegh. The go-ahead was given by a committee composed of U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, CIA director Allan Dulles and Secretary of "Defense" Charles Wilson.

In 1946, the Shah had fled to Iraq. On August 19, 1953, Roosevelt picked up the Shah — bribing him with \$1,000,000 to carry out the coup to overthrow Mossedegh — and drove him to the palace, covered in the back seat with a blanket. Pro-coup gangs in the streets — financed and organized by the CIA — took the Shah from the basement where Roosevelt was hiding him and carried him upstairs to return the Shah to power.

In 2000, former U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright said, "In 1953, the U.S. played a significant role in orchestrating the overthrow of Iran's popular Prime Minister Mossedegh." (FAS.org archives July 7, 1915)

Just another example of the U.S. overturning of an elected government on behalf of U.S. and British oil interests.

★★★★★

Chinatown workers fight racist displacement

Continued from page 3

These fighters also rejected a 99-year lease that Betesh offered as a settlement, which would've forced them to leave for repairs and prevented them from further pursuing rent stabilization.

Last December, after two years of battling Betesh in court, the Division of Housing & Community Renewal (DHCR) deemed the building rent-stabilized. This victory was temporary.

Govt works hand in glove with landlord

In mid-January, the city bosses' agency, the Department of Buildings (DOB), colluded with Betesh to forcibly displace 75 workers from the 85 Bowery building. In under two hours, the fire department and kkkops evicted whole families—including infants and the elderly. They were funneled into a shelter. On January 24, just before the two-week repair deadline given in the evacuate order, tenants and the Coalition to Protect Chinatown and Lower East Side organized a press conference to demand HPD take up repairs.

PL'ers attended the militant rally, and joined chants shaming HPD. One PL'er led the chant, "Workers united will never be defeated!" The next step is to discuss CHALLENGE with the fighters and involve their friends in this struggle.

At one point the tenants stormed through the barricade, pushing through an HPD officer to deliver a letter to the HPD commissioner, demanding they take over repairs and prosecute Betesh. Of course, that went unanswered. After two weeks of enduring cramped conditions, with no end near, tenants announced the hunger strike on Feb 2.

Workers win an inch, bosses take a mile

Despite efforts from supporters to get them to stop, the strikers never relented. Police attack dogs tried harassing and intimidating them throughout the strike.

Police Commissioner James O' Neil ordered the strikers to remove tarps tied to the barricades his minions placed. That apparently violated "criminal law." The tarps kept the strikers warm in the freezing weather.

Only under an exploitative system do robbers get off scot-free and workers who fight back are criminalized. Clearly, the bosses and their protectors care about private property, not working-class lives.

The hunger strike is over, for now; the city made an agreement for management to complete staircase repairs and allow tenants to return home by March 28. But we know these capitalist promises are untrustworthy. Tenants plan to resume striking should they not return home by that date.

A hunger strike relies on the oppressor to feel guilt for oppressing. Rather than appealing to the enemy's morality through self-harm, workers can expose and threaten the bosses' state power through militant multiracial unity. If we are to ever abolish racist housing and evictions, workers need all their energy for the continuous organizing needed to defeat capitalism.

Racist rezoning punishes workers

Wealth for capitalists always means utter devastation for workers. The land that is the modern-

day U.S. was taken through war and genocide of indigenous people. Today, real estate bosses dispossess working-class families in their pursuit of luxury rentals, made possible by the capitalist government and its politicians.

With mayor Bill de Blasio's blessing, the City Council in 2008 approved a rezoning plan for 111 blocks near Lower Manhattan. This racist plan protected the mostly white, Lower East Side and East Village neighborhoods from high-rise, high-rent housing, while excluding most of Chinatown. This allowed tycoons like Betesh to buy out buildings on the cheap.

Along with the government housing authorities, mayor de Blasio, the cops, and landlord Betesh, Chinatown councilwoman Margaret Chin is also guilty of racism. Democrat Chin colluded with luxury developers, leaving working-class housing, including public housing areas, vulnerable. This hurts mainly Black, Latin, and Asian tenants. Chin received \$230,000 of campaign donations from the Real Estate Board of New York. Chin, former affordable housing activist, was the first Asian person to represent Chinatown. Clearly, representation by-race does not mean power for workers.

Long-haul fight

This fightback is a blow to sexism and racism. The years-long multiracial fightback of tenants is an inspiration. The tenants may get their homes back, but the fight against racist housing is far from over. Racist property owners citywide will continue displacing working-class families. The only permanent way to end privatization is to build a world where property is owned collectively by and for the working class: a communist world. ☺

Lerone Bennett, Jr., 1928-2018

A lifetime of anti-racist myth-busting



Against the deliberate evasion and enshrouding of the truth, Lerone Bennett, Jr. was among the first scholars to survey Black history and lay bare the roots of racism. This Black historian and long-time editor of *Ebony* magazine spent a lifetime fighting the racist rewrite of history. In his landmark *The Shaping of Black America*, he wrote:

In the beginning, as we have seen, there was no race problem in America. The race problem in America was a deliberate invention of men who systematically separated blacks and whites in order to make money. ...Back there, before Jim Crow, before the invention of the Negro or the white man or the words and concepts to describe them, the Colonial population consisted largely of a great mass of white and black bondsmen, who occupied roughly the same economic category and were treated with equal contempt by the lords of the plantations and legislatures. Curiously unconcerned about their color, these people worked together and relaxed together. They had essentially the same interests, the same aspirations, and the same grievances. They conspired together and waged a common struggle against their common enemy – the big planter apparatus and a social system that legalized terror against black and white bondsmen.

In “The Road Not Taken,” a groundbreaking chapter from this book, Bennett demonstrates that race and racism were created by a vulnerable and

outnumbered ruling class elite facing the prospect of multiracial working class rebellion. He chronicles over a century of deliberate use of state power, both legislative and violent, to define and separate Black and white.

In “Black Power in the Old South,” from his first major work, *Before the Mayflower*, Bennett sketches a portrait of the Reconstruction era after the Civil War, where the temporary exercise of federal power to suppress organized racism led to a brief flowering of multiracial social gatherings and political power that has yet to be seen again in the American South.

Thomas Jefferson, slave-owning grandfather

When the entire historical establishment still heeded the racist denials of Jefferson’s white descendants, Bennett was moved by an unwavering confidence in the story of Black descendants of Thomas Jefferson and of Sally Hemings, the slave the third U.S. president repeatedly raped from the time she was an adolescent. (Over his lifetime as a wealthy Virginia plantation master, Jefferson owned more than 600 Black people.)

In his 1954 article, “Thomas Jefferson’s Negro Grandchildren,” Bennett points out the vicious hypocrisy of the author of the Declaration of Independence, which asserted that “all men are created equal.” As Bennett documented, Jefferson’s denial of his Black children with Hemings was cruelly and tragically unequal. (In fact, Jefferson kept those children enslaved until they came of age.)

Bennett went on to expose the stark inequities that four generations of racist U.S. “democracy” created between Jefferson’s white and Black descendants. The fact that Jefferson fathered six children by Hemings was widely accepted by mainstream historians only after DNA evidence emerged in 1998. Bennett was more than forty years ahead of his time.

Abraham Lincoln, ethnic cleanser

Bennett’s *Forced into Glory, Abraham Lincoln’s White Dream* is still met with disapproval from the

Lincoln cult in the mainstream historical establishment. In this 662-page magnum opus, published in 2000, Bennett quotes directly from Lincoln’s papers and contemporaries to present the man as he was—a lifelong and committed racist. He portrays the rising politician in 1848, when Lincoln undertook a dogged campaign to strip free Black people of the vote and even to fund a program to deport all Black residents from Illinois. The stance that carried Lincoln to the presidency was not so much anti-slavery as anti-Black—a “White Dream” in Bennett’s words, to colonize all ex-slaves out of the U.S. after the Civil War.

Bennett’s unmasking of the white supremacist Lincoln is unlikely to be accepted by the court historians of the U.S. ruling class as long as the capitalists hold state power. But under communism, in the anti-racist, more objective future to come, this work will be vindicated as well. Bennett’s scholarship will be part of the foundation for a new understanding of the U.S. past.

When mainstream scholars ignore Bennett’s takedowns of icons like Jefferson and Lincoln, or his game-changing analysis of the roots of U.S. slavery, they remind us of the lies and omissions in capitalist chronicles of the communist past, as well. Ruling-class institutions cannot afford to tell the truth about the history of racism, a necessity for the profit system and all of its brutal inequalities. Nor can they tell the truth about communism, the only threat to the bosses’ class rule.

An intellectual’s legacy must be examined in historical context. Lerone Bennett, Jr. was shaped by times of massive, multiracial, anti-racist political upsurge. He saw more clearly than most what would be needed to take those movements forward to ultimate victory.

While Bennett was not a communist, the clarity and integrity of his work has inspired countless anti-racists and communists in challenging the falsehoods that prop up the capitalists’ dictatorship. He enriched our struggle and helped pave the way for new generations of worker-intellectuals to create a communist society. The Progressive Labor Party will guarantee that future revolutionaries learn the important lessons Bennett lived to teach 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

W. Virginia teachers strike inspired by ‘mine wars’

NYT, 3/3 — ...Tired of low pay and costly health benefits...teachers have refused to work in all 55 counties, shutting down every school in the state.

The teachers disregarded their own union leaders’ advice to return to work earlier this week, opting instead for a thunderous showdown with members of the state’s increasingly conservative leadership....

Smaller walkouts began in early February, organized by the sons and daughters of coal miners who stood on the picket lines themselves. “When I was in diapers, he was involved in a mine strike,” Justin Endicott, 34, a fourth-grade teacher...said of his father....

It is not a surprise to anyone here that the first teacher strikes came out of coal country. This was the battlefield of...a series of deadly battles in the early 20th century between coal miners and armies of law enforcement and company-hired soldiers. Among the people who fought in these wars was the great-grandfather of Brandon Wolford, a major organizer of the strikers in Mingo County.

In 1920, thousands of miners faced off in the five-day Battle of Blair Mountain against armed strikebreakers and government forces in one of the largest labor uprisings in American history.

(NYT, 3/2) — Kate Endicott, H.S. English teacher: “I live paycheck to paycheck...We come from an area that is known for standing up for what [we] believe in. The union wars, they originated in Mingo County.

“We believe we’re following in their footsteps. We believe the movement was started years ago through the mine wars. We’re just reviving the movement that was started years ago.”

South Africa: New millionaire ruler over Apartheid regime

NYT, 2/16 — ...Furious street protests...have swept the nation [under] an economy that long funneled most of the spoils to a narrow, predominantly white slice of the populace....

Despite the formal eradication of apartheid, South Africa remains a land of stark economic inequalities that break along racial lines. Within the nation of 55 million people, just a tenth of the population, mostly white, controls more than 90 percent of the wealth....The vast majority of the rest owns nothing at all.

Roughly half the country lives in poverty. The official unemployment rate sits above 27 percent. And in the townships ringing cities, where the apartheid-era government forced black people to live,...two-thirds of young people are jobless. There, families hunker down in shacks lacking toilets and clean water....

...After a 2012 police massacre of striking platinum miners that killed 34 people....[current President Cyril] Ramaphosa occupied a seat on the board of Lonmin, the company that owned the mine....A day before the police opened fire, Mr. Ramaphosa had been urging senior government officials to take strong action to end the strike....

Beyond its systemic discrimination against black people, apartheid....ensured that huge numbers of black South Africans were available at poverty-level wages within...mining, agriculture and textiles....

...Ramaphosa...achieved extraordinary affluence by running South African companies with interests in mining, banking, real estate and telecommunications. His fortune has been estimated at \$450 million.

Wage slavery rules Church hierarchy exploiting nuns

NYT, 3/2 — ROME — Sister Marie told of nuns who worked long hours to cook and clean for cardinals and bishops, without being asked to break bread at the same table.

Sister Paule pointed out that many nuns did not have registered contracts with the bishops, schools, parishes or congregations they worked for, “so they are paid little or not at all.”

Sister Cécile said that “nuns are seen as volunteers to have available at one’s calling, which gives rise to abuse of power.”

These stories...were revealed Thursday in an exposé about how nuns are exploited by the leaders and institutions of the Roman Catholic Church....

Though convents also depend on the money generated by the sisters living there, many nuns, unlike priests, are not paid, or are poorly paid, when they attend conferences or when they preach....

“Behind all this is still the unfortunate idea that women are worth less than men, and above all that the priest is everything while sisters are nothing in the church,” Sister Paule said.

Coal bosses profit; miner’s black lung disease on the rise

NYT, 2/23 — ...Investigators...identified the largest cluster of advanced black lung cases ever officially recorded....A new black lung epidemic is emerging in central Appalachia....

Across the coal belt in Kentucky, West Virginia and Virginia, “there’s an unacceptably large number of younger miners who have end-stage disease and the only choice is to get a lung transplant or wait it out and die,” [said David Blackley, an epidemiologist at OSHA].

Scientists have linked the new wave of lung disease to miners breathing in more silica dust...[which] can damage lungs faster than coal dust alone. Modern machinery, insufficient training...and longer work hours may also contribute to increased dust exposure....

A survey of clinics in 2016 has unofficially recorded nearly 2,000 cases over a similar period of time....

...Lowered dust exposure limits...[were] challenged by coal industry groups as costly....

BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION CENTENNIAL SERIES

**THE SOVIET UNION CRUSHED FASCISM.
CAPITALIST LIES ABOUT WORLD WAR II**

This celebratory column is in honor of the 100th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution and the world communist movement of the 20th century. We mainly examine its triumphs. 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 international working class led by the Soviet Union crushed fascism during World War II, a great achievement. Capitalist rulers lie about it, hiding the key role of the workers and communist leadership in that victory. We reject those lies. Last issue, CHALLENGE busted the following myths:

Lie No. 1: British, French and U.S. Capitalists ("Allies") Always Opposed Hitler

Lie No. 2: The U.S. And Britain Defeated Hitler, With Little Help from the USSR

Here's the rest.

Lie No. 3: Churchill Was A Great War Leader

Churchill was anti-communist, racist, and a fervent class warrior for British imperialists. In 1910 as Home Minister he sent troops against striking miners and transport workers. He also advised the compulsory sterilization of the "mentally deformed" to "improve British racial stock."

During the Civil War in Russia (1918-21) he organized British intervention against the new workers' state in a vain attempt to crush it. He advocated the use of poison gas in Iraq against rebelling Arabs, and organized the Black and Tans, which terrorized Catholics in Ireland.

During WW II, Churchill delayed the opening of the Second Front in the East against the Nazis. After WW II, he sent British troops to Greece to install a fascist king, after it was liberated from the Nazis by communist-led partisans. Churchill served the British ruling class well, but the masses in Asia and Africa booted out British colonial rule soon after the war.

Lie No. 4: Japan Was Defeated By The U.S.

The Chinese Red Army destroyed more than a 1.7 million fascist troops and their puppets. This was far more than the number of Japanese soldiers destroyed by the British, U.S. and the Kuomintang (the Chinese nationalists) armies combined. The two major war campaigns against the U.S. involved less than one-fifth of the Japanese forces fighting against the Communists in China.

Lie No. 5: Atomic Bombs Were Necessary To End the Japanese War Quickly

Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill had agreed that the Soviet Red Army, after defeating the Nazis, would attack Japanese forces in China, supposedly to avoid the high casualties that would result from an invasion of Japan. But the U.S. had already tested the A-Bomb and dropped it on August 6, two days before the planned Soviet attack. The U.S. was thus able to claim credit for the Japanese surrender and gain full control of Japan after the war.

The A-bombs were used to warn the Soviet Union and workers of the world struggling for revolution, that a capitalist power possessed a super-weapon and would use it to maintain domi-

nance. Even capitalist scholars now admit that the U.S. lied about the Bomb saving 500,000-700,000 American lives that Truman said would have been lost in a full-scale invasion (the Japanese government had sent surrender proposals for months).

Lie No. 6: Hitler Was the Cause of WW II and the Holocaust

The root cause of war is the continuous need of the ruling class to amass capital and to exploit workers and natural resources. The European capitalist classes fought colonial wars for control of labor and resources. The U.S. invaded Panama to secure the Canal and launched the Gulf War to control Middle East oil.

The holocaust is often blamed on "Nazi mentality". Nazi mentality is really capitalist mentality in its most vicious form. Capitalism thrives on racism. Although the murder of tens of millions within a few years is unprecedented in human history, there are many other examples of racist mass murder, including the slave trade from Africa and the slaughter of native peoples in the Americas.

Lie No. 7: The Nazi Party, Not the Capitalist Class, Turned Germany Fascist

The German capitalist class forced fascism on Germany. This class of bankers and businessmen funded Hitler. It gave him money to organize the storm-troopers who terrorized the working class. Hitler banned strikes and put communists and labor activists into concentration camps. Between 1934 and 1938, while actual wages dropped, capitalists' profits soared by 50 percent. German capitalists made huge profits from the war from slave labor.

Lie No. 8: The Soviet Forces Were Anti-Semitic.

A big lie is that Soviet forces were anti-Semitic. In fact, one of the first orders Stalin gave to the Red Army was to evacuate Jewish families to the East into the safety of the Soviet rear, out of the reach of the advancing Nazi army. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish workers fought in the Red Army and as partisans in the Soviet Union and Europe. In late 1941, special agents were sent from Moscow to fight any anti-Semitism. In contrast, in the anti-communist Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), where the average jail sentence for war crimes was ten minutes per murdered victim, most of the Nazi killers retained their jobs.

Lie No. 9: Liberal Democracy Is the Opposite of Fascism

Every capitalist state, liberal or fascist, is a dictatorship over the working class to create and sustain conditions for the exploitation of workers. Any worker on strike readily gets first-hand experience of this reality. When the economy is up and workers' opposition is not militant, the capitalist state can allow some free speech. But when crises hap-

pen, the capitalist state reveals its true nature. Fascism is the logical form of capitalist state power.

As the Great Depression of the 1930s gripped the world, fascism spread worldwide. The Soviet Union, then communist-led and a source of inspiration to world's workers, was its main target. Communism, not liberal democracy, is the opposite of fascism.

Lie No. 10: The Jewish People Let themselves Be Slaughtered by the Nazis

The murder of millions of Jewish, Roma and other people who were considered "unter-menschen" (German for "subhumans") by the Nazis is one of the most barbaric acts in modern history. Even though they accept the existence of the holocaust, the bosses' media has spread a number of lies.

Films like "Schindler's List" imply that Jewish people went like lambs to the slaughter. In reality, there was widespread resistance to the Nazis in the ghettos and camps. Early in 1943, 50,000 Jewish people in the Warsaw Ghetto, organized by the Polish Communist Party and other anti-Nazi groups, fought for weeks against an SS division.

Fires of revolt blazed even inside Nazi death factories. Auschwitz inmates blew up a crematorium with the help of smuggled dynamite. At Sobibor, a daring revolt organized with the leadership of a Red Army officer killed 50 SS guards with 300 prisoners escaping to freedom. Communists in the ghettos fought against sellout "leaders" who served the Nazis by carrying out their orders and telling people not to fight back.

Why does capitalist culture lie about these events? One of its important roles is to spread passivity in the face of oppression. Also, it is a fact that most of the Jewish fight-back against the Nazis was led by communists, and was anti-racist at heart. So the racist, anti-communist capitalists hide the truth of Jewish resistance.

While victory over fascism is part of the legacy of the world's working class, we mustn't overlook the mistakes of its communist leadership. In the Soviet Union, concessions were made to nationalism. Military ranks were introduced in 1937, counter to the proletarian spirit. Communists developed coalitions with "anti-fascist" capitalists (e.g. Britain and the U.S.) under the guise of fighting fascism. These mistakes helped maintain capitalism in Western Europe, and restore full-blown capitalism to the U.S.S.R. after Stalin's death.

Today, with deepening crises and imperialist rivalry, the fascist clouds are gathering fast. It is essential for Progressive Labor Party to lead the working class in another struggle against capitalism, and its monsters of fascism and war. The struggle is more difficult because there is now no center of working class power like the U.S.S.R. was then. But if we learn from history, we will not go half-way; we will fight for communism and true emancipation for the working class.☺

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