

# CHALLENGE



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## FIGHT MASS LAYOFFS IN TEXAS SCHOOLS

**TEXAS, May 30**—In the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD), over 60 layoffs were recently announced. SAISD has 91 percent Latin and 75 percent “at risk” students. Teachers are targeted based on claims of low performance evaluations—including seven teachers in the district’s historically Black high school. A letter written by an SAISD assistant principal exposed how district bosses forced principals to create lists of teachers to target and then ordered them to give teachers poor evaluations to justify mass layoffs.

Across Texas, school boards in major cities have announced mass layoffs. Schools face massive reduction in enrollment and as a result millions of dollars in budget cuts due to the loss of state and federal funds. In Houston, administrators announced a \$115 million budget cut and the layoff of over 200 district employees.

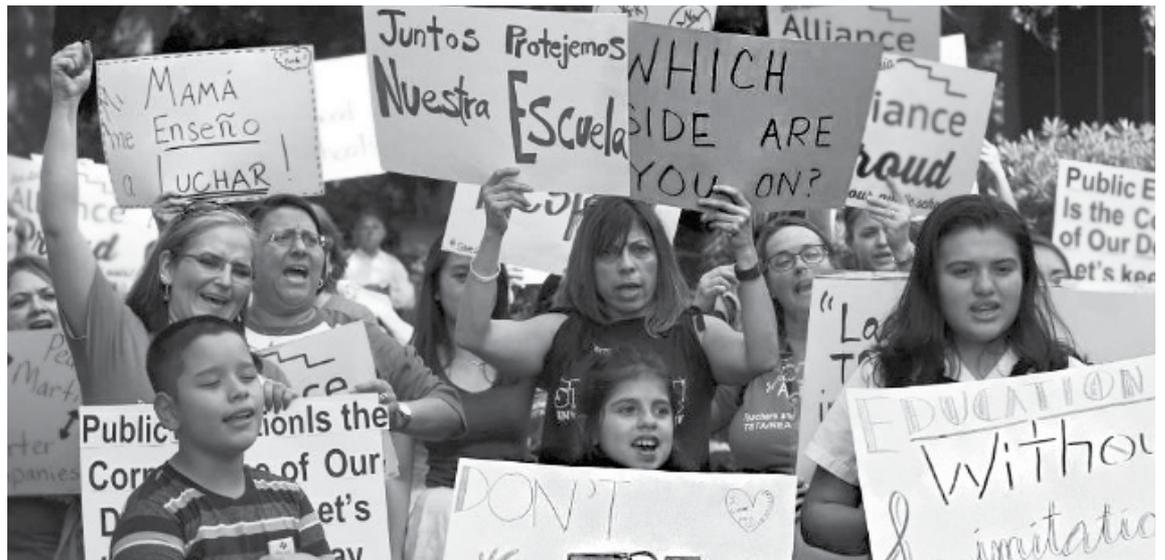
Last year there was 100 percent teacher turnover in several middle schools as Texas state administrators seized control of school boards in smaller, poorer districts. The schools under attack educate mainly the lowest income working-class Latin and Black children.

Inequality under capitalism guarantees that these students will face a future of the highest unemployment rate and lowest wages. U.S. capitalism superexploits Black, Latin, and Asian workers and uses high unemployment to keep white workers’ wages lower, with the threat that they can be replaced easily if they don’t keep their mouths shut and take what they can get.

These cuts are connected to charter school chains—KIPP, IDEA Academy, Great Heart, Energized for Excellence Inc.—pulling students out of neighborhood schools. In addition, charters are being hired to take over schools in the working class neighborhoods in San Antonio and Houston. The SAISD’s recent hiring of a charter chain, Democracy Prep, to take over a local school, was met with outrage by teachers and their unions. Charters aren’t better for teachers, either—teachers at charter schools are also being screwed, often receiving half the pay of public school teachers.

### Profit system hurts students the most

When public school funds are cut by the state, every student suffers. Although some families support this effort because they’ve been convinced they might get a slightly better education for their kids, the big picture is that there is a movement amongst the ruling class to kill off sections of public education because it costs too much to educate



kids who will be underpaid in unskilled jobs or face unemployment, and to lower working-class youth’s expectations of their future.

The current attacks are only the most recent phase of a more general attack on the state’s public schools that has been occurring for several years. In 2010, Progressive Labor Party stood with parents and prevented the closing of several SAISD schools. Eight years later, though, many of those same schools are under attack. These attacks on public schools are intensifying because to stay competitive, U.S. businesses must raise profits. Lower pay and higher unemployment of workers is inevitable.

### Students, parents, teachers denounce layoffs

In Houston, parents, students, and teachers are united to confront the school board. At an April board meeting, they angrily demanded that the board stop the charter school takeover, wearing shirts that read “Save Our Black and Brown HISD Schools.” They boldly called out the Black liberal board president for her complicity in carrying out the state’s racist plans. Outnumbered and afraid, the board revealed their fascism, forcibly removing and arresting two parents who went over their allotted speaking time, and then ordering police to clear the room. Because of the mass resistance to the board’s plans and outrage following the arrests, the board has since backed off their charter plan, but are still moving forward with hundreds of layoffs.

At this month’s SAISD board meeting, over 300 teachers and parents turned out to denounce teacher layoffs. The protest was so large that it

spilled into the hallway, and outside the building. Many teachers being targeted with layoffs bravely spoke out and exposed the hypocrisy of a school board that gets rid of its best, most dedicated teachers. Even teachers with over 30 years of experience who have been honored in the past for their achievements were on the chopping block. Parents stood in unity, erupting with the chant, “Save Our Teachers!”

### Working class unity creates potential for revolution

Members of PLP discussed the recent teacher strikes around the country with the teachers in the crowd. Some agreed that a strike in Texas could have put them in a stronger position. The struggles over the past two months have made it clear that all workers must unite to fight the bosses. Emmanuel Macron, France’s president, and Angela Merkel, Germany’s Chancellor, have instituted similar attacks on civil service workers, teachers, airline employees and many others, all intensifying in the last few months. These attacks are being met with street protests, and as in West Virginia, Arizona, and Kentucky, by wildcat strikes of school teachers. The parents and teachers in these schools are leading the way and PLP is working to deepen our base in these areas of growing struggle.

We must explain to workers and students how the daily, systemic attacks against the working class inherent in the capitalist system are just as violent as any mass shooting. The anger and energy of the working class around mass layoffs and cuts shows that in a period of increasing crisis, there is increasing potential to grow and build a movement for communism. ☺

## 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

# Iran deal exit

# U.S. splintered & exposed to Russia, China gains

The rivalry between top imperialists keeps getting sharper. This intensifying struggle pressures all local ruling classes and leads various factions to more openly fight it out. One clear example is the May 9 move by U.S. President Donald Trump to dump the Iran nuclear deal and escalate economic sanctions against the struggling country. Trump's move reflects competing strategies within the U.S. ruling class, which is split into two camps: the dominant multilateralist wing versus a more domestic-oriented, isolationist wing.

In recent years, going back to the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, the multilateral imperialist U.S. strategy has been to keep control over Middle East oil by playing regional powers off against one another and limiting any one country's influence. The Iran nuclear deal of 2015, in accord with Europe, Russia, and China, was designed to keep Iran relatively stable by relieving economic sanctions.

This year, Trump replaced main wing ruling-class figures Rex Tillerson and H.R. McMaster with Mike Pompeo and John Bolton as Secretary of State and national security adviser, respectively. Pompeo, the former CIA director and a darling of the Koch brothers, the domestic-oriented wing's chief funders, and Bolton, a George W. Bush-era war hawk, now have Trump's ear. Both have been vocal opponents of the Iran nuclear deal.

Trump's decision to pull out of the deal is an apparent move toward provoking regime change in Tehran. Iran has long supported rebel groups and factions that threaten the interests of U.S. allies Saudi Arabia and Israel. Iran backs Houthi rebels fighting Saudi Arabia in Yemen, along with Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, both constant threats to Israeli borders. In addition, Iran has significant influence in Iraq.

### Trump and Co. willing to brush off EU

Trump's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal was sharply rebuked by foes and allies alike. The European Union has much to lose if the deal falls apart. Overall, the EU is Iran's number-one trading partner, with trade soaring from \$9.2 billion (U.S.) in 2015 to \$25 billion in 2017 (Guardian, 3/25). Germany has gone so far as to announce that it would stay in the deal in defiance of the U.S..

It's apparent that the U.S. bosses influencing Trump are comfortable with alienating traditional, post-WWII European allies and doubling down on Saudi Arabia and Israel. Emboldened by the U.S. withdrawal, Israel may decide that now is the moment to take on Hezbollah, the Iran proxy that has previously achieved some success against Israeli forces. In 2000, Hezbollah forced Israeli troops to withdraw from southern Lebanon; in 2006, it blunted Israel's offensive there. Now the militant group is expanding into Syria (Council on Foreign Relations, 03/18).

Israel wants to stop three things: advanced weaponry reaching Hezbollah in Lebanon; the Syrian civil war spilling into the Israel-occupied Golan Heights; and Iran militarily entrenching itself on its northern frontier. In this carpe diem moment, by widening the scope of its airstrikes against Iranian and Hezbollah targets in Syria, Israel is deliberately challenging Iran (Stratfor, 05/2018).

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has been ratcheting up its own tensions with its main regional rival. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman “warned that the battle for influence over the Middle East ought to take place ‘inside Iran’” (CFR, 03/2018). It's important to point out that the U.S. is an active backer of the three-year, Saudi-led bombing campaign against Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, a proxy war that has slaughtered thousands of civilians, wounded tens

of thousands more, “created the world's largest food security emergency, and led to a cholera outbreak....” (bbc.com, 11/1/17).

### Russian, Chinese bosses making inroads

In response, Iran has increasingly turned to China and Russia, which re-entered the region in 2015 on behalf of its ally in Syria, President Bashar al-Assad, and has emerged as a decisive factor in that country's brutal civil war. As detailed in the March issue of Foreign Affairs:

*Russia could not have made these gains without Iran. Iranian ground presence gave Russia its victory in Syria. And in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, Iran and Russia have worked together closely to counter U.S. influence....Iran sits at an important geographic location and is an energy-rich country of 80 million people, with a network of allies and clients that spans the Middle East—all outside the United States' sphere of influence.*

China, one of the biggest buyers of Iranian crude oil, has signaled that it intends to continue trading with Iran: “By driving away American, European and Japanese companies, sanctions could increase opportunities for Chinese businesses,” said Hu Xingdou, an economist at the Beijing Institute of Technology (Agence France-Presse 3/18).

Chinese businesses involved in Iranian development are worth at least \$33 billion, with many of them connected to China's massive One Belt, One Road global infrastructure initiative. Beijing is seeking a leading stake in developing an Iranian gas field project as well, “with state-owned oil company CNPC set to replace Total if the French energy behemoth withdraws from the project over U.S. sanctions” (AFP, 5/18).

### Lose-lose proposition for U.S. rulers

After disastrous imperialist interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. ruling class has been trying to lower its military profile in the Middle East. The main wing needs to keep its powder dry to prepare for an eventual big-power showdown with ascendant imperialist rivals China and Russia. The domestic wing, meanwhile, is strenuously opposed to paying higher taxes for a ground war in the Middle East. They want to defend their interests on the cheap, with a nuclear deterrence strategy.

The bosses' problem is that neither wing's strategy can address their fundamental problem, a relative decline as the leading imperialist superpower. The U.S. is losing influence and control in the Middle East, and will continue to lose regardless of the Iran deal. The post-World War II liberal world order just isn't what it used to be.

### Workers in Iran must rise again with PLP

Despite recent government crackdowns and the reinstatement of U.S.-led sanctions, workers in Iran have a rich history of fighting back against fascist exploitation. In the 1970s, workers organized against the CIA-backed Shah; more recently, they have mounted a militant fightback against the fascist fundamentalist regime.

As the Trump regime tries to sway Iranian workers to join a movement for regime change, these workers must look to the lessons of the co-opted Arab Spring movements, which wound up replacing one set of U.S.-backed puppets for another. Only a communist revolution, led by the Progressive Labor Party, can destroy capitalism and serve workers' needs. ☛

# Colombia May Day: down with capitalist dictatorship

**BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA, May 1**—We do not believe in capitalist democracy, we organize for communist revolution! One working class, one communist world, one Progressive Labor Party! Peace between social classes serves criminal bosses!

Revolutionary slogans resonated for more than four hours in Bogotá, Colombia where, once again, the International Workers' Day, May Day, was commemorated.

PLP was present selling the newspaper *DESAFIO*, distributing more than three thousand communist leaflets. We talked to workers and students, letting them know about our revolutionary politics and inviting them to join our study and action groups to stop the continuous capitalist attacks. We explained that capitalism deteriorates our living conditions and fighting to destroy it and replace it with a communist society is the only solution.

Eighty participants which included comrades, sympathizers and readers participated in this march along our banner, enthusiastic young people also raised our red flags and chanted PLP slogans: "Down with capitalist dictatorship, up with communist revolution! The good life of the ruling class, makes the worker destitute!"

We were advancing our politics among the demonstrators, contrasting with the vast majority of trade union groups, politicians and phony left leaders that make this day an electoral carnival. To their reform messages, we responded, "Down with capitalist nationalism, up with communist internationalism" and "The history of the working class is not a carnival party."

We received support and admiration for our anti-electoral and anti-capitalist slogans and support for PLP's communist program as the only solution to the problems of the world's working class. We emphasized the discipline and vigor of the students, workers, and sympathizers, women and men, that help us and demonstrate that organized workers' struggles have a future, which makes our commitment even greater.

We sang the Internationale when we arrived at the Bolivar Plaza, the main site of the march and where the big unions had prepared their pro-boss



speeches and support for social democratic candidates. There we chanted, "The history of the workers' struggle is not in the ballot boxes!" Communists do not believe that racist capitalism can be reformed to serve the needs of the proletariat. We participate in these protests and local struggles to

build the class consciousness and our social base. It is necessary to help the international working class, transform this outdated society by uniting ourselves in our common interests and against capitalism. PLP fights to win workers to communist revolution as the only way to a better world. ☸

## International vigor at Oakland May Day

**OAKLAND, April 28**—Progressive Labor Party comrades, friends and families celebrated May Day with a rousing May Day dinner. There was living, breathing International working class unity as the 70 plus participants came from over 10 countries, were multiracial and multi-generational. We welcomed new members with applause and congratulations all around.

Every topic was about communism, and workers were involved in table talk conversation which followed each presenter. (See quotes from dinner participants.)

A young student opened with a bilingual greeting and history of May Day. We closed with singing the Internationale.

### Oaxaca teachers fight bosses' terror

A slide presentation about the long, massive, on-going struggle of Teachers in Oaxaca against the State Violence of the Mexican ruling class and their fascist police/military apparatus by a comrade who has participated in leading that struggle for many years. Workers who heard the presentation commented:

- "It was inspiring to hear about the hundreds of thousands who have united in this struggle and that PLP has played an important role in developing working class unity for 30 years."
- "It had an awesome, international flavor. Teachers in Oaxaca and teachers in the U.S. are fighting for their students and families. We think in local terms about our community...but here, we find out about what happens in other places."
- "We can't always predict when and how battles will unfold...Struggles happen that

we don't expect and have many contradictions. We admire the striking teachers in the U.S. but many were Donald Trump supporters....Yet, they broke the law and fought for their students and families."

### Red social relations

A comrade from El Salvador described communist relations in the daily lives of her small town before and during the civil war in the 80s. Mass murder sponsored by U.S. Imperialism and the Salvadorian capitalist class caused huge internal migration so that workers and peasants flooded into her small town. The people mobilized to build shelter and feed the migrants—all without money or wages. For generations, families had produced for their needs, created products for their use value and shared or traded what abundance they had. This communal life-style developed from both the indigenous and African heritage of the people in the town.

Gradually, capitalist commodity production undermined this culture and introduced money and profit. People in the town needed products that they could not produce themselves, so they were forced into commodity production for individual use. Workers who heard the presentation commented:

- "People feel better and healthier when they live as a community....it's a side of human experience that capitalism destroys."
- "People already lived in a community... which is communism. They did not have a name for it."
- "This story gives me confidence to talk about communism as the best way to organize society because people have some connection with communist relationships. Anti-communism is not all we know."

"This game was absolutely brilliant. It was the briefest and most memorable way of explaining strengths and weakness of the communist struggles that I have ever been part of...particularly when you explained the political lessons that PL is trying to implement now...Great leadership."

"I'm happy I came....communism was not watered down. Communist ideas set the table."

### Game highlights gains & lessons of past revolutions

Three young comrades redesigned the game to show the victories and lessons from the communist revolutions of the 20th century. Each table discussed photos from the Soviet Union and China to illustrate the fight against racism, sexism, and capitalism led by the communist parties in the USSR and China.

Then with visual aids and participation at each table, they presented some policies that communist parties implemented which brought socialism back to full blown capitalism and reversed the gains of the working class. Such as: cult of the individual, wage differentials as material incentives which developed inequality, welcoming former bosses into the communist party, making productivity and efficiency primary over ideological struggle for "share and sharer alike" society. They thought communism required a prior state of abundance for the working class to get on board.

The presenters, then, connected these previous experiences to the struggle in PLP to learn and develop towards the fight for communism around the world: for example: collective leadership, internationalism not nationalism and much more. ☸

# Antiracists protest Israel's virulent fascism in Gaza

**NEW YORK CITY, May 18**—Rivalries between imperialist powers are ravaging the workers of the Middle East. The United States, Russia, China and their junior partners like Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel care nothing for working class lives as they compete for power and oil profits.

Today about 1,000 Arab, anti-Zionist Jewish, and other anti-racists demonstrated with militant chants in Times Square and then marched to the Israeli Consulate to protest the barbaric slaughter of Gazan demonstrators over the past month. Two days earlier about 300 members of Jewish Voices for Peace and other anti-racists marched in the rain to the offices of Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, who have said nothing to condemn the violence.

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), have killed 111 protestors and wounded thousands of others with expanding bullets aimed to cripple, if not kill. These atrocities were committed with the full support of the U.S., in response to weekly mass protests involving thousands of Gazans, including entire families.

## Gaza is uninhabitable

Gaza is small strip of land at the southwestern corner of Israel where thousands of Palestinians fled after being driven from their homes when Israel was founded in 1948. Initially under the control of Egypt, Gaza was captured by Israel in the 1967 war, along with the West Bank and the Golan Heights. Ever since, these territories have been brutally and illegally militarily occupied. For the last 11 years Gaza has been under siege, with very little food or other life necessities allowed in. Gaza is surrounded by a wall and is closely surveilled by Israel. In 2009 and 2014, Israel launched brutal military attacks on Gaza, killing over 3,500 and destroying multiple dwellings, schools, hospitals, power plants and water treatment facilities. Today Gaza has almost no drinkable water, sparse electricity, huge food shortages and very little employment. It is called the world's largest open-air prison and the United Nations has declared that it is about to be totally uninhabitable.

## Israel breeds anti-Arab racism

Jewish Israelis are bombarded with profound anti-Arab racism from the cradle in order to justify the ongoing occupation of Palestine. They are taught a totally distorted view of history, such as that Arab workers fled in 1948 out of anti-Semi-



tism, as opposed to 750,000 being forcibly expelled and their homes and villages razed.

Today Jewish soldiers, or any Israeli, can steal from, injure or kill Palestinians with impunity, only rarely suffering mild consequences if an abuse gains international traction. Palestinians who rebel or protest in any way are painted as vicious terrorists, who have little regard for their own lives and are filled with hatred of Jewish workers. Even children who throw stones are arrested, tortured and sentenced to years in prison.

Israel is only able to exist because of the more than \$3 billion in military aid it receives annually from the U.S. This support has enabled it to become a nuclear power and serve as U.S.'s and the West's main protector of Middle Eastern oil. Israeli military terror also helps the U.S. to limit the power of rivals like Iran and Russia. For this reason, even Arab powers like Saudi Arabia support Israel and ignore its abuse of Palestinians.

## Workers need communist leadership

The Palestinians are also weakened by their own divided and traitorous leadership. The Palestinian Authority (PA), which rules the West Bank, spends as much money on police to prevent opposition to Israel as it does on health and educa-

tion combined. The PA cooperates with a small financial elite who control most of the economy and are in bed with Israeli capitalists. Gaza is run by Hamas, a fundamentalist organization, which also preserves most jobs and resources for its loyalists. Most Palestinians despise both these groups, but there is no strong alternative leadership at the moment. Israeli workers, though few recognize it, also play a high price for the occupation, with low wages, high unemployment, and scarce affordable housing, along with a racist moral atmosphere.

What is needed is a multiracial anti-capitalist consciousness and struggle in all of Palestine/Israel. Our comrades there raise this idea in the work they do in a multiracial union in Israel. In other countries we try to build communist consciousness in organizations of anti-occupation Jewish, Palestinians and other anti-racist fighters. Internationally there is a boycott of Israeli goods, academia, and cultural events. However, at this moment, it is wars for power and profit that are dominating the Middle East. The wars in Syria and Yemen, where the U.S., Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel attack each other in increasingly vicious and dangerous conflicts foreshadow larger wars and even world war. An international communist, anti-imperialist movement is the only hope for our class, in Israel/Palestine or anywhere. ☪

# Mexico: Working-class mothers study sexism, pledge to organize against capitalist violence

**MEXICO**—To celebrate International Working Women's Day, PLP attended a conference on violence against women. It took place at a kindergarten in an industrial area where Progressive Labor Party has done political work for three decades, and where we are well known as organizers. The school's principal sent out the invitations after a woman was killed nearby.

She invited the mothers of school families to the conference, which focused on fighting sexism. About 50 young mothers between the ages of 20 and 25 attended.

During the meetings we spoke about the Party document: "Communism and the Struggle Against Sexism", which notes that the key to ending violence against women is to struggle against capitalism. The other main discussion was around the book: *Caliban and the Witch* in which the writer Silvia Federici speaks about the division of labor between women and men in child rearing and earning wages. The discussions were well received by the women workers in attendance. While the questions asked were fairly timid, the women seemed to seriously identify with the Party's explanation of how sexism functions under capitalism.



At the end, the principal invited us back for future talks, and issues of CHALLENGE were distributed along with *Road to Revolution IV* and *Communism and the Struggle Against Sexism*.

It is important that all women and men to start organizing to defend themselves against the violence directed against women workers because it is an instrument of capitalism that terrorizes, and super-exploits this section of our class. The responsibility to change this unequal society lies in our hands. We must reeducate youth and workers to care for each other and see each other as true class sisters and brothers. This will guarantee that all families understand we must change this society for one that serves the interests of our class and not the interests of the rich. It is the ruling class that is guilty of all the violence, discrimination, murders, kidnappings, sexual assaults and super exploitation of women workers.

Join the international communist PLP and fight for an egalitarian society. Let's get rid of capitalism and the traitorous rulers that are guilty of so much violence, unemployment, hunger and misery in Mexico and worldwide. Long live communism! ☪

# Lessons from 9-day occupation at Howard University

**WASHINGTON DC, May 29**—As the semester ended at Howard University, students, triumphant from the nine-day occupation by 450 students of the administration building, headed for home. The students understand that they must remain vigilant and engaged to ensure accountability to the commitments made by the administration.

As one member of the student group Howard University Resist said, “We’ll all be here next year, and the administration building is in the same place, if things don’t go our way.”

With summer break here, we can begin to evaluate this past semester’s action in terms of its outcomes and strategies.

Here is a summary of the modest concessions from the administration:

- *On overcrowding:* A later date for applying for housing was set, and the university agreed to keep open one of the dorms originally slated for renovation if demand for housing exceeded the remaining supply.
- *On tuition:* The administration also committed to keep tuition constant through the 2019-20 school year and to fund a community food pantry initiated by HU Resist for the coming school year.
- The administration also agreed to begin providing transportation for sexual assault victims to the local hospital that handles rape kits and to provide students a voice in selecting a student ombudsperson.

The administration agreed to establish several committees and task forces including students as co-leaders to address other issues. Task forces were established to:

- Review the campus police’s use of force, training and the need for armed officers
- Enhance psychiatric and behavioral health services
- Establish a grievance system that holds faculty, administrators and students accountable in their language and actions



- Consider implementing a mandatory one-credit course with a curriculum around prevention of sexual assault, sexual harassment and interpersonal violence.

## Assessment of the struggle

HU Resist was born in the Spring of 2017 in opposition to the secret visit of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos to the campus. It led the bold seizure of the administration building (see CHALLENGE, 4/18) and held it for nine days after locking out the campus police. The leading HU Resist members engaged in negotiations with the Board of Trustees throughout the occupation, while President Wayne A. I. Frederick refused to meet with the students. His resignation/firing was the leading demand of the protest.

The occupying students received ongoing support from faculty, community members, veterans of previous occupations (from 1968 and 1989), and students from several area universities. They created an egalitarian and sharing environment in the building and conducted political education and other creative activities during the occupation. One student described it as a “microcosm of communism.” Ultimately, they retreated from their key demands, of firing the president and disarming the campus police, and left the building peacefully with both legal and academic amnesty provided by the administration.

One HU Resister said that they had to come to

*Continued on page 7*

# Newark: Fake radical Ras Baraka oppresses workers

There is no more striking U.S. example of the futility of trying to change the conditions of workers under capitalism through elections than Newark, New Jersey. Elections are used by capitalists to both give false hope of change to workers and to settle differences within the ruling class. The bosses’ media tells us it’s our civic duty to vote every two or four years, after which they tell us to sit down and wait for change. Only communist revolution will solve the problems that confront our class.

## Liberal politicians fail working class

Newark Mayor Ras Baraka has won another term as the mayor of New Jersey’s largest city. During his campaign in 2014 and now, Baraka promoted himself as a “radical” and promised to address the affordable housing crisis. But whose class interests has Baraka actually served? “[He] has overseen a downtown development boom that has won him unexpected support from the business community” (Newark’s Radical Mayor Has Been Good for Business, WNYC, 5/1). At the same time, a city-run shelter at 224 Sussex Avenue, housing 154 homeless people will close at the end of May, with little notice or alternatives for the shelter residents.

A resistance to the City’s cooperation with the local bosses is developing. The War Against Poverty Coalition (WAPC) and other organizations attended the last City Council meeting. They spoke out against the closing of the shelter and the police harassment of homeless and hungry people and the organizations that distribute food and clothing to them in Peter Francisco (PF) Park. Other speakers exposed the fact that Newark cops chased away people lined up for food before an unveiling of a memorial to immigrants in PF Park. The ceremony was attended by Baraka, racist Councilman August Amador and Seth Grossman of a local Business

Improvement District, who has described homeless people as “trash.”

## Racism and capitalism leave workers on the streets

Like many U.S. cities and urban areas around the world, Newark is plagued with mass homelessness. Homeless workers are unemployed or employed at low-wage, part-time or seasonal jobs. They do not make enough to afford to pay the high rents charged by landlords. Homelessness is a by-product of the exodus of manufacturing jobs from urban areas, mass racist unemployment, and the lack of affordable housing—all caused by capitalism’s thirst for maximum profits.

In the U.S., homeless workers are disproportionately Black and Latin. In Newark, an 80 percent Black and Latin city, half of the children “live in low-income homes. The median household income is \$37,000 per year and only 18 percent of residents” work in the city itself. “Rents have risen 20 percent since 2000 in a city where 78 percent are renters.” (NJ Advance Media 4/9). Meanwhile, workers’ incomes have fallen 10 percent in the same period. (Rutgers CLiME Report, 2017)

Baraka’s collaboration with capitalism is flagrant. As he put it, “You’re not going to stop the market, the only thing you can do is mitigate it or build a bubble so you’re not crushed” (NJAM 4/9). Meanwhile, with his help and that of the last two mayors, Prudential Insurance Company and other Newark bosses have largely succeeded in their plan to gentrify the downtown area. Although the City Council last year passed a zoning ordinance, backed by Baraka, that mandates that new housing developments have 20 percent of their units as “affordable,” it does not apply to all of the many developments under way.

## Elections are a dead end

As someone who is well aware of the role of elections under capitalism, Baraka has long since sold out the Black and Latin workers whom he claims to represent. Councilwoman Gail Chaneyfield, who challenged Baraka in the recent 2018 election, is no better. During her campaign, she opportunistically claimed to be on the side of the homeless, after previously opposing the feeding of people at PF Park because it was being done by “outsiders.” Many Newark workers were not fooled and refused to participate in the 2018 vote because they knew it would not change things. Between the Prudential Arena and plush storefronts, the message to long time residents is loud and clear. As one worker stated, “Down here, you got the cosmetic stuff. But the real issues [are] where the real people live, and that’s up the hill.” (WNYC, 5/1)

More actions to combat homelessness, racism, poverty, and gentrification are being planned.

WAPC has called for a rally at Newark City Hall to demand the shelter be funded and stay open. Some members of WAPC want to tie this struggle to a growing national campaign against poverty modeled on Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Poor People’s Campaign.

While we stay in the midst of the fight, Progressive Labor Party will continue to hammer away at the false hopes spread by elections and reform under capitalism. Communists have a proud history of battling the racist bosses’ attacks on our unemployed and low wage brothers and sisters. The capitalist system feeds a tiny minority of ultra-rich bosses while tens of millions have little or nothing. Elections only tinker with this reality. Change will only come with a workers’ revolution to overthrow capitalism.✊

# LETTER

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

## Thoughts on *Black Panther*

For sure—as compared to countless movies with no Black characters, or with a few passive Black characters, or with many Black characters, but none given depth, complexity and leadership on the world scene—*Black Panther* is a breath of fresh air. It's also great to see women in the film being powerful, insightful, and on the cutting edge of science and technology.

But we wish to offer some insights, in addition to what's explained in CHALLENGE (3/21) to show when it comes to Hollywood, all that glitters is not gold!

Three main strategies are shown in the movie. T'Challa's father represents the racist view that Wakanda must exclude immigrants, must make itself secret, and must take no steps to fight racist oppression on the world stage. At first, T'Challa agrees, but—influenced by Lupita Nyong'o's character, Nakia—changes his views, and embraces peaceful outreach. This is the reformist point of view.

Killmonger represents the third strategy: revolution and a recognition that oppressors will never give up their power peacefully. This, by the way, is exactly what Harriet Tubman said about the struggle to abolish slavery. She said slavery couldn't be defeated without bloodshed, a strategic outlook borne out by the Civil War. She was correct then, and the same is true



of today's important effort to defeat capitalism, which

is the root of modern racism.

The funders and creators of this movie have created the character, Killmonger, as the representative of revolutionary strategy. They portray him — the only major U.S. Black character—as cruel, brutal, and power-hungry. This is purposeful, to convince us that a willingness to employ violence as a means to end oppression is vile and unacceptable.

Another problem with *Black Panther* is the CIA character Everett Ross. The CIA, in addition to spying, acts as a thug for U.S. big business. For example, they assassinated Patrice Lumumba, first leader of the Democratic Republic of the Congo when that country achieved independence, because Lumumba stood firm against colonialism and stepped on the toes of imperialist interests.

In *Black Panther*, the CIA leader is shown as a good guy. What kind of truly anti-racist movie would show that revolution is bad and that the CIA is good? Only a movie that, in essence, lends support to U.S. capitalism, and therefore, to the systemic racism and exploitation at the heart of capitalism's profitability.

These viewpoints, no matter how beautifully wrapped up for us, must constantly be deconstructed and refuted. *Black Panther* is no exception.

★★★★★

# Jeanne Labourbe, first French Bolshevik



Jeanne Labourbe was born in Lapalisse, France in 1877 in a family of day laborers marked by republican ideas. First earning her living ironing clothes, she entered the service of a wealthy Polish family as a governess who taught French to children.

At the same time that she was teaching French to children, she completed and expanded her primary education. Returning to France in 1903, she tried to pass the Elementary Certificate, hoping in this way to become a teacher, but failed the exam.

She was taken on as a teacher in Poland, then Russian territory. It was there that she became involved with the family of a political deportee and gradually began to study social issues. She began to act as a revolutionary courier at the border.

When the revolution of 1905 broke out, her great heart, her great courage, her absolute devotion to the proletarian cause, launched her into the liberation movement. From that moment she devoted herself to the work of the RSDLP (b), Lenin's Bolshevik Party.

Expelled from Poland at the end of 1905, Jeanne Labourbe lived for nearly 10 years in Russia and France. During World War I, she married the Serbian socialist militant Vukhachin Marcovich. In

1917 the couple settled in Moscow. The first French member of the Bolshevik Party, Jeanne Labourbe, joined a group of interpreters whose aim was to rally as French soldiers, initially fighting alongside the pro-Tsarist forces, to the side of the Bolsheviks, citing their class interests.

She was for all her comrades the model of devotion, self-denial and valor. On the August 31, 1918, she founded the "French Communist Group of Moscow."

She was shaken when she learned that French soldiers had landed at Odessa. She could not bear the idea she said, that "the sons of the communards of '71, the descendants of the revolutionaries of '93, came to stifle the great Russian revolution." She asked the Central Committee of the Party to be sent to Odessa. She had to cross the front lines to get there.

She threw herself into action with her confidence in the revolution, her enthusiasm. She helped write leaflets, newspapers, always finding that they were not lively enough, that they did not catch enough of the soldiers' hearts.

She was arrested and then, along with ten other comrades, executed on March 2, 1919 by the French police and the pro-Tsarist Russians. The indignation was so great in France that the League of Human Rights asked the Government for details of her death. The reply, published in *L'Avenir International* of February 1920, is the only government version of the murder:

*Mister President,*

*The Minister of Foreign Affairs transmitted to the President of the Council your letter dated October 15, in which you asked to be informed of the circumstances which accompanied the death of Mrs. Jeanne Labourbe, which took place at Odessa, during the disembarkation of our troops in this city. From the report which has been drawn up on this case, it appears that:*

*In February 1919 a Bolshevik delegation was sent to Odessa by the Soviet Government, with the aim of provoking mutinies among the French troops and bringing them to revolt and defection. The [White] Russian police, who were then operating at Odessa, were specially under the orders of the [White] Russian general, governor of the city. The police arrested the members of this committee during a meeting. Some of them fired on the police, and the whole group was*



*shot. It was not until later that the French commandant learned that among the victims was a French woman, presumably Mme. Labourbe.*

These are the facts. This event took place before March 13, 1919, when a state of siege was proclaimed and the [White] Russian police passed under the orders of the French military authorities."

A street is named after Jeanne Labourbe in Lapalisse (Allier), her town of birth. In 1977, a Soviet postage stamp bearing her portrait was issued in honor of the 100th anniversary of her birth.☺

# Lessons from HU Resist occupation

## Continued from page 5

terms because they were beginning to lose people from the administration building. Another said that the idea of upping the ante in the struggle by sending groups of resisting students to shut down classes and establish a full strike on the campus—classroom activity generally continued uninterrupted—was not likely to be effective. Another resister said that the decision to leave the building was premature, and had the leadership been more decisive and followed the organizational principles of democratic centralism, the struggle could have been extended and become even more successful, perhaps ousting the president.

The dominant ideas within HU Resist are Black nationalist in sentiment, a weakness in welding together the unshakeable solidarity of the working class and its allies. Such ideology also tends to limit

one's understanding of the role of Black institutions like Howard University, leading to the incorrect idea that with enough struggle and "student power," Howard could become a vehicle for revolutionary change.

Howard is a capitalist institution whose purpose is to support capitalism and mislead its students into supporting the system while accommodating modest, temporary reforms. Its Board of Trustees is filled with corporate executives and other pro-capitalist forces.

On the other hand, many HU Resisters consider themselves communists and anti-capitalists, and the potential exists for communist ideas to take root and grow!

## The way forward

PLP members supported the occupation in several ways. A PLP member brought a group of

labor activists to the occupation after a demonstration against Wendy's fast food restaurant. Another worked to gain support from faculty in the form of a letter of support ultimately signed by 75 faculty members. Other PLers provided food to the occupiers.

PLP salutes the boldness and the courage of the Howard University students who took the fight into occupation of the administrative building. HU Resist members, and students fighting back against racism and sexism worldwide, must take this struggle to the next level and join PLP, and become members of an international revolutionary communist party. That means acting locally—by immersing once again into uniting the day-to-day struggles of campus workers and students—while thinking globally and organizing a movement to destroy this system once and for all. 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

### Hitler's Nazism modeled after U.S. racism

The New Yorker, 4/30, (Alex Ross) — ...The Nazis idolized many aspects of American society...In 1928, Hitler remarked, approvingly, that white settlers in America had "gunned down the millions of redskins to a few hundred thousand...."

James Whitman's "Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law"....methodically explores how the Nazis took inspiration from American racism....He notes that, in "Mein Kampf," Hitler praises America as the one state that has made progress toward a primarily racial conception of citizenship, by "excluding certain races from naturalization...."

The Nazis were not wrong to cite American precedents. Enslavement of African-Americans was written into the U.S. Constitution. Thomas Jefferson spoke of the need to "eliminate" or "extirpate" Native Americans....Between 1500 and 1900 the Native population of U.S. territories dropped from many millions to around two hundred thousand....Jim Crow laws in the American South served as a precedent....Hitler's regime expressed admiration for American race law....California's sterilization program directly inspired the Nazi sterilization law of 1934....

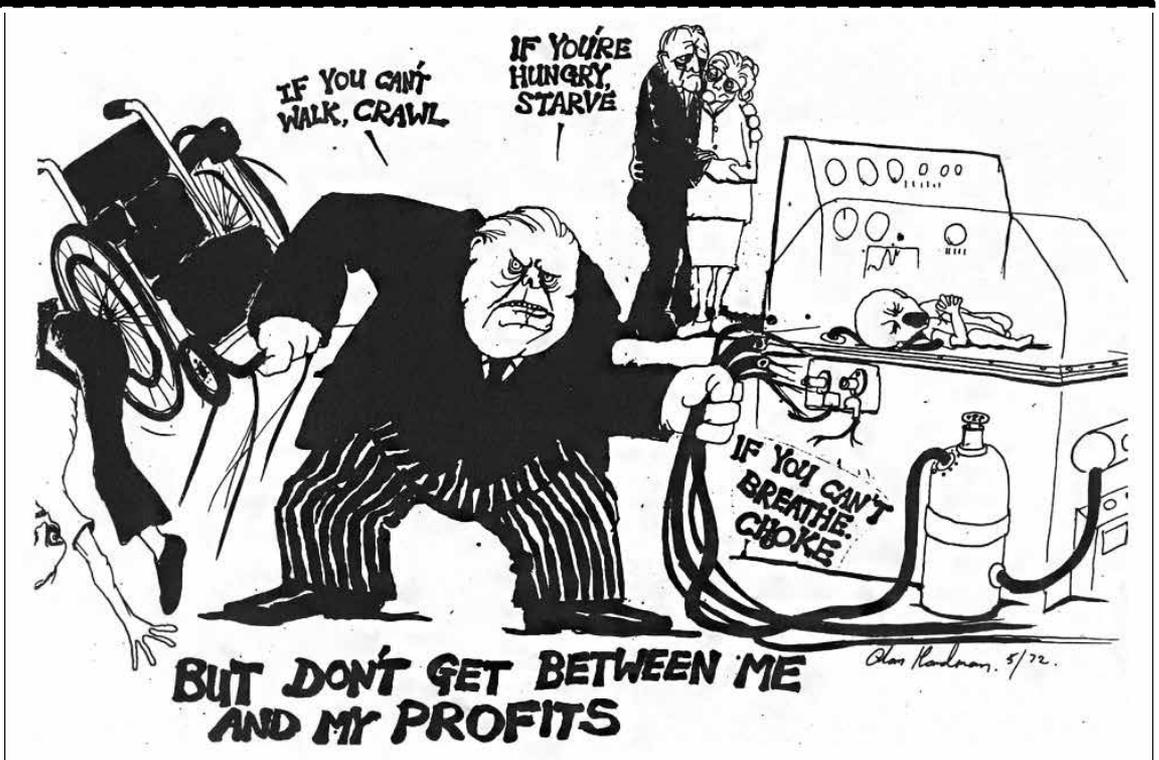
When Hitler praised American restrictions on naturalization, he had in mind the Immigration Act of 1924, which imposed national quotas and barred most Asian people altogether....The Immigration Act, too, played a facilitating role in the Holocaust, because the quotas prevented thousands of Jews, including Anne Frank and her family, from reaching America....

...General George Patton criticized do-gooders who "believe that the Displaced person is a human being, which he is not, and this applies particularly to the Jews who are lower than animals." Leading Nazi scientists [like]...Wernher von Braun.... realized that the Soviets would become the next archenemy of the American military-industrial complex, and cannily promoted the idea of a high-tech weapons program to ward off the Bolshevik menace.

### Monopoly capitalist mergers = U.S. unemployment up, wages down

NYT, 5/14, op-ed Bryce Covert — ...A dozen... corporate marriages were announced worldwide, worth a combined \$120 billion....This year, \$1.7 trillion worth of deals have been declared globally...All this...means fewer companies, which means less competition. For consumers, that can raise prices....That...focus on consumer prices hides another...more dangerous side effect....As mergers thin the ranks of businesses, workers have fewer options when they look for jobs. That...is part of why wages have stagnated....

Since the mid-1970s, productivity has con-



tinued ever upward, while pay has only muddled along....The power of a few consolidated employers...hold[s] down pay. When workers have fewer options for where they can seek employment...forced to accept lower wages just so they can get or hold on to a job....The more an industry consolidates, the more wages drop....

...Because the American economy is so dominated by a few large employers,...employment...is 5 to 18 percent lower than it would be otherwise, and wages are between 13 and 31 percent lower....

...No court has ever stopped a merger on the grounds of eliminating an employer hurts workers.

### Lynching atrocities part of slavery system whose racism is still unfolding

NYT, 4/18 — ...One of the nation's least recognized atrocities: the lynchings of thousands of black people in a decades-long campaign of racist terror....

The magnitude of the killing is harrowing, all the more so when paired with the circumstances of individual lynchings:...Parks Banks, lynched in Mississippi in 1922 for carrying a photograph of a white woman; Caleb Gadly, hanged in Kentucky in 1894 for "walking behind the wife of his white employer"; Mary Turner, who after denouncing her husband's lynching by a rampaging...mob, was hung upside down, burned and then sliced open so that her unborn child fell to the ground....

...A small group of lawyers spent years...in archives and county libraries to document the thousands of racial terror lynchings across the South. They have cataloged nearly 4,400 in total....

...[Facing] its destructive legacy is particularly hard in the "most punitive society on the planet...."

...The slavery system did not end but evolved: from the family-shattering domestic slave trade to the decades of lynching terror, to the suffocating

segregation of Jim Crow to the age of mass incarceration...now.

### Trump's evangelical pastors on fascist rant spread anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic racism

NYT, 5/15 — A Dallas evangelical pastor...and a megachurch televangelist both played prominent roles...in the opening ceremony of the new American Embassy in Jerusalem. Robert Jeffress...spoke at President Trump's private inaugural prayer service...while the Rev. John Hagee...gave the closing benediction....Mr. Jeffress made it clear...."Islam is wrong. It is a heresy from the pit of hell....Hagee said the Bible made clear that Hitler and the Holocaust — when about six million Jews were killed — were part of God's plan...."

### Third of families with children = no wealth, only debt

NYT, 5/20 — What does economic inequality really look like? Income alone doesn't give a complete picture....The more alarming gap occurs in wealth — a household's total assets minus debts....

Wealth inequality is much worse among families with children and the gap has widened greatly over the past two decades, with consequences that may cascade through generations....

Families with children...wealth declined by 56 percent ...from 1989 to 2013. The top 1 percent...wealth increase[d] by 156 percent, while parents in the bottom half saw their wealth shrink by 260 percent. About a third of all families with children in 2013 had no wealth, only debt....[Due to] a medical emergency,...companies replaced full-time jobs with part-time work....That means not only less income but also less money to save....The other problem...is debt...student loan and mortgage debt....

Even...a community college usually means taking on debt.

**Working class under attack**

# Capitalist culture lethal for youth

*As sharpening inter-imperialist rivalry leads to larger wars and fascism, the U.S. capitalist rulers are trying to solve the crisis of their failing profit system by attacking the working class. Over the next several issues of CHALLENGE, we will be writing about how these attacks are affecting workers—and how a communist-led revolutionary movement can fight back.*

On May 18, eight students and two teachers were shot and killed at a high school in Santa Fe, Texas. Coming on the heels of the February murder of 17 people at a Florida high school, the latest massacre reflects a horrifying trend. Since 2000, more people have been killed or wounded in mass school shootings in the U.S. than in the entire 20th century (Science Daily, 4/18). In 2018, the shooting death toll in U.S. schools is higher than in the U.S. military (Washington Post, 5/18). As families and friends mourn the loss of young lives, it is time to hold accountable the rotting U.S. capitalist system that drives teenagers to become murderers.

Metal detectors and armed school custodians won't stop this senseless violence. Reformed gun laws and more careful parents won't stop it. When people have reached the point where they are ready to slaughter their classmates, they won't be deterred by a locked cabinet or a background check.

**Capitalism alienates our youth**

The root cause of the recent rash of school shootings is a rotten capitalist culture that is spiraling into even deeper decay. U.S. capitalism in the 21st century is a story of economic dislocation, cuts in mental health services, and a society that lacks concern for the collective good.

The world capitalist order put in place by World War II is coming apart. As old alliances fray and U.S. bosses lose ground to China and Russia, capitalists around the world are racing to find cheap labor as they prepare for the next global war. Advances in technology are used to destroy workers' living standards. The five largest private U.S. employers—Walmart, Amazon, Kroger, Yum! Brands, and Home Depot—overwhelmingly hire people for low-paying service jobs.

U.S. rural areas are disinvested wastelands. The cities are bastions of extreme inequality and segregation, with underpaid immigrants and Black workers serving a mainly white elite class. Seven of ten U.S. workers are falling behind economically: "Most population segments experienced flat or falling incomes in the 2002–12 decade [and] young, less-educated workers were hardest hit" (McKinsey Global Institute, 7/16).

In the U.S. in 1970, according to the Financial Times, a 30-year-old "had a 90 percent chance — almost a guarantee — of earning more than what their parents earned at the same age, adjusted for inflation... This cornerstone of U.S. identity — that if you put in hard work, a better future awaited... is increasingly evading the country's young people." By 2016, about half of 30-year-olds were earning less than their parents did at the same age (12/16/16). Trying to start a business is even more hopeless than trying to find a decent job. Within the first 18 months, 80 percent of entrepreneurs crash and burn" (Forbes, 9/12/13).

The hard reality is that the capitalist ruling class views the masses of working people as disposable—a reality deliberately obscured by capitalist schools and the myth-making entertainment industry.

**Winners and losers**

Capitalist culture pushes the destructive idea that people don't matter unless they set themselves apart from others in the working class. A society defined by winners and losers is a breeding ground for selfishness, narcissism, and a lack of empathy. Capitalist culture teaches us to care only about ourselves, and perhaps a small group of friends

and relatives—and to "get ahead" at all costs.

Playing alongside this American Dream fantasy are media glorifications of extreme alienation, where the new generation of heroes are sociopathic gangsters, self-justifying drug kingpins, and narcissistic hit men. In hit TV shows like "Breaking Bad," "Barry," and "Assassin's Creed," angry, frustrated men are made sympathetic as they mow down innocent people.

The end result is that masses of youth feel they are doomed to be society's losers. Squeezed between the pressure to "make it" and a lack of hope for the future, many will break. As the bosses put the failure of their system onto the backs of children, millions of young people fall into mental illness, drug addiction, and crime. In many parts of the world, frustrated teenagers get blinded by anger into committing acts of terrorism. For a desperate few in the U.S., shooting their schoolmates becomes a demented way to be recognized—to stand out.



**CAPITALISM**

*A society defined by winners and losers is a breeding ground for selfishness, narcissism, and a lack of empathy.*

**What way out?**

Ending school shootings will require a revolutionary change of culture. Capitalist schools, media, organized religion, unions, and political parties are too invested in maintaining the profit system to confront the urgent problems faced by workers and their families. That leaves the international working class, led by the Progressive Labor Party, with both a tremendous task and a great opportunity: to build a revolutionary communist culture and a society run for and by the working class.

Most of us try to be good as individuals, but careers and money, fatigue and isolation overwhelm us. Capitalist culture, its selfishness and individualism, poisons the institutions we rely on every day. But it also resides inside us, and will not be undone easily.

Building a new culture doesn't start when the working class seizes state power. It begins now, today, in the class struggle to fight racism, sexism, and division. The basis for a new and better world lies in the struggle to change the one we live in. As Fredrick Douglas said, "Without struggle there is

**The bosses' deadly racist tool**

From the time that the Spanish, French, and British colonial powers committed genocide against indigenous peoples to grab the land and treasures of the New World, guns have been an essential tool for the imperialist U.S. ruling class to terrorize and control the U.S. working class. Guns were used to enslave Black people from Africa and to discourage rebellion on profit-generating plantations. The so-called Founding Fathers denied gun ownership to slaves and free Black people alike (Atlantic, 9/11), a selective gun control policy reaffirmed in the post-Civil War "Black Codes" and later in the Uniform Firearms Act (Arc Digital, 4/4). The Second Amendment "was essentially written to protect the interests of Southerners in the states that formed militias—often known as "slave patrols"—to crush any attempt at what was called ... a 'servile insurrection'" (Daily Beast, 12/6/2015).

The same lethal, racist dynamic persists today, with police using the threat or reality of legalized shootings to preserve wage slavery and the super-exploitation of Black workers. In 2017, U.S. cops killed 1,129 people, with Black workers three times more likely than white workers to be on the wrong side of a bullet (Newsweek 12/29/17).

A system that relies on guns as the primary instrument of oppression has spawned a culture of pervasive gun ownership. There are more than 300 million guns in the U.S.; four of 10 households own at least one (CNN 2/15). While most individuals keep guns for hunting or sport, the National Rifle Association—a historical ally of the Ku Klux Klan—has stoked racist fears to push gun sales, a \$13 billion industry, and to lobby for state-level "Stand Your Ground" legislation. According to a study by the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute, in states with SYG laws, 34 percent of white-on-Black homicides in states with SYG laws are ruled justified, as compared to just 3 percent of Black-on-white homicides (Arc Digital, 4/4).

no progress."

What we have on our side is our fighting history of class struggle. The fortitude of Harriet Tubman and Nat Turner. The iron will of the Red Army in smashing the Nazis. The fearlessness of the miners in Harlan County, Kentucky. The courage of the young people of Ferguson, Missouri, who stood up against tanks and machine guns to demand justice for Michael Brown.

The movement for a workers-led society is tiny today. But in every issue of CHALLENGE you can see the seeds of its potential. And with every struggle we move forward, we lay the foundation for the communist culture of the future.✊

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