

CHALLENGE



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TEXAS—Some 2,000 protestors marching in the small, desert town of Tornillo call to abolish Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

ABOLISH ALL BORDERS SMASH RACIST CONCENTRATION CAMPS



LOS ANGELES—Protesters block detention center.



NYC—Hundreds of protesters welcome separated children at La Guardia airport at night.

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

★ **EDITORIAL** *Trump accelerates anti-immigrant fascism amid U.S. decline...p 2*

★ **HOUSING** *Tenants call out racist Cuomo's housing crisis...p 3*

★ **U.S.** *From police to la migra, fight racist state terror...p 4*

★ **SHSAT** *Bosses' high school integration ploy points to war plans...p 5*

★ **HISTORY** *The French Revolution proved that workers can rule ...p 7*

★ **UNDER ATTACK** *Housing crisis unsolvable under capitalism..8*

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

Trump accelerates anti-immigrant fascism amid U.S. decline

President Donald Trump’s latest vicious attack on undocumented immigrants and their children has accelerated the rise of fascism amid U.S. imperialist decline.

Trump is supported by a mass, racist section of the working class that scapegoats and dehumanizes immigrant workers for the failures of the profit system—even as the bosses super-exploit immigrants for needed labor. But larger masses of workers around the world have recoiled in outrage and disgust at this state-sponsored child abuse, which has traumatized more than two thousand children. These workers are pushing back in support of their class sisters and brothers, and politicians are running for cover.

On June 20, in response to growing protests and defections from his own racist camp, the Terrorist-in-Chief signed an executive order to modify his “zero tolerance” policy to prosecute all “illegal” border-crossers—including seekers of asylum—and to kidnap and warehouse their children. Videos of teenagers in cages and audio recordings of toddlers crying inconsolably for their mothers recalled past concentration camps, from Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Japanese internment hellholes during World War II to the Nazi death factories in Germany. Trump upheld this fascist tradition with a racist rant blaming Democrats for allowing “illegal” immigrants “to infest our country” (CNN, 6/19).

Monstrous treatment of Latin children

The capitalist bosses—Democrats and Republicans alike—have a monstrous history of victimizing children to terrorize and divide the working class. Over more than two centuries of slavery in the U.S., countless children were bought and sold away from their parents. Into the 1970s, more than one of three indigenous children were stolen from their families by government agencies and religious institutions (dailykos, 2/2/13).

With the U.S. Supreme Court upholding Trump’s racist anti-Muslim travel ban on June 26, the bosses have declared open season on immigrants—and proven once again that the U.S. Constitution isn’t worth the paper it is written on. To implement their legalized kidnappings, the Gestapo of the U.S. Border Patrol lied to parents who “were told their children were being taken for a bath” (Los Angeles Times, 6/16). Others, including at least one breastfeeding mother, had their children physically yanked from their arms (Huffington Post, 6/22). In the dead of night, the Department of Homeland Security shipped two babies under a year old to an airport in Michigan (Detroit Free Press, 6/20).

Abuse in these concentration camps is rampant. An undocumented 14-year-old in McAllen, Texas, said he was “kept in handcuffs and then tied to a chair with a restraint placed over his face with holes so he could breathe.” Similar punishment was meted out to at least five other children, including one who said he was strapped naked to a chair for more than two days (CNN, 6/21).

On June 26, a federal judge ordered the Trump administration to reunite all separated families within 30 days, and those with children under five within 14 days. Given the administrative chaos and the fact that many parents have already been deported, the ruling’s impact is uncertain at best. Hundreds of children will likely be trapped in institutions across the country for indefinite periods, with little or no contact with their families. As the judge wrote: “[U]nder the current system, migrant children are not accounted for with the same efficiency and accuracy as property” (New York Times, 6/27).

Under capitalism, workers are disposable commodities.

Trump advances fascism

While Trump’s anti-immigrant gutter racism represents a clear step toward fascism, the foundation for his approach was laid by predecessors from both parties. In 1996, Bill Clinton backed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, which authorized a border wall, beefed up the brutal Border Patrol, and allowed for the jailing of undocumented

immigrants for up to two years before deportation. In 2005, George W. Bush’s Operation Streamline further criminalized immigrants by making a second border crossing a potential felony.

Deporter-in-Chief Barack Obama forced over 3 million people out of the U.S. While Obama won liberals’ approval for backing the Dream Act, “he actually contributed to the criminalization of large groups of immigrants and so fed directly into Trump’s future rhetoric. He also drew on Bill Clinton’s ‘tough on crime’ policies in ways that linked the criminalization of people of color with the deportation of ‘criminal’ immigrants (also overwhelmingly people of color)... [and] helped foment white racial fears” (Nation, 4/25/17). Under Trump’s June 20 order, the government will set up new family-style concentration camps—Obama’s preferred solution. Another proposal would imprison up to 20,000 “unaccompanied alien children” on four military bases in Texas and Arkansas (NYT, 6/22).

Emboldened by a 90 percent approval rating among Republicans (NYT, 6/24), Trump remains defiant. He trumpets Big Lies about fictional immigrant criminality while calling for an end to “due process” and the elimination of judges to hear immigrants’ claims for asylum.

Splits in a declining empire

But Trump may be pushing the limits of what the main wing of the U.S. ruling class will tolerate, at least at this moment. While the finance capitalists care nothing about immigrants, they have deep concerns about the mulilateral alliances that prop up their teetering empire, from NATO to NAFTA—all in jeopardy under Trump’s “America First” agenda. The bosses also have growing qualms about the inept president’s ability to fend off rising imperialist rivals China and Russia.

Capitalism is in crisis worldwide, with the U.S.-led “liberal world order” in freefall. Nationalist rulers have seized power from Eastern Europe to Turkey to the Phillipines. Formerly stalwart U.S. allies like Germany, Italy, and Britain are in internal disarray. In the New York Times (6/18), in an opinion piece titled “Fall of the American Empire,” main-wing mouthpiece Paul Krugman bemoaned Trump’s latest anti-immigrant attacks and the decline of U.S. imperialism in equal measure:

Committing atrocities at the border, attacking the domestic rule of law, insulting democratic leaders while praising thugs, and breaking up trade agreements are all about ending American exceptionalism, turning our back on the ideals that made us different from other powerful nations....

We were the leader of the free world, a moral as well as financial and military force. But we’re throwing all that away.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military is seeing a rise in enlistments by Latin workers (Pew Research Center, 4/12/17)—a group of vital importance for the main-wing bosses’ plans for an eventual World War III. They must find a way to win millions of young people to fight and die for U.S. imperialism, the main point of Obama’s Dream Act. The rulers need racism, too, to divide and exploit our class—but Trump has made it too raw, too obvious, too ugly. The liberals’ pleas for “humanity” is really a call to sustain U.S. global supremacy.

International solidarity

Workers are rising to say: Enough is enough. Anti-racists have demonstrated against deportations in New York, Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles, Houston, Paris, and London. Their solidarity represents a tremendous opportunity for the revolutionary communist Progressive Labor Party.

For PLP and its international base, the global migration crisis underlines our struggle to build a world without racist borders. As capitalism implodes and fascism intensifies, so too will a working-class movement grow and spread throughout the world. We are united in the same fight: one working class, one Party, one undivided world under the red flag of communism. Smash deportations! Join PLP!☛

Fight fascist family separations

LOS ANGELES, June 23—All over Los Angeles this week, communities have protested the family separations, jails for babies and children, and Immigration Customs and Enforcements (ICE) raids. Some held vigils and started an occupation in front of the downtown Los Angeles immigrant detention center. Others held rallies in their local neighborhoods. Progressive Labor Party participated in a rally that revealed the need for multiracial unity against the bosses.

No child is free under capitalism

In one Black working class neighborhood in South Los Angeles, a rally was called on Friday evening. PLP organized friends and nearby residents to come out and make our voices heard. But the rally was sparsely attended. This neighborhood is in the middle of a fight against gentrification. One organizer from Little Africa, a local group in the neighborhood, spoke some truth about the hundreds of years of Black children being separated from their families through poverty and mass incarceration. Then, it got ugly. Another speaker parroted Trump's hateful, anti-immigrant rhetoric in an attempt to scare white liberals out of the neighborhood.

Some people in the crowd were Black nationalists who called for more Black-owned businesses that they believe will employ local, underemployed workers. Nationalism feeds into these false divisions between members of the working class. PLP calls for internationalism, no bosses, no borders—just one working class united. As one sign said: “No Child is Free Until All Are Free.”

Long history of state terror

Imperialist powers have a long history of separating children from their parents (see page 2). In Nazi Germany, Jewish families were forced into concentration camps where children were separated from their parents and gassed to death. Now, under the Trump administration's zero tolerance

policy on unauthorized border crossings, the U.S. government is seizing migrant children (including infants) from their parents and putting them in separate detention centers while their parents are held on misdemeanor charges for trying to enter the U.S.

Corridor of capitalist violence

Most of the migrants seeking asylum in the U.S. from the southern border are from three Central American countries (El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala), countries where the U.S. spawned military regimes, as well as enacted trade policies such as NAFTA that helped create intolerable living conditions for the working class (see page 5). Migrants are trying to save the lives of their families, and yet U.S. courts have rejected over 75 percent of their asylum requests (NYT, 5/2). Migrants from Haiti are also coming through Mexico but with the end of Temporary Protective Status (TPS) they are settling in Mexicali and Tijuana because they can't cross the southern border.

Hypocrisy of the Dems

As communists, we agree that the liberal politicians don't care about Black people or migrant workers until they need them for the next election or to fight their imperialist wars. Now the Democrat leaders are expressing outrage when in the previous administration, they turned a blind eye to the Deporter-in-Chief, Obama, who deported over 3 million immigrants and Hillary Clinton, who sup-

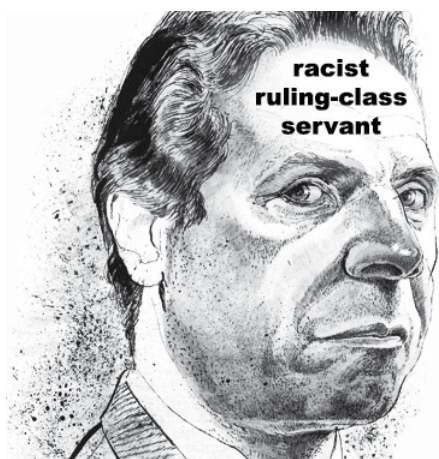


ported deporting unaccompanied children and called for “jailing black predators.”

Although unauthorized entry into the U.S. is half what it was in the 1990s and unemployment has fallen in recent years, Trump is trying to con white and Black workers into believing that immigrants are stealing their jobs, rather than the owners who send production and jobs abroad or who automate their operations. This has a political purpose: to keep working people from realizing one of their greatest resources—their number and their unity.

Trump and his supporters are building fascist terror and trying to keep the U.S. working class divided against itself. As they prepare for wider war, we must sharpen class struggle. On the job, in the schools, on the campuses, in our churches and community groups we must fight for a communist understanding of the world. Same enemy, same fight, workers of the world unite!✊

Tenants call out racist Cuomo's housing crisis



NEW YORK CITY, June 15—In a march yesterday meant to disrupt Governor Cuomo's “Master Builder” award ceremony, 1,000 working class-tenants and youth—Black, Latin, Asian and white—marched against high rents and homelessness. They chanted, “What do we want? Housing! When do we want it? Now! If we don't get it, shut it down” and “This is class war. Tax the rich and house the poor.”

As capitalism continues to decay, housing for the working class is getting more and more scarce.

Cuomo continues Moses's racist legacy

As the marchers turned onto super exclusive Park Avenue in Manhattan, militant youth led us into the street. We took over the entire uptown side of the street, stopping traffic.

Finally we moved onto the sidewalk as the police threatened to arrest us using their high decibel system. We later again poured into the street as we reached our destination, a luxury building where Governor Andrew Cuomo was receiving the Building Trades Employers Association first ever Robert Moses Master Builder award. It may be fitting since both Moses, the shamelessly racist architect of NYC segregation, and Cuomo are displacing the

Black, Latin, and Asian working class by the thousands. Because of Moses and the City politicians, more than 250,000 people were displaced in the construction of New York City's highways in the 1930s and '40s.

Under Cuomo, who is up for reelection this year, there has been a “36 percent increase in homelessness, up to nearly 90,000 people statewide since his Cuomo 2010 campaign” (Patch, 6/15). The housing court has churned out thousands of evictions. “About 232,000 cases were filed last year against tenants, roughly one for every 10 city rentals. Most tenants were accused of owing back rent. But in many cases, tenants were sued for rent they did not owe” (NYT, 5/20).

Cuomo was the target of the community groups who sponsored the event, saying it was “Cuomo's housing crisis.” A member of Progressive Labor Party carried a sign that said, “It's not just Cuomo, it's capitalism.” Another comrade distributed 120 Challenge newspapers.

Of course, opportunists like actor-turned-politician Cynthia Nixon criticized Cuomo for taking sides of the real estate bosses. Nixon is a challenger of Cuomo for the Democratic nomination for governor. She said she was proud to stand “renters not developers, with people not with wealthy corporate donors” (Patch, 6/14). Workers know a politician “cannot keep profits out of politics” and in the event that Nixon does become governor, she too will be reigned in by the billionaires.

Rent is killing us

Anger is growing as the housing crisis worsens in NYC (see page 8).

- 89,000 people are in shelters and thousands more live in the streets, including families with children.
- 100,000 rent stabilized apartments have been lost, especially as racist real estate developers and financiers rapidly gentrify neighborhoods.

As one tenant said, “The rents are killing us!”

Another said “The politicians? The landlords have bought them.”

Real estate developers move in like vampires and finance high-rent housing. Government officials claim the new housing is “affordable.” But this is based on NYC's “median income,” approximately \$55,000 a year for a family of four. In working-class neighborhoods where many tenants are Black, Latin, or seniors, it is common for almost half of the tenants to have incomes of about \$28,000 a year.

Bushwick tenants fight racist displacement

In the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn (which is 65 percent Latin and 20 percent Black), tenants are fighting the Camber Property Group developers' plans to build two nine-story buildings with 122 apartments. Only 27 would be “affordable,” for families whose income is at least \$51,000 a year. This development would kick out existing tenants, a boxing club, a restaurant, a laundromat and a parking lot used by workers at a nearby hospital.

On June 11 several members of PLP participated with others at a local hearing for people regarding the development. The misleaders of Local 32 BJ, the largest union of property service workers, spoke in favor because the new owners had promised maintenance jobs for mere a 12 union members. Everyone was shocked that a union “ally” would support a project that would eliminate 50 jobs in the community.

PLP says that the working class must never allow ourselves to be divided and pitted against each other by capitalist opportunists and sellouts. We need to fight for more jobs for our class.

The fight goes on. PLP is gradually building in the community organizations we're participating in. While the leadership of these groups calls for reforms, in lock step with the Democratic Party, PLers call for communist revolution as the way to free our class from the chains of capitalism.✊

From CPD to ICE — smash racist state terror

CHICAGO, June 23—Comrades from Progressive Labor Party here deepened our connections to the working class, taking an active role in two anti-racist events organized through local mass organizations. Current personal ties were strengthened while new ones were made, as we boldly connected the struggles to the need for communist revolution and the dictatorship of the working class.

Reform and revolution

The first action that we participated in took place in the south side neighborhood of Bronzeville, an area where the Party has been working to build a bigger base among workers. Bronzeville has been a Black working-class neighborhood for decades, and has a proud history of anti-racist fight-back and communist organizing. However, like many areas of the city, the neighborhood is gentrifying rapidly as the racist real estate bosses seek to make a land grab through their connections to the city's liberal politicians.

Bronzeville was also home to Maurice Granton Jr, the 24-year-old Black father who was murdered at the hands of the racist Chicago Police Department (CPD) on June 6 (see CHALLENGE, 6/27). Since the capitalist state-sanctioned murder of Maurice, our Party collective has been pushing to spend even more time near the Green Line train stop where he was killed in order to connect with friends, family, and other workers who are interested in organizing a response.

An organization fighting for a civilian-based police review board for the city had also planned to be in the neighborhood to show support for Maurice and engage community members with their reform petition. Several comrades have been active within this group and make calls for a revolutionary line while building the reform struggle. In turn, members of the reform group, including workers



affected by racist mass incarceration and kkkop torture, have spoken at Party events about their struggles against the bosses' attacks.

Both PLP and the reform group were able to supplement one another and turn up in the neighborhood. We shared the bullhorn to give speeches, and canvassed the block to get workers' contact information and distribute literature. Many expressed thanks for our openly anti-racist, anti-CPD presence in their area. More workers wanted to organize a march to demand justice for Maurice from CPD and the city bosses.

Conservative and liberal bosses both anti-immigrant

That afternoon, PLers travelled north to the Rogers Park neighborhood to participate in a demonstration against the Trump administration's openly fascist spike in separating immigrant working families at the U.S.-Mexico border (see editorial, page 2).

Although this demonstration was considerably larger than the previous action, the politics were weaker. Many speakers pushed voting in the upcoming midterm elections as a "solution," suggesting that the way to fight back against racist de-

portations and fascist state terror is to "build a blue wave" in the state.

As communists, we must attack the racist liberal politicians from the left, exposing their role in pushing anti-immigrant, anti-worker violence. Many of the immigrant detention centers that imprison the separated children today were constructed under Obama.

Voting under capitalism will never change the essence of this violence; all that really changes are faces of our oppressors. Communist revolution, led by a mass international PLP that smashes the bosses' state and replaces it with an egalitarian worker-run society, remains the only way out.

Although given our size, we couldn't dramatically alter the tone of this rally, we still made an impact. Many marchers complimented our t-shirts linking CPD to the fascist ICE, and were willing to take CHALLENGE and engage in conversation. More plans were made for another rally in an area of the city with a larger immigrant worker presence, in which more comrades plan to participate.

Dig deep to build revolution

The impact that we were able to generate by participating in the actions highlights the importance of continuing to "dig deep" and build a base within working-class communities and the mass movement. There are no real shortcuts in the path to communist revolution; just constant struggle and evaluation.

Killer cops gunning down Black youth in the streets of Chicago and thousands of Central American children and their parents detained in concentration camps are all connected. They are all part of the daily violence of capitalism. Our duty remains to keep connecting these fights into the broader revolutionary struggle against the profit system and the building of workers' power.✊

PLers rally against Trump's Gestapo

BROOKLYN, June 23— A handful of PLers rallied against president Donald Trump's Gestapo, the Gestapo that his predecessors built. The response of the crowd was telling; over 400 passersby grabbed CHALLENGE in less than an hour. One PLer on the bullhorn said, "If you aren't angry, then you aren't paying enough attention."

Children drugged and shackled

According to a class-action lawsuit filed in April, "Migrant children in US government custody are being involuntarily drugged to the point they cannot walk, stay awake, or maintain their physical or mental health" (Business Insider, 6/21).

The testimonies go back years, which means it includes the Obama administration. The following are direct quotes:

"I was forced to wear handcuffs on my wrists and shackles on my feet for approximately 10 days in a row."

"[They] strapped me down all the way; They have total control over you. They also put a bag over your head..."

"[They] give me a shot to tranquilize me. It happened many times...When the staff did that, they left me in the classroom near the wall to sleep."

"[They] make us angry intentionally. They made us act violently so then we had to be given shots. The staff would call us names like 'sons of a whore.'"

U.S. capitalism engenders child abuse

In the U.S., the act of separating families and traumatizing children began when the first slave ship arrived with 20 kidnapped African people at the colony of Jamestown, Virginia in 1619. It continued when indigenous children were stolen for reeducation camps. The motto was to "Kill the Indian, Save the Man." It continued when Japanese families were locked up in internment camps during World War II. Every time a worker or child

was lynched, killed by the police, or imprisoned, a whole family was left broken.

Being a citizen today doesn't save a working-class family from separation either. It continues through the new Jim Crow. A quarter of a million U.S. children have a single mother in jail.

More than 30,000 children are in prison. "Black children are incarcerated at a rate five times higher than white children" (NYT, 6/22). There are 400,000 children in the foster care system, which disproportionately targets Black and Latin families: "Some three-quarters of cases nationwide involve not abuse...[it] 'often just looks like poverty,'" said Christopher Wildeman, a sociologist... "There's no consistent evidence that removing kids is, on average, beneficial, and there's substantial evidence that it does harm," he said. (NYT, 6/22).

Kill fascism

A system based on exploitation and wages is inherently a violent system. This dictatorship of the bosses cannot solve the problem of child abuse because the system breeds child abuse. If family separation is as American as apple pie, then what makes Trump and Obama's deportation and separation policies fascist? That has to do with the current stage of capitalism. While its main rival China is rising, U.S. is in a phase of decline and crisis (see editorial, page 2). In order to "solve" its crisis and prepare for world war, it intensifies vicious racism and sexism for the working class while disciplining the different factions of its own class. If workers look to the liberal mainwing of the U.S. for solutions and leadership, that builds all-class unity, another mark of fascism.

PLP can without a doubt say that only communism can abolish borders, family separation, and racist concentration camps. That's because rather than exploitation, the system's foundation will be collectivity. With a working-class dictatorship, everyday people will ensure decisions are made in the interest of the whole working class. To end the U.S. Gestapo, join PLP. ✊

U.S. Imperialism destabilized Central America

Workers everywhere love their children. If they were not fleeing desperate conditions, they would not risk their lives—and those of their children's—on a dangerous trek across the bosses' borders into the U.S. These conditions are a direct result of decades of U.S. imperialism, which has destabilized Central America. The ensuing waves of drug trafficking, civil wars, and economic crises have created this latest refugee crisis.

In 1954, the CIA helped organize a coup against leftist Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz after his land redistribution program threatened the interests of the United Fruit Company. According to the Huffington Post, the coup laid "the foundation for decades of government instability and, eventually, a civil war that would claim more than 200,000 lives by the 1980s" (7/18/14).

U.S. imperialism did not stop there. In the 1980's, the U.S. bosses organized, funded a civil war in El Salvador against the then-leftist guerrilla movement, the FMLN. According to a United Nations report, more than 75,000 people were killed—85 percent of them by the CIA-backed Salvadoran military and death squads ("Truth Commission: El Salvador, 7/1/92).

Today, workers crossing the bosses' borders are still fleeing countries rife with violence. The Northern Triangle—El Salvador, Guatemala,

and Honduras—has some of the highest violent crime rates and corruption rates in the world: "As recently as 2015, El Salvador was the single-most violent country (that wasn't at war) on planet Earth, with a homicide rate of 103 per 100,000. And the vast majority of those homicides went unpunished...roughly 90 percent of murders throughout the Northern Triangle go unprosecuted" (Daily Intelligence, 06/21).

This epidemic of violence is the product of continuing U.S. imperialism and a decaying U.S. culture. Latin youth, many of whose families fled U.S.-sponsored disasters in Central America, were swept into cop-directed gang and drug operations in U.S. cities and then locked up in U.S. prisons. After being absorbed into criminal organizations while behind bars, these young men were deported back to Central America. They brought U.S. gang and drug culture with them, back to the countries they'd left as small children. They joined with former paramilitary killers trained and armed by the U.S., to create hotbeds of violent organized crime. Families caught in the middle had no choice but to flee for their lives.

Meanwhile, the U.S. demand for narcotics fuels the drug trade in places like Honduras, a source of much of the violence in Central America to this day (Daily Intelligence, 06/21/18).

Bosses’ high school integration ploy points to war plans

NYC mayor de Blasio and his schools chancellor have announced a forced integration plan, to increase the enrollment of Black and Latin students at the specialized high schools in what could become the most prominent forced integration plan since the battles of the Civil Rights Movement fifty years ago.

Anti-racist alumni, current students, teachers and parents, some of whom are members and friends of the Progressive Labor Party, have an opportunity to win masses of people disgusted by gutter racism to multiracial unity in the fight for school integration. We say that good schools are integrated schools, that good schools take the learning of each student seriously, and that it is impossible for a segregated school to be a good school, including the ones we call elite.

#Blackinbrooklyntech

At Brooklyn Tech, one of the specialized high schools, students and alumni who blasted racism with #blackinbrooklyntech taught us this lesson. Students have started a campaign against racist and humiliating treatment in the school by teachers and officials (see CHALLENGE, 2/10/2016). Since that time other student struggles against sexism and gun violence have maintained strong anti-racist politics. Teachers have formed ad-hoc committees to build up a more anti-racist school tone.

When the mayor’s integration plan was announced, several teachers were prepared to make a public statement welcoming the change. Many teachers, students, and parents who support school integration but have no platform to make their voices heard.

Specialized high schools are only 10 percent Black and Latin; “regular” schools are 68 percent Black and Latin. The stark racism of claiming the best schools are the ones that exclude Black and Latin youth most effectively undermines the kind of national unity required to confront imperialist rivals. The United Federation of Teachers, after sixty years of silence and cooperation as segregation grew in New York City, has taken a position that high school ‘diversity’ ought to be a goal (NY Daily News 5/31).

Racist backlash

The racist backlash to the proposed change has been swift and nasty. Asian workers, Chinese families in particular, are being misled in droves to defend segregated schools (see letters, page 6). The news media played up the disgusting spectacle of working-class Asian folks insulting other working-class families, made desperate to hold on to what meager gains they perceive themselves to have secured.

The entire city is being misled by the false notion that test scores capture a child’s potential to learn. The notion that a substantial increase in the number of the ‘best’ Black and Latin students in the city will ‘drag down’ the level of thinking at the specialized high schools is a gutter racist assumption and is driving much of popular opinion.

Integration part of war plans

Why now? The rulers have their own reasons for appearing to tackle the problem of school segregation now. Mayor de Blasio is burnishing “progressive” credentials for his next campaign. As always,

they are preparing for major war. War plans are always on the back burner for the imperialists, and they need a more robust multiracial armed force to take on their biggest rivals, China and Russia. Parent, students, and teachers have united to form something of a mass movement for school integration in New York City, and this movement has forced the question to the forefront in NYC now.

Our job is to take this fight further than the rulers are willing to go. They want a showpiece adjustment to school segregation. We want the kind of fully integrated and meaningful lives that capitalism makes impossible. Schools are used to preserve the structures of racism that are needed by capitalism. They need to have winners and losers. The capitalists need to preserve the number of elite higher-income workers that directly serve the ruling class as intellectuals, engineers, and financial managers. They need to maintain the façade of upward mobility in order to preserve the myth of the American Dream.

Defeat the bosses and their ideas

Capitalism causes the working class to fight for the scraps from their table. Instead of fighting for a system that meets the needs of the whole working class. Under communism, every school will be a place that meets the needs of its students. Education would be class conscious, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and anti-sexist. Communism needs the workers to be educated to help to remake the world. The fight for school integration now is an opportunity to root this education in the struggle against the bosses whom we will have to defeat to win the world we deserve.☺

Juneteenth perpetuates racist myth

June 19, or “Juneteenth,” commemorates the end of chattel slavery. Juneteenth has been pushed on the working class with the sponsorship of major banks like Wells Fargo. Juneteenth perpetuates many racist myths about the U.S., including the myth that the images we’re given of Abraham Lincoln and Barack Obama supposedly represent the ‘real’ U.S., and Donald Trump is something different.

While the bosses push their bank-sponsored holiday of Juneteenth on Black workers, the bosses obscure the many anti-racist battles that have been fought by Black and white workers together. These same bosses keep racism alive and well in the 21st century, to divide Black and white workers from each other and to prepare the U.S. working class for bigger and deadlier wars on the horizon.

Origins of Juneteenth

Two years before June 19, 1865 came Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, which excluded slave states that were not in rebellion against the Union – Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware, and Missouri – and Texas, which was not a battleground. Many planters and other slaveholders moved to Texas with over 150,000 slaves in order to escape the raging Civil War. In June, 1865, after the surrender of General Robert E. Lee and the Union victory in New Orleans, word finally came to Galveston, Texas that the slaves were free. The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, officially ending slavery throughout the country, was not passed until December, 1865.

Abraham Lincoln, the so-called “Great Emancipator” of slaves, was no believer in the equality of Black workers. His main motive for fighting the Civil War was preservation of the unity of the United States, not abolishing slavery. In 1858, Lincoln said, “I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races...”

Lincoln favored setting up colonies for Black former slaves in Africa and Central America, and requested funds from Congress to deport freed slaves.

Another history we do not learn about or cel-

brate is that of the multitude of rebellions against slavery, many of them multiracial, from the 1600s to the 1800s. In their book *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker document many of these. Among them are:

- The Barbados rebellions in 1649, which united Irish and African slaves;
- Bacon’s rebellion in Virginia in 1676, which united slaves and white indentured servants;
- The ‘New York City Conspiracy’ of 1741, which united African workers, white indentured servants, sailors, and Irish immigrants;
- Nat Turner’s slave rebellion in Virginia in 1831;
- John Brown’s multiracial antislavery campaign culminating at Harper’s Ferry.
- The most successful was the Haitian rebellion, which abolished slavery and colonization on that island by 1804.

Racism never ended

At the end of the Civil War, freed slaves became wage laborers on former plantations, sharecroppers, or domestic workers. For a short time, their well-being was protected by federal troops during Reconstruction from 1865-77. Once this protection was withdrawn, white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan flourished, often made up of local law enforcement. This Jim Crow era was characterized by the open murder of thousands of Black workers, rampant imprisonment, impoverishment and indebtedness of former slaves and total segregation.

Although many of these abuses were gradually mitigated through mass migrations of Black workers to the North through the end of World War II, court decisions, and then the Civil Rights Movement, racism has continued to flourish in the all parts of the U.S. Today, wage differentials between white men and Black and Latin workers add up to almost \$800 billion dollars a year, nearly half of annual corporate profits. Differences in social spending on such services as education, health care and

housing add up to hundreds of billions more dollars. U.S. capitalism could not survive without racism.

Black workers continue to be incarcerated at five times the rate of whites and be murdered disproportionately by police, accounting for 63 percent of those killed (223 deaths in 2017) while comprising 13 percent of the population. No cop has ever been convicted for murder of a Black worker in the U.S. Schools, hospitals, and neighborhoods are just as segregated today as they were 50 years ago.

All workers are hurt by racism

Other ideas pushed on workers today include “white privilege”, as if white workers created racism, benefit from it, or should be paralyzed or separate themselves because of guilt. While many white workers may temporarily hold racist views, anti-Black racism was purposely and methodically created by the U.S. bosses of the 1600-1700s to justify slavery and separate white indentured servants and poor farmers from Black slaves. Before that, there had been social mixing and intermarriage between whites and non-whites.

What the ruling class fears is us recognizing that the lowered standards and super-exploitation for one sector of the working class brings down the standards for all sectors.

Racism serves capitalism well- to maximize profits and minimize rebellion. Separation into different schools, neighborhoods, job titles, unions, and neighborhoods keeps us divided when only multiracial mass action would enable us to fight back effectively. U.S. rulers also rely on racism to win workers, white, Black and immigrant, to fight imperialist wars for markets and resources by painting Muslim, Arab, Asian and other workers as enemies.

It is heartening to witness the mass uprising against the separation and incarceration of immigrant children, which has actually forced a minimal change in Trump’s policies. We must use this power of the unity of millions of workers to destroy this racist system once and for all and build an egalitarian worker-run society: communism.☺

LETTER

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

HS Student speaks out against SHSAT

The Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT) is another persistent function of oppression for working-class kids, specifically and most especially Black and Latin kids. The exam is not, in any way, an adequate or accurate measure of a student's intellect, or academic merit; rather it is indicative of how much test prep a student has done. And the only students that can afford prep programs, much less have the privilege of knowing the SHSAT exists, are the students currently in specialized schools.

The difference between "specialized" high schools and regular high schools is a single test. The connotation behind "specialized" fools students into thinking that specialized school students are somehow more gifted. I have seen this in an alarming number of my Asian peers, who have aligned themselves with white students' passivity. They are not only confined to but also championed by a myth that stresses their success. The model minority myth is still very much a powerful force today, dictating that Asians are natural overachievers and therefore, are the path other racial minorities should aspire to travel.

The rhetoric I've been hearing from my peers is troubling because it is so blatantly entitled, which only proves how successful the SHSAT has been at the segregation and marginalization of working-class students. The argument that abolishing this test harms Asian and white students would be a respectable opposition if not for its inherently racist undertones; why does it take a bill that targets an advantage of white and Asian kids for people to finally try reforming education inequality? What about schools in impoverished neighborhoods that have been incredibly underfunded for decades?

All students deserve better access to resources, and abolishing the SHSAT is the first step towards that.

★★★★★

We need Black-Asian unity

The model minority myth has always been used as a wedge to divide the natural unity between Black and Asian workers. We can see this clearly in the case of East Asian parents accusing Mayor de Blasio of anti-Asian racism (see page 5). He had called to eliminate the entrance exam that bars Black and Latin students from entering the city's elite schools. The false argument goes that by eliminating the test, the City is taking away one of the only ways Asian youth can work their way out of poor living conditions. Capitalist propaganda has won a small portion of the working class to see segregation as a necessity.

Researcher Ellen Wu in defines a model minority as "a racial group distinct from the white majority, but lauded as well assimilated, upwardly mobile, politically nonthreatening, and definitively not-Black." The model minority myth is built on the foundation of anti-Black racism with roots in the 1960s. It was a convenient tool used to undermine the Civil Rights Movement, impede fightback from Asian workers, and effectively blame both Black and Asian workers if they don't succeed under capitalism.

The narrative accepts anti-Black violence.

This myth erases the real history of Asians being anything but "a model minority." Asian and Black workers fought against racist discrimination together, organized against imperialist wars together, and built romantic lives together:

- The fight for justice for Vincent Chin, murdered by two racists in 1992 Detroit, highlighted racism against Asian workers.
- Joe Ishikawa, after surviving the concentration camps in Colorado during World War II, worked to desegregated public swimming pools.
- Yuri Kochiyama, a civil rights leader, aligned herself with Malcolm X and Black nationalist organizations.
- Bobby Seale, the chairman of the Black Panther Party said in an interview with Gidra (a Asian nationalist political newspaper) in 1970, "In general, I see the struggle moving with all the people and not just Black people alone. I see the Asian people playing a very significant part in solving the problems...in coalition, unity, and alliance with Black people because...[it's] the basic problem of poverty and oppressions that we are all subjected to."
- Perhaps the most iconic symbol of Black-Asian



unity is the photo of W.E.B. Du Bois and Mao Zedong in 1959 China.

- Following the 2014 Ferguson rebellion, a group called #Asians4BlackLives in the Bay Area organized under the banner of, "end the war on Black people" and affirmed the natural basis for multiracial solidarity.

PLP has long rejected the nationalist and "third-worldist" politics of the 20th century. We fight as one international working class. Any section of the working class that rejects or fails to unite with Black workers is digging its own grave. This situation also shows that smashing anti-Black racism is key to building any fightback.

★★★★★

Belfast: the racism of 'peace walls'

We recently experienced some real "fake news" while traveling in Ireland. For 20 years, we've been told that the so-called Good Friday peace agreement in the 1990s had ended the long battles between Protestant and Catholic workers in Northern Ireland and that everything was peaceful now.

We went on a tour of Belfast. Our taxi driver was a young man during "The Troubles" that supposedly ended in 1998. We were surprised to discover that Belfast is divided by miles and miles of so-called 'peace walls,' up to 25 feet high, that enforce the separation of the two groups. The gates between them are locked from dusk to dawn. And even more walls have been built since the "peace."

Both groups of workers view each other as enemies when they should be fighting together against bosses' rule. Of course, it's better now than it was before the Good Friday deal; for years, there was constant fighting and killing in the streets, with Protestants supported by the British military, and Catholics barred from many jobs and schools and opportunities.

The narrative frames the fight as between Protestants and Catholics religions, it's really always been about land and power. The north was the most industrialized part of Ireland, and in the 1920s when Ireland had forced Britain to recognize its independence, Britain held on to that part, and set the mostly Protestant pro-British parties up against Catholic parties that wanted to be part of a united Ireland.

The Protestant working class was sucked into an ideological struggle against Catholics. Every July, they celebrate a 300-year-old victory of a Protestant king over a Catholic one, with huge bonfires and marches with anti-Catholic slogans and banners. It's a huge event, essentially celebrating Britain's oppression of the working class in Ireland.

Belfast is filled with murals which celebrate political victories. Some of the murals in the Protestant side celebrate the victory of the Protestant king's conquest of Ireland in 1690, another the paramilitary member who promised to kill the most Catholics in a year. The murals on the Catholic side are often tied to the struggles against oppression, either oppression of Catholics in Northern Ireland, and related victories, or social justice struggles in other places.

This division between Catholic and Protestant enable the continued oppression of all of the working class by both British and local bosses. The only solution for those workers is a united class fighting all of the bosses. We gave a CHALLENGE to our tour

guide. He had a good view of class issues and capitalism. We hope some of PLP's ideas will infuse some members of our class.

★★★★★

NYCHA

Continued from page 8

were places that you wanted to get into as the neighborhoods were deteriorating around you" (NY Times 6/25).

Response to Crisis? Gentrification

The ruling class responded to the economic crisis in NYC with gentrification. Without a need to support large numbers of industrial workers, and political pressure to put falling tax dollars into schools and services for the new wealthy white residents, the City all but abandoned the projects financially.

"By the turn of the century, the idea of government as landlord went out of fashion. Suddenly, NYCHA became a victim of disinvestment as all levels of government steered billions of dollars away from the agency" (NY Times 6/25).

In one of the most blatant examples under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, "the New York City Housing Authority and its board members... failed to spend nearly \$1 billion that it [had] been hoarding since 2009 to make life more livable for the ... residents of its 334 developments" (NY Daily News 8/1/2012). The residents have been paying the price for the resulting extreme deterioration of conditions and services.

"The housing authority's operating deficits and mounting costs to maintain and renovate its aging 2,462 buildings quickly impacted living conditions. Hurricane Sandy's wrath and last winter's frigid temperatures further exposed the buildings' vulnerabilities...and the authority admitted in June to lying, covering up missed lead inspections and deceiving federal inspectors."

Residents have been fighting back. The federal lawsuit was the result of tenant protests that forced news media to publicize the horrific physical condition of many of the buildings.

Mayor de Blasio's response to the conditions in NYCHA has been to intensify the program begun under previous Mayor Michael Bloomberg of selling off project playgrounds and parking lots to private real estate developers. The new buildings are allowed to have 50 percent of the apartments go for market rates, i.e. extremely expensive, the remaining "affordable" units will require a minimum family income of over \$50,000, twice the average income of public housing residents.

Most major U.S. cities have leveled their public housing. New York now seems to be following a similar script of letting the buildings decay to the point of being unlivable and then use the residents of the new for-profit private developments as a political battering ram to get rid of the projects.

The tenants are continuing to fight (see page 3). Wherever you live, this is a cause that needs your support. There is no affordable place to go. Beyond this immediate issue, the bigger question is how long will we continue to put up with a system that continually solves it problems on the backs of the working class.

Many white workers who followed jobs and new houses out to the suburbs are now themselves the victims of deindustrialization. Racist divisions built by the ruling class over many years have kept white workers in the suburbs and Black and Latin workers in the city divided.

But we are one class, not just in one city but also around the world, with a united interest in getting rid of this system that has failed. Progressive Labor Party is building a revolutionary communist movement to fight for a society that serves the working class. Join us.👊

The French Revolution proved that workers can rule

On July 14, 1789, poor workers took over the Bastille, a medieval prison in Paris and symbol of feudal, aristocratic power. The great French Revolution had began! The capitalist class (bourgeoisie) would replace the monarchy (king and nobles). But some advanced revolutionaries were advocating an egalitarian, communist society. This was the birth of the modern working-class communist movement!

France was then an agricultural society ruled by noble landowners and a powerful Catholic church, with the king at the top. The urban bourgeoisie wanted a constitutional monarchy giving them more political power. They needed the urban workers, called “sans-culottes,” to fight for them against the monarchy. But for a few years the sans-culottes fought for their own interests.

The sudden, violent overthrow of the French monarchy and landed aristocracy proved that the status quo was not “God-given,” not inevitable, not the product of “human nature.” It proved that the political structure could be changed for the better. Not only was a society with more equality and less exploitation possible, but the French Revolution also gave birth to future revolutionary communist movements.

The French Revolution was inspired by the Enlightenment, a bourgeois movement that attacked monarchies and feudalism. The Enlightenment popularized talk of human rights—anti-racism, political rule by the people, the rights of women,

and equality for all. It argued that the power of kings and aristocrats was illegitimate.

In 1789 the French King had called a nationwide meeting (Estates-General) of nobles, clergy, and bourgeoisie, to vote him new taxes. When the bourgeoisie refused the King tried to shut them down. But the sans-culottes rebelled and stormed the Bastille. The revolution began. Here are some lessons, especially from the most radical and democratic period of 1789 to 1795.

* The sans-culottes of the cities—workers, journeymen, apprentices, working women—always pushed the Revolution ahead, towards more equality, more rights and power for working people.

* The sans-culottes had no political party. The party of petty-bourgeois revolutionaries and sincere idealists who worked most closely with them was called the Jacobins. But the working class needs its own party. It is the job of the Progressive Labor Party to fulfill that historic task today.

* It was the mass actions of the sans-culottes, sometimes supported by the most radical Jacobins, who pushed the Revolution to adopt the most democratic reforms.

The bourgeoisie, intellectuals, and sans-culottes all united to get rid of the king and aristocracy and to take land from the Church. After that, their interests no longer coincided. The radical bourgeoisie needed the sans-culottes only as long

as foreign armies threatened to destroy the Revolution.

Seizing the lands of aristocrats and the Church gave peasants their own land. They wanted higher prices for the food they grew. But the urban sans-culottes needed low prices. So the peasants’ economic interests were more aligned with the bourgeois merchants, traders, and landlords than with those of the sans-culottes.

Once foreign armies were driven back, the bourgeois representatives—some of whom had been executed as counter revolutionaries—turned against the Jacobins and the sans-culottes and established a more repressive state. After 1795 the propertied bourgeoisie was in firm control. They organized a bourgeois dictatorship, and then an authoritarian empire under Napoleon Bonaparte.

Gracchus Babeuf, a poor, self-taught worker, headed the last and most radical, movement of the Revolution. His “Conspiracy for Equality” was crushed and Babeuf executed. But one of his followers, Buonarroti, survived to influence the working-class and student militants of the 1840s, including Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. And the working class of Europe learned from the experience of the sans-culottes of France. The Paris Commune of 1871, and the Russian Revolution of 1917, were the first revolutions by the industrial working class, the proletariat. They grew from the lessons of the great French Revolution.☸



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

Billion\$ in profits caging immigrant kids

NYT, 6/22 — ...Housing [and] transporting... migrant children detained along the southwestern border is not a million-dollar business.

It's a billion-dollar one.

...Southwest Key Programs has won at least \$955 million in federal contracts since 2015 to run shelters...[for] immigrant children in federal custody....Southwest Key is but one player in the lucrative secretive world of the migrant shelter business. About a dozen contractors operate more than 30 facilities in Texas alone, with...about 100 shelters in 16 other states.

...There is a migrant-shelter hub...in the four-county Rio Grande Valley region of South Texas [with]...about a dozen shelters....What happens inside is often highly confidential...employees sign nondisclosure agreements, more a fixture of the high-stakes corporate world than of non-profit child-care centers....

Trump's order...calling for migrant families to be detained together likely means millions more in contracts for private shelter operators, construction companies and defense contractors.

A...network of private prison companies already is operating family detention centers in Texas and Pennsylvania,...and are likely to expand under the new presidential directive....

...Several large defense contractors...are also building a presence in the system, including General Dynamics....

The migrant-shelter business has been booming since family separations began on a large scale....

For years, including during the Obama administration, contractors housed children who were... crossing the border....

The shelters' rush to house, and cash in on the surge of children [under Obama] includ[es] Southwest Key, whose president and chief executive, Juan Sanchez's....tax records show...compensation — more than \$770,000 in 2015 alone....

...Officials have investigated allegations of sexual abuse and neglectful supervision in numerous facilities.

Total U.S. killing of civilians discounts troops' secret actions in 130 countries

NYT, 6/16, letter to editor — The Pentagon's account of civilians killed by American military action is unreliable. One reason,...is the blackout on civilian casualty figures for countries in which the United States conducts strikes in secret. And there are many.

While the Trump administration lists seven countries in which the United States...is using military force, Special Operations Command has admitted that...its forces had already been deployed to 137 countries.

Another reason,...is the definition of the word “civilian.” The Pentagon...term...mean[s] “whomever we didn't intend to kill” rather than “what the law requires.”

This excludes people it wrongly intended to kill because of bad intelligence, false presumptions of combatant status and...because the United States wrongly applies law-of-war rules for killing in places where the United States is not at war.

(Gabor Rona, professor at Cardoza Law School)

Macron, “president of the rich” cuts welfare

NYT, 6/16 — The French president...Emmanuel Macron dislikes being called “president of the rich,” but...it is the one [label] he can't shake.

...The cost of the new presidential dinner service is unlikely to help.

...Macron is ordering...1,200 plates from a porcelain factory in Sèvres that is heavily subsidized by the state....

...At a moment when Mr. Macron was...complaining...that French welfare spending costs “a truckload of cash,” those fancy new plates...require “at least five hours of work — it's all made by hand....”

...The cost of the plates....[are] a total of nearly \$600,000....

For Sèvres, “the subsidy remains...four million euros.” [\$5 million]

France: workers strike, masses march to defy Macron, singing The Internationale

NYT, 6/13 — René Bodiou, a 75-year-old...retired union member....summed up a feeling shared by many on the street...: “Macron does not speak to those who are poor, who sleep on the ground; he speaks to...the entrepreneurs....”

Several hundred thousand union workers have taken to the streets of France this year....

...Four railroad unions staged the biggest strikes...and holding protests from Paris to Marseilles, and Nantes to Lyon....

For the strikers,...many hoped that in the face of Macron...people would clamor for a return.... to the heady days of May 1968 when laborers and students joined hands and for a month brought the country to a standstill and won unprecedented gains....

...People stopped along the route for the traditional sandwich of Moroccan merguez sausage on a baguette,...a sign of solidarity with many immigrant workers who came from the Magreb region of northwestern Africa....

...The marchers [chanted] “The truncheon's blow is free; the university also must be.”

“Macron is screwed; the railroad workers are in the street.” (It rhymes in French.)....

...Solidarity,...it is all together that we will win....

People set up stands selling...a collection of red-covered books — a color associated with... communism. There were classics of Karl Marx, “The Commune of Paris” and “Value, Price and Profit” as well as...“The Communist Manifesto,” and Lenin's “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism....”

The leftists who marched....called for all workers to unite and sang the “Internationale,” the communist anthem.

India's capitalist ‘democracy’: lack of water killing 200,000 a year

NYT, 6/18 — ...In the Himalayan resort....Shimla's decrepit network of water pipes, built under British colonial rule more than 70 years ago,...in May left some homes without water for 20 days....

...The water...crisis...[is] threatening millions of lives and livelihoods. Some 600 million Indians, about half the population, face high to extreme water scarcity conditions, with about 200,000 dying every year from inadequate access to safe water....

...[Shimla's] ancient pipe system also leaks five million liters of water every day....

...In the rare instances when tap water flows, it is dirty and undrinkable.

Working class under attack

Housing crisis unsolvable under capitalism



Workers protest racist housing conditions and homelessness. See page 3

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 June 10, New York City settled a lawsuit brought by Federal Prosecutors by admitting that New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) bosses had lied about performing lead paint inspections and directed their building managers to hide dangerous conditions from inspectors.

The problems included rat- and roach- infested buildings, rampant mold from leaking pipes and a winter in which over 300,000 residents went without heat for at least part of the season.

At least 19 children have confirmed lead poisoning and that number is expected to soar as more families have their children tested (NY Daily News 6/11). The settlement includes a court appointed monitor to oversee NYCHA and a minimum of 2.2 billion dollars to be spent by the city over the next five years to make repairs on NYCHA buildings.

NYCHA was built as part of the New Deal to provide affordable housing at the height of the Depression in 1935 while NYC was the largest industrial concentration in the U.S.

Today the local and federal bosses have left the public housing system in a state of disrepair, on the verge of ruin. The decline of public housing shows the limits of reforms under capitalism and the inability of capitalism to meet the long-term needs of the working class.

Built in an industrial city

NYCHA is a series of public housing developments spread across New York City. At the time, New York led the country in building well-maintained, affordable housing for the working class.

NYCHA represented, along with programs like the WPA, Social Security and Unemployment Benefits a social contract modeled after European capitalism's response to mass uprisings by the working class. In 1941, the over 1 million manufacturing jobs represented 60 percent of the city's workforce. All this housing was segregated by race or excluded Black families altogether.

Public housing was built with great fanfare. Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia proclaimed in 1936 at a public housing construction site "Down with rotten antiquated rat holes...let in the sun...a new day is dawning, a new life, a new America." (Guernicamag.com 10/1/2014)

But, NYCHA did *not* solve the city's housing problems. Most notably, tenants had to have a job to be eligible for an apartment. For those who could get in, it was a huge improvement.

Today, NYCHA is the largest public housing system in the country with between 400 and 600 thousand residents. The promised \$2.2 billion will hardly make a dent as the system has \$25 billion in unmet capital needs, "after a decades long decline in federal funding left it unable to cover investments in critical infrastructure" (WSJ 3/6/17).

Two forces of NYCHA

The rulers supported public housing because it served workers' needs in an era of expanding capitalism. With the City limiting rents to only two thirds of the neighborhood average, it took some pressure off the bosses to raise salaries.

Public housing replaced poorly maintained tenements for the mainly white working class families that made up NYC. "The Lower East Side known as the 'Lung Blocks,' notorious for their transcendently high rates of tuberculosis, diphtheria, and cholera" (Guernica, 10/1/2014).

The first NYCHA housing was all white and in the Lower East Side. The second NYCHA housing was opened in Harlem in 1937, which was for Black families only (Bedford and Bowery, 1/2/2015).

Attempt to integrate

The working-class movement was able to have a big effect on the early culture of the projects. NYCHA began as purposefully segregated all-white housing. A strict selection process and minimum income requirements limited the number of Black families who were eligible.

While most of public housing was lawfully segregated in the country, NYC had one of the few examples of housing integration. The left-wing, often communist inspired collective politics of the time, also played out in day-to-day life in the developments.

"A Tenants' Association had been established and threw regular parties; residents took trips to the theater and held forums to discuss contemporary social and political issues. There was a daycare center, a sewing group, and a Mothers' Club" (Bedford + Bowery, 1/2/2015).

NYC homelessness

"Homelessness in the city has reached a level not seen here in decades, if ever. Today, an average of 60,000 people are provided shelter every night, in 547 buildings, by the city's Department of Homeless Services...Of these people 70 percent are families with children, and at least one third of the families include a working adult.

In the success story that New York is considered today, the situation is just as perverse: the rents are driving people and commerce away, but some of the tallest residential towers ever built sit all but empty [from apartments purchased only for investment purposes]."

—Harper' Magazine (July issue)

Even as late as the early 1970s, NYCHA provided many resources to tenants. A resident of the Red Hook Houses, in Brooklyn, described growing up there.

"We had a stadium, where schools from all over the city would have track meets. We had a baseball field. We had a serious swimming pool. We had a center where we could learn martial arts and play ball (Narrative.ly 4/15/13).

In the late 1960s (influnced by the fightback of the time and white flight),NYCHA announced that tenant selection would no longer "deal with the morals of the applicants" and that it would abandon previous requirements of employment, stability, and orderliness. Single-parent black and Puerto Rican welfare recipients replaced white, middle-class tenants."

Deindustrialization hurt workers

But the "New America" turned out to be relatively short lived. Industrial jobs moved out of the City along with white workers as part of post-war development of the suburbs. Between 1969 and 1976, New York City lost 600,000 jobs, majority of them in manufacturing. Racist housing laws forced Black and Latin workers to stay in the City.

Between 1950 and 1990 the city's white population went from 6.7 million to 3.1 million. Along with the flight of industry and white workers went the tax base and the city responded by cutting services, putting many public workers on the street as well. The jobs that were left for the working class were mainly low paying service sector jobs. (Monthly Labor Review February 1993)

Instead of maintaining NYCHA at the same level they had been, the city, state and federal governments began to cut back on staffing. There were the first signs of basic maintenance delays. In that period, the projects were almost all Black, Latin and older white residents. Abandoned by the City's bosses, the strength of the relationships among the tenants showed some the possibilities of a workers led society. "The housing authority's projects were anchors of stability and safety. They

Continued on page 6

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