

# CHALLENGE



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## Klan in blue kills Jemel FIGHT RACISM



**CHICAGO, November 18**—In the early morning hours of November 11, the racist killer kkkops murdered another member of our class. The Klan-in-Blue opened fire on 26-year-old Black security officer Jemel Roberson at a bar in the Chicago suburb of Robbins, while he was actively trying to diffuse a fight that had broken out at the location.

Jemel tragically joins the ever-growing list of workers legally lynched by the racist kkkops. These sexist and racist thugs can't be reformed any more than the sexist and racist capitalist system that they serve and protect. The only way to permanently end racist police murders—and achieve true justice for Jemel and countless other victims of capitalist state violence—is to join and build the international Progressive Labor Party (PLP) as the force to crush capitalism with communist revolution!

### Guilty of being a Black armed worker under capitalism

To his many loved ones, the racist murder of Jemel at the hand of the Midlothian Police Department has been completely devastating. Those closest to him have described him as a “gentle giant,” and devoted father, brother, uncle, and boyfriend. He was widely respected by his fellow workers, and was a talented athlete as well as the organist for his church.

Jemel was hired security and attempting to subdue an armed individual who was threatening other people at the bar when the kkkops responded at the scene and opened fire. Although their “of-

ficial” report states that Jemel had no identifying markers that he was working security and that he was given multiple warnings to drop his weapon, other workers are challenging their racist cover-up.

According to other workers at the scene, Jemel was clearing wearing a cap and a sweatshirt that had the word “security” clearly written on them. They also claim that “not even five seconds” passed before the kkkop entered the room and shot him. The racist murder was so reckless that another cop present was heard to openly criticize the one who fired the shots (Chicago Tribune, 11/16). Despite Jemel wearing security clothing and having a legal license to carry a gun in the state, he was instantly perceived as a threat and gunned down.

This murder of an armed Black worker reflects in large part the racist profiling in the thoughts and actions of millions of kkkops, but also reflects a deeper fear of a major threat to the bosses and capitalism. For all the bosses’ fascist rhetoric about the “sacredness” of gun ownership in the United States, the fact is that workers—especially Black workers—possessing weapons has always presented an inherent political problem for them. The ruling class wants to control all the guns, preferably in the hands of their cops. The ruling wants guns to control workers, not in the hands of workers. What the bosses fear most is a multiracial working class armed with guns and class consciousness.

### Racist murders mean—we got to fight back!

Committed to building such a movement for

communist revolution, a group of PL comrades and friends attended a vigil in Jemel’s memory the Friday after his murder. The vigil took place at his former high school, Lane Tech College Prep, on the north side of Chicago, and was organized by classmates and other school alumni.

Many of the speeches reflected a deep sense of shock and grief over the loss of Jemel. A group of his classmates had difficulty in even expressing the depth of the pain that they were feeling after his murder. They spoke on the racism and alienation that they had already experienced as a result of being a small Black student minority in a selective enrollment high school made up of mostly white students. After losing Jemel to the hands of the killer kops, they were handed another harsh treatment of feeling invisible and unwanted under capitalism.

Other Lane Tech alumni, friends of Jemel, and community organizations also made statements in his memory. One Black worker came to the microphone and made a clear call on the need to take action. He said, “We are in a war, and we need to choose sides.” Other speakers echoed the need to get organized to fight back against the racist bosses and their killer kops, but unfortunately stopped short of calling for mass multi-racial working-class unity as the most effective way to build that fight.

For our part, our small multi-racial group of PLers worked to make that message clear. We distributed our communist newspaper CHALLENGE, engaged in conversation, and made a few contacts that we intend to follow up with.

### We build this fight, for Jemel and workers everywhere

Justice for Jemel Roberson goes beyond getting his kkkop murderer fired and thrown in jail. Although these outcomes, in and of themselves won’t lead to a world where working-class people everywhere can live a productive life in safety and dignity.

For that future, we need to connect racist police murders, deportations, unemployment, and imperialist war to their common root of capitalism, and build the struggle for international communist revolution as the only solution to wipe these anti-worker attacks from the face of the earth. It’s no simple task, but for us, it’s the best possible way to honor fallen working-class heroes such as Jemel.

## 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

# Workers have no side in bosses’ civil war

The bitter U.S. midterm elections exposed the all-out battle within the U.S. ruling class—and how far the two main factions may be willing to go as they prepare for fascism and war. Both sides are attacking the liberal democratic trappings of capitalist dictatorship, from the U.S. Senate and Supreme Court to the vote-counting process itself. President Donald Trump called the ballots in Florida “massively infected.” The rulers’ mainstream media are worrying that the U.S. has “arrived at the brink of a veritable civil war” (national-review.com, 7/31). The New York Times’ Paul Krugman warned of “a growing crisis of legitimacy for the U.S. political system” (11/8).

As U.S. bosses fight among themselves, China’s more united imperialist rulers are positioning themselves to overtake them economically and militarily, from Africa to Latin America. As the Times recently noted in a five-alarm package of articles on China: “An isolated, impoverished backwater has evolved into the most significant rival to the United States since the fall of the Soviet Union” (11/18). From aggressive tariffs (taxes on imports) to rising tensions around Taiwan to a near collision of rival warships in the South China Sea, the two superpowers are charting a collision course for global conflict.

In periods of crisis, in order to close ranks against outside enemies while bringing workers at home to heel, the capitalists must discipline and unify their own class—by any means necessary. The midterm elections represented their latest clash over how best to keep their lethal profit system afloat. At some point, these disagreements will get bloodier.

### Two parties, one capitalist nightmare

For workers, the stakes could not be higher. The U.S. bosses—Republicans or Democrats, open gutter racists or lying liberal misleaders—have nothing to offer us but racism, poverty, fascism, and imperialist war. Like fellow mass murderers George W. Bush and Barack Obama, or Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton, they are two sides of the same nightmare. But in the absence of a world-wide communist movement, workers are vulnerable to the false ideology of voting as the road to social change. On November 6, the horrific racist policies of Trump and the Republikkkan Party led tens of millions to try to find something better.

Though only 47 percent of the voting-eligible population cast a ballot, it still marked the highest turnout for a U.S. midterm since 1966 (npr.org, 11/8). There were 36 percent more voters under 30 than in 2014 (realclearpolitics.com, 11/8). Electoral enthusiasm spells progress for the bosses: “When you have two Muslim-American women in Congress, suddenly every young Muslim-American woman sees that as a possibility,” said Sayu Bhojwani, president of New American Leaders, an organization that helps immigrants run for public office” (NYT, 10/31). As the New York Times gloated, “Democracy did remarkably well last week” (11/14).

But there is no lesser evil under capitalism—only profit-driven evil. Capitalism cannot be reformed or voted into providing a decent life for workers. Only a communist revolution can stop racism, sexism, mass unemployment, and imperialist war. Only a communist society, run by and for workers, without money or profit, can serve the needs of the international working class.

### There are no good bosses

The international main wing of the U.S. ruling class is centered in finance capital and multinational corporations like JPMorgan Chase and ExxonMobil. It is predominantly represented by the Democratic Party, alongside billionaires like George Soros and Warren Buffett. The main wing derives much of its profit from multilateral trade and imperialist control over labor, markets, and cheap Middle Eastern oil. To defend their interests, these bosses need military alliances, and a mass, multiracial U.S. military—including immigrant troops—to fight an inevitable World War III. In general, they would prefer fascism with a liberal, “democratic” cast, to contain workers’ anger within the electoral system.

The smaller, nationalist wing makes most of its money from domestically based industry. More focused on short-term profits, they oppose paying extra taxes to prepare the U.S. for a leading role in the next global war. Their strategy is to establish a “Fortress America”—

a more contained, less ambitious world power. Backed by billionaires like the Koch and Mercer families, these bosses have used Trump and his white supremacist base to advance their agenda and withdraw from entangling, costly agreements like the Paris climate accord. They would use Nazi-style fascism as the way to discipline workers to accept whatever sacrifices are required as economic and political pressures intensify.

But while there are important differences among the bosses, and the political stooges who front for them, there are no good bosses. Ayanna Pressley, soon to become the first Black woman in Congress from Massachusetts, stumped for the arch-racist Hillary Clinton in 2016 (Boston Globe, 1/31). “Progressive” winning candidates like Ilhan Omar and the “fake “socialist” Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez campaigned on abolishing the gestapo-like Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE). Within a week of their election, they were already retracting their pledge (CBS News, 11/12). They know that the racist abuse of immigrants is fundamental to U.S. capitalism. Case in point: their political forebear, Obama, who deported more than 3 million men, women, and children.

### Bosses’ infighting, racists’ terror

The main wing owns significantly more resources and grassroots support. Yet after the October confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh, the domestic wing held all four centers of political power: the White House, both houses of Congress, and the Supreme Court. This unprecedented situation sparked vicious infighting. The bosses’ liberal democracy seemed off-balance, unstable, even unsustainable.

But after the “blue wave” that swung the House of Representatives back to the Democrats, and peeled off millions of white women and suburbanites who had backed Trump in 2016, it seems more likely that the main wing could recapture the White House and possibly the Senate in 2020. Post-Trump, the Republican Party might be reclaimed as the loyal opposition. Two-party electoral democracy might continue to serve the dominant imperialists’ purpose, at least for a while longer.

It’s another question entirely whether the domestic wing will be willing to take a back seat again—or whether Trump’s angry, racist base will continue to play by the rules. On November 9, a fervent Trump supporter named Cesar Sayoc was charged with mailing homemade bombs to 13 individuals or companies associated with the main wing, including Obama, Soros, and the TV network CNN. As Sayoc’s former lawyer said, Trump “welcomed all extremists, all outsiders, all outliers, and [Sayoc] felt that somebody was finally talking to him” (Washington Post, 10/29).

This was not an isolated case. Since the summer of 2015, when Trump’s presidential campaign took off, more than a dozen of his known backers have planned or committed acts of racist terror (theintercept.com, 10/27). More generally, the number of terror-related incidents in the U.S. have more than tripled since 2013:

In 2017, there were 65 incidents totaling 95 deaths. In a recent analysis of the data by the news site Quartz, roughly 60 percent of those incidents were driven by racist, anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic, antigovernment or other right-wing ideologies. Left-wing ideologies, like radical environmentalism, were responsible for 11 attacks. Muslim extremists committed just seven attacks (NYT, 11/3).

In mid-November, in Pasco County, Florida, investigators “seized 110 illegal weapons including a rocket launcher and two functional pipe bombs ... and indicted 39 members or associates of Florida white supremacist gangs” (wftv.com, 11/18).

### Class struggle, not bosses’ struggles

Both wings of the ruling class want political loyalty from masses of workers, and will stop at nothing to get it. While Trump’s open racism is abhorrent, the main wing bosses are not the answer. For them, “fighting racism” is about neutralizing real struggle while building patriotism en route to inter-imperialist war.

Progressive Labor Party has a different plan. We seek to organize sharp and principled anti-racist class struggle on the road to smashing capitalism. Our only ally in this fight is the international working class. Join us!✊



# Nurses strike, gives bosses a taste of workers medicine

**CHICAGO, November 16**—Over 30 Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) from the University of Illinois Hospital (UIH) officially went on strike yesterday, and have backed it up with pickets and open confrontations against their racist and sexist bosses. The LPNs are striking over stalled contract negotiations, disrespect from the bosses on the job, and an overall decreasing stability for their profession.

A comrade from Progressive Labor Party (PLP) was present at the picket today to push the politics even further to the left, calling for mass multi-racial working class unity as the strongest weapon we have to take the offensive against the capitalist bosses and their profit system.

## Multi-racial women LPNs challenge bosses

When the strike began, the nurses were out in force. They held their largest picket on the lawn directly across the street from the front entrance of the hospital, complete with signs, chants, and bullhorns. At the various clinics connected to the main hospital throughout the city, there were smaller pickets in solidarity forcing the clinics to close down early. The make-up of these actions was multi-racial, led mostly by Black and Latin women, who are by and large the majority of as LPNs.

In addition to the pickets, a group of the nurses and other workers marched to a meeting on campus of the hospital executives, where they demanded that they be allowed to speak directly to UIH CEO Michael Zenn and the other bosses about contract negotiations. The majority of them were met with rude insults from the racist and sexist bosses and denied a chance to participate, with the excuse that they were being “disruptive” and that there wasn’t enough space in the boardroom.

Another short picket took place the following day, again on the lawn in front of the hospital. A number of the chants focused on the “second-class” status of LPNs as compared to registered nurses (RNs) and the racist and sexist character of the bosses’ disregard of their contributions to patient care. A number of UIH LPNs gave personal testimony on the bullhorn about their key role in improving the health of their working-class patients and the need to continue fighting back.

A comrade from PLP, who works in another local hospital, took the mic to express solidarity, emphasizing the need for workers to unite across workplaces under capitalism as the only real way to begin building our power in the face of the bosses’ attacks.

## Don’t fall for bosses’ traps. Reject union misleaders, elitism

Although this comrade was applauded for this statement, the reality is that the state of working-class struggle is a long way from taking any kind of legitimate offensive against the capitalists and their system. A large reason for this is an over-reliance on the role of unions under capitalism. More often than not they follow a toothless legalist strategy to try and enforce a contract, or even worse, direct workers down the path of dead-end electoral politics to put another one of the bosses’ tools in power.

Many of unions’ “militant” actions are nothing more than publicity stunts that try to deceive their members that they are taking action on their behalf. In fact they are well-planned in advance with news media and the kkkops and therefore present no real threat to the bosses. The day two picket of this “unfair labor practice” (ULP) strike itself only lasted barely an hour before the union mis-leadership made the call to wrap it up.

Another factor working against a struggle such as this is the elitism that saturates health care under capitalism. Despite at least 1,000 UIH nurses working within this hospital system, very few of the registered nurses have demonstrated active support of the LPNs strike, even though they themselves faced off against the same racist management’s attacks just over a year ago (See CHALLENGE, 9/15/17).

Many workers can be fooled into thinking that wage differentials, education level, and professional titles make their work more “important” than



that of other workers. But this just works to hide the fact that our labor is connected and we can only fight back effectively when we organize across trades to shut down entire hospitals, schools, and other industries.

## Communism connects our struggles

To fight for communist revolution and the complete destruction of racist and sexist capitalism, means understanding the contradictions that weaken working-class unity, and then taking active

steps to overcome them to build international workers’ power. To this end, comrades in PLP will continue to organize within unions, in the workplace, and in the neighborhoods to win more workers to communism, a system that values the contributions of all workers and puts our needs first.

We salute to the University of Illinois LPNs! Your work is important, and your multi-racial fightback is, too! ☺

# College conference breaks borders

**NEW JERSEY, November 10**—More than 65 workers, students, teachers, and community members from Puerto Rico, New York and New Jersey convened at this year’s Progressive Labor Party college conference about internationalism and smashing borders. Those in attendance represented immigrants from West Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Black, Latin, Asian and white students and workers born in the U.S. Along with the help of more experienced communist fighters, a new and younger group of working class organizers led this conference and committed to spreading the Party’s ideas as we organize for communist revolution (see page 7 for letters).

## Break down concepts, break down borders

A new comrade opened the conference, highlighting the importance of breaking down the meaning and power of concepts like working class internationalism, exploitation and fascism for newer people being introduced to communism and PLP. There are no borders for capitalists as they span the globe fighting wars and looking to exploit workers and raw materials. Meanwhile, workers are held prisoners by these same borders, and used as cheap labor and cannon fodder in the bosses’ wars. This conference focused on building multiracial unity to smash all borders.

The panels that followed linked historical, communist-led working class fightback against capitalist oppression to three modern day struggles where PLP is active. The conditions arising from imperialist intervention in Yemen and Palestine have sharpened the class consciousness of community college students in New York fighting against racism on their campus. Similarly, the imperialist interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean have left working class people in

Puerto Rico with a crumbling infrastructure and massive insecurity. This has produced the forced migration of undocumented workers to places like New Jersey, where they are forced to drive without a license and are in constant danger of state violence.

## Same enemy, Same fight!

Given the chance to choose internationalism or nationalism through the panel presentations and the small workshop discussions, many in attendance were especially driven by the connections made between the students from the Middle East and the workers from Puerto Rico. One of the students from Yemen described the horrible details of famine that forced her family to migrate, while another student from Palestine described concentration camp-like conditions in that nation. One worker from Puerto Rico was involved in PLP’s October Brigade, a summer project meant to initiate a new wave of international communist fight back. This worker warned that the government slogan of “Puerto Rico will rise again” was a just a message to capitalist investors. The government has no interest in investing in the workers of Puerto Rican so they can live and thrive again. He also explained how many workers and children have been drinking contaminated water, died from lack of medical access and at the hands of the state by isolation and suicide.

After the conference, many who have not yet joined PLP expressed how inspired they were by our young leadership and the commitment to put our revolutionary Communist Party in the hands of the world’s working class by fighting for an internationalist outlook. They shared the desire to go back and continue organizing with the communist fighters and friends in the Progressive Labor Party—learning together in both study groups and local organized struggles. ☺

# Migrant caravans

## Worker unity only solution to smash bosses' racism

**TIJUANA, Mexico November 20**—Some of the first migrants from the current Central American caravans have arrived in this border city. U.S imperialism and its Mexican capitalist lackeys have welcomed them with more xenophobia, racism and obstacles. Only the international working class, following the communist leadership of PLP, can organize a future for our sisters and brothers. Only our class can offer them the solution to get out of this capitalist hell together.

In Tijuana, in unprecedented acts, the right-wing National Action Party (PAN) mayor Gastélum has used the media to encourage protests and xenophobic and racist attacks against the migrants. This achievement represents a great danger for the international working class. It is a bosses' victory in their constant battle to keep us divided.

Our victories will be accomplished by confronting and crushing all expressions of anti-immigrant racism. In fact, there were protests and actions of solidarity with the migrants, but they have to grow and strengthen to be able to beat the racists.

Communists in the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) say that workers migrate because of the same reasons, they facing a capitalist-made tragedy. That is why we organize to change this criminal system. The PLP in Mexico organized a collection of food and clothing to support the caravans, but mainly we have taken them our communist alternative: revolutionary politics in the form of literature demonstrating the need for workers' power to overthrow all the capitalists.

The bosses' racism and nationalism are capitalist strategies to hide exploitation and dispossession. The imperialists for centuries have carried out these crimes in the main regions of the world where the great waves of migrants come from: Latin America, Africa and Asia.

Migrants try to find a better place to live with dignity, but with the capitalist economies' crises and the imperialist wars that they cause, this is becoming more and more difficult. The caravans of Central American workers, mainly from Honduras, show the tragedy experienced by our class sisters and brothers who flee poverty, oppression and violence in their places of origin. If this were not the case, no one would expose themselves to the horror of crossing Mexico to reach the United States. During this journey many of migrant workers are robbed, abused, kidnapped to work as slaves or hit men, women are raped or sexually exploited. Many of our class brothers and sisters are killed by criminal gangs, others are extorted by immigration authorities and the police.



In addition, hundreds have died or been mutilated in the dangerous journey they make on the train known as the Beast. Others, get sick without being able to receive any kind of assistance. They do not receive aid because nationalism has encouraged the population to see the migrants as enemies, they are seen as the ones that take away jobs, and in effect, they work for less than the minimum wage and without social security, under the bosses' threats of termination, or deportation.

Faced with the migration generated by the crisis of their system, the capitalists and their governments close the borders with their armies, police, their criminal bands and their borders, while fomenting racist hatred against the migrants. For this, they use their media to blame them for the increase in crime, to steal from local workers the precarious and nonexistent jobs, to break the laws.

### Working-class solidarity

But, in spite of this racist campaign, workers demonstrated their solidarity in the communities where the caravans have arrived. Despite the precariousness with which they live, people organize themselves to receive their class sisters, they prepare food for them, they give them accommodation, they also provide them with medical care and clothes and support them with transportation.

This solidarity can become an internationalist class consciousness to unite the workers of the world to fight against the cause of their problems, the capitalist system. Migration is provoked because capitalism is an unequal system at the local and global level. In Latin America and especially in Central America, workers have suffered chronic

and millennial misery, it is a region that produces mainly raw materials and cheap labor, the precariousness and scarcity of work together with the violence of criminal groups has forced the migration of hundreds of thousands in recent years, mainly to the U.S.

Migrants are part of the labor force that capitalists use to perform the worst jobs, the heaviest and the worst paid, which means super profits for the bosses. But that situation affects all workers because it causes a general decrease in wages and working conditions. Migration is a phenomenon that occurs between countries and within the same country. It may have a political or economic origin.

For example, in Mexico, thousands of families have been displaced from their places of origin by the violence of drug trafficking groups, by land conflicts, by lack of work and livelihoods, by armed or electoral political conflicts, or by religious conflicts. These problems are generated by the capitalists, because in addition to providing them with cheap labor, it ensures the division of the working class, which limits our class' ability to fight and face the attacks of their system.

The expulsion of workers also allows bosses to control the territories to take over the land for the mines, the extraction of gas or oil, also of the lakes, forests and rivers, and the richness of the biosphere. Because of all this, capitalism will never be able to provide our class with a decent, and stable future. Only the working class can change our situation with a communist revolution. That way, we will crush all borders as well as all the racist divisions that separate us. Solidarity with the caravans! Crush anti-immigrant racism! Join the PLP! ☺

## KCC students, staff take the future into their own hands

**BROOKLYN, November 21**—At this year's Progressive Labor Party College Conference, a PL'er told Kingsborough Community College students and staff that "we lead by taking matters into our own hands" (see page 3). This KCC contingent didn't waste any time jumping back into action as soon as classes began on Monday! And since then we've been talking about the possibility of a communist future.

Here KCC students who attended the Conference describe what they did.

### All for one, one for all

On Monday morning, a freshman student came to our group and explained her problem. She's a CUNY Accelerated Study in Associates Program (ASAP) student like me, which means our tuition and books are covered. Because ASAP sends the checks to our home, this student didn't find it strange when she received one. Then the college told her they had overpaid her for ASAP and placed her on academic hold, preventing her from registering for classes next semester.

I see students like her all the time, shy or unsure of how to stand up for themselves. At Kingsborough, some staff test your patience. They ignore you and only help when they absolutely have to.

First we went to Financial Aid. They tried to make it sound like it was the student's fault for cashing the check. We asked to work out a payment plan; they said no. The money would have to

be immediately repaid. The whole point of ASAP is to help students who don't have money to pay for college. We struggle to pay for basic expenses. What students who need ASAP have hundreds of dollars lying around for whenever the college makes a mistake? Next we went to the Bursar's office. We were told there was nothing they could do, and told me to mind my own business.

### Standing up is our business

After it was clear we weren't going anywhere, the staff member took a waiver form and said "ok fine, let's just do this." Just like that, they wrote it out for half of the amount owed! While she still has to pay back half, why did we have to go through all that?

I asked them that, and I demanded to know how many other students this "mistake" had happened to? Will they all be receiving these special waivers? Why are academic holds placed on students, affecting their futures, when it's the college's mistake? And why is it our responsibility to account for the college's money? They had no answer.

I didn't just stand up because she's my friend. I did it because this is wrong and more of us need to stand up. We discussed it with friends who read CHALLENGE and went to the conference. This student has to write a short essay as a part of the waiver deal. We talked about turning her short essay into an open letter protesting the college's "mistakes," and posting it around campus.

### Always bring a crowd

On Thursday, a student's expensive laptop charger went missing during lab. Her friend said she witnessed who took it, maybe by accident. No one wanted police involved, but the office in charge of the lab completely ignored the students' request to look into it. We discussed it and eight students and faculty supported the student by walking back to the office and demanding that phone calls be made and the issue followed up. We said we'd return and follow up on the situation next week.

A young Caribbean student new, to communist ideas, and a PLP member had just been reading a CHALLENGE article together and talking about what it means to be a communist on a day to day. We take matters into our own hands - and when we do, we bring a crowd!

### Small struggles prepare us for larger battles

None of these struggles will end the war in Yemen, lift the siege of Gaza, end racist administrators or racist police terror. Not today! However if we build a communist movement, brick by brick, and struggle by struggle united we can put an end to these evils.

From small skirmishes for waivers to mass struggles like improving public transportation, we're training ourselves to become the leadership we need to one day run the entire world. ☺



# No justice for Jorge—smash racist concentration camps

**November 9, Newark, NJ**—150 protestors and supporters rallied outside of the Federal Building today, demanding the release of Jorge Chajón who has now been detained, for over a year now. At the tender age of thirteen, Jorge made the perilous trek from Guatemala to reunite with his family in New Jersey, accompanied by a caravan of 75 workers, fleeing the capitalist violence, that is all too pervasive in his homeland. For over a decade now this has been Jorge's new home. Here, he graduated High School, and had it not been for his immigration status at the time, he would've attended Rutgers University, he later married, and recently became a father to a baby girl.

Despite sorting out his immigration status, and qualifying for DACA (Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals). Jorge's status as a dreamer was brutally crushed when he was detained by ICE, costing him half a million dollars, and 15 months in detention facing inhumane treatment. Today at our demonstration. many blamed the Trump administration for ongoing fascist policies. Yet criminal separation of children from parents within the borders of the U.S is part and parcel of decades of systematic U.S sponsored oppression in Central America. Rulers here reap even more benefits by dividing immigrant from "citizen."

The fear of deportation--of even more than the 2.5 millions of Obama's regime--drives wages low-

er for "citizens", too, who are pitted against immigrants for jobs. What Jorge's experience shows us is that the capitalist bosses can only offer workers nightmares not dreams of a better life. The Progressive Labor Party (PLP) stands in solidarity with Jorge Chacón's family but takes a further step into the future. We recognize that fighting for an egalitarian world has to combat policies like Reagan's genocide in Guatemala of the '80's that planted the seeds of violence Jorge and other workers in Central America fled, and continue to flee today.

The crowd today included members of Unitarian Universalist Faith Action, NJ Alliance for Immigrant Justice, Make the Road NJ and members of PLP. We held a banner displaying 2500 signatures demanding Jorge be released, and reunited with his wife and two young children. Unfortunately our rally resulted in no "justice ( the hearing is postponed to November 20). His previous hearing was scheduled for June 26th, but ICE officials failed to transport him to that hearing as well as to a previous hearing!

Members of PLP and workers engaged in this fight say Enough to false promises! We vow to continue fighting alongside immigrant workers like Jorge, for a new system free from exploitation, that would ultimately smash the profit system and its deadly borders.✪

# March for the working class in Yemen

**NEW YORK CITY, November 8**—Progressive Labor Party participated in a mass march against the destruction and slaughter in Yemen. Although the protest was small, half the protesters blocked the doors of the Saudi Consulate, risking arrest. Comrades distributed dozens of CHALLENGE, hoping to spread an internationalist outlook. In 3 years of civil war there, the Saudis, together with the U.S., UK, and the UAE, have killed more than 10,000 of our working-class sisters, brothers and children and left more than half the population starving. They have blockaded the port of Hudaydah where relief supplies could enter the country.

Some U.S. politicians have expressed "concern" about the Khashoggi killing and U.S. support for the genocidal war in Yemen, but one thing is clear. The U.S. ruling class is not going to give up the hugely profitable arms deals with Saudi Arabia, nor the role the Saudis play for U.S. imperialism's power and control of oil in the Middle East.

## Stories from protesters

After the protest, I got together with four women friends, originally from Yemen. As usual we talked about our families and cultures and Yemen. I want to share some of their stories with CHALLENGE readers. Many of them talked about how the 2017 Anti-Muslim ban (the racist title of this executive order says it all: "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into

the United States") issued by president Donald Trump effectively separated and devastated families.

- *I have eight sisters and one brother in Yemen. We can't visit our family there and our brother, who needs to get a job to support our sisters, can't get a visa to the U.S. because of the ban. They live in a village in Yemen. There are no jobs. The cities are destroyed.*
  - *I am an American citizen, born in Yemen. I got married one and a half years ago in Malaysia and returned with my husband to his family in Yemen. After the ban, I quickly returned to the U.S. to apply for a visa for my husband. We only lived together as a married couple for four months and now he can't come to the U.S. and we have no possibility to have our own home and family.*
  - *I have family in Djibouti. It's expensive to live there; a one-bedroom apartment costs \$2000 a month. Yemen refugees there are waiting for years. They've sold homes and businesses to survive and now are not able to get enough to eat and are drinking dirty water.*
- Comrades, we have to continue this fight. We are one international working class and we must destroy imperialism! ✪

# KKKapitalism targets Ramsey for exposing racism

**STATEN ISLAND, November 19**—On July 17, 2014, Ramsey Orta turned on his phone and took a video of the murder of Eric Garner on Staten Island. Eric was his friend. The klansmen in blue who killed Eric Garner and the and EMTs who stood by while he said "I can't breathe" eleven times have not been charged with any crime. They have not even been fired by New York City's liberal mayor, Bill de Blasio. The current and former police commissioners even allowed Eric murderer, Daniel Pantaleo to continue to work and even make an excessive amount of overtime. Racist murder is business as usual, for this rotten system which will continually fail our working class sisters and brothers.

Ramsey made sure the video went viral by giving it to the New York Daily News. Workers all over the world became aware of the racist brutality of the New York Police Department. This created an international firestorm and made Ramsey a target of the police. People should not forget that if it was not for Ramsey's courage, we would not clearly and vividly know the truth about Eric Garner's death. There are many other cop murders of unarmed Black and Latin workers and youth, but their details are not known because there is no video. The Progressive Labor Party will not turn our backs on Ramsey Orta.

## Targeted by the system

Ramsey was arrested five times after the video went public. He is now serving a prison sentence of close to four years, on trumped up gun and drug charges, for which he was forced to accept a plea bargain. This is "justice" under capitalism. The per-

son who reveals the facts of racist police murder is jailed while the murderous politicians and their police are free to kill others. Capitalists, their lackey politicians and cops want to tell the working class to shut up about racism and these murders.

Over 100,000 people marched in Manhattan after the non-indictment of kkkop Pantaleo, expressing their anger and pushing the movement against police brutality. At the same time, a local group called Staten Island Against Racism and Police Brutality formed to get justice for Eric Garner. Whenever these murders take place, Progressive Labor Party members support the large demonstrations and the long-term grassroots organizations.

For daring to expose the system, Ramsey Orta has been and continues to be targeted for physical and emotional abuse by deputies and corrections guards. There has been a pattern of Ramsey being harassed, assaulted and then transferred to another facility every few months since he began serving his prison sentence. As a result of this, Ramsey frequently has had his privileges revoked and has been put into solitary confinement. Rat poison was even found in the food in his prison wing.

This is what happens when you expose the system. The constant facility changes makes it difficult for Ramsey's supporters to visit him or send him letters. That's part of his punishment for helping to unmask this racist system.

One of the things we've learned participating in these movements in the last few years is that many people talk about the fact that we must change the whole judicial system and police, but fail to realize

## Solidarity with Ramsey

Share his story! Let us show Ramsey that he isn't alone. In a recent phone conversation from prison, Ramsey said:

*"...Thank you guys a lot for keeping my head leveled and sending me ideas and options to let me think another way rather than falling into a trap of situations that happen here. I appreciate that people are still here and bear with me. I tell multiple people that when they write me and ask me what can they do. How can they help? They ask me if they can send me anything, I just tell them that I'm good. I would rather you just keep my story in the limelight and share my story before anything."*

justices. Racism and the resultant "justice" system formed the basis of the profit system and cannot coexist without them.

The working class must take power under a mass communist party or any minor change or reform can be reversed. Bringing workers and students to that level of understanding is our job as members and friends of the Progressive Labor Party.✪

# LETTERS

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

### No point of voting

When surrounded in a sea of “I Voted” stickers, it can be somewhat intimidating to raise the Party line. Luckily, I didn’t have to do this among strangers, but with our base who already have an understanding of our political analysis due to three years of organizing on the job.

When I announced in the lunchroom among 20 coworkers that I have never voted, it was like the record player stopped at the party and everyone quickly turned their heads to see why. “You’ve NEVER voted?” said one teacher. “You’re not even registered?” shockingly proclaimed another teacher.

My base of course was not surprised, but here was a perfect opportunity to broaden that base and rely on my current base for support in offering our analysis. I asked these 20 teachers to give one example of when a person they voted for changed something about their lives in a material way. Housing, health care, education, employment, economic inequality, racism, sexism, police murder, immigration...not a single person could give one example of any change. I followed up asking what they thought Hillary Clinton would have done so differently is she was elected instead of Trump. Silence filled the lunchroom.

So then the obvious question becomes “what’s the point of voting?” With all of these teachers born and raised in California, they clung on to the necessity of voting for state laws or propositions. I admitted to not knowing much about propositions as we don’t have them on the East Coast, but that I would get back to them.

That night I found a dozen articles explaining how propositions were instituted as a way for the ruling class and billionaires to push through legislation faster than the normal process allows. Billions of dollars are spent every year to spin the truth behind the propositions to influence the working class to vote one way or another. I shared these articles with all of my coworkers.

A base member then shared an article with everyone explaining how the idea of voting for the “lesser evil” is false. It offered a dozen examples of how the Democratic Party and politicians of color have let down the working class in every major category time and time again.

While there is still a long way to go to get these teachers to understand that the working class needs a communist revolution. I need to do more to take these conversations out of the lunch room and embed them in the class struggle where we really learn about the system. But these discussions have helped to start the conversation with many about how to really make change for the international working class.

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### Internationalism is a verb

During a recent trip to the U.S. East Coast, there were a lot of factors that mixed and forced me to think more deeply about what we mean when we say we are an international communist Party. These factors included a college conference that specifically addressed the importance of internationalism for working-class movements, as opposed to “uniting” under the bosses’ nationalism; the ongoing migration of thousands of workers from Central America, making their way through Mexico to the U.S. border; and a handful of conversations with comrades from Puerto Rico and South Asia about their work and the state of the class struggle.

I also was reminded of the heroic example put forward in the 1930s of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War, thanks to an excellent historical article on the back page of CHALLENGE (11/21). To them, proletarian internationalism went far beyond issuing statements of solidarity; these comrades from all over the world uprooted themselves entirely, risking their lives for the cause of fighting the growing fascist movement spreading across Europe at the time.

Today, as hundreds of the migrant workers arrive in Tijuana, Mexico and other cities along the U.S.-Mexico border, where they are met with not only thousands of U.S. troops mobilized to militarize the border but also an increasing racist nationalism from misled workers in Mexico, our role



is as important as ever. Those of us who can, must participate in the actions to travel to the border to welcome and not repel the migrant workers fleeing the violent crises of capitalism and imperialism. We can take an active role in countering the bosses’ racist attacks, while demonstrating a true proletarian internationalism. With proper and patient struggle along the way, we will win more workers away from a phony liberal “humanitarian” line and more closer to communist politics.

One world, one class, one Party. Smash the bosses’ borders!

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### Capitalist firestorm burns workers

Capitalism is incapable of providing safety for workers from Honduras to Paradise, California. So far 79 people from the working class towns of Paradise and Magalia in Butte County (NE of Sacramento) have been killed by the fast-moving camp fire that started on Thursday, Nov. 8th. Nearly the entire town of Paradise with a population of 26,000 was incinerated in about a day and a half. The neighboring town of Magalia, population 11,000, has been evacuated. About 700 people are still unaccounted for. This is the deadliest wildfire in California history.

The number of deadly wildfires in California has risen dramatically in recent years. Earlier this year wildfires destroyed parts of the northern Central Valley city of Redding and several towns in the coastal mountain areas of Mendocino and Lake Counties. Last year large parts of Santa Rosa and Napa were devastated.

The Tubbs Fire in Santa Rosa and the Camp Fire appear to have been sparked by arcing PG&E (Pacific Gas and Electric Co) power lines too close to drought-stricken trees. However the major cause has been climate change/burning of fossil fuels over the last 150 years. It is now nearly Thanksgiving and we haven’t had rain since April. Some of us are old enough to remember the 1962 World Series being rained out in early October in San Francisco. Generally spring comes earlier and fall comes later these days.

Millions of redwoods, pines and firs have died from drought and practically explode when sparked. Even the few wet years only serve to build up the dry grasses and shrubs that fuel these wildfires. Hot off-shore “Santa Anna” winds that are now more common in the fall rapidly spread these fires that could have been controlled years earlier. Another factor is that more people have been moving to rural areas like Paradise because workers can’t afford the cost of living in urban areas. Twenty-five percent of the population of Paradise is elderly compared to fifteen percent nationwide.

The capitalists not only put profit before the environment but they don’t prepare workers to evacuate from these fast-moving fires. Most of the people had no emergency warnings or plans to evacuate neighborhoods. There were horrific images of people trying to drive through the flames only to have their tires burst by the heat and then running for their lives. The fire burned a football sized field area every minute.

Of course there have been many heroic stories of nurses and others evacuating neighbors and patients to safety (including the uncle of my coworker) from the Feather River Hospital in Paradise. Dozens of community groups and churches have raised money, food and clothes for the tens of

thousands who became homeless.

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### California wildfires: workers demand safety

California wildfires used to be years apart, but now several burn simultaneously each year. The northern California working-class hamlet of Paradise was completely consumed, killing 76, leaving charred abandoned autos jammed together on roadsides as people fled on foot or died in their cars. An 18-wheeler melted to a puddle of metal. Hundreds of miles away, in the SF Bay Area, residents were warned to stay inside because of the smoke, which sickened people and made them light-headed and blotted out the sun. It had an end-of-world feeling.

Scientists and activists have said for years that capitalism’s heedless use of fossil fuel and its destruction of greenhouse-gas-absorbing jungle would lead to catastrophic climate change, but capitalism in crisis thinks only of this quarter’s profits.

Many people are angry. They are demanding that cities issue mandatory shutdowns and stay-home orders, to force companies to shut down and protect workers who stay home. They are demanding that cities stock and distribute the correct masks for everyone right away, particularly to the thousands of homeless. They are demanding cities open up large indoor areas 24/7, with filtered air for the homeless and those in drafty houses from landlord neglect and who can’t afford air purifiers. And they are renewing demands that California stop drilling and fracking more oil, making the climate crisis worse. Ultimately, people are angry that capitalism is utterly unprepared to deal with the climate disaster it’s causing.

In the 1950s and early 1960s the threat of nuclear annihilation seemed to paralyze fighting back, and one might think the threat of climate change could paralyze us the same way. But the 1950s were actually paralyzed by anti-communism, not nuclear threat. Yes, the fires of climate change threaten us, but we have a choice. We can fight back, and fight all the way.

★★★★★

### College Letter continued from page 7

Rico are still struggling from the aftermath of the earthquakes and how most of the profits they earn go to capitalists. How Yemen is going through the worst famine in history because of capitalism and nothing is being done. So many countries are going through the same process because of capitalism. Change must happen. Always.

I agree with abolishing capitalism, but I don’t think it would be possible for it to happen unless something like World War III occurs. That would completely destroy the country and economy and then the idea of communism even happening would be easier to spread. The United States is built and born with capitalism and has been that way since it’s birth. So it would take a lot more than conferences and events to abolish this capitalism.

★★★★★

### We are proletarians

The conference was a vibrant discussion against nationalism as we embrace internationalism. The speaker set the tone with her opening speech. She painted clear lines for those in the room who may have been unclear on terms like proletariat. She explained who is a proletariat and what a proletariat has to offer.

After the breakout sessions, I was inspired. In my group, we came up with new propaganda for recruiting. It’s called the “What happened to you, happened to me.” The concept is for a series of videos that highlight the shared anguish of the proletariat around the world at the hands of capitalism.

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# College Conference Letters: ‘Ready to Commit’

See article on page 3

## Student from Yemen: ‘I would like to join PLP’

When I first walked in, a man in a blue skirt welcomed me. I liked seeing that diversity, different kinds of people, many different backgrounds.

The speakers from Puerto Rico touched and resonated with me. The problems are very similar to what’s happening in Yemen. I lived for five months without electricity in Yemen at the start of the war. I was happy to hear these perspectives. It makes me so mad that the U.S. wants to control Puerto Rico. But when it comes to the hurricane and helping people, they don’t do anything.

Then we had to talk about Kingsborough, and I was pretty nervous. But when I saw how anxious the crowd was to hear us, I felt confident.

I was asked to talk about my experiences during the Yemen war, and that’s what I was prepared to talk about. I’m a freshman and I wasn’t involved in the struggle around Michael Goldstein last year. But seeing how people stood up last year for people like me, made me feel positive. So through this negative situation I’ve made the friends I have today.

This made me realize how powerful we are if we unite. If people united against Goldstein were able to make such an impact, we can use that power to do even more positive things. For example our campus Muslim Student Association organized Charity Week helping children in Yemen and other Middle Eastern countries.

When I talked about Yemen, many people’s eyes opened, and I believe we should have talked about it more. No one really knows what’s happening there, and they need to know, including myself. I still don’t completely understand the poli-

tics behind the war. At the workshop meeting I felt the group was very intellectual. I want to see more students and young people. I liked what the teachers and older people had to say, but I wish we had more young people. Other than that I loved the discussion.

One person asked what I thought about boycotting Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) in protest to Saudi Arabia. I’d never thought about it. It’s brilliant! I hate how Saudi Arabia is getting billions of dollars through Hajj. Boycotting the Hajj would leave Saudi Arabia helpless. That’s something poor Muslims around the world can do for Yemen.

I liked how no one was nationalistic. I felt at home at the conference. I felt how I feel around my family, even though these were strangers. I felt I wouldn’t be judged for expressing myself. Everyone loved hearing different perspectives, and accepted different points of view and disagreements. I love the message and love the vibe. I still have to see about the time commitment, but I would like to join the Party.

★★★★★

## Ready to commit

My experience at the college conference was a piece of the puzzle that had been missing—a piece that allowed my emotions to speak more clearly as the facts continued to present themselves. So many things were laid out for me that I could not ignore.

What spoke to me the most was the workers’ current situation in Puerto Rico. Hurricane Maria’s lasting effects hit home. The cargo trucks were filled with supplies and still are being withheld from the working class. Supplies to this day are still needed for the working class in order to survive.

I was informed that it took 25 days after the hurricane for water to be delivered to the rural areas of the island. It is not at all shocking that this is the case. Nevertheless, it was a reminder that capitalism is and will always act in the interest of keeping themselves in power. I was challenged on many levels, particularly the steps needed to build a proletarian movement. By the end of the conference, I came to the conclusion that I was ready to commit to the revolution. I am ready to commit to speaking up on the injustices of this capitalist system.

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## Eye-opening experience

The conference was a very eye opening experience. I learned many things from people of different backgrounds, races, and religions. We all shared the same pain and struggles from different parts of the world but also learned new things from different perspectives. I think it’s beautiful that many of us share the same passion and are willing to make things change instead of just talking and complaining about our everyday problems that shouldn’t be happening in the first place. With determination and persistence, change will occur over time. I hope many more people come to events and conferences such as this to build more solidarity. People’s struggles and pain should be everyone’s struggles and pain.

At the conference, we discussed how the working class is being used and exploited for the profit and benefit of capitalists. They want to limit our power. We could see that by how we are treated in different countries. By how people in Puerto

More letters from college conference on page 6 and next issue!



## RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

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

### The latest Jim Crow: billion\$ from e-carceration

NYT, 11/11 — “The New Jim Crow” — ...a system of legal discrimination and segregation... [was] born in this country because of the war on drugs and mass incarceration....

Many...current reform efforts contain the seeds of the next generation of racial and social control, a system of “e-carceration” that may prove more dangerous....

What’s taking the place of cash bail may prove even worse....In California, a presumption of detention will effectively replace eligibility for immediate release....And increasingly algorithms are helping to determine who should be caged and who should be set “free.”

...These advanced mathematical models — or “weapons of mass destruction”...are based on factors that are...highly correlated with race and class, but are also significantly influenced by pervasive bias in the criminal justice system....

...If you’re set “free” from a brick-and-mortar jail an expensive monitoring device is likely to be shackled to your ankle — and a private company may charge you \$300 a month, an involuntary leasing fee. Your permitted zones of movement may make it difficult or impossible to get or keep a job, attend school, care for your kids or visit family members.

...One false step (or one malfunction of the GPS tracking device) and cops will find you and snatch you right back to jail.

Who benefits...? Private corporations....Four large corporations...have most of the private con-

tracts to provide electronic monitoring for people on parole,...giving them a combined annual revenue of more than \$200 million just for e-monitoring....

### Founding fathers’ wrote slavery into the U.S. Constitution

NYT, op-ed. 11/1 — [In] the South, where slavery was the bedrock of economy and culture... slaves running for freedom across America’s internal border, would have to be stopped. In Article IV, Section 2, Clause 3, of the Constitution, the founders attempted to stop them:

“No person held to service or labor in one state, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation thereof, be discharged from such service or labor,...shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due.”

...Citizens in any state, Northern or Southern were...to return runaways just as they...[were] to return stray livestock or stolen cash.

### Mexico: Framed prisoners languish in jails for 16 years without verdicts

NYT, 11/14 — Daniel Garcia has been held for more than 16 years without a verdict....

Mexico’s...judicial system...allowed those accused of... minor offenses to be held indefinitely as their cases dragged on for years....

Prisoners like Mr. Garcia...were languishing in prison without completed trials or sentences... [in] a slow and opaque process in which trials happened behind closed doors and where...evidence was based on torture, forced confessions or fabricated proofs....

Months later, a fourth witness, Reyes Alpizar... recanted...saying they had been tortured by police into signing false statements.

Mr. Alpizar was so brutally beaten he had to go to an emergency room. Medical examinations...

confirmed he had been tortured. But he also remains in prison without a sentence.

### Capitalist hospital mergers jack up patients’ bills

NYT, 11/14 — The nation’s hospitals have been merging....forming powerful organizations that influence nearly every health care decisions consumers make....The mergers have essentially banished competition and raised prices for hospital admissions.The price of an average hospital stay soared, with prices...going up between 11 percent and 54 percent....During the Obama years, the mergers received nearly universal approval from anti-trust agencies....The behemoths have [been]...gobbling up major doctors’ and surgeons’ practices....Prices rise even more steeply when these large hospital systems buy doctors’ groups....

### Fascist hate crimes rising sharply

NYT, 11/14 — Hate crime reports increased 17 percent last year from 2016...as heated racial rhetoric and actions...dominate the news....

But hate crimes remain vastly underreported....

“I wouldn’t feel too confident in those numbers,” said Sim Singh...for the Sikh Coalition....

Controversies have ignited...over a photo of high school students flashing...a Nazi salute, and...by Cindy Hyde-Smith, a white United States senator from Mississippi who ran against Mike Espy, who is black. Ms. Hyde-Smith said that she would attend a public hanging if...asked....

Black people accounted for nearly half of hate crime victims....Of those targeted based on religion, 58 percent were Jewish....

Said Derrick Johnson, the president of the [NAACP]...“The acceptance...has been condoned by President Trump...[for] individuals to be more open and notorious with their racial hatred.”

# California wildfires kindled by capitalism



A burned out mobile home park in Paradise, California. Ten years ago, this same family lost a home in the same spot to a fire.

Wildfires are regularly occurring natural disasters whose effects on workers are worsened by the neglect of capitalism. Throughout the state of California, over one thousand workers are still missing and at least 80 have been found dead in the Camp Fire in Northern California and the Woolsey and Hill fires in Southern California. Over 11,000 homes, including the majority of the town of Paradise, have been destroyed and the fires have not been fully contained.

Under communism, we would organize the working class to plan in advance for and respond collectively to the damage and destruction that ensue from natural disasters. Instead of “everyone for themselves,” our motto would be “mobilize the masses to act together.” Most of all, we would preserve and protect our environment from exploitation for profit, and design scientific policies based on the interconnection between a viable natural environment and human progress.

### A Paradise lost

While California boasts to be the richest state in the country, home to tech giants like Google and Facebook and the multimillionaires of Malibu, these blazes lay bare the inherent inequality of capitalism, especially in this state, as many poor workers have been reduced to refugee status in tent cities in Walmart parking lots much like our sisters and brothers of less developed countries. (New York Times 11/18).

Moreover, while the Woolsey fire turned around 100,000 acres into a smoldering hellscape with its fast-moving fire, one neighborhood in its path was saved. It’s a gated community with multimillion-dollar homes of celebrities like musician Kanye West who called on private firefighters to save their \$60 million mansion and many of the other houses in their neighborhood (Huffington Post 11/15).

Mainly retired workers on fixed incomes lives in Paradise. Most of them never received evacuation orders; those who did found gridlock as they tried to flee (Los Angeles Times, 11/14). This is the essence of capitalism—leaving workers stranded to die. We see this time and time again around the world—the earthquake in Haiti (2010), the tsunami in the Indian Ocean (2004), hurricanes Kat-

rina (2005), Harvey (2017) and Maria (2017) in the southern U.S. states and Puerto Rico.

### For decades, workers had demanded safety

The Woolsey fire started near the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL) and burned part of this nuclear waste contaminated site that has yet to be cleaned up (NBC News, 11/12). Workers who live near SSFL have been campaigning for decades for the government to clean up the site, not just because of the ongoing exposure to residents, but also because of the danger that a wildfire could pose by spreading hazardous chemicals in its smoke.

In the area surrounding the Camp Fire, workers have been wearing masks when outside to protect themselves. Despite the dangerous air quality, farm workers in Ventura County are forced to continue to work in the fields picking crops. Some farms even forced their workers to speed up the picking to avoid crops being damaged by the fires (LA Magazine, 11/15).

### Workers douse fires for \$2/day

For the other thousands of workers’ and their communities, these blazes were covered by over 9,000 firefighters including 1,500 incarcerated, mostly Black and Latin workers. These incarcerated firefighters risk their lives to make slave wages of two dollars a day, which only increases to \$1 an hour when they are actively fighting fires (New York Times, 11/15). Even with the work experience, they cannot work as firefighters when they are released because of their criminal records.

### Bosses don’t prioritize health of workers and earth

According to Cal Fire the causes of these fires have yet to be determined. Many people suspect that they were caused by power company equipment failures, which happened minutes before the start of each blaze. Southern California Edison is already facing a lawsuit stating that their negligence caused the Woolsey fire (Ventura County Star, 11/19). Pacific Gas and Electric also reported issues with two high voltage power lines in the area where the Camp Fire started. (Sacramento Bee, 11/18).

Nevertheless, while it is true that forest fires are a natural phenomenon, and while the California energy corporations might have started these fires, the magnitude and intensities of these fires represent a much larger problem that has been ongoing for generations. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) was created in the late 1800’s with the sole aim of managing timber production and was the first government agency that hired university-educated agronomists and forestry experts as opposed to other government bodies that hired based on patronage. However, after the Great Idaho Fire of 1910, which burned three million acres and killed at least 85 workers, fighting forest fires was added to its mission. Nevertheless, in spite of its best intentions, the proponents of scientific forestry didn’t understand the role of fires as serving an important function in maintaining the health of forests.

For instance, shade-intolerant trees such as ponderosa pines, lodge pole pines, and giant sequoias, require periodic fires to clear areas in which they can regenerate. Once fires were suppressed, these trees were overrun by trees like the highly flammable Douglas firs which turned forests into potential giant tinderboxes. Coupled with the Great Migration west, which resulted in larger communities in forest areas, these government policies led to more people living in areas vulnerable to wildfires. With this movement, insurance companies added pressure on the USFS to continue a bad practice in order to preserve their property.

Over time, the USFS began to take on multiple missions that were often in direct contradiction representing the competing interests of real estate developers, wealthy homeowners, insurance companies, timber interests, environmentalists and aspiring firefighters. As a result, the decline in the USFS’ effectiveness now mirrors the decay in bourgeois political institutions like the U.S. Congress (Foreign Affairs, September/October 2014).

### Burn capitalism, build communism

Under capitalism, the ruling class doesn’t care about whether housing is built safely in areas that are prone to fires, floods, hurricanes, or other natural disasters. During times of crisis, the working class unites to help each other evacuate and to help each other rebuild. Under communism, natural disasters would be exactly that—natural. Under the leadership of the working class, we will build infrastructure and maintain natural areas to lessen the damage to neighborhoods and destruction of workers’ lives.☺

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