

# CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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# Abolish KKKops



**CHICAGO, March 12**-Dozens of protesters, including Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members, blocked City Hall elevators for nine hours to protest the \$95 million police training academy to be built on Chicago's impoverished West Side. This is on top of the \$1.5 billion yearly budget for the police (Chicago City Budget) and the \$113 million the city spent on police misconduct lawsuits in 2018 (The Chicago Reporter, 3/7).

The Chicago City Council nevertheless approved this expenditure, showing once again that the job of all politicians and cops is to "serve and protect" their billionaire capitalist masters. Workers don't need "better trained" cops that will

control us and stop us from fighting back more effectively. We don't need politicians bought and controlled by billionaires and their lobbyists and their bribes. We need a system where we run society for the working class and by the working class. That's communism. But to organize such a society we must fight racism and sexism. We must unite our class into a multi-racial force that can overthrow the capitalists. This is why PLP organizes for communist revolution.

This militant action was led by young Black and Latin organizers in the #NoCopAcademy campaign, which has been fighting for Schools not Cops, Clinics not Cops, Jobs not Cops, and to

End Police Murder since the plan to build the Cop Academy was first announced two years ago. Participants were prepared to be arrested, but no one was, in spite of a heavy police presence throughout the day. Evidently Chicago's lame duck Mayor Rahm Emanuel feared arrests would bring more attention to the phony election campaign.

The day was filled with chanting (No Cop A-ca-demy, 95 mil for commun-ity. Say What?), stopping people from coming on or off elevators, marching, and individual conversations. This gave PLers the opportunity to talk about our upcoming May Day march and dinner and to make connections with those interested in further discussing the necessity of communist revolution. The protest continued the next day at the City Council meeting. The City Council voted to borrow \$65 million to pay for the Academy, meaning the working class will end up paying three times that in interest.

Capitalists will always spend money on police to protect themselves from the working class while cutting funds for schools, jobs, housing, and health clinics that the working class needs. The capitalist politicians also make sure they hire their "friends," regardless of competence. The contract for the Cop Academy is going to AECOM, a company whose history is riddled with scandals including use of deficient materials, fraudulent billing, inflated cost projections, and over-charges. A member of AECOM's Board gave \$50,000 to Emanuel's re-election campaign (The Chicago Reporter, January 24). Capitalists are happy to give their cronies money extorted from the working class in the form of taxes.

The struggle continues. The reform battle to stop the Academy may be lost, but the courage, the solidarity, and the multi-racial unity that these fighters built and experienced cannot be taken away from them. PLP will continue to participate in the many anti-racist struggles to come and person-by-person, we will win millions to fight for communism.✱

## JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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# OUR FIGHT

- ★Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.
- ★The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today’s world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.
- ★Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world’s workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.
- ★While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.
- ★Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society’s benefits and burdens.
- ★Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of “race.” Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.
- ★Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.
- ★Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.
- ★Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion’s false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.
- ★Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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## WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

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

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

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## Editorial

# Somalia bombings: U.S. imperialism shows its weakness



Somalia is seeing an increase in lethal U.S. drone strikes, with 47 attacks killing 326 people over the last third of 2018 (New York Times, 3/10). These terror bombings are an essentially defensive response by a weakening U.S. imperialist state trying to counter the ascendant superpower China in East Africa. While both factions of the U.S. ruling class know they must try to contain China’s influence, the bosses’ main wing, the finance capitalists, should know that bombing with no boots on the ground is not a winning formula.

This U.S. is targeting al-Shabab, a band of small capitalists who use religion to justify their own bombings and murders of Somalians and Kenyans (see box). The U.S. is backing the current Somali regime against the al-Shabab insurgency to keep its imperialist toe-hold in the country. President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed is a dual Somali and U.S. citizen who until recently worked at the New York State Department of Transportation in Buffalo. He is seen as a willing collaborator with the U.S. (Politico, 2/19/17).

Somalia is a desperately poor country with huge geopolitical importance. It is located in the Horn of Africa, a gateway to the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean. Besides controlling possibly the longest stretch of coast in Africa, Somalia borders Djibouti, where the Chinese are building a military base for 10,000 troops. Just across the Gulf of Aden lies the devastation of Yemen, where the U.S.-backed Saudis are waging a vicious war on Yemeni workers to maintain control of the Arabian peninsula. Close to five million barrels of crude oil move each day through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait between Yemen and Djibouti and Eritrea. The narrow strait is a potential chokepoint for goods on the trade route between Asia and Europe, including critical energy supplies (bloomberg.com, 7/26/18). This on the cheap strategy to prop up Mohamed as a U.S. puppet, and bomb Al-Shabab won’t be enough to defeat Chinese imperialism.

**Horn of Africa eyed by rival imperialists**

The New York Times, U.S. finance capital’s leading mouthpiece, claims that “the intensifying bombing campaign undercuts the Trump administration’s intended pivot to confront threats from great powers like China and Russia, and away from long counterinsurgency and counterterrorism campaigns.” Instead of increased bombing, main-wing analysts like the Atlantic Council’s Bronwyn Bruton are arguing for:

- Negotiation with al-Shabab, which is expanding the territory under its control.
- Ending support for the Somali government, which has a long history of corruption.
- Partnering with Gulf States like Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which are already training Somalia’s military, and allowing them to negotiate with al-Shabab as well (Michigan Daily, 3/13/19).

This liberal counterstrategy exposes the growing weakness of the U.S. position in East Africa. Gone are the days when the U.S. had unlimited resources to impose its will throughout the world. The Vietnam Syndrome, the U.S. bosses’ inability to mobilize worker’s

### Who is al-Shabab?

Al-Shabab, or “the Youth,” is an Islamist insurgent group based in Somalia. They are small-fry terrorists who once held sway over the capital of Mogadishu and large portions of the Somali countryside. In recent years, however, an African Union–led military campaign has pushed the group outside major population centers. Even so, the thousands-strong insurgency remains a big security challenge in war-torn Somalia. It mounted its deadliest attack to date in late 2017. Aside from terrorizing workers in their home base, Al-Shabab also launched five known lethal attacks in neighboring Kenya since 2013.

Al-Shabab claimed allegiance to Al-Qaeda in 2012 and receive funding from both Al-Qaeda and local sources. Their main fight is against the Western-backed Somali government in Mogadishu, which historically has been plagued by corruption and incompetence.

support for land-based military incursions, is alive and well. The rulers’ choices today? Ineffectual bombing or simply staying out of the way to regroup for an inevitable World War III.

Meanwhile, China has increased its trade with Africa by 226 percent over the past 12 years and tripled its foreign direct investment between 2011 and 2016 (Economist, 3/7). In December 2018, the Chinese bosses made a two-year deal for exclusive fishing rights in Somalia’s rich waters. They have also agreed to lend money to the Somali government to rebuild the Mogadishu seaport (Daily Sabah, 2/19). More and more, the Horn of Africa looms as the site of a potential proxy war between China and the U.S.

Second-tier imperialist powers are also vying to continue to exploit and control Africa. French President Emmanuel Macron recently made his tenth visit to the continent in two years, stopping at the French military base in Djibouti as well as Ethiopia and Kenya. The French bosses are allied with the U.S., at least for now. Macron recognizes that “Beijing is aiming to reshape the global order in its interests” and has “made countering China’s growing economic and military power a priority for this year” (Bloomberg, 3/12).

**U.S. strategy looks like a loser**

Over the past 15 years, drone strikes have become a favored option for the U.S. to flex its military might while minimizing the need for ground troops. Barack Obama bombed multiple countries with drones, including Somalia, during his eight years in office. Donald Trump is continuing this strategy while hiding it from view. The State Terrorist in Chief recently declared that the CIA would no longer make public the number of drone strikes or related fatalities (BBC, 3/7).

In 2017, the U.S. suspended military aid to most Somali units as Trump authorized the first deployment of regular U.S. troops to the country since 1994. There are now approximately 500 U.S. military personnel stationed there (Council on Foreign Relations, 1/31)—nowhere near the number needed to consolidate control of Somalia or challenge the growing Chinese presence in Djibouti. Trump’s minimal troop mobilization, coupled with the dramatic increase in bombings of forcibly recruited teenagers in al-Shabab, is hardly a strategy to win the hearts and minds of Somali workers.

**A lose-lose conflict for workers**

As Somali workers are bombed by terrorists on both sides, from above by U.S. drones and on the ground by al-Shabab suicide bombers, their only solution is communist revolution. The only way to stop imperialist slaughter is by building a red army to seize state power in all the countries of the world. All power to the international working class!✊



# JHU: Reject police on campus

**BALTIMORE, MD** – Students at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) have joined local residents to combat JHU's push for a state law authorizing it to establish a private police force that will patrol campus areas and neighboring public streets. These "Hop Cops" would report to and serve the interests of the administration and board of JHU. That's how capitalism works. Workers and students need a system that serves our needs. That's communism.

These privatized cops would not have even the nominal accountability of Baltimore city police. Hopkins security officers are already known for harassing both Black and Latin students and passersby—but currently they do not carry guns or have full police powers. Adding armed police with the power to stop, arrest, and shoot will intensify the racist oppression in and around the three JHU campuses, with potentially fatal consequences.

The purpose of the move, according to Rep. Elijah Cummings, chair of the U.S. House of Representatives Oversight and Reform Committee, who is pressuring state legislators to pass the bill, is to keep the "riff-raff" away from a prominent medical institution that serves wealthy patients

like Saudi princes. Cummings is just another racist politician who serves his billionaire, capitalist masters. We need a communist revolution to dump them all in the trash heap of history and put the working class in charge.

JHU mouthpieces have lied to residents and lawmakers alike, misrepresenting crime statistics (crime has actually dropped in areas surrounding Hopkins) and offering sham accountability schemes that would result in a force that is more secretive and more shielded from liability than any municipal police department. Some residents have been talked into supporting the move with the promise of Hopkins creating a model police force that uses "best practices" to make their streets safer. The reality, well understood by community organizers and JHU Students Against Private Police (SAPP), is that the force will be mandated to do what's best for Hopkins, not its mostly working class neighbors. SAPP and local residents have stepped up to expose the charade at multiple community meetings and public forums, and their organizing is paying off.

Many communities are increasingly voicing solid opposition to the measure, as are JHU

students, some 3,000 of whom signed a petition against the private police force. And 75 percent of students who responded to an email survey likewise opposed the move. Faculty and JHU alumni (with the exception of former NYC mayor Michael Bloomberg, a Hopkins alum and poster child for racist, aggressive policing) have also responded to a petition drive with a resounding "NO".

But JHU is the largest employer in Maryland and virtually owns Baltimore. It is tightly connected to corrupt elected officials and capitalist power brokers throughout the city and state. But the impact of the bill will be far-reaching. It will set a dangerous precedent for privatized policing in Maryland, sending the state back to the early 19th century when every capitalist enterprise had its own police force to keep order, suppress speech, and break strikes. As we go to press, the State Senate has approved the measure, and it is now in the hands of the House of Delegates for a hearing and vote. But SAPP and local residents, supported by civil rights groups like Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle, will not give up the fight. The stakes are too high. And these local struggles are part of a bigger fight to smash the worldwide rise of racism and fascism with communist revolution.✊

## Oakland strike builds confidence for future battles

**BAY AREA, March 20**—Teachers in the Oakland Education Association (OEA) went on strike and settled a new contract. Oakland public schools are a product of the same racism addressed in the recent LA, Denver, West Virginia and Charter school strikes. This strike was a mass school for pro-communist ideas.

Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members participated in picket lines at seven schools, worked with friends and co-workers before the strike to build consciousness and solidarity, participated in the mass actions organized by the OEA, and distributed leaflets and literature. PLP teachers were embedded in the picket lines and the on-site organizing and decision-making at their schools.

For many young workers, this was their first strike. It was an eye opener. Many questions surfaced: from tactical issues of how to run the picket line, and what is the role of school administrators who appear friendly, to the strike, to who runs the OEA and the deeper issues about capitalism.

Now that the contract passed and teachers are back to work the burning question remains: what will teachers do? Will they continue to be active? Some high school campuses have formed on-going committees. Will some teachers make the leap from fighting around immediate conditions to building a long-term revolutionary movement to get rid of capitalism? After this experience, will some conclude that the unity they built can grow and abolish the capitalist ruling class? This would indicate a growth in class-consciousness.

As one PL'er discussed on the picket line: "All across the globe, workers are flexing their power through organizing strikes to demand better learning/working conditions and higher pay. I know there is no true stability for our class under capitalism. This system is designed to commodify all aspects of our lives, and then leave us in the cold when we can't afford to fund our own survival. This process of turning all things and experiences into items that are bought and sold absolutely includes education; take it from an undergraduate who is \$25,000 in debt with student loans. In the Bay Area, we have been witnessing that the contradictions of extreme wealth and extreme poverty grow deeper over the last decade."

### Strike ends, fight begins?

When the strike ended, 42 percent voted against ratification, which is a big no-vote since the lead-



ership was pushing this as a win-win. Nurses told the bargaining team they needed lower workloads to serve the student needs (not cash bonuses). They distributed a flyer urging a no vote.

The OEA demands were built around securing teacher and student needs; zeroing in on the particular racist attack on students in Oakland's low-income areas (Black, Latin, and immigrant students) where most school closings are scheduled. The wage demand focused on the fact that a 20 percent annual turnover of teachers was due to the inadequate wages, and inability of teachers to live where they teach due to predatory real estate profiteering (gentrification). Turnover and underfunding has caused great instability in the schools. There were student-teacher centered demands for smaller class sizes, more resources for students like nurses, counselors, and special needs services.

### Working-class solidarity on display

This strike showed a lot of strength, unity, and multi-racial fight against the institutional racism in education. There was working-class solidarity. Teachers, students and community residents picketed in the morning and afternoon. There were mass demonstrations downtown, an occupation of the state building and a demonstration against a charter school organization.

The Oakland United School District (OUSD) school bosses tried to intimidate the fighters and break the strike. Teachers set up alternative "strike

schools." Teachers in other districts adopted an Oakland school, joined the picket lines, and held a sickout action.

### Strike fever spread to colleges

In the duo-lingual program, both the Laney Administrators and the "strike-friendly" Oakland High principle tried to intimidate both teachers and students to have "alternatives" (i.e., to create scab classes off campus). Instead, the strike energy spread to Laney Community College where students and teachers started a campaign to publicize and fight the conditions facing part-time teachers, adjuncts who are 70 percent of the teaching staff in a campus of mainly working class, Black, Latin, Asian, and immigrant students.

### First day back

Monday, the first day teachers went back to work, the OUSD School Board voted for \$22 million in austerity cuts which included staffing cuts, cuts to student services, and decimation of libraries. As communists, we see this struggle as a step in building a revolutionary movement. Organization at schools sites and many mass actions show workers can run things based on collectively figuring out what we need as a working class. These are the seeds of a communist society where life is organized based on the needs of the working class not the profits of the capitalists. Many PLP members and friends commented that this battle deepened friendships with families and teachers for the battles ahead.✊

# INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY

# FIGHT SEXISM, BUILD COMMUNISM

## HAITI

**HAITI, March 19**—Working class women are in a precarious condition in Haiti. Despite the fact that the government has a minister of women's affairs, and there are many organizations who "fight" for the rights of women, against discrimination between men and women and against domestic violence perpetrated against women—nothing has really improved in the lives of working women in Haiti.

International Women's day is a holiday with communist origins, March 8 is celebrated in many ways around the world. In Haiti, there are conferences or educational meetings, yet none of them tackle the day-to-day demands of working women and students, who do not enjoy real parity/equality with men. Organizations fighting for women's rights are already engaged in an unequal battle, since in a class society there are bourgeois women and working class women and their needs, demands, and struggles are not the same.

In fact, ruling class women who exploit other women or who benefit from the precarious condition of other women. These contradictions cannot be resolved until class society is destroyed with communist revolution and we live in a truly egalitarian world.

It is with this in mind that we gathered to commemorate International Working Women's Day. About 30 people met in a conference room in a small provincial town to discuss the role of women in the fight for change in Haiti and around the world on Sunday, March 10. A presentation, using in part the article that previously appeared in CHALLENGE, summed up the story of March 8. It inspired many of the young women present to take control of the future by participating in the struggle against the established order. They understood that gender inequality, exploitation and all sorts of discrimination are all fruits of the capitalist system, and it is only by overthrowing this system that we will have a fair society.

Two of the participants believe that the situation that women face is not by accident. Women are trained and educated to believe they are the weaker sex and should be subordinate to men, that there are studies and jobs that should be reserved for men, that they shouldn't make the effort needed to aspire to equality, or that they should depend on the men they marry, that they should not make decisions as equal partners.

These young women think that it is the obligation of women to fight for the collective well-being, that it is horrid to see women forced to prostitute themselves in order to get a bite to eat for themselves and their families, or be resigned to violence out of fear of losing whatever livelihood they may have.

We wanted to give full value due to women in our struggle and to recognize their courage. There was a general consensus among the participants in this conference that women have to become equal partners in the struggle for equality and to end the system of exploitation that engenders it. And even more, become leaders in the struggle, both in the day-to-day struggle and in developing the communist ideology. And that our class brothers in struggle have to welcome their participation and their leadership!

To end the day on a social note, we had pizza and drinks while we watched a film called "Black November" about a volatile, oil-rich Nigerian community that wages war against their corrupt government and a multi-national oil corporations in order to protect their land from being destroyed by excessive drilling and spills.

The end of capitalism will be the end of all sorts of inequalities. Let's fight to end capitalism!✊



## MEXICO

**MEXICO, March 19**—The International Conference of Socialist Women, held in Denmark in 1910, established March 8 as the International Working Women's Day, to recognize women's struggle for their political and economic rights. This communist origin, and its significance in the revolutionary struggle to end the special oppression of working-class women, is generally unknown or purposelessly hidden.

Progressive Labor Party (PLP) organizes all workers to put an end to the capitalist system and its sexist ideology that justifies and promotes the special oppression of women. Financially, this oppression generates huge profits for the capitalists due to the super exploitation of women. Politically, sexist ideology divides the working class, limiting its capacity to organize and struggle.

On this holiday, PLP held a conference on sexism at a school on the west of the Mexican valley, in a community where the Party has worked for many years, and where recently several women have been murdered. We explained these murders are crimes against our class, caused by an oppressive system; that we should immediately unite as workers in self-defense, but that we should organize to get rid of the root cause of the problem: capitalism.

### Capitalism dehumanizes women workers

Capitalist "culture" degrades women: education, movies, music, books, magazines, and theater, show women as merchandise, focusing on the differences with men, and stereotype women according to the needs of the system at particular moments. Against this sexist ideology, PLP promotes the development of women as communist organizers to lead our class in the struggle against capitalist oppression and for an egalitarian communist society.

In spite of huge advances against sexism accomplished by communists, especially in Russia and China at the beginning of the last century, sexism is still hurting our class. For example, in Mexico:

- In 2018, 845 women were murdered, twice the numbers reported in 2015. Since January 2019, 70 women have been murdered, including 11 minors.
- According to the UN, on average nine women are murdered daily, and six out of ten women report to have experienced some type of violence
- Sex crimes against women were also twice as many in 2018 compared to those reported in 2016, to reach 2,733 per 100,000 women; 40 percent of which were committed against minors.
- One out of two adolescent women, 12 to 19 years of age, who start their sex life becomes pregnant as a result of sexual violence and early marriage".
- Women earn salaries that are 34.2 percent less than men's, that is, for the same job a man gets paid 100 pesos while a woman gets 75. Only 43 percent of working age women have a job and half are self-employed. On average one out of three lack health services, written contracts or benefits.

Capitalists derive huge profits from paying lower salaries to women, but also benefit from their unpaid work, which includes household work, care of other members of the family, such as children and the elderly, and the raising of children. The social and economic value of these activities is vital to capitalism.

As previous statistics have shown, capitalist institutions study the inequalities faced by women, but offer false solutions. These institutions hide the role of capitalism in the oppression of women, create justice and support organizations that misdirect the struggle towards legal or public policy demands that do not get to the cause of the problem, or towards their own feminist organizations, which they finance and promote.

In spite of all this, working women have played an active role in the recent strikes that took place at the Tamaulipas maquila factories, the Metropolitan Autonomous University (UAM), the Chapingo Autonomous University (UACH), the Benito Juarez Autonomous University of Oaxaca (UABJO), and in the recent sit-in of the Section 22 teachers belonging to the Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educacion (CNTE). PLP supports these struggles and organizes these workers in some of these universities and works with the Section 22 teachers.

We make an effort, however, to transcend the limits of trade union or feminist struggles and advance towards the revolutionary struggle for communism.✊

# College forum: when will CUNY go on strike?

During a forum discussion about the recent outbreak of teacher strikes, a Bronx college student asked “Yes, but when will we go on strike here at CUNY?” Whether raising tuition every year or paying poverty wages to part-time instructors, these attacks are racist as they target students and faculty that are disproportionately Black and Latin. But militant, multi-racial, student & faculty fight-back is growing on a number of campuses. We are organizing forums, conferences, rallies and “grade-ins.”

Whether organizing to oppose tuition hikes or demanding better pay for part-time instructors, Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members are there, fighting hard now but also for a better future. And that future is communism where the workers and students fighting back today run all of society in the future.

CUNY runs on part-time (adjunct) labor. More than 60 percent of the courses are taught by adjuncts, many of whom make approximately \$3,000 a course. An adjunct teaching the maximum number of courses (which is never guaranteed) at this salary makes a yearly salary of around \$33,000 per year. This is a poverty wage in New York City! This two-tier system of full-time and part-time faculty has allowed CUNY to get away with running its 20 campuses on the backs of low wage faculty, who are disproportionately Black and Latin.

But let’s be clear, even though the current fight is to improve the wages of part-time faculty, we can never forget that the primary targets of racist attacks at CUNY are the students. The majority of students at CUNY are Black and Latin and the

racist attacks on them come from every direction. Their instructors struggle with poverty wages and they are overworked, often having to travel long distances between campuses. Student’s books become more and more expensive and the buildings where they attend classes crumble around them, and their tuition keeps going up.

To build unity between faculty and students, we have invited students to our union meetings. This has strengthened the connections between faculty and students revealing, for example, that many of our students and some adjuncts are Uber drivers. Students see the adjunct struggle as part of their struggle and they are also the most willing and ready to fight.

In a significant development, more than eight campuses passed resolutions last spring endorsing militant actions, including a strike. However, due to the dead-end politics of the union leadership, the 25,000 members of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) union are not prepared for a strike. Instead of seriously planning for a strike the union leaders plan endless, useless trips to the state capitol to lobby politicians or spend time and energy figuring out how to shame the CUNY Board of Trustees. As if any of the CEOs who launch these racist attacks on our faculty and students have any shame!

Nonetheless, while we realize that we may not be in a position to just “go on strike” we know we have to try to expand the limits of what’s possible at CUNY. That means getting to know people, joining committees, and getting people to trust one another, all the while organizing collective ac-

tions. Many rank and filers and PLP members are involved in this kind of work. At a recent conference led by a rank and file group, over 100 people attended to share experiences about the strike wave and make plans for future actions. One PLP comrade spoke about the “traveling strike panel” where students go from class to class talking about a strike. Another spoke about the need to make the fight against racism a central theme in our organizing.

PLP members have many plans to continue participating, learning, and leading in these struggles. In our staff and student organizations, we are involved in many activities- from social evenings at the movies to hosting a forum on U.S. policy in Venezuela. We are participating in a rally at the Bronx Borough President’s Office where student leaders will denounce racist plans for tuition hikes and fare hikes and demand higher pay for adjuncts.

PLP is fighting hard for the worker-student alliance, challenging the divisions that exist between students and teachers. As we get closer to May Day, we plan to organize a CUNY contingent that reflects this sense of urgency and class struggle. We want to be clear in our study groups and meetings that we participate in these struggles not only to win some reforms and make life a little better under capitalism, but we also fight for a better future, communism. With the dynamic students and young adjuncts we are working with, the future is bright!✪

## Workers debate *Blackkkklansman*, a pro-cop film

**NEW YORK CITY, March 19**—Over 20 Progressive Labor Party members (PLP) and friends at a local study group compared the nationalist lies of “Blackkkklansman,” the film directed by Spike Lee to Boots Riley’s heroic tale of multi-racial workers fighting back in “Sorry to Bother You.” We watched both movies. We discussed how Riley’s is a pro-working class movie while Spike Lee (who started his career as an anti-cop writer/director) is now doing the work for the ruling class in his pro-cop film.

We were a multiracial group of workers, students and retirees. After the movie, we passed out a copy of a CHALLENGE article, which was a critique of “Blackkkklansman” by Boots Riley and the PLP. Having the leaflet as a source material, we opened the floor for thoughts and questions. Someone said, “Spike deserves credit for bringing the story to light.” A comrade rebutted that statement by saying, “This story is all a lie, as stated in the CHALLENGE article. The film upholds the ideas of capitalism which are very dangerous for the working class.”

“Well, how is it dangerous when it’s just him using his poetic license?” a friend questioned. Another PL’er said, “It’s dangerous like “Birth of a Nation” is dangerous. It’s stories like these that promote ideas that the oppression we feel is coming from other workers and not the system.”

Someone mentioned that a Jewish cop was in the film, as if that is promoting multiracial unity. As a criticism, it was clear by this point we should’ve done the reading together, before watching the movie. Another PL’er pointed out that it wasn’t even true. The real Ron Stalworth character had a non-Jewish white partner made to be Jewish in the movie to share a vested interest in stopping the Klan. “The only unity this film wants us to feel is the unity with cops,” the comrade insisted.

A different PL’er disagreed, “The other unity is with Black nationalism. In this film we only see



the racism and sexism of the Klan and no criticism of Stokely Carmichael or the Black Student government as if they were flawless. Spike Lee wants Black workers to trust the system and Black nationalism when the rulers attack, which are both dead-ends for Black workers.”

In response, someone said, “The end of this movie really moved me. When I saw the footage of what happened in Charlottesville, it put it all in context for me. That we need to do something to fight this!” Another friend replied, “That’s what’s so dangerous about this movie, it uses emotions about a very dramatic experience for all of us to conform to their solution.”

Final comments were, “The unity in “Sorry to Bother You” was better because it showed the

unity between the workers,” and “I liked “Sorry to Bother You”—it was just a better film.”

It’s important to note how art is used under capitalism. Just as in everything else under this system, it is used to hide capitalism’s true nature, which is racist, sexist and in a constant state of war for profit.

At the end of the event, we spoke about communism and how May Day is coming up. That’s when we get to use our voices and tell the truth about our past, future and the truth of who we really are. We are workers fighting to end this system of torture and greed. We collected donations and encouraged our friends to come to May Day. Join us as we prepare to write our own story. Fight for communism!✪



# LETTERS

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

### No to concentration camps!

A comrade and I attended a council meeting in Dwight, Illinois regarding a proposal for a 1,200 bed detention center to be built on 88 acres of land west of I-55. We arrived at the Amtrak station an hour before the meeting for a rally where a speaker talked about how 22 people have died by the hands of the murderous capitalists and their concentration camps. People began organizing for months before the vote on Monday night, locally forming “No ICE Dwight” and inviting fighters from hours away to drive down to protest in solidarity.

After the rally, 50 people marched to the high school where the council was set to vote only to meet 300 more people there—the majority in opposition to the center. Many people spoke about how the corporation, Immigration Centers of America (ICA), always makes false promises in order to profit off of making the working class miserable. Speakers cited countless instances of abuse and rape occurring in detention centers while others said that the center would provide much needed jobs to the town.

The council then voted for the prison with a vote of 5-2. The comrade I was with spoke with residents who voiced opposition to the center and was told that ICA promised the town a new sewage system if granted zoning for the prison. We cannot let the bosses pit us against each other or accept bribes. The working class cannot sell out. We must fight back.

★★★★★

### Solidarity with undocumented workers

Many friends and neighbors are aware of my communist politics. Most politely listen. Some even agree that capitalism is the problem we’re facing but few are willing to join in the struggle. It’s easy to feel out of place. However, with the ongoing and intensified racist attacks on immigrants at the border, more local people are willing to step into the struggle one toe at a time – and the conversations are, bit-by-bit laced with a stronger political struggle.

Immigrant women, men and children who had been detained for months by ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) before the current caravan crisis, are being put out at bus stations near detention centers in Texas – at least a day’s drive from my location. They leave with those horrid ankle

monitoring bracelets (grillettes) and few belongings. PLP members and organizers from liberal organizations have formed a loose network of people who meet them at various bus stations offering assistance. Information about immigrants scheduled to arrive in different locations is passed along the network and we arrange to be at the bus stop two to four times a day with supplies and phone numbers in hand.

While waiting for the buses, we are challenging volunteers to think past the moment of “feel good” participation. We’re engaging people in discussions about past immigration policies, the U.S.’s destructive foreign policy and migration patterns around the world. Some understand that capitalism can offer no solution to this crisis or any other around the globe. One retired nurse spoke of her self-doubt that she could offer anything besides hats and gloves. She was surprised to hear that nurses and doctors are members of PLP! We’ll be continuing our conversation as we go.

At the bus stations, I have been amazed by the immigrants’ openness and resiliency getting off the bus in spite of the terror many of them had experienced while in ICE’s hands. Our encounters are short-lived– but memorable. After quick introductions we offer essentials like hats, gloves, warm coffee, names and phone numbers. I also mention the U.S. Government’s despicable policies. One woman and her five-year old accepted a ride to an address about twenty-five minutes from the bus station. She had not been given an apartment number so she decided to knock on every door until she found the relative she had not seen in many years. Another father and son chose to stand in the cold to wait for their ride instead of going indoors.

As we waited we talked about public schools for his son. Dad spoke so proudly of his fourteen year old son having finished primary school. To me, it is clear that the working class can and should run society! At the same time, under capitalism these snippets of solidarity cannot create a safe world for the working-class. We must have a revolutionary movement for communism.

★★★★★

### Chicago mayoral race is a dead end

This current mayoral election in Chicago is unprecedented. Two Black women are running and it is reminiscent of Obama’s 2008 election campaign.

★★★★★

Then, PLP was greeted with disbelief when we assailed candidate Obama as an agent of the capitalist ruling class. During his tenure as president he bailed out the banks with a \$700 billion dollar handout and became known as the “Deporter in Chief” for deporting over three million immigrant workers.

Toni Preckwinkle, the “establishment” candidate, spent 19 years as alderwoman [city council] representing the wealthy Hyde Park neighborhood (Obama’s former residence). She has been Cook County Board President for eight years, and is chairperson of Cook County’s Democratic Party. She led the Cook County Board’s successful campaign to close Oak Forest Hospital on the city’s far south side, which resulted in twelve ventilator-dependent patients being transferred, after having spent more than ten years or more at this health facility. All but one died soon after being transferred. Preckwinkle received a \$10,000 campaign donation from Alderman Ed Burke, the longest-serving (the bosses) alderman in Chicago. The donation money was returned when Burke was recently indicted for corruption. In spite of this record, SEIU (Service Employees International Union) has donated over one million dollars to her campaign. She also has the endorsement of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU).

The other candidate, Lori Lightfoot, is being presented as “anti-establishment” and a police reformer. A former federal prosecutor and partner in a global law firm, she is best known for being head of the city’s Police Accountability Task Force. Lightfoot’s campaign is touting that during her tenure as head of police oversight, police were fired at a substantially higher rate. But according to an article in the Chicago Sun-Times, the count of cops fired increased from 19 during the comparable period before Lightfoot to 21 during her time as president. She presided over several cases where the facts showed clear police culpability but she instead ruled in favor of the police (3/10).

As in all elections under capitalism, workers can choose heads or tails of the proverbial coin toss. Either way, the workers of Chicago will lose, because all politicians are bought and paid for by the ruling class. This election will be no different.

# The homecare industry: wage slavery

“I spend my life in someone else’s home, shunned from family and my life. I work day and night, 24 hours at work without rest. My body aches all over, my nerves have been damaged.” These jarring words are one of the many vivid snapshots from the film “The 24 Hour Workday,” a grassroots documentary that exposes the level of hyper-exploitation suffered by women workers in the home care industry. Divorced from the film’s context, these words sound like they came from the pages of a history book about Black women workers living in bondage up until the 19th century, many of whom raised the slaveowners’ children, losing their own. After organizing with homecare workers, I think this should be rightfully called out as modern-day wage slavery. The homecare industry still retains much of the racist and sexist essence it did in the past.

Women—predominately immigrants, Black, Latin, and Asian—make up 93 percent of the labor force in the homecare industry. The homecare workers who star in the film reflect this statistic. They’re mostly immigrants from Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and China, who came here in order to escape poverty or violence, to give their families a better hope for the future.

Ironically, once they became homecare workers, many discovered they weren’t not much better off. Many reported they started neglecting their families once they began working 24-hour shifts. They described taking on such grueling work out of necessity and the scarcity of opportunities, others found themselves coerced by agencies to take on 24-hour shifts as 12- and 8-hour shifts became less available. Homecare workers call this good work, but describe the working conditions as a prison from which they can’t escape.

Most of the stories we hear in the film, or in our

organizing with them, have a theme of loss. Some have lost their children to violence and drugs on the streets of New York, others in Honduras. Or they miss out on important milestones in their families. Some say the long hours destroyed their marriages or relationships with their children.

Above all, the most profound loss homecare workers face is the destruction of their health. Homecare workers account for some of the highest rates of disability in the workforce, second only to construction workers. Many become patients as a result of working long hours. As is the case of one worker in the film who is barely 50, uses a walker, and now needs a homecare worker.

Throughout the film, home attendants have accurately appraised the situation, and called it out as slavery. Aside from being forced to do double, sometimes triple, the work for half the pay, many have been fired for asking for less hours.

The agency bosses make these workers agree to shady contractual agreements that hold them legally responsible if something happens to the patient on their watch. This forces them to stay awake, so their patient doesn’t die on their watch. Crooked agencies have also gone as far as intimidating undocumented homecare workers with threats of deportation.

This level of exploitation is legal, just as it was in the past. The state plantation sponsor, otherwise known as the New York State Department of Labor, has long justified this practice through the 13-hour rule (where the homecare workers are paid wages for 13 hours for 24 hours work, thus robbed of 11 hours pay), and is doing everything in its power to block home attendants from fighting back.

But while the state cries crocodile tears over this

bit of thievery on the part of the homecare bosses, they continuously pit workers against their patients, while insurance companies rake in massive profits. The bosses rationale for justifying the 13 hour rule is to save agencies from imminent “financial ruin, but these arguments sound sickeningly familiar, to the ones plantation bosses used to preserve the violence of slavery in the past. Yet this entire country was built on slavery. Truly the bosses have no interest in entirely abolishing it.

Despite these concrete examples of this particularly disgusting form of wage slavery, many workers outside the campaign have objected to workers referring to it as modern day slavery. Many, parroting the bosses’ line, say it’s an exaggeration, that home attendants have a choice in the matter, and can quit. That in order for it to be slavery you need an auction block, or shackles or physical violence to keep them in bondage.

These objections are in part due to the capitalist lie that we get a fair exchange for our labor—a fair day’s wage for our work. But the truth is that we are all wage slaves.

However the bosses use insidious means to cover it up. Through their laws, courts, and cultural brainwashing, the bosses have long been appropriating our labor, robbing us of our time, families, homes, and lives. They also reinforce this with brutal impunity, using their cops, military, and other forms of terror to suppress us and keep us in line, so we won’t fight back. Nevertheless homecare workers continue to fight back. Still workers rise!✊





# Green New Deal: Liberal bosses push fascism



The Youth Climate Strike on March 15 brought school walkouts to dozens of countries. Millions have been driven to participate out of disgust with capitalism’s wanton destruction of the natural world. Masses of people took to the streets across Europe, Chile, India, Kenya, South Africa, New Zealand and dozens more countries.

To realize the potential power of the working class to unite and fight for a better world, we will have to free ourselves from the ruling class’ leadership of the climate movement. The environmental movement is being led and promoted by the main wing U.S. bosses and their allies in Europe who are moving towards fascism to hold onto control of their increasingly threatened liberal world order.

These murderers who sit atop the capitalist world, who have plundered the earth while destroying the lives of billions of workers in the process will always and forever sacrifice the environment of the working class to preserve themselves and their power. Only communist workers power can build a society that serves the needs of the working class.

Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez (AOC), in service to Nancy Pelosi and her big capitalist backers, seeks to leverage environmentalism to broaden out the base of support for the main wing of the U.S. ruling class while bringing reluctant politicians into line with the needs of these big fascist U.S. bosses. Ocasio-Cortez’s Green New Deal (GND) is a bid, in the words of its own organizers, to reorganize U.S. society on the basis of permanent wartime mobilization - “The Green New Deal is premised on the realization that America now faces ‘the moral equivalent of war’ in the twin crises of climate change and worsening income inequality.” (newconsensus.org)

This same ruling class that irradiated Japan with nuclear bombs, doused Vietnam with napalm and Agent Orange, and poisoned Iraq with depleted uranium is now asking us to swallow ‘war-time mobilization’ in the name of environmental protection and social justice. They created cancer clusters in Gary, Indiana and offered lead-laced water to the children of Flint. The only class inter-

est the U.S. capitalists have ever pursued are their own.

We have seen this language from Washington liberals before, and it led to decades of war. In reaction to the Arab Oil Embargo that shook U.S. imperialism in the 1970s, Jimmy Carter announced in 1979 that “We must deal with the energy problem on a war footing... [it is] the moral equivalent of war.” Soon thereafter he announced a “Carter Doctrine” which set a policy of exclusive U.S. control of Middle East oil which launched an era of indiscriminate slaughter of Muslim workers from which we have yet to emerge.

The climate politics we see taking shape will be used to discipline politicians who show signs of being out of touch with the bosses urgent need to fundamentally reorganize society in preparation for conflict with rival imperialists. In a cell phone video that went viral on the internet, long-serving and arch-imperialist California senator Diane Feinstein was positively roasted by a gaggle of children and teenagers who visited her office to expose her refusal to sign onto the Green New Deal.

The ‘Sunrise Movement’ that organized the Feinstein flogging, names the Koch Brothers on its main website as a fossil fuel company that has to be targeted for dismantling. Some of the most strident voices in the push for a GND have called for the nationalization of energy firms that refuse to sign on to the program, and have even called for

top executives of these firms to be tried for crimes against humanity (thedig, podcast, 12/27/18).

The more domestically oriented/’Fortress America’/small fascist wing of the U.S. ruling class, typified but not totally led by the Koch brothers, has more leverage in today’s Trump White House than in any other before. The more internationally oriented main wing of the U.S. ruling class must build a political movement to smash their rivals, and environmentalism is shaping up to be a major strategy of these liberal imperialists to do so. Agreements such as the Paris Accords align with the interests of giant gas energy firms whose holdings allow them to isolate equally filthy smaller energy bosses more closely tied to coal interests and other legacy energy production methods:

*For ConocoPhillips and Exxon—as well the non-U.S. oil and gas heavyweights; BP, Royal Dutch Shell, Eni, Total, and Statoil—backing the Paris Agreement is not just riding the trend of increasingly environmentally-conscious businesses. Those companies with operations all over the world stand to benefit from the Paris Agreement because the nations’ efforts to cut carbon emissions will lead to transitioning from coal-fired plants to gas-fired plants. And natural gas is quite a substantial portion of all those majors’ businesses, investments and profits. (oilprice.com ).*

If ‘green tech’ pioneer Tesla is any indication, AOC’s promises of a social-justice oriented and environmentally friendly U.S. capitalism are a pipe dream and the Green New Deal will amount to new corporate welfare schemes benefitting a new ‘green’ ruling class. Enjoying the boost of an estimated \$5bn in federal subsidies Tesla CEO Elon Musk is now valued at \$20bn (and projected to be worth \$55bn) while his firm has recently carried out 7 percent layoffs, amounting to some 3,000 workers (wired.com,1/18) and firings of union organizers in the name of keeping profits high (cnn.com 10/26/17).

Communism is the alternative plan – a planned economy is the only way to get to a sustainable future for all the world’s workers. Only an international dictatorship of the proletariat can eradicate the still-greatest peril: imperialist war.

Only communist workers’ power can

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