

CHALLENGE



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MAY DAY! WORKERS' DAY!



The following is an excerpted speech given by a young woman at the Brooklyn May Day March for Communism.

I am a high school student and I stand in solidarity with the international working class to eradicate this capitalist system, and eventually, fight for worldwide communism.

Capitalism is a system that gets working-class people killed. We are killed from hunger. We are killed by homelessness. We are killed by bombs, drones, and bullets. We are killed by overdose or suicide.

This is not made for me

I have been forced to grow up in a system that was not created for me. Myself and millions of my peers are the future and it is our responsibility to fight for a communist world now because our future is on the line.

Black and Latin high schoolers like me are forced to walk through metal detectors just

to enter school, a long-standing culture of the racist policing of youth. The bosses have money for drones and but they underfund our schools. The Department of Education promotes the corrupt elitist specialized high schools, while kids in smaller mostly Black and Latin schools aren't even given the necessary resources to learn. Students in my building organized a walkout for learning that doesn't force us to be in front of a computer with no help from teachers. As a result, the computer-based learning was removed. The strength in our movement was our unity.

Unity of the working class is unstoppable, and while winning a small victory seems minimal, it not only showed the bosses that we are unafraid, but it also encouraged those who believed that is wasn't worth fighting.

Racist borders

I have a friend who went to a volleyball

tournament out of state with her mom. While waiting at a bus stop, ICE, the immigration police, approached them, demanded ID, and detained her! My friend was born here but her mom is undocumented. Imagine how scared my friend was knowing that there was a possibility that she would never see her mother again. We live in a society that separates innocent families who are escaping the very countries the U.S.

government and their capitalist allies and foes have helped to destroy. Nothing but desperation and love for one's children will cause a parent to make the dangerous journey across a desert, only to risk living in concentration camps or living under the threat of being snatched up like prey. These are the choices under capitalism.

Continued on page 4

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

Sri Lanka: trapped in imperialist rivalry & identity politics

The Easter Sunday church bombings in the island nation of Sri Lanka killed 359 people, injured hundreds more, and terrified the whole population. This attack exposes two lethal dangers for the international working class: on the one hand, ruling-class infighting fueled by inter-imperialist rivals; on the other, the backward, anti-revolutionary ideas of identity politics.

Progressive Labor Party fights for working-class unity, the principle that an injury to one is an injury to all. We fight for a world without racism, sexism, profits, or borders. Join us in a lifetime mission of fighting for the best possible world: communism!

Bosses' infighting kills workers

Much as in the United States and Britain, there are divisions within the capitalist ruling class of Sri Lanka, and workers paid the price. The small-fry terrorist group, National Thowheed Jamath, along with its international affiliate, the Islamic State, has claimed responsibility for this bloody massacre. But Sri Lanka's rulers knew it was coming all along! More than two weeks earlier, Indian intelligence had warned them about the attack (New York Times, 4/22). The bosses responded by distributing a memo to select government officials. You know the ruling class is in disarray when the prime minister is excluded from national security meetings!

But Sri Lanka's problems go far beyond the shameless subjectivity of power-hungry politicians. It is caught in an imperialist crossfire between China, the chief U.S. rival, and India, which is tied to the weakening U.S.-led liberal world order. Both countries have strategic interests in the Indian Ocean. The bosses are following their old wartime axiom: “Whoever rules the waves rules the world.”

While the pro-Western prime minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, appears to align closer to India, President Maithripala Sirisena favors China. “China's projects, backed by loans from its government...have faced opposition in Sri Lanka amid concerns raised by the United States, India and Japan that China might use Sri Lanka as a military base” (Reuters, 7/22/18). Indeed, the strategic Hambantota port and 15,000 acres of land around it now belong to China as part of its One Belt, One Road blueprint for world supremacy.

Bosses use massacre as drill for fascism

The ever-declining U.S. bosses didn't miss a beat. Alongside other allies, they “sent a team of FBI agents and military officials to help Sri Lankan authorities with the ongoing investigation” (ABC News, 4/26). The bosses are using these attacks as practice for the fascist collaboration they'll need in the wars to come.

As illustrated by the 9/11 attacks in the U.S., the Big Terrorist bosses respond to Little Terrorists with more repression and racism against the working class. After the Easter bombings, Sri Lanka's government shut down social media, enforced a curfew, imposed body checks, and banned face coverings. “Even if temporarily, Colombo [the capital] has reverted suddenly to the [civil war] wartime mentality—or even worse. Security forces now stand at every corner, making searches and deploying other measures that were rare even during those days of bloodshed” (NYT, 4/24).

But never fear. Our working-class sisters and brothers will find creative ways to rebel against the harsh oppression of crisis-mode capitalism.

Divide et impera

Sri Lanka is an ethno-religious mash-up: Sinhalese Buddhists, Tamil Hindus, Tamil Christians, Dutch Burghers, and Tamil-speaking Muslims. The church bombing, organized by a Tamil-speaking Muslim terrorist group, is the largest act of sectarian violence since the 26-year-long civil war that ended just ten years ago. That conflict pitted Tamil-speaking Hindu separatists against a government dominated by Sinhala-speaking Buddhists. It left 70,000 dead.

The lesson is that identity politics is a death trap. It is political tribalism organized around the myth of, well, one's “identity.” Organizing based on race, gender, and/or sexuality—anything but class—is a deadly ruling-

class creation. Nowhere is this clearer than in South Asia. The British Empire's policy of “divide et impera” (divide and rule) ignited religious and ethnic hostilities to maintain its profit-generating colonial control. In Sri Lanka, the British bosses systematically pitted Tamil against Sinhalese workers. In India and what is now Pakistan and Bangladesh, the British divided Muslim workers against Hindu and Sikh workers, groups that had coexisted for almost a millennium. In both cases, the result was mass displacement, needless bloodshed, and a loss of class-consciousness.

Modern-day South Asia consists of many countries born out of national liberation struggles. All are run by rapacious oppressors who supposedly share an “identity” with the oppressed.

Identity politics: global poison

The liberal U.S. ruling class built identity politics as a way to steer fighters away from the communist-led anti-imperialist and anti-racist mass movement of the late 1960s. Rooted in the capitalist universities, the “intellectual radicalism of the early [identity politics movement] can be seen as a search for a universalist politics that might take the place of...Marxism” (Harpers Magazine, Sept. 1993).

In the 1980s, a time of open right-wing racism under President Ronald Reagan, the boss-led movement funneled workers' anger into the dead end of electoral politics. “[T]he development of an explicit left-wing identity politics...became the de facto creed of two generations of liberal politicians, professors, schoolteachers, journalists, movement activists and officials of the Democratic Party” (New Statesman, 9/18/2017).

Identity politics hijacks working-class outrage against the bosses' police terror or sexist violence and cynically uses it to build false worker-boss unity. It pushes workers to pursue individual success (you do you, boo!) instead of seeing ourselves as part of one class—our class, the working class.

Frankenstein's monster for the bosses?

In 2016, racist white identity politics—one part reaction to liberal, “multicultural” identity politics, one part reaction to the disaster of capitalism—gave Donald Trump the presidency. As long as the bosses keep us fighting for a society where our oppressors look like us, where unity is only skin-deep, capitalism gets off scot-free.

But with the U.S. bosses now challenged by China and Russia, and in relative decline, they realize they went too far. Identity politics is blocking their push to build pro-U.S. imperialist unity among the workers they previously fought so hard to divide. Meanwhile, small-time fascist bosses in the U.S. and worldwide have seized identity politics to build their own movements, including racist white nationalism, to undermine the main-wing finance capitalists.

Today the U.S. bosses need a more patriotic, “American” form of identity politics to build nationalist allegiance for the inevitable global war to come. The Democratic Party's candidates for president, including a host of women, Black, Latin, and gay politicians, represent this trend. Whatever their differences over policy, all of these misleaders seek to unify workers behind a liberal movement for war and fascism.

But workers are no fools. Time and time again, we see glimmers of genuine, multiracial unity. The worldwide response to the 2014 Ferguson Rebellion endures as a shining star in this dark night.

Workers need internationalism

Along with building all-class unity in the bosses' interests, identity politics sabotages internationalism. As we continue to battle against racism and sexism, we are also fighting for something profound. PLP aspires to win workers to the idea and practice that we have more in common with each other than with any bosses, regardless of the exploiters' gender or the color of their skin. We fight for one world, one class, one Party. Join us as we celebrate the unity of our class on May Day, International Workers' Day! ☘

Why I became a communist

I decided to commit to communism and join the Progressive Labor Party because it was the right thing to do—the progressive thing to do for my family, friends, community, and the earth.

These are loose stats but it feels as though one out of two people I talk to are workers who are tired of working, exhausted by capitalism, not having insurance and drinking Robitussin and other homemade remedies for their colds and ailments because they can't afford to go pay for prescribed medicine.

I'm done with being super-exploited as a Black, queer woman and disgusted with U.S. imperialism and the effects that war and greed has on the Earth's land and atmosphere. I'm done with knowing that we should do better and not acting.

I joined because from Puerto Rico to Jersey, there are food deserts leaving workers stranded with little to no healthy food options or food that's not injected with hormones and making them sick.

I joined because my mother has been on disability for the last 20 years, making a little under \$2,000 a month. She's had a looming cloud of fear to even go back to her former place of employment, the Post Office, because of her past

trauma of being treated like a slave as a mail carrier. I joined because of my father sacrificing his spirit, wasting away emotionally and physically as a NJTransit Bus Driver, working day to night and overworking on his days off and on vacation to provide for my mother and I. Working is the center of his world. The center of his next world is retirement and moving down to a Southern state.

However, more of us want the center of our next world to be different—to not revolve around a potential reward of resting and a pension in exchange for 60 years of labor. Sixty years of not connecting with your family, isolating yourself from your community and only being able to help those closest to you. Sixty years of back and neck injuries, temper flares, trauma, alcoholism and depression.

I joined because my brother, cousin, best friend and many others that I know in Newark and in other parts of New Jersey are limited to low wage jobs at the Post Office, UPS, Amazon and the Newark Airport as their options. The youth know that retirement and a pension is not guaranteed in 40 years. That is no longer a reality for many of us; we don't stay at one job for 40 years but work pay-check to pay-check, working up to five jobs at

the same time. I am no longer okay with knowing better and not doing better.

I joined because I'm fed up with reformism and respectability politics and shaming the poor, working class on whether they vote or not. I'm tired of police brutality and innocent people dying in prisons, I'm tired of street harassment and microaggressions in the work place.

The Progressive Labor Party is passionate and direct about what our struggles are and what we need to do to win and defeat capitalism.

PLP is about struggling, growing, caring for each other and equally critiquing others and ourselves on how to be better for the sake of the world. PLP meets people where they are at and connects our personal problems to a bigger picture of how capitalism is destroying us all. But instead of taking on the problems of capitalism by ourselves or complaining about or making a meme about it here and there, PLP challenges us to work together and destroy capitalism instead.

I'm here for it, I'm dedicated to it and I'm hopeful for the future and the solutions that we put into practice. We know the problems, now let's connect and build towards a new center and a better world. Long live PLP! Long live communism! 🇺🇸

Stop & Shop strike exposes lousy union; inspires all!



BOSTON, MA, April 29—On April 11, Stop & Shop workers at 240 stores went on strike in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut in the first grocery workers' strike in 15 years at the only unionized supermarket chain in New England. Strikers said NO to low wages, attacks on pension plans, ending overtime pay for Sundays and holidays, drastic cuts to health care plans, and reduced hours for part-time workers. Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members and friends walked picket lines at half a dozen stores in Boston and Worcester, urging other workers to support the strike and calling for an end to the capitalist profit system.

This strike was a heroic attack on a huge capitalist company and adds to the encouraging rise of strikes in the U.S. It was nearly 100 percent solid and strongly supported by customers. Stop & Shop lost \$100 million during the 11-day strike, 75 percent of their business. Worker solidarity beat back many company attacks, but workers still remain at semi-starvation wages.

The enemy is capitalism

Stop & Shop is owned by Ahold Delhaize (owner of Food Lion, Hannaford, Martin's, among others), a Dutch corporation with 375,000

employees and stores in 11 countries. Ahold made a \$2 billion profit last year, and is valued at \$23 billion. This is an example of what Karl Marx called "consolidation of capital"—big companies gobble up smaller companies in order to cut costs, and stay competitive against their rivals. This law of capitalist economics can't be changed through laws and regulations, or by working for "better" companies. The profit Stop & Shop made last year averages \$6,000 per worker. In other words, each worker loses 1/4 of their pay to profit the company. Imagine, giving up 1/4 of your (already low) paycheck to make wealthy shareholders even richer—and it's all legal under capitalism! That's why we need a revolutionary change to a system of communism, where workers run society and profits and exploitation are illegal.

Undemocratic union sold out part-time workers

A Stop & Shop worker in Worcester, MA said workers at her store are angry: "We went on strike for all the workers. But there are no union meetings, and part-time workers got almost nothing." Union leaders told workers to go back to work before they even saw or had a chance to vote on the new contract. Seventy-five percent of Stop &

Shop workers are part-time, and their average pay averages \$12.75/hour. Many who work 30 hours a week have no health or retirement benefits. Many part-time workers had their hours cut in the last few months, with no promise of getting their old hours back. The lowest-paid workers got only a 25-cent raise. The worst part of the contract is the "two-tier" system: new hires get lower wages, pensions, and benefits than current workers, dividing them from the better-paid full-time and longer-serving workers.

Striker's fight inspired other workers

The strikers faced a tough battle as Stop & Shop kept some stores open using management as scabs. The company also used workers from prison-release programs as scabs, at much higher pay than most employees! The strikers weren't allowed to even talk with workers, such as security, who are not part of the union, making it harder to spread the strike. The police sided with the company, not letting strikers at some stores block driveways to keep shoppers from crossing the picket line. And the union, United Food and Commercial Workers, only gave \$100 a week in strike benefits.

Strike support spread

Many workers from other trades supported this strike. Teamsters, or truck drivers refused to make food deliveries. At one picket line, 25 members of the steelworkers union—some recently locked out by gas company NSTAR for demanding a labor contract—showed up and militantly confronted shoppers. Members of other unions (teachers, electrical and construction workers) also walked the picket lines. PLP members visited picket lines, and gave out strike support leaflets in English and Spanish and CHALLENGE newspapers. Politicians such as Joe Biden and Elizabeth Warren showed up, hoping for votes, but it was working class solidarity that won the day, bringing strikes as workers' strongest weapon back into the consciousness of the working class of New England.

Let's also bring the ideas of workers' power and communist revolution into the consciousness of workers everywhere. 🇺🇸

Fight for communism; our future is on the line

Continued from page 1

Luckily, my friend knew that she could rely on the working class. She called the director of the volleyball club, who then called on coaches. They all went back to get them. They avoided a disaster at least for now. This is what millions of working people in this country and around the world have to deal with just to try and provide for their families. Politicians can't solve this problem. It's up to us to change the world.

Racist police

We live in a society which allows racist police to kill innocent Black men and women. We must remember that every person killed has family who loves them. For Shantel Davis, Kiki Grey, Kyam Livingston, Tyrone West, for too many other names we must continue to fight because their voices were ripped from them by these killer cops. These same cops whose job it is to scare protestors or strikers, to keep the working class in constant fear so that they don't rebel.

Voting doesn't work

The bosses infect us with the wrong idea that voting the "bad bosses out" is the way to get this. This false idea that the U.S. was moving in the right direction was enforced when the first Black president was elected. Obama continued to do the dirty work of the men before him. His administration deported more people than any other president, dropped over 12,000 bombs on Syria in his presidency and did nothing to fight racism like many believed he would.

Donald Trump's open, vicious, anti-immigrant racism is a big attack on our class. Communists reject the bosses' fake borders, made to keep us divided. Our solidarity knows no boundaries.

We are given "socialist leaders" like Bernie

Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez as an alternative. But they still want to keep the capitalism in place; the same system that was built on slavery, segregation, and war. Their main job is to fool people into thinking that we have finally found a fix. The rulers are preparing us for a future of war. The U.S. wants us to fight people as young as me in China and Russia.

Fight back

In Oakland, Los Angeles, Chicago, West Virginia and other cities, teachers, students, and parents went on strike, demanding better learning and working conditions.



Haiti: Tens of thousands rebelled against the government for mispending government funds instead of using it to help lessen poverty.

India: Over 150 million workers took part in a national general strike.

Central America: Workers marched to the border of the U.S. breaking down the illusions of borders along the way, only to be met with pepper spray, beatings and arrests. But other workers showed up in support.

Workers need communism to win

When workers come together we can overcome the elaborate plan that bosses created to oppress us. History has shown that under communist leadership, despite many weaknesses, working-class unity benefits our class.

After the revolution in Cuba, middle class city kids were sent off into rural areas to teach kids as young as seven taught people who had never learned to read or write. In 1962, Cuba had one of the highest numbers of literate people in the western hemisphere.

Yet, teens like me are told we shouldn't be involved because these concepts are too complicated. Still, we continue to be exposed to racism and sexism during early childhood, we are overpoliced in schools, segregated and separated based on our academic performance; that is what we are too young for!

We want a future where children don't have to deal with racism, sexism, homophobia, capitalism, imperialism, and fascism. That future is communism. We will not tolerate anything but the best for the international working class!✊

See full speech at www.plp.org

'I always felt communism was natural to me'

I joined the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) for many reasons. Most importantly it was my shared hatred for the way things are currently governed under the capitalist catastrophe, in combo with the harsh realities of being a Black worker forced to live under this racist system. A woman PL'er introduced me to communist ideas. I began revealing to her things that bothered me about our existence as Black people and how our lives aligned with others around the world, and she helped me realize the ways in which my thought processes aligned with party's line.

My family has been fighting against police and the racist system since I was a child. Watching my family fight with such frequency has made the police the enemy in my eyes. I can recall memories of waking up with guns in our faces, as the police would kick in my grandmother's door looking for her sons, my uncles, to lock them up. In addition to my hate for this decaying system and its KKKOPS, there was always this sense of disbelief that stirred in me whenever I listened to politicians talking.

I watched how Demopublicans or Republicrats,

whichever party they claim to be, don't really care about you and me. Yet they terrorize and deprive, working people, especially Black workers of the basic rights they claim to protect.

I would always laugh at their promises of equality, and justice. It was this and my experiences of being a Black man in the U.S., as well as observing the experiences of my working class brothers and sisters that uncovered these lies to me early on in life.

When I returned to Puerto Rico in April with the brigade of comrades from New York and New Jersey to affirm our solidarity with the island's residents, I was able to see my values put in practice. There were six of us from the original 25 members of last year's summer project. We revisited the school in Toa Baja and found out that the school had been reopened because of petition efforts by the local parents and teacher organizations. To see parents, teachers, and workers from the community defy the island bosses, occupy the school, and turn it into a community center was supremely powerful for me to witness. It makes me want to get more involved! It showed me

that like Black workers, Puerto Rican workers have a resiliency and determination that I admire. They keep fighting no matter how hard they get knocked down.

To be able to do this type of work has developed my awareness of class-consciousness; the same things they are doing to you, they are doing to me. We are in the same class and if we struggle together we can win.

Moreover, my newfound camaraderie with PLP members helped shape my creative process as a filmmaker/documentarian, such that it enabled me to use my craft as a vessel for communicating anti-racist and communist values.

PLP gave me a whole new perspective for understanding the world, and the way capitalism is constantly contorting, shape-shifting and creating new ways to distort our reality, and create unnatural divisions amongst workers. Best of all, the most exciting part of being a communist is the way it makes me feel, more alive as opposed to just living or existing. Looking back I always felt like communism was natural to me.✊

May Day Greetings from Colombia

Colombia—As we prepare for May Day, the International Worker's holiday, when millions of workers around the world will march to celebrate the history of struggle against the terrorist capitalist system with its crisis of its over production, competition for maximum profits, and capitalist rivalries, that threaten a new imperialist world war.

Members of Progressive Labor Party (PLP) in Colombia would like to send all workers, comrades, friends and supporters of PLP around the globe, militant and warm greetings. With each passing May Day it becomes abundantly clear that the boss' democracy does not work for the benefit of the working class, and it cannot be reformed. Thus the capitalist system and its bankrupt democracy must be destroyed by worker's power.

Capitalism creates a world where countless women, men, and children die by the millions because of poverty, incurable illnesses, racist killings at the hands of the bosses police and military, and environmental poisoning. Horrible conditions such as unemployment, wage slavery, sexism and war, do not automatically make workers communists, nor do they breed a revolutionary consciousness. It is only when millions of oppressed workers gain class consciousness, the understanding of the enemy capitalism, and make the decision to fight and



unite as a single class. This must be done under the revolutionary leadership of a party. Only then can we overthrow this rotten system.

On this special day we make a call to our comrades, and workers around the world to strengthen ourselves in the face of adversity. More than ever we need to develop and disseminate the revolutionary line of the PLP. We must always strive to self criticize our mass work, and look for ways to build a stronger party, using the dialectical principles (the science of class struggle), of quality and quantity. We need to be part of the class struggle even more, be creative,

constant and scientific, showing once again that revolution is possible. Unlike the mobster politicians and revisionist crooks who say that these are illusions or things of the past, that revolutionary struggles are obsolete. Nevertheless, we must fight united against our exploiters, and reject class collaboration.

On this May Day a contingent of the PLP in more than a dozen countries will march along with workers, students and soldiers showing the revolutionary potential of our class. We march with only one interest, destroying the capitalist system with communist revolution, and building a world where production and distribution will satisfy every workers needs. A world where workers are in charge of their own destinies. Everything we do will be for the communist cause.

Here in Colombia we organize and lead the struggle to defend our class brothers and sisters, to try to build up our ranks with our literature and win workers to our revolutionary message. We fight to make our presence known in political, worker and student meetings. Comrades of the world lets charge towards international communist revolution, we fight to establish the proletariat dictatorship. Dark night will have its end, with a new and glorious communist dawn. ☺

Oakland celebrates May Day

OAKLAND—Progressive Labor Party comrades and friends held our annual May Day dinner tonight for the Bay Area and the Davis/Sacramento area. In the tradition of this workers' holiday, we gathered in solidarity with the international working class to celebrate many struggles over the past year that have developed multi-racial, multi-generational, working-class unity.

This unity was in full display among the 60-plus participants at our event. It was set up and moderated to encourage active participation from everyone. There were "Question and Answer" and "table talk sessions", as well as poetry. We made plans to participate in various May Day activities such, as the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) shut down of the Oakland Port and a coalition march. We ended with singing the working-class anthem, The Internationale, and a collective clean-up of the room.

Reflecting on anti-racist struggles

Two major anti-racist, anti-capitalist struggles were reported on during the dinner. The first of these was the Oakland teachers' strike, with its militant demands and actions that united the needs of teachers, students, and families against capitalism's systematic, racist dismantling of public education for the working class. The bosses' attacks affect all levels of education, from preschool to the university level. The speakers highlighted the outpouring of working-class unity and rank-and-file teacher initiative during the strike (See CHALLENGE, 3/24).

The next topic of discussion was the fightback of immigrant workers with Temporary Protected Status (TPS). Close to a million workers and their families from 13 countries face deportation and the separation of their families. Many have been living and working in the U.S. for more than 20 years contributing taxes to Medicare and

Social Security but barred from collecting any benefits.

The theme was the racist, anti-immigrant worker attacks on TPS holders, and how they come from the failing economic system's attempt to blame one set of workers for the problems faced by others as the system falls apart.

The speaker emphasized that this is not an attack just on immigrants, but that it is designed to undermine working-class consciousness and solidarity. It's an attack on the whole working class. A spontaneous chant of "power to the working class" followed this speech.

"Table talk" contrasts capitalist reforms with communist revolution

A table talk was structured to discuss how reforms are related to capitalism, such as the democratic socialism of Bernie Sanders, but also the revolutionary socialism after the armed revolutions that took place in 20th century in China and Russia, and we also discussed PLP's goal of egalitarian, worker-run communism. These topics gave people the opportunity to reflect on the role of armed struggle, force and violence during workers' fightback against capitalism and for revolution. Many spoke from personal experience of struggles around the world and in the U.S.

We reviewed the accomplishments, mistakes, and areas to improve in past struggles of the communist movement. Many said this must be an ongoing part of our political education as we develop our movement. Coming out of this collective energy and successful May Day dinner, the future is bright. ☺

Comments from attendees

"I'm a student just starting out dealing with this world. The dinner was a tremendously empowering experience, to know about and interact with comrades, and to hear them speak about their unique experiences and opinions. The air of welcoming was something hard to find elsewhere and there should be many more events like it."

"As a TPS holder, it was a great pleasure at the May Day dinner to see young people engage in critical thinking and talking about the issue of violence and the TPS. I'm happy our new generation is so engaged."

"I loved it...I appreciated the speeches and the food. The moderators really set the tone... people were free to listen and free to speak."

"The comradely respect and consideration people showed for each other's opinions was truly moving."

"It was great to see young people and older people together...talking from different perspectives... Lots of new faces."

"The feelings and emotions of workers' solidarity were front and center. I loved the passion... especially how we could live very differently when humans could achieve our full potential in a communist world."

"Fantastic event, I'm glad I decided to stay the whole time. It was truly communist from sharing food to discussing revolution."

"It was a potpourri—people of all ages, all backgrounds, traditions, geography. After the discussion about revolutions, I talked with my brother later that night. I explained that non-violent revolution is an oxymoron, you can't hold power if you can't catch it... you got to take it from the rulers."

"As someone who is 77, started work at 15 and who, for a short period of time, experienced when working people got a few gains, I see that now the system is taking it all back and then some. That time is never coming back for the working class. Capitalism as a system has got to go and you need a Party to do that... I invite people to join PLP to build for a better world."

LETTERS

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

Track workers discuss Black nationalism

Hurricane Katrina struck the southern states of the U.S. in August 2005. It drastically affected New Orleans mostly due to the racist neglect by former president Bush. Not only were the levees unprepared for the smallest of hurricanes, but after the levees broke and the neighborhood known as the 9th Ward, where mainly Black workers lived, was underwater, it took Bush four days to send aid. Nearly two thousand workers died as a result of the hurricane overall (CNN, 8/30, 2018).

A few weeks ago, at the end of the workday with my fellow subway track workers, a gang of seven sat to eat our lunch in the lunchroom where we engaged in a conversation about hurricane Katrina, which then evolved into a full discourse about racism, crime and the “buy Black” strategy.

A co-worker passed around a poem he had written about hurricane Katrina, which explained the racist, vicious ways those workers were killed. Another co-worker reacted to the poem by saying, “Yeah, that’s when we saw all those people out there looting!” I countered, “Those people were just trying to survive!”

I told him that his position on what happened in New Orleans is racist. Still he persisted, saying, “Why is it always Black folk out there committing crimes like this, burning their own communities and such? Why can’t Black people come together, instead of tearing each other down?”

The co-worker who wrote the poem agreed it was wrong to loot. I explained it’s racist to describe the survivors as “looters” and “criminals.” These terms were only used because it was Black people who were out there doing whatever they could to survive; also how the so called phenomenon of “Black-on-Black-Crime” is only defined as such when Black people are doing it, as if no other group commits “crime” against members of the same race. The rulers use these tactics to distract us from the real criminals. They keep the working class from fighting racism and teach us instead to blame the victims—to blame the poor for living in poverty—to blame the dead for dying.

My poet co-worker agreed with me and told us of his involvement in mass demonstrations after the murder of Amadou Diallo, in 1999. Amadou was a Black man who was murdered in front of his building by kkkops who fired 41 times, claiming his wallet was a gun. He said, “We need to band together like we did then.”

I agreed, “But not just with Black workers but with all other members of the working class,” I said.

My other co-worker countered, “If Black people band together and put their money in a business, they could make their own community.”

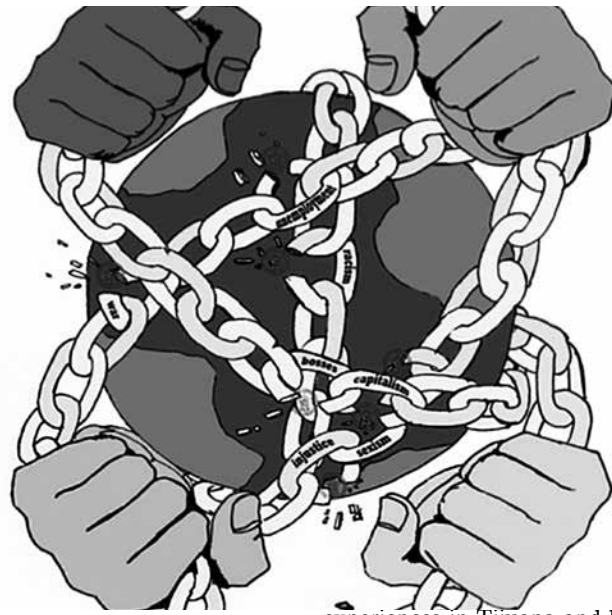
I said, “Buying Black only helps the Black capitalist, not the Black working class. The very idea of buying Black was pushed by Nixon in order to guarantee Black workers’ support of capitalism, and to move them far away from any real revolutionary action. We cannot trust any of these rulers Democrat and Republicans alike.

A third co-worker, who had hardly spoken before, said, “You surely got some weird ideas,” as he left the lunchroom. I asked him if he had ever seen or heard of any time when Black capitalists ever changed things for Black people? He said, “No.”

I said, “There are many stories of workers running society based on need and not profit.” Someone else walked into the lunchroom then, who we didn’t fully trust. We shook hands out of respect and agreed to continue this debate later.

This debate was a good step forward in struggling with co-workers on the job. It really taught me who my friends are and exposed ideas that need to be challenged. This argument helped me sharpen my ideas, and reminded me of the ways the ruling class has taught us racism and nationalism. Both are a dead-end for workers. I may not have won anyone to communism today, but I’ve planted a few seeds for my co-workers to think about, to band together as a class and not with the bosses. It’s up to us to remind workers of our class history of fighting back and lay the seeds for a communist future.

★★★★★



Union border study group builds international solidarity

In April, our union held the second meeting of our study group on Borders. The group grew out of our participation in the New Sanctuary Coalition’s (NSC) mobilization to greet and welcome the 7,000 men, women and children on the Central American Caravan as it reached the Tijuana/San Diego border. Trump and millions of racists had vilified the refugees, but we defied them and joined the NSC call to “End All Borders”. In the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) we say that only getting rid of capitalism with a communist revolution can eliminate borders.

The meeting was attended by 15 union members, four of whom had been to the border. The age range went from 25-75, more than half were women and included young journalists from Greece and Turkey. A woman journalist who covers events in Africa chaired the meeting and led the discussion on our two readings. One was the *New Yorker* piece by Jelani Cobb on white supremacy and the New Zealand Mosque massacres. The second was a piece on how mass resistance to the Fugitive Slave Act helped lead to the Civil War and the end of slavery. It pointed out that cities that defended and embraced enslaved people who had fled their oppressors were known as Sanctuary Cities, much like today.

The discussion was wide-ranging covering specific

experiences in Tijuana and linking the thousands of refugees there to the 65 million refugees world-wide, a situation created by the wars and terror of worldwide imperialism and the “fruits” of the racist profit system.

A Black writer had suggested the reading on the Fugitive Slave Act because he felt that there was not enough support among Black people for the refugees. He said if people saw the links between this mass current migration and the mass migration of enslaved Black workers at the time of the Civil War, there could be more unity.

He reflected the problems and frustrations of building this movement. He said that white workers won’t support this because they feel threatened by the refugees and Black workers won’t support it because they are fighting for their lives. He also said “it’s not workers who are going to the border, but people with college educations.” Looking around this room, he had a point. Basically, he was asking the central question: Can workers in the U.S. be won to fight for international solidarity across all borders?

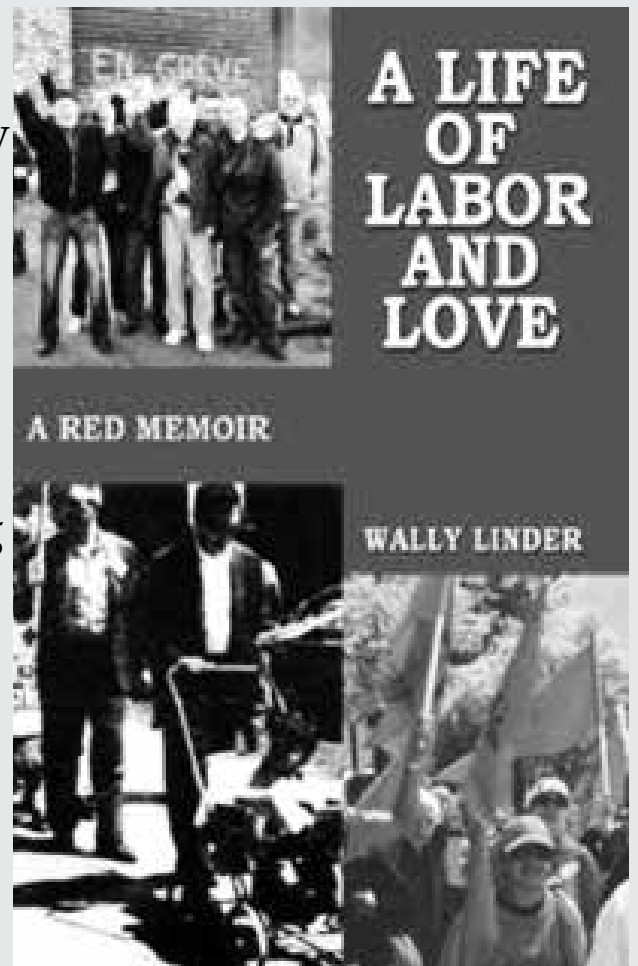
This has set the stage for our next meeting, to be held after May Day. As a step toward building this international solidarity, we will try to get as many study group members as possible to march with the Progressive Labor Party on May Day in Brooklyn.

★★★★★

A Red memoir: A life of Labor and Love

A memoir from Wally Linder who helped found the Progressive Labor Party.

For a copy, send \$16 for the book (plus \$4 for shipping and handling) and your address via PayPal to wallylinder5230@gmail.com



Delivery workers demand Sage restaurant serve justice

BROOKLYN, April 30 – Early this month delivery workers made a brave decision to stage a protest and work stoppage against their racist bosses at Sage, a Thai restaurant in the Williamsburg neighborhood. These mostly Latin and immigrant workers had been meeting with a Bushwick-based community organization, in which Progressive Labor Party (PLP) is active. The racist bosses at Sage have stolen \$500,000 in back pay from their workers (Eater New York, 4/3). The workers are also seeking paid overtime and sick leave. Capitalism exists to extract profits from all workers, and superprofits from our class' most vulnerable members. These working class fighters are starting to realize they have the power to change their condition. PLP is working to move them even further, to fight for a world free from all exploitation—communism.

Racist owner panics

The protesters were chanting both inside and outside the restaurant as delivery workers spoke and publicized their demands. The owner, who had been absent up to this point, was forced to come in and cancel all deliveries. We rallied for about three hours. While the scared owner was talking to the lawyers, we forced him to agree to sit down with the workers and their lawyers at a later date to discuss the demands.

We also warned the owner he could not take reprisals against any of the workers, including those inside the restaurant, such as the cooks and busboys, who also joined the stoppage.

Reclaiming the fightback

The event's success speaks to a resurgence of militancy in the organization. In recent years,



liberals have infiltrated and transformed the neighborhood organization into a political lobbying group, pushing a legal strategy in the state legislature and backing certain politicians.

In the past, PLP members and their friends were able to fight for, and organize, direct on-the-job protests. Then, organization members had a place to come to discuss their workplace problems, ask for help and make a plan of action. They would organize rallies and make demands of the owners/bosses of the workplace, threatening to take them to court if they didn't pay back stolen wages to the workers.

Nowadays, the only actions that get done are when the organization's lawyers file cases with the Department of Labor. These can take years to

get solved. Sometimes they go nowhere. Liberals talk a big game about workers' rights, but they're toothless when it comes to real action.

In the last year, we have demanded that the leaders of this community organization take direct action again, and actually confront the owners/bosses like before. This push resulted in the April 1 action.

Reflections

Workers were excited and pleased with the action. We discussed the need to continue to raise workers' consciousness in the fightback against the bosses. Actions like these when multiplied are what prepare the working class for the most important fight ahead of us: communist revolution.



RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from the capitalist press that may be of use for our readers.
NYT=New York Times
GW= Guardian Weekly

England: The one percent owns half the land – Queen gets \$900K in aid

NYT, 4/20 — Land ownership in England, a source of enormous wealth...is a culture...harking back to the Middle Ages....

Less than 1 percent of the population — including aristocrats, royals and wealthy investors — owns about half of the land....Many...inherited the property as members of families that have held it for generations — even centuries....

In England, home to about 56 million people, half the country belongs to just 25,000 landowners....

Real estate prices in England are among the highest in Europe....

In Britain, land accounted for half of the country's net worth....

...For the last 30 to 40 years, landowners have enjoyed enormous unearned income windfall gains at a faster rate than wages....

"There is nothing that the landowners have done to earn those incomes," said [the research head at the Institute for Innovation]...which has put aristocrats, the royal family and wealthy investors among the top recipients of taxpayer-funded aid.

Queen Elizabeth II's estate...received...aid in 2017 [of] more than \$900,000....

...Too high a concentration of agricultural land...destabilizes rural areas, [and] threatens food safety.

5 years later: Flint's water still toxic

NYT, 4/26 — On April 25, 2014, a group of smiling officials in Flint, Mich., toasted the switch to the city's new water source, the Flint River.

"Here's to Flint!"...the mayor said....

Almost immediately Flint residents began telling their elected officials that...the water... smelled terrible, tasted like metal and seemed to give them skin rashes....

...Flint officials had failed to add needed corrosion controls to the river water. Lead from the city's old pipes leached into the water, causing alarmingly high lead levels in the blood of many residents....

In Flint, the water crisis is by no means in the past.

"It's a community that's still dealing with the trauma and the aftermath of being poisoned at the hands of the government."

"It's one huge nightmare piled on top of another one," Ms. [Melissa] Mays said....

"We're back to where we first started, where we're yelling and screaming," Ms. Mays said....

Officials had failed to warn residents of known risks and allowed their desire to save money...to come before the safety of water.

Still, five years later, no one has been sentenced to prison time.

China's capitalism: workers battle 72-hour work-week; bosses say "it's an honor"

GW, 4/19, — Chinese tech employers have pushed back against a wave of protest over the industry's long hours, known as the "996" schedule of working from 9 am to 9 pm, six days a week.

For months,...employees had been posting evidence of unpaid, often compulsory or heavily encouraged overtime....Jack Ma, founder of Alibaba, one of the companies...forcing overtime on employees, has defended Alibaba's long hours.... He called the 996 schedule "a huge blessing" and said workers should consider it an honor rather than a burden. "If you join Alibaba, you should get ready work 12 hours a day...But they forbid Marx and Lenin

Rank-and-file workers...have other

ideas.

NYT,4/30 — They are organizing online against...the 996 culture....

Unusually for China --- where independent labor unions are banned.....the movement is gaining traction....

The Chinese government feels compelled to react.That means no strikes and no demonstrations....References to Marx and Lenin are forbidden. The philosophies of communism's leading lights often run contrary to the way China is run today....Written across the bottom of the 996.ICU group's home page: "Developers' lives matter."

Pills can't fix capitalist conditions that lead people to suicide

NYT, 4/26—As doctors, we want to help people, and it can be hard for us to admit when our tools are limited. Antidepressants may seem like an obvious solution...while nearly one in 10 Americans uses antidepressants, there is very little convincing evidence to show that they reduce suicide.

This is because many of the problems that lead to suicide can't be fixed with a little extra serotonin. Antidepressants can't supply employment or affordable housing, repair relationships with family members or bring on sobriety... Mental health providers perpetuate the narrative that suicide is preventable, if patients and family members just follow the right steps...

The implication is that the help is there, just waiting to be sought out.But it is not that easy. Good outpatient psychiatric care is hard to find, hard to get into and hard to pay for. Inpatient care is reserved for the most extreme cases, and even for them, there are not enough beds...We need to address the root causes of our nation's suicide problem — poverty, homelessness and the accompanying exposure to trauma, crime and drugs. That means better alcohol and drug treatment, family counseling, low-income housing resources, job training and individual therapy.

Democratic socialism: Basis for wider war



Progressive Labor Party
52 Years
27 Countries
5 Continents
1 Class
1 Party

The next U.S. president will inherit the task of maintaining U.S. imperialism's blood-soaked world leadership. The long-term trends of U.S. imperialist decline and Chinese imperialist ascendancy makes for an ever-more volatile world situation.

The working class is faced with choosing between following one set of bosses or another as they spend our class' lives killing each other in war for their power and benefit, or the best option building a revolutionary communist movement to smash capitalism once and for all with revolution.

Sooner or later regional war will explode into major war requiring a military draft. The task the bosses will demand of the next U.S. president will be to win over U.S. workers to sacrifice, for U.S. youth to die and to build a mass fascist movement to force the smaller fascist U.S. bosses to fund wider war.

While not the bosses' first choice, it may turn out that Bernie Sanders ends up as the person the U.S. rulers rely on to do the job. In his most recent foray into foreign policy he sold himself by pointing to Trump's abrupt pullout from Syria: that Trump's impulsive unilateral action "left our international partners blindsided and questioning U.S. leadership" (sanders.senate.gov, Jan 2019).

For Sanders, as well as for the most established wing of the U.S. ruling class, preserving the U.S. bosses position in the world is key—everything else comes after that. Sanders' democratic socialism will spawn a more dangerous imperialism because his strategy of binding the youth more closely to a reformed capitalism is the glue U.S. rulers hope will hold society together in the event of a draft.

Current congressional efforts to discipline Trump over the Saudi war in Yemen have given Bernie the platform to make the case that war ought to be waged with the broad support of the U.S. populace of which congressional approval is symbolic.

**Sanders' record:
reliable war strategist**

Over the years Bernie's role as the voice for winning workers and students to support war becomes clear— since the 1990s his votes against war have been interspersed with votes to fund war (votesmart.org). He voted to support Clinton's regime change and sanctions targeted at Iraq in 1998, for the 2001 Authorization of Force resolution that opened the War on Terror and in 2009 voted to keep Guantanamo Bay open. In 2016 Sanders supported Obama's escalation of U.S. ground forces in Syria (thehill.com 4/26/16).

**Sander's role: winning youth to
nationalism and capitalism**

The average age of a Sander's donor is 30 (NYT Feb. 25), a segment of the population who were still kids on September 11, 2001, who have lived

with war their entire lives. These youth saw their loved ones thrown out of work after the 2008 financial crisis while war spending expanded and they are disillusioned with U.S. imperialism. U.S. workers over 30 are far more likely to say that the "U.S. stands above all other countries in the world" than to say "[t]here are other countries that are better than the U.S." but among those under 30, the latter view predominates two to one (Atlantic Magazine, 2/21/19). A military draft cannot be imposed on young people with such a view of the world, but a draft is precisely what will be needed in any war with great-power rivals.

The dean of Harvard's business school Nitin Nohria put the problem for U.S. rulers bluntly: "We—as a school that has often been associated with business, which is closely associated with capitalism—need to ask 'what can we do to make sure that society's trust in capitalism remains strong and can be rebuilt?'" Less than half of people aged 18-29 had a positive view of capitalism in 2018, a 12 percentage point decline in the past two years, and Nohria says that "the school's largest area of concern remains addressing underlying distrust in the United States' economic framework." (Harvard Crimson, 4/3).

Sander's position is to offer a way for the bosses to win the support of the working class to fascism and war, but it will be expensive for U.S. bosses to live up to the packet of reforms Bernie has put forward. A massive reform program will also require mobilizing millions of workers to fight for it. The possibility of losing control of that kind of movement scares the ruling class and tempers their support for a Sanders victory.

Sanders' programs are also the basis for mobilizing the working class around the main wing positions of disciplining the ruling class and raising taxes on the capitalists to fund their war. The bosses recognize that a civil war or at least a civil reckoning with the more domestically oriented smaller fascists needs mass support in order for the big main wing fascists to win. The big rulers are hoping Sanders' programs can suck workers into fighting for the big fascists.

Pete Buttigieg and Joe Biden are putting

forward discounted, less risky versions of the Sanders program. Kamala Harris and other female candidates embody a strategy of 'representation' where identity politics would serve as the glue that binds the nation together in the event of a draft. All agree U.S. bosses leadership in the world is key.

**Sander's foreign policy: mass
support for U.S. imperialism**

Instead of international terrorism Sanders sees an 'authoritarian axis' as the new threat—with Russia's Vladimir Putin figuring prominently in it (Bernie Sanders, speech at Johns Hopkins University, October 2018). Sanders says if war with Russia 'becomes necessary' he is 'not afraid' (feelthebern.org). In supporting a tighter arms embargo on China in 2005 and repeatedly railing today against China as the source of U.S. workers' worsening standards of living. Sanders hitches his supporters to a program of U.S. nationalism that serves the interests of U.S. rulers keen on coming out ahead in rivalry with their main foes.

Venezuela reveals the Sanders gambit—pose as anti-war now while building a base for wider war in the future. In tune with mass resentment of U.S. imperialism Bernie has spoken out clearly against military intervention at this time, calling it a mistake. He has called for new elections as the best way to dump Maduro. Sanders is willing to go so far as to remind his listeners of the long list of U.S. interventions in Latin America that have built hostility to U.S. capitalism over generations. Reducing this hostility to U.S. capitalism —not challenging capitalism itself—is what Sanders seeks to achieve. Bernie is in effect saying that recognition of the past misdeeds of the U.S. ruling class is essential to building confidence in this same ruling class' capacity to lead society in the future. The choices confronting our class are following the bosses onto the killing fields around the world or fighting for a worker's led communist society. Progressive Labor Party's May Day marches and more represent the ongoing communist confidence that the working class can and must seize power and lead society. Let's build on the successes of May Day 2019 and make May Day 2020 the best political choice workers can make!🇺🇸

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