KENOSHA, WISCONSIN, August 26—When police fired seven shots into Jacob Blake in the back while his three children watched, workers and youth in Kenosha erupted in rebellion. As they should.

U.S. capitalism’s defenders, the police, have once again proven themselves to be a terrorist force that must be abolished. To do so, the rebels need communist politics and revolution.

Some antiracists, including Progressive Labor Party, have learned from the protests that tumbled in every U.S. city following the recent police murders of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta and Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky. One such lesson is that nothing scares the rulers more than multiracial unity and Black leadership from the working class. As CHALLENGE goes to press, PLP is bringing solidarity to the bold Kenosha fighters (see next issue).

Jacob Blake’s Kenosha

Sheskey shot Jacob. The other bad cop that aided in this attempted murder was Luke Courter, a cop known for posting, “It was a good shot” about the 2014 police murder-by-14-shots of Dontre Hamilton, a Black man with schizophrenia. The racist kkkops paralyzed Jacob from the waist down after one of the seven bullets severed his spinal cord, shattered some of his vertebrae, and damaged his stomach, kidneys, and liver. The racist trauma these police caused to Jacob, his family, and children is unforgivable.

Jacob’s family has a pro-working class history; his grandfather was a pastor who fought for fair housing in the 1960s and 1970s. When they moved to Kenosha, it was to start over. Kenosha was an auto-manufacturing center for a century until the capitalist crisis led workers to lose their livelihoods. As of 2019, nearly 20 percent of workers live in official poverty. Police chief Daniel Miskinis’s goons are known for drawing guns for something as small as a routine traffic stop. Routine systemic racism and the decay of U.S. capitalism seem to be on full display in this city.

Two repulsive ruling class responses

The Small Fascist Republicans are openly appealing to racist police terror and Klan-type vigilantism, an ideology that led a white 17-year-old, Kyle Howard Rittenhouse, to shoot and kill protesters in Kenosha with a rifle. A country that alienates Black, Latin, and immigrant workers has little chance in galvanizing those same people to defend U.S. imperialism against rivals like China (see page 4). This is the motivation behind the Big Fascists’ response.

The Big Fascists, the main finance capitalists of the ruling class, wasted no time in co-opting protests and sending out their apologists. Opportunist Al Sharpton spoke with Jacob’s father, who will now speak at Sharpton’s March on Washington commemoration on Friday. Liberal Joe Biden, hoping to be elected president in two months, said the police shots “pierce the soul of our nation.” This is the same man who wrote the bipartisan 1994 Crime Bill that intensified the war on Black and Latin workers. This is just one of several laws that Biden helped
As Colombia’s “Democratic Center” ruling party and its liberal opposition intensify their capitalist dogfight to control Colombia’s nearly $250 billion GDP (U.S.) from the World Bank to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, millions of workers and their families have been left infected, jobless, and hungry. The masses lack access to the most basic medical services to detect and treat the coronavi- rus. Nor are they getting the economic aid sup- posedly set aside for sickened workers. Instead, the money is often by known criminal organiza- tions that terrorize the country with deadly vio- lence against workers.

To protect the bosses’ profits, the govern- ment led by President Ivan Duque has ordered the reopening of production to stimulate their econ- omic recovery. Meanwhile, the liberal and fake- left opposition backs the five-month, ineffective nationwide quarantine, demanding that people stay home while ignoring a growing wave of star- vation. As workers hang red distress flags and rag- s from their windows, the government does nothing to solve “the food crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic” (Revista Semana, 4/13).

Against this panorama of corruption, neglect, brutality, and bald-faced lies, the Progressive La- bor Party (PLP) is fighting alongside the working class in Colombia. We are constantly looking for ways to attack racism and sexism, hunger and slave labor, individualism and reformism—to eradicate the pandemic of capitalism. As the inter-imperialist rivalry for markets, natural re- sources, and cheap labor intensifies, the world- wide Covid-19 crisis is also an opportunity for the working class to advance its struggle to organize a mass revolutionary communist movement, smash the bosses’ system, and establish an egalitarian society run by and for workers.

Vaccine, imperialism and cardboard coffins

According to official statistics, the pandemic has killed more than 18,000 people in Colombi- a, with more than 100,000 new cases reported each day (worldometers.info). Given the extreme shortage of testing, the real death toll is doubtless much higher. Funeral homes are so overwhelmed that a team of Colombian designers developed a cardboard hospital bed that converts into a cof- fin (guardian.com, 5/27). Many of the dead are migrant workers, who are even more vulnerable to the pandemic after losing their jobs. They are evicted and end up living in the streets, with no physical distancing, adequate nourishment, electricity, medicine, or even drinkable water.

Despite the collapse of the country’s health care system, the U.S.-leaning government has rejected a Cuban medical mission, healthcare supplies from China, and the possibility of a fu- ture vaccine from Russia. As the race to create a vaccine and control its distribution has created a new inter-imperialist battleground between the U.S., Britain, China, and Russia, deadly national- ism is moving the world closer to the next global conflict. As always under capitalism, there will be winners and losers. Poorer, super-exploited workers (not just in Colombia, but in Latin America, and Africa) will likely be left to fend for them- selves. Since public health is a global propisi- tion, and viruses know no borders, asollyk & Bowen noted in The Tragedy of Vaccine National- ization (2020), the competition “is not only morally and ethically reprehensible, but also contrary to every country’s economic, strategic, and health interests.” As long as capitalist science is an in- strument for profit, the biggest losers in this race will be the workers of the world.

Liberals unleash killer cops

The Colombian bosses’ knives are out—for each other as well as for the working class. On Au- gust 4, ex-President Alvaro Uribe, the Democratic Center party founder, was placed under house arrest for bribery while being involved in fascist paramilitary death squads (npr.org, 8/5). Uribe’s former right-wing allies, who defend the racist politics of U.S. President Donald Trump, are pushing the renewed militarization that re- quires more police and more internment (El Tiempo). The latest atrocites echo the 50- year, U.S.-backed, anti-communist massacre of more than 230,000 people, most of them civilians (National Center for Historical Memory).

The opposition liberals, who call themselves the new “political center,” favor reformist envi- ronmentalism, empty rhetoric on human rights, and the European-style social democracy pro- moted by Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocacia-Soto in the U.S. They’ve shown their true colors in the capital city of Bogota, where Mayor Claudia Lopez, the open lesbian liberal who may be the second most powerful politician in the country, campaigned to put more killer cops on the streets (bbc.com, 10/28/19). Lopez has un- leashed the paramilitary ESMAD, the notoriously lethal “riot” police, to attack hundreds of workers and students rebelling against the government’s mismanagement of the pandemic.

As in the U.S. and elsewhere, the most danger- ous enemies of the working class are the Big Fas- cist liberals, with their phony promises to create a more just and equal society, in a capitalist system driven by maximum profit. In Colombia, the liberals’ alliance with reform- ist environmentalists, feminists, and LGBTQ+ groups serves to discourage and mislead workers from fighting for communism—the only solution to the misery under capitalism. The fake left, represented by the central unions and parties like the MOIR (Independent and Revolutionary Workers Movement), are aligned with the capital- ist bosses in China and Russia. Their focus is not to fight capitalism but to gain more influence— and a license to steal—within the government.

A world to win

In Colombia, in our collectives and in daily struggles with industrial workers, farmers, and students, we talk about the impossibility in a capitalist system driven by maximum profit. In Colombia, the liberals’ alliance with reform- ist environmentalists, feminists, and LGBTQ+ groups serves to discourage and mislead workers from fighting for communism—the only solution to the misery under capitalism. The fake left, represented by the central unions and parties like the MOIR (Independent and Revolutionary Workers Movement), are aligned with the capital- ist bosses in China and Russia. Their focus is not to fight capitalism but to gain more influence— and a license to steal—within the government.

Join PLP!
In the wake of Covid-19, rising mass unemployment, along with the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and countless others, it was important to analyze the ways the ruling class weaponizes identity politics to profit off the divisions of the working class. The study group discussed the topics of capitalist ideology in media and hip-hop, communism, sexism, and immigration (see letters, page 6). PLP aims to treat participants with the highest respect and encourage the highest commitment. We fight to learn and learn to fight. Everyone, regardless of experience was encouraged to advance the conversation with their unique perspectives.

During the discussion on communism, participants made the distinction between communism and socialism, the former being a society based on workers’ power and elimination of the basis of all inequity while the latter is a halfway system that still tolerates inequities and other capitalist practices.

Another discussion explored how liberal leaders like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez learn to posturing progressiveness on the need to build a nation ready for bigger wars. More importantly, how communism means that the exploiting class will be eliminated, which is the root of racism and economic divisions. Workers would control all aspects of society.

**CHALLENGE: door to door**

Putting the theoretical into practice, PLP distributed CHALLENGE in Newark’s Ivy Hill neighborhood, Bloomfield Ave, and, for the first time, in Stephen Crane Village, a working-class housing complex where the residents are predominantly Black and Latin. For years, residents have been subjected to deplorable housing conditions, and mismanagement from corrupt and indifferent slumlords. Stephen Crane lies on the border of Belleville, NJ near the Clara Maass Medical Center. A few PLPers stood in front of Pat’s Deli, where workers from the hospital often visited during their lunch hour, while others went door to door in the housing complex with CHALLENGE, speaking with the residents, encouraging them to inquire further if they were interested. PLPers received a warm reception!

**The future is bright**

The Summer Project closed with a barbecue and reflections. A healthcare worker opened the program by discussing his journey to joining the Party (see letter, page 6). Another young worker who organizes undocumented migrant workers gave a talk about the contradictions of reform and revolution. A PLP member discussed the role of elections and why the Party slogan is “don’t vote, organize!” Identity politics still remain a barrier to applying a class analysis to world events. Liberal leaders are the leaders of the capitalist world, since they funnel working-class anger into nationalism, fascism, and eventual war.

An undocumented student said, “I didn’t know what capitalism was” before her introduction to PLP. She talked with her teacher, researched it independently, and participated in study groups. In the process of fighting to learn, she realized how important it was to understand what it means to live under capitalism. This student wants to keep learning and fighting with PLP.

With students like her, the future is bright and red.

**New Jersey, August 25**—This year’s twin pandemics of Covid-19 and police terror shed a light on the decline of the U.S. ruling class and proved yet again that capitalism fails our class. It is in this context of rising fascism that Progressive Labor Party (PLP) organized the annual Summer Project. The purpose of the Summer Project was to educate newer members about communism, learn about organizing in their places of work, school, and neighborhoods, strengthen relationships, and further develop our budding young leaders. The fact that PLP was able to execute the Project exemplifies the young leaders’ commitment to building communist leaders.

In the span of two hot summer weeks, the red (communist) Project reached 50 multinational and multigenerational women and men. Through the distribution of CHALLENGE, 1,500 people were exposed to communist literature. At its closing, four participants joined or recommitted to the Party, including Black and white students and teachers. Overall, a success in moving towards winning workers and students closer to a communist outlook! The Party has a bright future.

**Learn to fight, fight to learn**

The Summer Project, in Newark, NJ for the first time, consisted of a series of group discussions held physically distant and virtual, CHALLENGE distributions in Newark and nearby towns, and a few rallies. Veteran PLPers opened the Project with an introduction and history of PLP as an international party building an anticapitalist and anticolonial movement for communism and advancing communist politics for 55 years.

The bosses’ media condemn what they called “the riots.” Meanwhile, anyone with eyes has been witnessing the systematic violence of the Klan-in-blue. As youth and workers risked their health and lives in a pandemic to protest racist police murder, the bosses doubled down with more fascist terror.

The Democratic mayor, John Antaramian, installed a curfew and called on 125 soldiers from the National Guard, the military reserve force, to defend private property and the government. The police terrorized protestors with teargas and rubber bullets. This terror is not reformable; the origins of police go back to the hunters of enslaved Black people fighting for their freedom in the South and terrorists to “dangerous” European immigrant workers in the North. Their role has not changed.

The truth is that the biggest instrument of violence, worldwide, is the bosses’ state: their government, military forces, courts, schools, and media. The capitalists murder millions every year through imperialist war, mass unemployment, deplorable health care, unfair housing, and the profit-driven poisoning of our air, water, and food. U.S. capitalism in particular was born out of the slave-owning bourgeoisie; all millions of working children and children from Africa were stolen and enslaved.

Rage led protestors to damage the symbols of daily oppression under capitalism: a kkkop car, courthouse, and commercial buildings. Of course, individual and spontaneous violence won’t get workers what we need. Real and lasting change requires something more: organized mass violence to seize state power and make a new society run by and for the working class. You need an international communist party for that.

**Black leadership with multiracial unity**

The rebellions have proved yet again that Black working class, cops, and real change and retribution. Our experience positions us to suffer the most under capitalism while having nothing to lose but our chains. This is the starting point for communists to defend each other, fight among ourselves in the hundreds of years of revolts and fightbacks against slavery, racism, and imperialism.

The potential of the working class, when real- ized, has the power to build a new society from the ashes of this dying one. For that, we need all workers—Black, Latin, Asian, indigenous, immigrant, white—to reject every aspect of this inherently unequal system and its tramps of electoral politics. Join PLP’s movement for a lifetime of antiracism as we pave the path to communist revolution.
Students, family, teachers expose liberal misleadership, demand safe schools

NEW YORK CITY, August 3—Hundreds of teachers, students, and parents protested the unsafe plans to reopen city schools. They demanded smaller class sizes and the removal of police from schools. High schools are in a particularly precarious position with a pro-student element of working-class solidarity in this protest that began outside the teachers’ union (UFT) headquarters and marched to City Hall. Pro-}

Democrats: the party of war and fascism

At the Democratic National Convention (DNC) the imperialist Big Fascists put on display the political coalition that they hope can defeat Donald Trump and the Small Fascists that he represents. The Big Fascists are going all out, calling on their fake progressives, various military leaders, and anti-

Big Fascists vs Small Fascists

If it’s not just electoral politics between the Re-

Small Fascists are mostly domestically or-

Big Fascists, are the greater threat to working class. They want to build multiracial support for reforms that will feed their drive towards war against imperialist rivals, China and Russia. PLP says that workers from different countries have no interest in killing each other. The whole damn capitalist sys-

At a press conference, New York City Chancellor Richard Carranza, has a plan that will sacrifice Latino lives. In Ohio overall, 8.9% of infections rates are lost. The plan is slated to send back the education workers of Sanset Park, a mainly-Latin neighborhood, and CV and LA (many of the the teachers union, 8/12) makes reopening schools there unsafe by any standard. An equity team composed of school staff and chili report to mayor de Blasio, Carranza and governor Cuomo highlighting this racist risk of the current plan and demand that school closure until the entire city’s infection rates are low enough for everyone to return (Brooklyn Paper, 8/20).

Build student-teacher-family solidarity

Capitalism is and always will be violent. Which-

In contrast with previous demonstrations or-

To truly organize the working class, education workers must prioritize organizing students and their families against racism. This will create the unity necessary to defeat capitalism and create a communist world.

Mass budget cuts while bosses’ profits soar

Instead of the great investment of resources and workers required to combat a pandemic, the bosses are already slashing school budgets. Democrat-run New York City has cut $400 million from this year’s budget. Carranza admitted the net impact will be over $1 billion loss (State Island Advance, 7/9) and warned of a possible layoff of 9,000 teachers (Wall Street Journal, 8/20).

New York City chancellor, Richard Carranza, has a plan that will sacrifice Latino lives. In Ohio overall, 8.9% of infections rates are lost.

At the Democratic National Convention (DNC) the imperialist Big Fascists put on display the political coalition that they hope can defeat Donald Trump and the Small Fascists that he represents. The Big Fascists have opposed anti-racist initiatives by its members and by Black and Latin workers in the community. Their misleadership must be challenged.

The rally reflects the influence of the protests following the murder of George Floyd and other targets of racist police terror. Protesters welcomed multiracial fightback is growing. Some teachers opposed to reopening NYC schools have been inspired by an individualist, anti-student outlook that focuses strictly on their own safety. However, speakers at this protest over-

There’s a split between two capitalist factions: the Big Fascists, representing finance capital and the maintenance in the over 1,500 city school buildings, still assure us that things are “safe” and “we are ready!” Reams of reports on schools’ infrastructure will need to push for what’s in the best interest of students, family, and teachers alike.

At the Democratic National Convention (DNC) the imperialist Big Fascists put on display the political coalition that they hope can defeat Donald Trump and the Small Fascists that he represents. The Big Fascists are going all out, calling on their fake progressives, various military leaders, and anti-
A communist commune for struggling youth

I regard the collective as the supremely important form of educational work.

Anton Semyonovich Makarenko

A pandemic rages. There is no cure. Countless are infected; hundreds of thousands have died. The U.S. accounts for only four percent of the world population but over 25 percent of Covid-19 cases. Clearly the capitalists don’t care about us; their only goal is profit. So, we are being shoved into factories, offices, and stores to die for their profit system. To complete the misery, capital demands that children be returned to schools without guaranteeing safety. Such is the logical conclusion to the capitalist educational system.

But there is an alternative to the abject failure of this miserable racist, sexist, anti-working-class capitalist system and its so-called “education”. And that is communist solidarity: production for need, mutual respect, and education for collective and individual development. A communist revolution is needed to transform society. Two great working-class revolutions have occurred within the last 100 years. The Bolshevik Revolution (1917) and the Chinese Revolution (1949). When both have been tragically reversed due to the seeds of capitalist practices in their early practices have yielded valuable lessons to be applied before and after our next successful revolution.

What can we learn from these revolutions now, especially in education? A good starting point is to examine some of the dramatic changes made in every sphere of life after the Russian Revolution.

From 1914 to 1921 Russia, an already impoverished country ruled by a vicious ruling class, was devastated financially and militarily first by its involvement in World War I and then by a civil war created by the U.S., English, French and Polish imperialists. Eighty percent of its industry and transportation system was destroyed and agriculture and food distribution almost ceased. The Soviet state faced immense problems of hunger, disease, and homelessness. These were the leftovers of the old capitalist society that was dealt with.

All children have role to play in leadership

Yet, despite the vast problems, many in the Soviet Union were eager to create a new society, a new humankind, a new collective spirit and an entirely new type of education. Among them was an educator, Anton Makarenko.

Born into a working class family in 1888, Makarenko became a teacher when he was 17 years old. Already convinced of the need for revolution he began his career in the midst of the first (1905) revolution organizing meeting places for revolutionary workers. Makarenko continued teaching and supporting revolutionary activity. By 1920 he had successfully taught hundreds and supervised thousands of students. In addition, he had begun to formulate a new education system based upon the Marxist classics, Lenin’s leadership and the Red Army’s experiences.

In 1920 he was asked by the Educational Commissariat to organize the Poltava Colony for Young Offenders. Due to the destruction caused by WWI and the capitalist Civil War, tens of thousands of starving, orphaned children roamed the countryside and the cities in search of food and shelter. Many turned to crime to survive. They were thoroughly demoralized, angry, and divided by ethnic hatreds.

Makarenko began with six adolescents who had a criminal history, a windowless, doorless, broken down building, some poor farmland, no tools, no books, little food, and two teachers. The goal: to create a foundation of a communist educational collective. Completely uninterested in their past records, believing no one is born with “good” or “bad” genetic characteristics Makarenko had a positive and optimistic outlook about each child’s development. He found that all children, including those with profound psychological problems, had a role to play in leadership.

This was a time when the U.S. led a Jim Crow segregated education system, sowed racist pseudo-scientific ideas, and promoted individualism.

‘Just as the working class and peasantry had overcome great social and personal problems to win a revolution, all children would, given respect and collectivity, become productive comrades.’

Utmost demand & utmost respect

The first months were rough. Untrusting, the children felt that this was just another prison. It took months before Makarenko gained their respect by forcefully demand- ing that they cut the firewood for the whole colony not just for themselves. It was a beginning. Based on his years of teaching and revolutionary activity Makarenko came to see that one must “place the utmost demands on a person and treat him with the utmost respect” in order to succeed.

He rejected physical punishment, which was a common measure in that period. Makarenko realized that just as the working class and peasantry had overcome great social and personal problems to win a revolution, all children would, given respect and collectivity, become productive comrades.

What the capitalists promote only in theory was already done in practice in the Soviet Union: emphasis on treating children with respect, providing a collective for children to learn, importance of adult models, learning as a social process, uniting mental and physical work as one, and more.

Amidst their poverty (and with some help from the central organizations), the children began to learn to raise their own food, repair their clothes, fix their dwellings and cobble together tools.

However, the main tasks Makarenko set before them was to collectively plan their communal needs. Many of the children were functionally illiterate. Yet despite their resistance to being in school, the demand was they learn the trades that kept the commune in repair. They began to work in teams gradually learning to think in wider collective needs not merely individualist needs. The children loved this freedom and self-respect.

Over many years hundreds of children passed through the renamed “Gorky Colony.” With more teachers and agronomists, engineers and the USSR’s growing prosperity, the colony combined five hours of productive agricultural and industrial work and four hours political and conventional instruction. The intellectual labor and manual labor were united. Even within the first three years, the collective students were encouraged to become a partially self-governing commune. After seven years, Makarenko was asked to duplicate the success by founding a new collective of orphaned children, which became the Dzerzhinsky Commune.

‘The Road to Life’

Makarenko wrote many books and articles about education which outlined his conclusions distilled from years of experience while educating thousands of children. One of his outstanding works, The Road to Life, is a record of the transformative experience of the Gorky Colony. It is a book to inspire all those teachers (and in fact everyone) who yearn for a free, respectful, socially conscious life: a communist life.
The workers inspired me.

I joined the PLP members on the streets of New-ark, where I handed out issues of CHALLENGE with a headline about a nurse’s strike. A few workers actu-ally reading them in front of me inspired me.

Several people were intrigued, thanking me for the information or asking questions about communism. This community engagement invigorated my percep-tion of communism from academic philosophy to ac-tivist reality.

That day, I also attended an open study group fo-cused on abolishing borders and nationalism. I am ex-cited to come back to PLP study groups and continue to spread CHALLENGE. Please continue with this important work.

I was amazed that this existed.

I learned about the Progressive Labor Party from a person I met at a rally against the murder of George Floyd. The PLP is the only group I’m familiar with listening to the progressive politician Larry Hamm talk about the need for better relations between the community and police. I didn’t know Hamm too well, but said that he seemed like a pretty good guy. The PL’er shrugged and said he was trying to diffuse the anger in the community and push people toward using the electoral process as a solution for the police murdering Black people in America. I was impressed and wasn’t expecting such an an-swer from someone I didn’t really know. I considered myself a communist already so I was happy to find out that this person was a communist too. It was during this discussion that I learned about PLP.

I have been in the DSA, but was curious about this local communist party and reached out to PLP. I was amazed that this long-existing [organized communist] in Newark; I had no idea. The reading group I had attended was interesting so I attended the project.

I helped distribute CHALLENGE to workers out-side a member’s workplace, participated in a motor-car-ade where we blasted homemade communist chants over pop songs, and participated in more study groups where I learned more about the Party’s line.

I don’t agree with everything in the Party’s line. For example, I don’t necessarily accept that existing socialist countries were wrong to preserve the use of money and wages. I don’t feel qualified to weigh in on that issue. But I don’t have to agree with everything in PLP’s line to know that this is an organization I want to be a part of. Props and solidarity to the New-ark PLP chapter; thanks for organizing such a great summer project.

Smash all borders!

I attended a study group about immigration. Capi-talists use borders to divide us and push people to im-perialist countries to be super-exploited in exchange for a dream that never arrives.

One young woman shared how the U.S. was sold as the land of opportunity. Her mother sold all their belongings to move to the U.S. fleeing from gangs and poverty. Once here, she was faced with the realities of the capitalist, racist U.S. system, where she works all day for minimum wage but can barely provide for her children. She questions her decision, but fears it is too late to return.

Non-English speakers participated as robustly as anyone else in this multi-racial and multi-generational crowd. This should be a given in any conversation, but usually immigrants are exiled to the back of the room and made to feel like they don’t belong. Not in PLP.

But, we do have to make more progress in spread-ing the politics of no borders. Every member of PLP must be confident in saying that we don’t want the immigration reform of liberal bosses; we want to do away with racist borders.

Healthcare worker fed up

I am a communist speaking out against the atroc-ies healthcare workers face. My experiences have de-stroyed my trust in the capitalist healthcare system. I did doubles and triple shifts for pennies while being the only Certified Nurse’s Aide taking care of 45 pa-tients. The head nurse ordered me: “I don’t care if the patients are soiled. Just make sure that they are alive and there are no falls on my shift.” This shows the worker how much the bosses care. All of this exploita-tion for a $20 gift card and $17 overtime.

Another example is when we asked for more Hoyer lifts to transfer patients without hurting our backs. Only one out of every ten working conditions. The administra-tion refused. Our labor is replaceable once we are injured.

The union 1199 is the glue to keep the workers’ mouths shut. The union handbook states that it’s il-legal to strike or interfere with the operation of the employer as a partner of the union!

Another capitalist lie is if you try hard enough, you can start from the bottom and reach the top. This competitive attitude allows the bosses to profit. Racist, sexist ideology furthers individualist division. They want to keep us full of illusions, as class war rages in the streets. Meanwhile our brothers and sisters die in emergency rooms.

Attention! If you want to end oppression, our greatest weapon is the communist revolution. It is time to organize and join PLP!

To defeat sexism, fight for communism

Can we fight for communism if we don’t fight sex-ism? Can we eliminate sexism without a communist revolution? Both group participants answered both questions with a resounding “No!”

Sexism—oppression and exploitation based upon gender—is everywhere and so much a part of every-day experience that it is easy to detach it from capit-alism and see it as just a reflection of “human nature.” Yet, especially when confronted with racism, sexism is immensely destructive to the working class.

Marxist class analysis enables us to root these be-liefs, behaviors, and practices—sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly—in the political economy of capitalism. (Links to readings are online). Here are a few highlights from our discussion:

1. While there are biological differences, sexism in class society is rooted in the rise of private property and the production of commodities. Power is the source of inequality. It fosters further division.

2. Identity politics and intersectionality critique class analysis as “class reductionism” and direct atten-tion away from capitalism as the source of oppression.

We came away from the discussion with increased appreciation of the importance of linking communist practice with communist theory.
Students need communist schools

forces the same lesson for us: a system that can't educate and care for its youth does not deserve to exist, and we must learn together what it will take to smash it. Join Progressive Labor Party!

No ‘lost generations’ for communists

Communists and many anti-racist education workers refuse to accept that Covid-19 will result in a “lost generation.” We know that the working class is full of fighters, and that whether remote or in-person, education workers and students must use the sharp study of math, science, history and language to explore how Covid-19 reveals the racist poison of capitalism and the need for a new, communist society. In the event of a strike, we must organize outdoor “Freedom Schools” where we relate schoolwork to survival of this pandemic. We must conduct home visits for absent students. Parents and students must be invited to picket lines where education workers can teach students while parents work or run essential errands. As during the recent anti-police rebellions, life’s greatest lessons are learned in the classroom. Each connection between workers is one seed of a communist future, when tended by a growing Progressive Labor Party.

Every worker can contribute to the fight for a better world. Both coronavirus and recent international anti-racist uprisings have led many youth to criticize and reject this political and economic system. These shifts in consciousness present an exciting opportunity, and we must ensure that the alienation felt by so many students is turned into class struggle, rather than nihilism and cynicism. We know that communists can learn more from a single protest against police brutality than in a whole year of capitalist history curriculum. A better world is possible, and we need the power of the entire working class to create it.

Pod-Schools Reveal True Nature of Capitalist Education

The ruling class is not treated as expendable. Ruling-class families and wannabes with enough wealth are not facing the lose-lose choice where in-person learning means risking one’s life. Even in wealthy suburbs the public schools are not equipped to operate safely. For $25,000 a year, parents in wealthy suburbs can pay to have their children educated at private schools (NYT, 7/30). And further up the income ladder the most exclusive private schools are resourced enough to operate even a person socially distant in instruction. Only workers face the lose-lose choice of returning to unsafe schools or staying home and leaving young minds to rot.

Insurance bosses profit in Billions from Covid-19

NYT, 8/6 — The nation’s leading health insurers are…reporting…earnings that are double…a year ago.

CVS Health, which owns Aetna…[and] also owns a large pharmacy benefit manager and a drugstore chain, said net income for the second quarter reached $3 billion, about $1 billion more than…the same period of 2019…[And]…Anthem’s net income soared to $2.3 billion for the second quarter from $1.1 billion in 2019, while UnitedHealth reported net earnings of $6.7 billion compared to $3.4 billion for the same three months last year.

Although many hospitals have been overwhelmed by the coronavirus outbreaks… insurers have shelled out less in medical claims…because expensive elective surgeries have been postponed.

The companies’ staggering profits stand in stark contrast to the scores of small medical practices and rural hospitals that are struggling to stay open [while] states are facing massive budget shortfalls as businesses collapse, unemployment rises and tax revenues plummet.

Insurers are currently spending a far lower proportion of premium revenue on their customers’ healthcare costs…. That translates into millions of dollars that…should wind up in the pockets of insurers because expensive elective surgeries have been postponed.

The companies may have even higher profits than is apparent. Some like United Health have large networks of doctors and other health care businesses, in addition to owning giant pharmacy benefit managers. There are no limits on how much these units can make.

Medical bills’ secrets: a single Texas virus test costs up to $6K

NYT, 8/7 — A reader had taken his 1-year-old daughter to the emergency room because after her nails were clipped a bit too short, her finger started spurring blood. The little girl was fine and received disposable gloves.

The bill came: $629 for the visit. How…so much?…The real cost lay in fees that every emergency room charges just for walking in the door. Frustrated reader…had access to some of the most valuable, most private information in the American healthcare system...

…What [are] people being charged when they get tested or treated for the coronavirus?…

…In the United States, hospitals and doctors’ offices typically keep their prices secrets…. America’s health care prices are the highest in the world, and fees can vary drastically from one hospital or doctor’s office to another. Last month, four patients who received coronavirus tests in one Texas emergency room [and were] totally unrelated to one another….showed that the price of a test could range from $199 to $6,408—all in the same facility.

Pandemic worsening mental health, hits Black workers the hardest

NYT, 8/7 — According to the National Center for Health Statistics, roughly one in 12 American adults recorded symptoms of an anxiety disorder at this time last year; now it’s more than one in three. A majority of American adults—53 percent—believe that the pandemic is taking a toll on their mental health.

This number climbs to 68 percent if you look solely at African Americans. The disproportionate toll the pandemic has taken on Black lives and livelihoods—made possible by centuries of structural disparities, compounded by the corrosive psychological effect of everyday racism—is appearing starkly in mental health data.

Black death penalty victims are the new lynching

NYT, 8/4 — Black lives do not matter nearly as much as white ones when it comes to the death penalty…. Defendants convicted of killing white victims were executed at a rate of 17 times greater than those convicted of killing Black victims. [The] Supreme Court…. ruled that…race discrimination in the capital justice system did not offend the Constitution….

That provides a haunting reminder of once-prevalent Southern lynchings…. [The] McCluskey–McDowell decision of our time…is a declaration that African-American life has no value which white men are bound to respect…. Killers of white people were more than four times as likely to be sentenced to death as killers of Black people….

A new study….found that 22 of the 972 defendants convicted of killing a white victim were executed, compared to two of the 1,565 defendants convicted of killing a Black victim….

A…2017 study compared…homicides from 1975 to 2005 and executions from 1976 to 2005….About half of the victims were white….but three-quarters of the defendants put to death had killed a white person. About 46 percent of the victims were Black, but only 15 percent of defendants who were executed had killed a Black person.

Joblessness concentrated in working-class neighborhoods

NYT, 8/7 — The economic damage from the coronavirus [has] some of the worst economic pain…in neighborhoods where workers who have endured the broadest job losses live. In corners of the South Bronx, South Los Angeles or the South Side of Chicago, unemployment is concentrated to a breathtaking degree. And it means that other problems still to come — a wave of evictions, deepening poverty, more childhood hunger — will be graphically concentrated, too. Neighborhood-level unemployment rates suggest that…one out of three workers in these areas jobless. In New York City, parts of the Bronx were experiencing the Great Depression. Concentrated distress in these neighborhoods could also have long-term consequences for the children growing up there….

Black female food-service workers…are most severely affected in this downturn…. The coronavirus has made it clear that jobs are concentrated in neighborhoods where most people can work from home and neighborhoods where most can’t. And because the latter group is disproportionately made up of Black and Latin workers, those lines also largely follow patterns of racial segregation, as in Chicago.

As of June, the Chicago metro area had an unemployment rate of 15.6 percent…[But]…in neighborhoods on the predominantly African-American South Side, the unemployment rate was more than double that…. Workers in the lowest quintile of income have experienced three times as many job losses as workers in the highest quintile.

In Los Angeles, job losses appear to be the most severe in South Los Angeles, in predominantly Latinx parts of the city.

Students need communist schools

Red Eye on the News….
After the experience last spring, students, parents, and teachers know that remote learning is a degraded and degrading replacement for in-person instruction. Students learn less. At the same time, the stubborn push by both wings of the U.S. ruling class to reopen schools is driven by their reckless drive for profits and need for social control. In New York City, the United Federation of Teachers, a union born in racism and anti-communism (see CHALLENGE, 3/27/14) has begun strike preparations while making no provisions to care for student instruction or counseling. It’s clear that the remote vs. in-person debate is a racist, lose-lose proposition for the working class.

Capitalist schooling trains us to treat the working class as expendable. We are taught that it is inevitable that some workers and youth will be homeless, unemployed, or incarcerated. Education workers are habituated to accept some drop-outs, suspensions, and failure as unavoidable. As much as capitalist schools teach expendability, they also strive to teach patriotism and build loyalty to U.S. imperialism. If millions of youth are left without the grasp of social control while the facade of stability crumbles around us, imperialists will have a harder time winning workers to fight a war with China.

That’s why we fight for communism, where no worker or child will be treated as expendable because we will eliminate the profit motive that drives all capitalist schooling. A divided U.S. ruling class is united in contempt for workers’ lives.

We can see the capitalists’ “doctrine of worker expendability” in full view within both wings of the divided U.S. ruling class. For Trump and his gang of domestically-oriented bosses, orders to “reopen the schools now!” means more short-term profits, maintaining credibility with an anti-science base, and advancing their openly racist, nationalist “America-First” re-election campaign, all while adding fuel to the flame for fascist ideas like “the survival of the fittest.”

The stakes to reopen the schools and economy are much higher for the dominant, imperialist wing of the ruling class, represented in New York City by Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio. Despite crumbling infrastructure, the imperialist wing bosses are scrambling to reopen schools in finance-capital’s home base of New York in hopes of restoring a sense of legitimacy to U.S. capitalism, both globally and domestically. They will need to win workers to fight yet another imperialist war.

A “lost generation” disillusioned and unfit for this task will hinder their ability to wage such a war. Liberal’s phony, silver-tongued appeals to workers that “we are all in this together” and empty assurances that “we are ready” show that the liberal wing is the main danger to the working class. They are just as ready as ever to betray workers to both Covid-19 and World War III for their long-term profits.

The blatant disregard for workers’ lives shown by both wings of the U.S. ruling class is a hallmark of rising fascism. Capitalists of any stripe are workers’ enemies.

Dangers of remote learning

Opening schools with few safety resources and protocols will prove deadly to workers and students, but remote learning has its own dangers—especially for those that cannot afford to have an adult in the home every day. Not to mention the added trauma for students in temporary housing or shelters! Real collaboration, social interaction, and hands-on learning are nonexistent. We cannot simply reflexively accept the disastrous and racist choice to have young minds rot at home.

Remote learning runs the risk of piling on another layer of normalized neglect to the already-callous and racist culture of capitalist schooling. Black, Latin, and immigrant working-class students face the brunt of this attack, whether it is due to limited, inconsistent or lack of computer and Internet access, the need to work to support their families, or in a home with no quiet space to do schoolwork. So too do students with special needs and language needs. Assuming students have the personal organization and technological skills to learn remotely, this extensive screen time is linked to altered sleep cycles and affects students’ physical and mental health (Johns Hopkins Newsletter, 4/20). Not to mention how profoundly isolating the experience is for developing minds and bodies.

Lives are not expendable, and neither are minds.

Reopening school

Capitalists hold state power, for now. They will reopen their schools, sooner or later. Vaccination, once safe and effective, will reduce but not eliminate risk. There is no possibility of returning to “safe schools.” Poor ventilation, budget cuts and massive layoffs that hurt working-class schools hardest, inadequate disinfection, and insufficient personal distancing and PPE measures all mean no safe schools. The families who need schools the most will send their kids in first, and love their kids no less than anyone else. More than learning schools provide health services, lunch, physical therapy, language, counseling and other related services. Calling to keep schools closed “until they’re safe” without recognizing this reality and without genuine planning for student needs, undermines the cause of building working-class solidarity.

What Would Communists Do?

In a communist society, our education system would be centered around societal needs. Free of the chains of profit, all sectors of society would be mobilized to collectively combat a crisis like Covid-19. We would rapidly and massively invest labor and materials to retrofit school buildings, improve ventilation and sanitation systems, and convert spaces for temporary learning while we develop a vaccine. Of course, schools would have been built and maintained in the interest of student health and safety in the first place! Moreover, education under communism would surely not be confined to school buildings. In the face of a pandemic, workers and youth would learn in the midst of struggle from a young age. We could train thousands to create and administer Covid-19 tests and to develop methods of contact tracing, as well as distribute food to those who may not be able to leave their homes. We would undertake campaigns as the Soviet Union did to train young people to take leadership in practical, creative work in the farms and factories, or as China did sending students into the country-side during the Cultural Revolution.

Despite examples of parent-teacher-student unity during this current crisis, there remains a possibility that the working class—students, parents, and teachers—could emerge from this crisis even more fractured. This potential for division may be the greatest danger of all. Education workers must fight back alongside their students against the bosses’ system, which has set our class up to fail in what will certainly be a tougher school year. Every rotten aspect of capitalist schools rein-

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