



# CHALLENGE

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# Workers Fight Back



## CHALLENGE Inspires Transit Workers to Fight Racist Murders, Union Sellouts

**LOS ANGELES, CA** — After trying to pass a motion for a “5-minute strike” to protest the racist murder of Darrick Collins by the LA Sheriffs, LA transit mechanics have been trying to increase CHALLENGE networks. The following are excerpts of these discussions:

After the union meeting, a group of CHALLENGE readers, African-American, Latino, and white, went to a coffee shop to continue the discussion. Even though the motion hadn’t passed, there was a feeling of victory, because they had been able to successfully carry out an organized political fight.

A comrade told the other workers, “As we know, there’s a lot of talk of rebellions and other actions against police terror. These things will happen. The question is who will lead them and with what politics. The working class and the Party need more African-American workers to take leadership, and that’s why it’s so important for you to be involved and help build a communist base.”

An office worker in transit, sitting in front of his computer, exclaimed, “Wait a minute...This looks important,” as he read out loud the title of the PLP leaflet, “Wanted for Mass Murder: L.A. Sheriffs and Capitalism.” Then he continued, “Let me turn off this computer and read this right now.” He gave \$3 for CHALLENGE and said, “What you’re doing is very good. We need this.”

“What a dog!” exclaimed a transit worker when he found out how the mechanics’ union leader had tried to stop Darrick’s uncle, a driver, from speaking at the mechanic’s union meeting.

“And aren’t we all the same union?”

“No, but when they go on strike, we support them and when we go on strike, they support us.”

A third worker said, “This is the role of the sell-out union leaders, to keep the workers separated. That’s why it’s so important that we take leadership. Because with a bigger political base, these sellouts won’t be able to get away with this.”

When he gave CHALLENGE to a regular reader, an African-American worker, he said, “Here, take this 50-cent donation.” But then he took out \$2 and said, “Better take this so that the paper keeps coming out. Even though I’m not a communist, I know that this is capitalism — and it stinks.”

In a study group a worker reacted furiously at the treatment received by the driver, and he agreed to begin getting out two CHALLENGES to his friends. Here, a comrade explained what we’re trying to do, “Imagine that it’s 4:00 pm when dozens of thousands of workers and students are riding the buses home. Suddenly the drivers announce to the passengers that they are stopping for a ‘five-minute strike’ to protest the racist murders of the working class by the cops. They pass out leaflets and ask for the support of all those on the buses. At the same time, young Party members on the buses give speeches and pass out CHALLENGE.”

After a gathering at his mother-in-law’s house, a driver who is a CHALLENGE reader sent us a text message about the funeral of Marco Salgado, a bus driver and Iraq war veteran, killed by the police in Ontario, California (40 minutes from Los Angeles)

two days before. The driver who sent the text is helping build the struggle in transit against the racist police murders. He says that he’s shown CHALLENGE and Party leaflets to another seven drivers. “Could you give each edition of the paper to your friends?” we asked him. “Of course I can,” he answered. ☺

### WORKERS AND STUDENTS UNITE AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY

Last week two workers from the Los Angeles MTA (Metropolitan Transit Authority) came to speak to several classes at a local high school about the racist murder of Darrick Collins, a young black man, by the LA Sheriffs last month in a nearby neighborhood. Darrick’s uncle and another transit worker came to our school because some other students at the school had been involved in the protests and leafleting that the Party had initiated immediately following the shooting.

Darrick’s uncle asked the students, “How many of you young people have ever been stopped by the cops just for walking down the sidewalk? Raise your hand. “Several dozen went up. “How many have been stopped twice?” A few less hands. “Three times?” At least a dozen of the 70 students raised their hands.

Another transit worker said “Get involved; confront this brutality. From here, some of you are going to college, some to work, and some to the military. In all these places, you’re going to find the same problems that make it next to impossible for the working class to have a decent life. In all of these places we can build the fight to overthrow the capitalist system that took Darrick Collins from his family and friends.”

In one class, since the presentations, the concept of working-class unity has been brought up by students several times. In a discussion about the “similarities and differences between Hispanic and African Americans” the first thing a student said was that the two groups had no real differences because they were both part of the working class!

Some students are writing a letter of solidarity to the family of the young man who was killed by the police. Other students are writing a petition against the racist police killings.

This is just one example of the steps forward we can take when we unite our forces: students, teachers, workers, soldiers, etc., together and support each other’s struggles. As one student said later, “Worker and student alliances like these are key to revolution. Only a worker-student-soldier alliance will bring an end to this exploitative and murderous capitalist system. The time for a communist revolution is now!”

## D.C. Bus Drivers’ Slowdown Speeds Fight vs. Bosses’ Attacks

**WASHINGTON, D.C., October 13** — Metro bus drivers launched a work-to-rule action last week against growing disciplinary attacks. Workers — overwhelmingly black and Latino — are being written up, suspended, and fired by racist bosses determined to soften up workers for the coming cutbacks in health care, pensions and jobs. But Metro workers let management know they’re not taking this increased harassment lying down. With communist leadership from PLP members, they will sharpen this fight-back even further!

The weak union leaders presented this action as simply “following company rules.” Roland Jeter, union vice-president, publicly declared, “We wouldn’t advocate a work slowdown.” But rank-and-file workers who launched this movement see it as the beginning of resistance to management’s attacks.

On the key North-South lines, on 14th and

16th Streets and Georgia Avenue, buses backed up in rows of six, seven and even more as they headed downtown during the morning rush hour, often with delays of 30 minutes or more. This bold rank-and-file action gave workers a sense of their real power, overcoming the union leadership’s lie that we workers would not stick together. We saw who talked the talk and who walked the walk!

At Northern Division, many younger workers indicated they were ready to provide more leadership in this class struggle, to meet fire with fire! But to do this, we must be prepared to clash with the bosses’ whole system. That means more workers must become revolutionaries, not just militants. They must join with the PLP group and plan to fight not only the Metro bosses, but join with workers globally against the whole system of capitalism that destroys the lives of countless workers, both here and worldwide. ☺

# Afghan 'Drug War' Scam Hides Real War for Oil

Every year, more people die from Afghan opium than any other drug in the world: perhaps 100,000 globally. While 90% of the world's opium comes from Afghanistan, less than 2% is seized there. (UN report cited below)

## Obama's War on Afghan Drugs a Deadly Farce

Obama appears to be awaiting the results of Election Fraud II before he decides on a comprehensive war plan for Afghanistan. But one part is already certain. U.S. rulers are insisting that Afghanistan remain a linchpin in the anti-working class global drug trade. While substantial funding for the Taliban comes from illicit drugs, the U.S. has no intention of wiping drugs out in Afghanistan or anywhere else. Drugs are far too useful to the ruling class, both as a means of social control and as a pretext for imperialist military action.

The ruling class's Brookings think-tank is publishing a new book called "Shooting Up: Counterinsurgency and the War on Drugs," promoting "a *laissez-faire* policy toward illicit crop cultivation." Its author, Brookings' fellow Vanda Felbab-Brown, testified in Congress recently praising Obama's new Afghan narcotics strategy of "defunding and deemphasizing eradication and focusing on interdiction." In effect, letting the drugs flow gives U.S. forces greater policing power over the Afghan people.

## U.S. 'Fights' Drug Lords to Secure Pipeline

U.S.-led NATO has made Lashkar Gah, capital of Helmand province, a focus of its phony anti-drug campaign. It's no coincidence that the city sits on the route of the proposed Turkmenistan-

Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline (TAPI). Just three years ago, there were no combat battalions in or near Lashkar Gah. When plans for TAPI resumed in earnest last year, six NATO battalions (mainly U.S. and British) suddenly appeared. Today seven full battalions patrol the Lashkar Gah region, in the guise of "combating drug lords." In the same period, poppy-producing Kandahar saw a similar troop surge. It, too, bestrides the TAPI route.

A recent UN report, "Addiction, Crime, and Insurgency: The Transnational Threat of Afghan Opium," ties the "War on Drugs" to widening and worsening wars for gas and oil:

"Drugs are funding insurgency in Central Asia where the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Islamic Party of Turkmenistan, the East Turkistan Liberation Organization and other extremist groups are also profiting from the trade. The Silk Route, turned into a heroin route, is carving out a path of death and violence through one of the world's most strategic, yet volatile regions. The perfect storm of drugs, crime and insurgency that has swirled around the Afghanistan/Pakistan border for years, is heading for Central Asia. If quick preventive measures are not put into place, a big chunk of Eurasia could be lost — together with its massive energy reserves." The report's racist anti-Islamic language suggests strong U.S. influence.

## U.S. 'Anti-Drug' Bases in Colombia to Target Chavez

U.S. rulers are staging the same charade in South America. In August, Obama upgraded the U.S. security agreement with Columbia to "allow the Pentagon to lease access to seven Colombian military bases for U.S. support in fighting drug traffickers and guerrillas involved in the cocaine trade." (Reuters, 8/7/09) The top brass's real objectives are, of course, stifling insurgency in coal-rich Columbia (Exxon Mobil's biggest source) and establishing a military beachhead against oil-rich and anti-U.S. neighbor Venezuela.

Back in the U.S., illicit drugs, with most heroin originating from Afghanistan, help the

rulers in two ways. Using drugs promotes docility among workers, and anti-drug laws strengthen the leverage of the burgeoning police state.

Cops made 1,841,200 drug-related arrests in 2007. More than 350,000 prisoners stand convicted of drug charges. So U.S. authorities condone wide-open drug trafficking, seizing a few shipments now and then for show. The vast U.S. law enforcement establishment stops about 9% of the opiates entering from Afghanistan (UN report).

## Racism Central to Rulers' Drug Policies

U.S. racist discrimination has led to the jailing of most of the black and Latino youth and workers who comprise 70% of the U.S. prison population of 2.4 million, highest in world history. At least two-thirds of these inmates are non-violent offenders (who are not incarcerated in Western Europe).

The racist drug-law sentencing in the U.S. metes out mandatory prison terms that are ten times longer for use and possession of crack cocaine (the cheaper variety pushed in black and Latino communities) than for the more expensive powder cocaine (mainly used among middle-class whites). New York State's racist Rockefeller drug laws passed 30 years ago imprisoned predominantly black and Latino youth and workers for decades of wasted lives. This is the brutality of racist capitalism.

Obama's U.S. war machine is not a humanitarian organization. It won't end the drug scourge because its capitalist masters have no interest in giving up such an effective anti-working class weapon. Communists, however, eradicated the opium poppy from China shortly after they took power in 1949. Now that China's rulers have fully embraced capitalism, the nation consumes 13% of Afghan opiate production.

The lesson? Stopping drug trafficking, or any evil the profit system thrives on, requires a real communist revolution. We must rebuild such a mass, PLP-led movement on sounder, irreversibly working-class principles. ☪

## OUR FIGHT

★ **Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to smash capitalism — wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world.**

★ **Capitalism returned to the Soviet Union and China because socialism failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system, like wages and division of labor.**

★ **Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism — the dictatorship of the proletariat. This fight requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.**

★ **Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. Everyone will share in society's benefits and burdens.**

★ **Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.**

★ **Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women — sexism — and traditional gender roles created by class society.**

★ **Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One International working class, one world, one Party.**

★ **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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## Stella D'Oro Workers' Heads High, Keep Up the Fight

**BRONX, NY, October 2** — Over 200 bakers, mechanics, electricians, teachers, professors, city workers, day care workers, teamsters, and transit workers chanted together, "The workers, united, will never be defeated!"; "Keep Stella in the Bronx"; and "Whose factory? Our Factory!" in front of the Stella D'Oro factory.

The Stella workers and their supporters are still fighting to keep their jobs and to obtain compensation if the plant is sold. Brynwood Partners (owners of the factory) is in the process of selling the company and equipment to a non-union factory owned by Lance Co. in Ashland, Ohio.

One Stella worker who spoke explaining that the fight continues, and that whatever happens the workers are holding their heads high; the bosses are the losers. Another worker said they never believed that we would last three months on strike. "But they were wrong. They never thought that all of us would stay out. But they were wrong. Not a single one of us went back until we all went back together after eleven months. They think that we will give up now. But they are wrong." The multi-racial, men-women unity of the workers

defeated the racism and sexism of the Stella bosses.

At one point, the manager of the plant was seen in his car. One of the shop stewards leapt toward the speakers' platform. Grabbing the microphone from a speaker he screamed, "Dan Meyer, you a-----, the factory belongs to us!" The crowd roared, "Whose factory, our factory" and surged forward. Only metal barriers backed up by a solid line of cops prevented this hated boss from getting what he deserves.

A spokesman from IBEW Local 3 (electrical workers) explained how Brynwood Co. is stealing from the workers and the taxpayers of NYC because the city bosses had given tax breaks to Brynwood to help them pay for some of the plant equipment. His suggestion was concrete. When the bosses start to move out the machinery we must be there to stop the trucks.

More and more workers in NYC are reading CHALLENGE and coming closer to PLP due to the heroism of the Stella workers. We ALL need to redouble our efforts to build the revolutionary communist movement that will dump the Brynwood bosses and all the bosses in the ashcan of history. Join us! ☪



# Mexico: 44,000 Fired Electrical Workers Plan Mass Strike

**MEXICO CITY, October 25** — “Strike, Strike, Strike,” clamored thousands of workers inside and outside the offices of the Mexican Electrical Workers’ Union (SME), historically one of the country’s most militant unions. President Felipe Calderon fired 44,000 workers, aiming to destroy the union, while arguing that public companies “don’t work.” Hundreds of thousands, including PLPers, have marched through the city to back the workers.

Dozens of unions, mass organizations, university, farmworker movements and representatives of the AFL-CIO are joining together to support the electrical workers to plan actions and a national strike to be announced on November 5.

Many of the leaders of these groups are reformists and pro-capitalist opportunists who will once again betray the workers. Only guaranteeing communist ideas which workers can make their own can convert them into a powerful revolutionary reality.

This government move follows the privatization of banks, railroads, and the telephone system. Despite the fact that these companies were supposedly not productive, Carlos Slim, one of the world’s richest capitalists, using non-productivity as an excuse, bought up TELMEX.

The government blames the workers for the supposed “bankruptcy” of the electric company, but it’s the government — which serves the capitalists — that administered it, not the workers. Whether companies are private or public, workers are being attacked more sharply because of the crisis of capitalism.

The workers are demanding abolition of Calderon’s decree that fired them and complete rejection of the new “economic package” that raises income and sales taxes on workers’ already-poverty wages.

During a meeting, masses of rank-and-file work-

ers applauded thunderously when several speakers demanded paralyzing Mexico City, its factories and schools, take-overs of buildings, highways, and confronting the police who’ve taken control of the Department of Power in downtown Mexico City. But immediately Martin Esparza, SME leader, said, “We can’t fall for provocations...the police and the army are part of the people...we have 100 lawyers who will help us.”

To that the workers again clamored “Strike, Strike!,” forcing other “leaders” to try to calm them. Meanwhile, Esparza is seeking support from the city’s Mayor, and from Lopez Obrador, both of the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution).

But neither the government, the sellout leaders, Lopez Obrador, nor the lawyers defend the workers’ interests. In 1997 the workers were attacked when the government reformed the Social Security Law. Recently they reformed the law again, depriving millions of older state workers of all rights to a secure, dignified retirement.

This time it’s the workers for the Dept. of Light and Power who are being attacked. Soon it will be those in the Federal Commission of Electricity and the PEMEX oil workers and the whole working class, to serve the interests of either U.S., European or Asian imperialists. No boss or imperialist bloc will defend the working class. They all exploit workers and keep us living in poverty.

In the last few days, marchers have supported the SME and protested massive attacks on the country’s working class. In one march, Oaxaca’s un-



ionized teachers participated and some, together with industrial workers from Mexico City, helped distribute a PLP communist leaflet. It attacked capitalism and imperialism for the attacks on the workers and called for building PLP and communist revolution to destroy this system.

Capitalism, by its very nature, generates exploitation, poverty and wars, killing workers. We workers, the vast majority of the population, are the only ones who create everything of value. In a communist society, we workers will determine how to distribute this wealth we create, eliminating the oppression a handful of bosses imposes on us with their laws, police and sellout leaders.

Mexico’s working class, like workers internationally, are under sharpening attack from the worldwide capitalist economic crisis and intensifying imperialist rivalry. This increases the potential for PLP’s growth. We aim to mobilize all our friends to join this class struggle and be active at work or in school to build CHALLENGE networks and the Party. ☪

# France: 3,000 Undocumented Workers in Sit-Down Strikes for Rights

**PARIS, October 23** — Nearly 30 worksites were still occupied here today in the 2009 mobilization of 3,000 undocumented workers, striking for “legalization” and for decent working conditions. Since October 12, around 160 undocumented workers have been occupying the FNTP, the building trades’ employers association. On the building’s façade the brass FNTP plaque rubs shoulders with a small red flag.

This Autumn “Act II” 2009 strike follows the big strike movement of undocumented workers in the Spring of 2008 — “Act I.” “We want to come out of the shadows, we can’t go on this way,” Dèh Barou told one newspaper. The undocumented Mauritanian immigrant has temped for eight years in the automobile industry. “We’re exploited, underpaid and haven’t any rights — if we don’t say ‘no’ at some point, things will never change.”

X. Macalou, a fortyish building trades worker from Mali, is a veteran of “Act I,” the Spring 2008 strikes (see CHALLENGE, 5/31/2008). Today he’s a strike organizer, leading the occupation of a temporary work agency by 200 to 300 undocumented workers. The strikers take turns manning a picket line day and night. “We’re ready to hold out to the end,” Macalou said.

## Condemn Government’s Racist Policy

On October 10, over 10,000 protesters marched here to condemn the government’s racist policy of case-by-case “legalization” of undocumented workers. They castigated “a policy that segregates undocumented workers in a no-rights zone of administrative uncertainty, preventing their social integration.”

The strike was symbolically kicked off on October 13 when 23 undocumented temporary workers from West Africa who maintain the RATP subway

station platforms erected a tent camp in the parking lot of the RATP Paris regional transport depot. They told how “for hours on end, we break up the asphalt on the station platforms, take 110-pound chunks up to street level, and then go back down with buckets of bubbling tar” — all this at night, “without a break, without a safety helmet, without safety shoes, without a mask ... and without ever seeing a doctor,” because none have documents.

Then, without a warrant, the government sent in the police to evict the workers and their tent camp, parroting the racist line of the French fascists, who claim that “foreigners” rob the French social security system. On October 20, the 70 strikers occupying the tax collection office in Vitry-sur-Seine were violently evicted by the police, two workers requiring first-aid treatment.

Fed up with being afraid to walk in the street, tired of being confronted with ID checks, a man from Mali, in his fifties, searches feverishly in his wallet and holds out his building trades worker ID card. Having lived in France since 1994, he has been working eight hours a day in industrial cleaning. “I’ve got all my pay stubs. I pay taxes and sales taxes like everybody else. But I have no right to social security, or to a retirement pension, or to unemployment benefits, because I haven’t got any immigration documents. That’s why I’ve joined the occupation.” To get a job, undocumented workers have to submit fake papers. “Nobody checks if they are fakes when it is a question of paying social security contributions and taxes, but they’re fakes because they don’t give us any rights,” commented Mamadou Sognane.

“If you protest, if you are tired, they tell you that you can go, because there always another undocumented worker who will take the job,” said Aboubacar. He has worked with fake documents, which cost him 4,000 euros, for the past eleven years. Un-

documented workers comprise a majority in some trades.

“For the temp agencies, undocumented workers are pure profit,” said Aberkhane Boukhalfa, a union steward who works for Manpower and who makes the rounds of the picket lines “to lend a hand.” The racist super-exploitation of immigrant workers nets super-profits for these bosses.

The strikers are backed by five trade union federations and five associations. A support statement from the Paris SUD-Education teachers union said: “The exploitation of undocumented workers, the most insecure of the insecure workers, opens the way to the destruction of job security for all workers. They are the main victims of a development which is depriving increasing numbers of workers of stable jobs, generalizing job flexibility, deregulating work codes and putting pressure on workers.”

## ‘We’ll Occupy This Place For a Year if Necessary...’

“We’ve got to set up a solidarity fund to be able to buy food to eat,” said Kouaté Kandjura, one of the spokespeople at the FNTP occupation. “We’re determined to occupy this place as long as is necessary, for a day, a month...or a year if necessary.”

These undocumented immigrant workers are fighting for the whole working class, internationally, setting an example for workers everywhere who are exploited by the same profit system. They’re fighting the bosses’ attempts to divide us by nationality (borders established by capitalists worldwide). The “legality” of workers is based on racist laws that serve the bosses. They use it to set one group of workers against another and thereby drag down conditions of all workers.

The international working class must support this fight and adopt PLP’s slogan: “Smash all borders!” ☪

# Wanted for Murder: Bosses' Racist Healthcare Cuts at Cook County

**CHICAGO, October 26** — With almost 50 million uninsured, and racist unemployment at a 60-year high, Cook County Health Services CEO Foley and the new System Board, are slashing services and cutting jobs at a breath-taking pace. There are over 1 million uninsured workers in Cook County and with plant closings and layoffs the number grows every day. These cuts are racist to the core as 82% of the patients are black or immigrant workers.

The new strategic plan calls for closing in-patient services at Provident and Oak Forest hospitals, including the Provident OB service. They are cutting staff at Stroger and issuing a blizzard of memos and write-ups to make workers fear for their jobs. They want to make every patient pay \$10 at every clinic visit, even if they can't afford bus fare.

The Cook County Clinic in Robbins is being sold to the Christian Health System, a private for-profit outfit that charges for care on a sliding scale. If you are one of the thousands of unemployed or uninsured workers in the south suburbs, this leaves you without a doctor or without that \$40 you were planning to use to put gas in the car. That's the racist profit system; you have freedom to choose, health care or gas, food or medicine, a CT scan or next month's rent.

Staffing in some units is being cut drastically. In the Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU) nursing bosses Antoinette Williams and Zina Jones plan to use 40% fewer nurses for the same number of babies. Not only is this a threat to those we serve, but nurses, doctors, techs and other workers will get fired and disciplined when mistakes inevitably occur. Nobody will write up the bosses making the cuts.

Cook County patients and health workers have two problems: racist health care

cuts and capitalism. The "free-market," organized around profits, has made public health care an endangered species. Regardless of political party, the President, Congress, Governor, mayor and health board must all serve profit needs rather than workers' needs. Capitalism's poverty, stress unemployment, pollution and wars cause the health problems. The only solution is communist revolution and a worker-run system, where racism and profits are outlawed and meeting the needs of the working class comes first.

This is deliberate, premeditated understaffing, ordered by the same CEO and Board that the medical staff and unions hailed as the "savior of the system." Maximum work from the minimum number of workers is the standard operating procedure under capitalism. This is doubly true during an economic crisis and two wars (despite the "Peace Prize" president). In a hospital, especially in an intensive care unit, this amounts to cold-blooded, racist murder.

Health workers and professionals must join forces with those we serve, who are the main victims of these attacks, to fight these vicious, racist cuts. We should begin by protesting at town hall meetings, organizing job actions and preparing for a strike to fight these attacks every way we can.

Some people believed the new "reform" board and the new "turn-around" CEO would make the County system better. Forget it! No group of wealthy administrators taking orders from the billionaire bankers, who got bailed out by the Obama gang, can meet the needs of the working class. That's why we need workers' power — communism. Join the PLP and help dump this murderous system for good. ☸

# Boeing Bosses Building Bridges to Fascism; Workers Need Red Revolution

**SEATTLE, WA, October 26** — As CHALLENGE reported (10/28), Boeing International Association of Machinists (IAM) union district president Wroblewski hasn't found the time to attend our local meetings since the Party's summer plant-gate demonstrations against the no-strike deal. He has, however, found time to participate in secret no-strike talks in Chicago and Washington, D.C. led by international IAM president Buffenbarger (Seattle Times, 10/22, front page).

This shocker reemphasized how serious the bosses are about imposing fascist conditions on industrial workers. These times call for nothing less than the long-term fight for communist revolution. Increased CHALLENGE networks and revolutionary class-conscious leadership moving workers into class struggle are paramount.

In contrast, the day before many local union officials joined Boeing representatives in company cafeterias praising "20 Years [of] Building Bridges Together," celebrating joint safety and training programs. More like building bridges to capitulation to fascism!

The UAW at Boeing is doing its class-collaborationist part. Refusing to let workers strike after their contract expired earlier this month at the Philadelphia military helicopter plant, the union leadership rammed through an extra-long 5-year contract last week. This pales before the plans discussed at the IAM secret talks — a 10-year no-strike pledge!

## Reject Capitalist Illusions; Build A Workers' Movement

Wroblewski's e-mail response to the Times article is patently absurd: "There are no 'secret talks' ... just ongoing discussions." Calls to the International have resulted in equally unbelievable assurances. "Maybe, we'll wait till the new contract comes up [in 2012] to consider a 10-year pact," an international official suggested by way of "reassuring" us. Why believe anything these fascists-in-waiting say? They're clearly not opposed in principal to disarming us for 10 years.

These "reassurances" negatively affect our ability to fight back. We should not underestimate U.S. rulers' absolute need to develop fascist control as their empire wanes because of international capitalist rivalry. Many of us may have the vain hope of some negotiated, relatively "peaceful" solution.

For years we've followed a certain path: Contracts come every three or four years. Often we strike, trying to stop Boeing from cutting our wages and benefits. Sometimes we even override the union's sellouts. But we never break the chains of wage slavery, only fight to change the shape of exploitation.

As fascism is consolidated, these contracts, more than ever, clamp down on class struggle. "You can't strike. You are under contract," the Seattle Times editorial gleefully declares, saying we must give in to the bosses' demands.

Boeing bosses have used racism to contract out work to factories with predominantly immigrant, black and Latino workforces, at poverty wages, a central part of fascism.

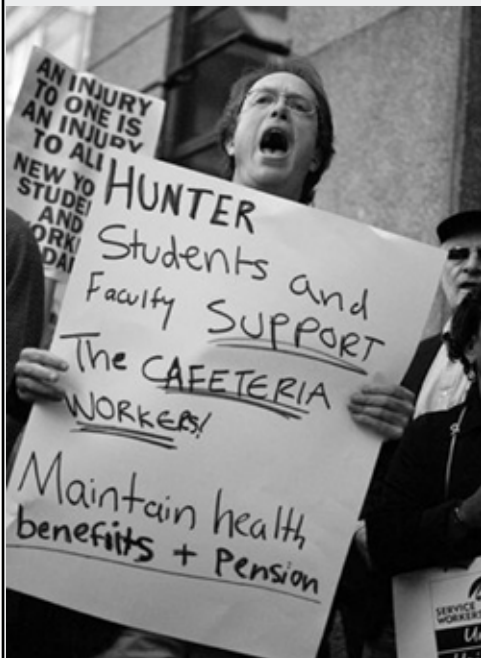
Advancing under these conditions requires strengthening the Party's anti-racist communist political base-building, our CHALLENGE networks and developing the closer personal ties allowing us to struggle for a revolutionary outlook among readers, sellers, their families and friends.

Real gains are harder to come by because of the bosses' fascist plans. The union misleaders' snake oil will never spontaneously disappear. As our campaign against this no-strike deal gathers steam, our success will be judged, in part, on how much we can win workers away from capitalist illusions and to our Party. Let's replace 5, 10, 20 years of building bridges to fascism with 5, 10, 20 years of building for communist revolution! ☸

**BULLETIN** — As we go to press, Boeing has abandoned the no-strike talks. U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D.-WA.) and Washington governor Chris Gregorie intervened over the weekend. That led to further direct talks between the IAM general vice-president and Boeing, with the union offering further concessions to get a 10-year pact. The talks' end most likely means the second 787 production line will be moved to Charleston, S.C., eventually employing 3,800.

The union wants to continue the talks, hoping for a deal that won't result in a rank-and-file revolt. Last time the leadership pulled a stunt like this, they were greeted with a hail of chicken bones. Let's make sure this time they have more to worry about than chicken grease on their fancy suits. ☸

# Students, Profs Support Hunter College Cafeteria Workers



**NEW YORK CITY, October 5** — Over 150 Hunter College cafeteria workers rallied today after receiving a letter saying that their new bosses, AVI, will not pick up their health coverage. The non-union AVI recently took over the contract for these workers but refuses to honor the workers' old collective bargaining agreement, which included a pension plan and free family health benefits.

The mainly black and Latino workers' hourly wage averages \$10.15/hr., not enough to afford the wage reduction need-

ed to pay for part of their health coverage. AVI also wants to substitute a 401(k) plan for their current pension.

The protest started with union chants but quickly changed to the more class-conscious, "Workers, united, will never be defeated." There were many support messages from students. Also, the professors' message declared, "Today it is you, tomorrow it can be me, so we must fight together." A Stella D'Oro worker linked the cafeteria workers' struggle to their recent 11-month strike and called for a boycott of the cafeteria.

The union mis-leaders were exposed when one said they would take a petition to the school president, so the protesters yelled, "Let's all go." His response was, "Let's not rush into things."

PLP is supporting the workers' fight while pointing out that although workers view the racist AVI food company as the enemy, we should see the main racists as the Hunter College administrators. They contract this work out to companies that exploit workers on campus while sitting back as if they had nothing to do with it.

In the coming weeks we will demonstrate against the administration and AVI and try to organize a boycott and other actions to build a base for class consciousness and ultimately to win fellow students, workers and professors to see the need for communist revolution. ☸



# Derrion Albert Is Not Racist Capitalism's First or Last Victim

**CHICAGO, October 10** — The fatal beating of 16-year-old Derrion Albert on September 24 left more than one victim. Anjanette Albert, Derrion's mother, was correct when she identified the young men charged with first-degree murder in her son's senseless death as "victims too." Capitalism — which creates poverty, homelessness, unemployment and war in its relentless drive for profits — causes this violence. Racism is one of the system's main weapons that victimizes and divides our class.

Only communist revolution can make a real difference in the lives of the young black workers in these neighborhoods. Communists fight for a future of equality for the entire working class, black, Latino and white. We will have to eliminate the rich bosses who run this society in order to guarantee a future for our young people.

## Tale of Two Communities Victimized by Racism

At Fenger High School, located in the "Ville," an area in the predominantly black Roseland community, only 6% of last year's students met or exceeded standards on the reading portion of the Illinois State Achievement Test. This community is plagued with an astronomical number of black households now in foreclosure. One-third there lives in poverty, with no job stimulus on the horizon.

Another victimized community is the neighboring Altgeld Gardens. CHA (Chicago Housing Authority) developed this isolated far-South Side housing project for black factory workers during World War II. The Pullman Company dumped its waste on the spot Altgeld Gardens now stands. One of the nation's five worst concentrations of toxic waste is

on Chicago's South Side. The "Gardens" has a high poverty and unemployment rate and is among the 15% lowest-income communities in the U.S.; 85% of Chicago's children live in poverty.

## The Rulers' 'Answer': Military School and National Guard

The youth violence infecting our communities will only sharpen with capitalism's economic crisis. Any recovery, just like the Olympics, will not be coming to poor black and Latino neighborhoods. Obama knows this. That's why he dispatched Attorney General Eric Holder and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan — former CEO of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) — to the city this week to meet with angry parents, and students. "Chicago won't be defined by this incident but rather our response to it" was the three-second sound bite Duncan told the TV news cameras. But it's Duncan's racist Renaissance 2010 school reform that is directly responsible for driving the escalating numbers of youth deaths even higher.

While running CPS, Duncan closed dozens of public schools, opened more charter schools and sent thousands of students outside of their poverty/gang-infested neighborhoods into new unfamiliar poverty/gang-infested neighborhoods. Before Renaissance 2010, the intolerable number of CPS students fatally shot in these neighborhoods was 15. In the 2006-07 school year it rose to 24; in 2007-08 to 23 deaths and 211 shootings. Now in 2008-09 it's risen to over 40 fatalities and 290 shootings (five in the first two months). These resemble numbers from Iraq or Afghanistan.

The war-makers' "answer"? The miniaturization of the schools. Duncan closed Carver High, Altgeld

Gardens' neighborhood school, turning it into a selective enrollment military school. He "turned around" Fenger High School, meaning he fired all the teachers, clerks, engineers, etc., hiring all new personnel.

Mayor Daley and Jesse Jackson's response is using the National Guard to patrol the streets in these black neighborhoods, to "provide safe passage to school for our youth." Marilyn Stewart, Chicago Teachers Union president and collaborator with Duncan, responded by calling for special schools that house only "trouble-making" students. They have plenty already; they're called juvenile detention centers.

PLP's Education Club took the lead from the youth and held a rally and CHALLENGE sale in the Roseland community, distributing leaflets and 130 papers and speaking on the bullhorn. A college student printed a sign reading, "Beep 4 revolution."

Overall, the young people were encouraged by the overwhelmingly positive reaction from the workers and youth they talked to. This has sparked a revival in our regular Saturday CHALLENGE sales, and spurred us to join an anti-violence youth organization, enabling us to meet more workers interested in PLP's ideas on multi-racial unity and revolution. Through such mass organizations, we can help organize anti-racist class struggle, possible school walkouts and mobilizations against these increasing racist assaults.

Progressive Labor Party invites you to join us in building such a movement. The fight for a communist society — the main answer to these racist attacks — will destroy this profit system and replace it with a society based on the needs of the international working class. Join Us! ☺

## Reality Produces Qualitative Change; Youth Blames Obama for Racist 'Mess'

"She wants us to think like Obama?" my student asked incredulously. "He's the one who got us in this mess!" Moments earlier, we were meeting with a student-led social justice organization. Instead of discussing the fatal beating of a black student and its connection to our struggles against public school sabotage, a professor was ringing a chime and announcing, "We are progressing!" to transition from task to mind-numbing task. This is progress?

The last straw was when an adult said our mission statement was too confrontational. Mission statement authors were stunned when the principal suggested the students who were fighting at school "take it outside." The authors were students from near where Derrion Albert had been beaten to death. The moderator added, "We need to think like Obama."

At this, I walked out. To my surprise, a Summer Project participant was at my heels. I asked why he walked out. Though hesitant in L.A. about blaming Obama, he was dead-set today: "He got us into this mess!" From what the students learned fighting attacks on neighborhood schools, they instantly blamed Arne Duncan for what happened to Derrion. I asked if that made it Obama's fault and they said "Yes!"

In the hall, we agreed Derrion wasn't the only victim, all the young men involved are victims of this racist system. If they don't get killed, they will be lost to prisons. When we returned, the meeting hadn't changed. My friend struggled

with me to give it a chance. I said it's patronizing the students and wasting time we could discuss issues. I said telling students to be compliant with the system that's destroying their schools invalidates their experiences with attacks and neglect in their schools.

He asked how PLP meetings are run. "With respect!" was my first answer. "We talk about immediate issues first. Everyone sees themselves as a leader, so everyone makes sure meetings run well. Our job here is to develop our students into leaders."

Just then, a student interrupted the professor. "Why are we ignoring communication issues [between black and brown students] and talking about pens and paper?" He opened a dam, all the students chimed in, "This isn't what's wrong," "We don't run meetings like this!" When the students spoke up, my friend admitted, "I was wrong, you were right!"

Last year, this group organized and participated in more actions than ever before. They got the attention of teachers who want to get involved due to our militant line against the (now nationally-led) attacks on, and re-segregation of, Chicago Public Schools. Students who come around PLP are stepping up their political leadership. The student who walked out of the meeting now meets with a club and is pulling this group to the left as we struggle to recruit Chicago students to the Party.

*Red Teacher*

## Anti-Racist Fight Turned Water on for Newark Residents

**NEWARK, NJ, October 21** — Forty black and white workers in front of City Hall demonstrated against the racist cut-off of water to over 1,000 tenants and homeowners. People with families and many with small children have been denied water for drinking, bathing, heating and sewage since the end of August. Many of these are tenants in apartment buildings where the landlord is responsible to pay the water bill.

Meanwhile, Prudential Insurance Company has refused to pay its bill of over \$2 million, and New Community Corporation, which owns many buildings, land and businesses, owes hundreds of thousands in delinquent bills. Neither has been denied service.

Prior to the demonstration various groups of concerned individuals met to discuss organizing tenants door to door, initiating class action suits and moving to physically turn the water on. Tenants even offered to pay their rent to the City to reinstate water service, but the City took the position that it did not want to "interfere with a tenant-landlord relationship." Can it be any clearer that the corporations, landlords and City work hand-in-glove to protect profits?

Most people at the demonstration were members of the People's Organization for Progress (POP). POP demonstrates frequently against police brutality, but the leadership calls for citizen review and never links the capitalist system's laws to racist oppression. One speaker even pressed for "Black Power." A nurse who joined the picket line distributed and sold 30 CHALLENGES, pointing out the article on John Brown and the need for multi-racial unity. She spoke, saying that the capitalist system was responsible for this racist attack, and called for action, "Politicians, corporations, all be gone; Black and white workers' power turns the water on!"

Two days later, the water was reinstated but we know that the City bosses may very well turn it off again come January in their effort to extract every penny from the poorest residents of Newark. We will not cease our organizing efforts to build mass unity among Newark's workers to prepare for future action against these racist attacks and build communist consciousness that the only way to defeat the attacks against workers is with communist revolution. ☺

## Can't Depend on Rulers' Laws:

# Turn Militant Outrage into Fight vs. Bosses' System

**NEW YORK CITY, October 28** — Hundreds of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 workers are marching across the Brooklyn Bridge today. They are protesting the Metropolitan Transit Authority's (MTA) decision to appeal a legally-binding arbitration award granted in August. Some workers also organized slowdowns on October 14, a union-labeled "Day of Outrage."

Slowdowns and other on-the-job actions are workers' best responses to these attacks. But the political direction of militancy matters as much as the militancy itself. Reforms under capitalism can be taken away. For lasting progress, workers need to overthrow the bosses and build a communist society where workers hold power and work for need, not profit.

Many transit workers who were fined for the illegal 2005 strike are furious that the MTA is challenging workers for following the arbitration law. Protest signs read, "What part of binding don't you get?"

The award is based on the cops' and firefighters' contracts, whose majority white workforces got better deals than transit. But the city's racist rulers chose to attack transit's mainly black and Latino workforce.

The boss's laws enforce the will of the capitalist ruling class. The Taylor law was a reform "victory" that allowed municipal unions to organize after the 1966 transit strike. But the bosses used

it to punish transit workers in the aftermath of the 1980 and 2005 strikes. The bosses' laws serve their needs, and arbitration is binding only when it favors them.

The August award they're fighting gave workers an 11% pay raise over three years, and reduced the healthcare contribution to 1.5% from 1.53%. But the 2006 arbitration award, received after the strike, punished workers and so went unchallenged by the bosses.

### What Next?

More slowdowns and demonstrations are needed but rank-and-file workers, not union misleaders,

or politicians like Bill Thompson, John Liu, and Bill De Blasio, must lead fight-backs. Local 100's two main factions are trying to direct workers' anger only at Mayor Bloomberg, for backing the MTA board's racist decision, but all politicians serve the capitalist class. Following them will lead to similar deals that deceive and attack workers.

Lasting victory means building the Progressive Labor Party to raise the ante of class struggle and organize against capitalism. That's the only way to ensure that the militant action of October 14 was not just blowing off steam, but serves as a small example of the tremendous class struggle needed to unite for communist victory. ☸

### The MTA — Wall Street's ATM

The bosses want the city's workers to resent "greedy" transit workers for their above-average contract. The real greedy ones are MTA bosses and Wall Street banks that made transit generate millions in bank profits.

As Track Equipment Maintainer Kevin Maloney explained in a letter to the civil-service newspaper *The Chief* (10/9), the real cause of the MTA's budget woes is "debt service," not "out-of-control" labor costs.

Fifty-five percent of the MTA's funds are paid by riders. To fill the budget gap created by a lack of government funding, the MTA colluded with ma-

ior banks to borrow money in the form of bonds. Now two billion dollars, nearly 20% of the MTA's 2009 budget, is going to "debt service" — paying the interest on those bonds. This is the fastest growing part of the MTA's deficit (Straphangers Campaign).

The liberal Drum Major Institute reported (4/9), "Between 2003 and 2008, debt payments and non-labor expenses grew by 45 percent and 40 percent, respectively, whereas labor costs grew by 16 percent. Debt payments are expected to grow another 51 percent by 2012 — a financially unsustainable trend."

## Capitalism's Racist Jaws Trap Another Black Airport Worker

**NEW YORK CITY, October 26** — Last week a young black worker was pulled over by the cops on his way to work at LaGuardia airport. Initially the cops told the worker he had been pulled over for a broken taillight, but on the ticket, they cited him with not stopping at a stop sign. Why did the police pull him over? DWB (driving while black) seems his most likely offense.

When the racist cops questioned the young worker, they found his license was temporarily invalid and placed him under arrest. After dragging him to jail, the police rifled through the worker's car and found a laptop in his trunk. The racist cops went to the exhaustive step of running the serial number on the computer. At this point, they discovered it had been reported stolen at the airport six months earlier.

Right now, it is not known if the worker stole the laptop. What is known is this: the NYPD proceeded to contact the fascist airport police, who confiscated the worker's airport ID, making it impossible for him to work and notifying his bosses of the proceedings, which will undoubtedly lead to his firing. The cops then charged him with theft on federal property, a mandatory felony, and threatened to send him to Riker's Island prison.

What is also known is this: last November the airport police (to fill a quota of arrests) attacked a worker helping passengers. Every day the NYPD harasses black and Latino workers doing nothing more than coming and going from work. Every week the black worker was harassed by the racist airport bosses for petty uniform violations and the like. And on every flight that the arrested worker loaded and unloaded, the bosses stole thousands of dollars from him and other workers by paying them as little as \$7.50 an hour and reaping \$10,000s in ticket sales (per flight).

Capitalism is based on wage slavery, a system where bosses steal from workers every day. It uses the brutality of the police to enforce and defend this law. At the same time, it tries to teach us as workers to be individualistic and only look out for ourselves.

PLP does not condone hurting other workers, and this includes stealing. However, we should remember that workers under capitalism steal either because they do not have enough or because the system teaches us selfish individualism and to not care about others. Fighting for communism means not only fighting to meet the material needs of the working class but also fighting for more collective, pro-worker thinking.

This young worker was definitely influenced by capitalist ideology, as we all are. But primarily, he is just one more worker who has fallen into the racist jaws of the capitalist justice system. If he had been a white boss, it is likely that the police never would have pulled him over. But the NYPD pulled over a young black worker, and under capitalism that is often as bad as a death sentence, either by the bullet or by starvation from a lost paycheck. ☸

## CHALLENGE Helps LA Teachers Intensify Class Struggle

We are happy to see CHALLENGE again printing letters critical of the work; this will help us to have a useful dialogue about how best to organize for communism in the day-to-day work. In Los Angeles we are doing our best to organize students and teachers in the union meetings and at our local schools around CHALLENGE and to build a base for the revolutionary line of the Party. We have been able to increase our distribution to about 250 papers per issue. We are active in the teachers' union and this spring organized two illegal one-hour work stoppages against teacher layoffs at our school that were about 90% effective.

These actions were organized by CHALLENGE readers at our schools, raising the need to defy the bosses' laws and the union contract to fight against the attacks on the schools in school, area and city-wide meetings. We fought for a one-day job action within the city-wide union, and had a successful vote at our schools, but when the union leadership folded in response to a court injunction, we could not pull off wildcat strikes at our schools.

Nevertheless, we have increased the paper sales and recruited a new PL club of young people active in these struggles and in school and the Summer Project. We advanced the political understanding of teacher and student CHALLENGE readers by refusing to let the union leadership define the limits of discussion. As fascism develops, the ruling class uses cutbacks and "school reform" to cheaply prepare the schools for war, especially in a school population that is overwhelmingly Latino and black. We put the struggle against charter schools in that

context, rather than opportunistically echoing the "anti-privatization" rhetoric of the union leaders and revisionists (fake leftists).

We have also been self-critical about being misled, like so many honest teacher activists, into believing the hype about "bottom-up" school reform. Many honest trade unionists and good anti-racist teachers are willing to believe in reforms because they want something better for kids. We struggle with our political friends to see that racist capitalism has nothing good for the schools: that "school reform" is a fascist plan to teach a few technical skills and a lot of patriotism as they increase class size and teacher hours, and lay off experienced teachers and union janitors. We're trying to spread an understanding that reform and revolution are a contradiction, united in the struggle of teachers and students for a decent education.

We are not fighting to make the bosses' schools work better for them, but for a communist world where education will serve the working class. Calling for a strike against cutbacks and school reform is part of fighting for the political leadership of students and teachers, showing them the direction of the fight for communist revolution and winning them to the Party. Although we have a lot of weaknesses, we measure our success in recruitment, in increased distribution of CHALLENGE, and our friends' deeper understanding of the attack on the working class as the crisis of capitalism sharpens, inter-imperialist rivalry accelerates and communist revolution becomes increasingly necessary.

*Los Angeles Comrade Teachers*



# 'Recovery' for Bosses, Depression for Workers

Despite the media trumpeting the end of the U.S. economic crisis, the U.S. is in a depression. This depression is a necessary part of the capitalist system and reflects capitalism's racist nature. Ultimately, the only way to make conditions better for workers worldwide is communist revolution.

Capitalism is unplanned and competitive — the measure of success of any company is maximum profit. U.S. manufacturing is in long-term decline compared to its world rivals, mainly due to the falling rate of profit in highly automated U.S. industries. Since the 1970s, falling wages for U.S. workers have meant they can't buy the very commodities they produce. This in turn has led to one new credit gimmick after another. The latest of these were mortgage scams, which caused home prices to soar. The inevitable collapse of those prices has set off a chain reaction of foreclosures and economic crises.

## Jobless 'Recovery'

Conditions of workers in Africa, Asia and South America are much worse than those of U.S. workers. But workers here are already at depression-era levels of unemployment. A U.S. Federal Reserve chief concedes that the "official" national unemployment rate would skyrocket to 16% from 9.7% if discouraged workers are added to figures (Agence France-Presse, 8/28/09). Include those workers who work part-time but would take a full-time job if they could find one and that number goes to 21%, fully 30 million workers.

In Detroit, the former center of the U.S. auto industry, the official unemployment rate is 28.9%, the

highest number since records started being kept (ABC News 8/28/09). The New York Times (NYT) reports (8/11/09) that about a third of the unemployed have been jobless for more than six months, the highest number ever.

Unemployment depresses wages and benefits, improving the boss's bottom line at the cost of higher exploitation of employed workers. Whatever "recovery" takes place for bosses' profits, it will be a jobless one for workers.

## Racist Devastation

This crisis has a particularly racist character. Even before this depression started, one-third of the so-called black middle class "was already in danger of falling to a lower economic level" (NYT, 9/13/09). As bad as white workers have been hit, black and Latino workers have suffered even more.

Subprime and other lousy mortgages were aimed disproportionately at black and Latino workers in urban areas. As mortgage rates adjusted upward, more and more black workers couldn't pay their bills. Also, by 2010 "40% of African-Americans nationwide will have endured patches of unemployment or underemployment" (NYT, 9/13/09). Those factors combined have spelled devastation for many black workers.

## Two Paths: Endless Profit Wars or Communist Revolution

The strategy of the U.S. Federal Reserve and Obama's economic team "was to create staggering amounts of money out of thin air" (NYT, 8/20/09).

They printed hundreds of billions of dollars, not backed up by actual value, and used that money to "stimulate" the economy. This has created a budget deficit of \$1.8 trillion. U.S. rulers are arguing amongst themselves about what to do next. But it will take nothing short of a major war or series of wars for U.S. and other bosses around the world to get out of this crisis.

During the Great Depression, the economic growth of 1934-1936 was followed by government spending cuts. But another collapse followed in 1937-1938. What ended the Depression and gave the U.S. capitalists an advantage over its competitors was the destruction of German, French, and British factories in World War II and the mobilization of millions of unemployed into the U.S. military.

Only the overthrow of the racist profit-driven capitalist society can solve the problem of unemployment and economic wars. Communist-led reform struggles for more jobs, higher wages and against the bosses' wars can build a base for anti-racist class unity against the bosses. But there are no reform solutions for capitalism's problems. Communism would organize production to meet the needs of the working class. No profit calculation would enter this picture. Join our fight for a communist world. ☸

## RED EYE ON THE NEWS

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

### Dump toxic costs on the poor

**GW, 10/2** – The oil trading company Trafigura last month agreed to pay compensation to 31,000 people in Ivory Coast, after the Guardian and the BBC's Newsnight obtained emails sent by its traders. They revealed that Trafigura knew that the oil slops [waste products] it sent there in 2006 were contaminated with toxic waste... It is one of the world's worst cases of chemical exposure since the gas leak at the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal, India. But in all other respects the Trafigura case is unremarkable, just another instance of the rich world's activities. Dump your telly over a hedge and you will be in big trouble. Dump 10,000 in Nigeria and you will get away with it. It suits all the rich nations not to ask too many questions, as long as the waste goes to faraway countries.

The Trafigura story is a metaphor for corporate capitalism. The effort of all enterprises is to keep the profits and dump the costs on someone else. Price risks are dumped on farmers, health and safety risks are dumped on subcontractors, insolvency risks are dumped on creditors, social and economic risks are dumped on the state, toxic waste is dumped on the poor, and greenhouse gases are dumped on everyone.

### For insurers, sick are the enemy

**MinutemanMedia.org, 9/25** – We hardly need to recite the shortcomings of our malevolent insurance companies. Their executives are paid millions, their duplicative approval systems are bankrupting all of us, and their customers are viewed as the enemy, always sick and presenting medical bills. The obvious goal for them is to sign up folks who are healthy and dump folks who are ill. It's just good business. That's the genius of the free market we hear so much about.

To promote this common-sense business model, insurers hire battle groups of lobbyists, pay fortunes to political campaigns, and advertise profligately.

### Big biz decides what media say

**MinutemanMedia.org** – This is the big picture of the U.S. media system: On the most important issues — questions of war and peace, liberty, social justice, public health and prosperity, and the fate of the planet — it has failed us time and time again.

And that's not surprising, because the system is founded on a couple of very bad ideas: It's a bad idea to have journalism mainly carried out by large corporations whose chief interest in news is how to make the maximum amount of money from it. And it's a bad idea to have as these corporations' main or sole source of revenue advertising from other large corporations, so that the news industry's overwhelming financial incentive is to keep those advertisers happy.

### Red atheist risked her life vs. Nazis

**NYT, 10/1** – Dr. Strobos, a sturdy 89, is honored every so often for the quietly valiant things she did almost 70 years ago as a medical student during the German occupation of the Netherlands: working with her mother, she hid more than 100 Jews who passed through their three-story rooming house in Amsterdam.

That sanctuary... was just a 10-minute stroll from a more fabulous hideout: Anne Frank's.

Tina Strobos... was seized or questioned nine times by the Gestapo and was once hurled against a wall and knocked unconscious. Why would she take such gambles for people she barely knew?

"It's the right thing to do," she said with non-chalance...

But such an outlook has an origin, what Donna Cohen, the Holocaust Center's executive director, calls "learned behavior." Dr. Strobos comes from a family of socialist atheists who took in Belgian refugees during World War I and hid German and Austrian refugees before World War II.

### Clean the air by poisoning water!

**NYT, 10/13** – Much power plant waste once went into the sky, but because of toughened air pollution laws, it now often goes into lakes and rivers. Air pollution was causing respiratory diseases



and acid rain.

So three years ago, when Allegheny Energy decided to install scrubbers to clean the plant's air emissions, environmentalists were overjoyed. The technology would spray water and chemicals through the plant's chimneys.

But the cleaner air has come at a cost. Each day... the company has dumped tens of thousands of gallons of wastewater containing chemicals from the scrubbing process into the Monongahela River, which provides drinking water to 350,000 people and flows into Pittsburgh... "It's like they decided to spare us having to breathe in these poisons, but now we have to drink them instead."

### Biggest democracy tops child deaths

**GW, 10/9** – India's growing status as an economic superpower is masking a failure to stem a shocking rate of infant deaths among its poorest people. Nearly 2 million children under five die every year in India — one every 15 seconds... World Health Organization figures show it ranks 171st out of 175 countries for public health spending.

Malnutrition, neonatal diseases, diarrhea and pneumonia are the major causes of death... "The difference between rich and poor is huge... The health service has failed to deliver."

**MORE ITEMS AVAILABLE ONLINE:**  
[www.plp.org](http://www.plp.org)



# Steady Rain Couldn't Dampen Throng Celebrating John Brown's Raid

**HARPER'S FERRY, WV, October 17** — Braving the cold and rain, nearly 300 antiracist workers and students from around the country commemorated the 150th anniversary of John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. Celebrants, more than half under the age of 25, acknowledged the need to continue Brown's fight against racism through multiracial unity and militancy.

Teachers introduced the events in their classrooms and encouraged coworkers to help build for the events. Many months of fundraising, including a 50-50 raffle held in all attendees' cities, helped make the day possible.

The program kicked off with a recitation of Brown's speech from his trial, given by a founder of the Harper's Ferry Historical Society. Brown pointed out that if he was rich, fighting against workers, instead of a worker fighting against the system of slavery, his fate would have been different. When asked about his participation in the program, the Historical Society member was excited about the rally and exasperated with the National Park Service for not including these events on their official activities' calendar.

Students performed a skit, playing Brown, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass planning the raid. It focused on Douglass' aversion to violence and Tubman's actions. Brown's collective included Harriet Tubman, whose role was celebrated as well. The skit was followed by the crowd warming up

with anti-racist and communist chants and singing "John Brown's Body."

There was a performance of spoken word and song about Emmett Till, a young black boy, whose lynching helped spark the Civil Rights movement. A performer recreated Till's fear of his lynching. Another performer sang Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit," written after seeing a lynching in the segregated South. The crowd responded with a strong cadence of "smash racism, power to the workers."

The fired-up crowd thronged together to march through the streets of Harper's Ferry with militant chants and red flags, taking its anti-racist message to the townspeople and National Park Service visitors. Everyone braved a steady rain reminiscent of the conditions 150 years prior.

A closing rally was held at the original site of the federal armory which had housed the 100,000 weapons which were Brown's goal. A long-time anti-racist fighter spoke of Brown's good plan and the lessons the current generation needs to learn



to fight racism. He ended with the passing of the "Sword of Struggle" to the younger generation to once and for all smash racism. A college student accepted the sword with humility and renewed commitment to the struggle.

The rally ended with a speech calling for the need to destroy capitalism, fight for communism, and join the Progressive Labor Party. The day's commemoration reinforced the lessons of multiracial unity, militancy, and boldness as the guideposts to our lives. ☼

## Forging Parent-Student-Teacher Unity Inspired by John Brown

**BROOKLYN, NY, October 18** — What a week we've had at our High School! Class struggle has been alive and well: We've helped fight the layoff of a co-worker, built our union chapter, fought back against a racist attack by the principal, and, out of all our activities, nearly 40 students, parents, and friends joined us to celebrate John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry (see article above).

We started the week with a parents' dinner for the parents whose children were interested in coming with us to Harper's Ferry. Seven students and eight parents came. While we ate we talked about our reasons for going to Harper's Ferry, and celebrating John Brown's raid, and the fight against slavery. The discussion broadened, as we talked about layoffs on other jobs. One parent works for a city agency, which has laid off 700 workers and replaced them with temps. Other parents talked about their struggles in their schools.

We explained that the reason we were organizing to go to Harper's Ferry was because we were revolutionaries who wanted to win other workers to see the need for revolutionary violence to overthrow capitalism, the same way that John Brown saw the need for violence to overthrow slavery. Three parents came on the trip, and another couple gave us a contribution. A post Harper's Ferry potluck celebration is in the works.

### Organizing Against Layoffs

In NYC, 530 school aides are being laid off (NY Daily News, 10/9), a racist attack because most are black and Latino. At our school, one aide is being "bumped" for a more senior worker who was laid off at another school.

In response, PL members and leaders of the teachers' union chapter at the school organized a petition to build support and anger among the workers in the building. Almost everyone signed the petition. We then campaigned to bring teachers and other staff to the UFT Delegates Assembly (DA) to get more support. We weren't able to get other staff to come, but we were able to get our co-worker into the meeting, and pressure the UFT misleaders to help fight for her job.

The following day we had two union-chapter meetings in the school where about 25 workers met to make plans to fight the harassment and micro-management by our school administration. We also distributed stickers that many staff and students wore, saying essentially, "No Layoffs... Make the

Bosses Take the Losses." We assigned members of each department in the school to build for a dinner on Friday to take our soon-to-be laid-off coworker out after her last day, and struggled with staff to come out to a picket line Friday morning.

Friday morning about 20 staff picketed the school, against lay-offs and cut-backs, chanting, "They say cut back, we say fight back," and, "The workers, united, will never be defeated." It was difficult to get more staff out, but we're setting the stage for more protests in the future.

Mid-day one of our comrades was called into the racist principal's office and warned not to bring students to Harper's Ferry. This racist attack on student-staff unity only made us angrier and more committed, and we found later that even conservative members of our staff were infuriated.

We followed all of this activity with a social in a local bar Friday. About 30 of us toasted our co-worker, and shared stories, and built ties.

### The Result of This Week

Over thirty-five students, parents and teachers joined us in a day of celebration of the fight against

racism with working-class violence and multiracial unity in Harper's Ferry. We are developing plans, with students, staff and parents, to fight the racist principal. We will start a campaign to fight for student-staff unity. The future is ours, the struggle continues. ☼

### HOW WE ORGANIZED

During the summer, some PL'ers began thinking about organizing a trip to Harper's Ferry to celebrate John Brown's raid. Some of us were in a position to organize official school trips while others were in a more fascistic situation. In one instance, the principal said if a teacher arranged to meet a student at an AIDS Walk, that would be a "school trip" and it needed his approval. This was obviously false, but this principal was more intent on attacking certain teachers than in educating students.

In one Brooklyn high school, teachers had nearly 50 students interested in the John Brown trip. Everything from politics to logistics was explained to the students' parents. There was an overwhelmingly positive response. Several parents wanted to go with their children. An information/parent permission slip was produced along with a pamphlet about the activities in Harper's Ferry. Those materials were circulated to all the interested students.

Excitement grew and new students became interested. Calling parents became a daily activity. Money and permission slips began coming in. A parent informational meeting was organized and a sizable group of parents and their children attended.

In the end, the trip had an excellent turnout. Several parents and dozens of students came. Most thought it was a great trip despite the rain. Now the struggle moves on.

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