

CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

volume 42 no. 4

february 17, 2010

suggested donation \$.50

State of Their Union: Expanding U.S. Imperialism in Haiti

In Obama's State of the Union address, he grossly insulted the earthquake-stricken working class of U.S.-occupied Haiti. He talked for over an hour, mainly about domestic issues, concentrating on restoring U.S. bosses' profits amid workers' misery, while completely ignoring the more than 200,000 deaths — a toll vastly multiplied by the poverty U.S. capitalism forces on Haiti. (See CHALLENGE, 2/3) He passed over the millions more now suffering injuries, disease, homelessness and hunger under the guns of well-cared-for U.S. troops.

This attitude mirrors the racism that U.S. imperialism spreads worldwide, having super-exploited the overwhelmingly black population of Haiti for over a century, making it the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere.

The fact is, each dollar of U.S. government assistance includes "33 cents for U.S. military aid," but only "nine cents for food." (Associated Press, 1/27/10) This paltry "aid" fronts for stepped-up coercion. While the quake has Haiti's workers down, U.S. bosses step on their

backs. This lays bare capitalism's utter unwillingness to relieve distressed workers.

Obama, however, did note an opportunity to convert the catastrophe into building U.S. imperialism. He praised "Americans who've dropped everything to go someplace they've never been and pull people they've never known from the rubble, prompting chants of "U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A!" from people in Haiti. Obama and his ruling-class masters hope their half-baked aid can legitimize a full-fledged military presence.

U.S. Rulers Seek To Rescue Image, Not Haitian Workers

Some U.S. "relief" workers are openly patriotic and paramilitary like the NYPD-FDNY team that put in a brief, highly-publicized appearance in Haiti. But the most committed volunteers are genuinely compassionate people in groups like Doctors Without Borders (DWB). These

continued on p. 2

EDUCATION>>

Mass Anger Erupts Over Bloomberg's Racist School KKKlosings

page 3

STRIKES>>

France: Undocumented Workers' Strike Shows Need to Smash All Borders

page 4

HEALTHCARE>>

AIDS Protesters Picket White House, Slam Obama's Racist 'Freeze'

page 4

HISTORY>>

Racist Rulers Distort Black History to Hide Workers' Rebellions

page 8

Eyewitness Report on Haiti's Workers' Heroism Inspires HS Students, Staff

NEW YORK CITY, February 3 — "We will have to rebuild Haiti all over again. Maybe this time we should make it communist," exclaimed a student. "What do you guys think?" she asked. This occurred at our emergency student government forum last week in a local high school about the crisis in Haiti

Thirty students attended to hear a report from a high school student and a staff member who had just returned from Haiti. Representatives from two local student governments and their advisors also came. The students and staff were extremely inspired by the moving account of how working-class people are dealing with the horrors of capitalism and imperialism.

One speaker explained how his family organized food for their neighbors and tried to help everyone in the community. He then related the chaos, disorganization and long lines at the U.S. Embassy. People were exhausted, hungry and thirsty. They

were forced to sign promissory loans to repay the U.S. government for their return flight to the U.S. which really angered the audience.

A staff member who went to Haiti to see her family and help out explained how she got there — riding a horse from the Dominican Republic for the last leg of her journey! She brought nutrition bars and water to give out to everyone she saw. She described how so many buildings were destroyed but that the U.S. Embassy remained intact. If the recently rebuilt embassy could withstand the quake, why weren't workers' homes, schools and hospitals built with the same care?

Students raised many important issues connected to the earthquake: was U.S. imperialism or Haiti's history of dictatorships mainly to blame? How the media is using racism to further attack Haiti's working class; and what we can do to support the people there.

We also reviewed some history, pointing out how U.S. bosses, including Disney, have long reaped profits there. In 1993, Disney chairman Michael Eisner made \$203 million while workers sewing Mickey Mouse pajamas made 12 cents an hour. We said students and staff should take matters into our own hands and organize relief and solidarity activities that are not micro-managed by supervisors and principals. One student suggested organizing walkouts and protests against the U.S. military occupation which defends U.S. corporations that pay Haiti's workers starvation wages.

We understand the desperate situation in Haiti and were very thankful that these two friends could share what they saw and did. But students and teachers did leave with a feeling of optimism, that we must be involved in everything, from fundraising to solidarity trips, to support our working-class brothers and sisters in Haiti. ☺

Expanding U.S. Imperialism in Haiti

continued from p. 1

sincere doctors are being mis-led by war-making bosses with an imperialist agenda. Unfortunately, all these groups ultimately serve the same U.S.-flag-waving purpose.

DWB's actual leaders plan and carry out even greater assaults on the working class that would disgust most DWB doctors, if they were aware of them. DWB's advisory (financial, that is) board boasts heavyweight U.S. imperialist credentials. (See box)

New York City's police commissioner Ray Kelley, who sent in the cops and firefighters, is continuing his career in making Haiti a pro-U.S. police state. In 1994-1995, Kelley was training Haiti's police as Director of the International Police Monitors of the multi-national force in Haiti. For this, then President Clinton awarded him a commendation for "exceptionally meritorious service."

No Honor Among Thieves — U.S. Uses Disaster to Beat Rival Capitalists and Trash International 'Law'

Obama & Co. pounced on Haiti to execute unilateral military action under humanitarian cover, infuriating French-, Russian- and Chinese-allied Venezuelan competitors for cheap Haitian labor. Led by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), (see box at right) liberal U.S. strategists have been cooking up such an operation for some time. An October 2009 CFR report, "Interventions to Stop Mass Atrocities and Genocide" called for the U.S. to "break the law" regarding national sovereignty and UN strictures, when overriding U.S. imperialist in-

Wall Street Big Shots Run Doctors Without Borders

- Doctors Without Borders (DWB) Chairman (and Exxon Mobil and JP MorganChase heir) Richard Rockefeller, M.D. heads the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the main bankroller of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) think-tank. Rockefeller's CFR has helped guide every U.S. military invasion since World War II — massacring millions in Vietnam, Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan while training death squads in Latin America.
- DWB board member Robert van Zwieten toils for the Asian Development Bank (ADB). U.S.-dominated ADB provides the main funding for the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project, a chief objective of Obama's deadly Afghan surge.
- DWB board member Elizabeth Beshel is global treasurer of Goldman Sachs, which, while it doles out multi-million-dollar bonuses to its officers, serves Obama's job-destroying regime as an unofficial Treasury Department aide.
- Victoria Bjorklund, also on DWB's board, is a partner at Wall Street law firm Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett. In a typical deal, Simpson greased a \$2-billion loan from JP Morgan to Shell Oil and the Saudi national oil company, both major beneficiaries of U.S. war-making in Iraq, Pakistan and now Yemen.
- Partners in Health (PIH) is another relief operation in Haiti that betrays sincere activists. It is the founded and funded creation of Harvard University which functions as the U.S. rulers' leading ideology factory. Imperialist blueblood James Houghton, director at Exxon and JP Morgan, leads Harvard's governing body. In liberal guise, the university's Kennedy School fine-tunes government schemes for wars abroad and police crackdowns at home.

PL'ers must work in these bosses' "aid" organizations and win the many honest people within them to understand that while they are already making very positive contributions to the working class, the ruling class wants to use these groups to further their imperialist interests.

terests demand.

The paper cited war zones Kosovo, Rwanda and Darfur. But U.S. rulers grafted the phony humanitarian rationale onto Haiti. It read in part: "Force or threat of force may be used in cases of genocide and mass atrocities to, among other things, protect vulnerable populations, guard relief efforts, degrade perpetrators' capacity for repression, and signal a willingness to escalate further if necessary."

The U.S. has even invented Haitian "perpetrators" in the form of thugs hoarding relief supplies. But, to the contrary, workers in Haiti are collectively organizing food distribution. Even the NY Times reported (1/26) that, "New rules of hunger etiquette are emerging. Stealing food, it is widely known, might get you killed...No matter what is found, or how hungry the forager, everything must be shared." This working-class "communal rationing" contradicts the media's

demonization of young workers in Haiti. (See article below). The main hoarders are, in fact, the U.S. military, who — wielding police power — effectively control the bulk of supplies.

We must unite with Haiti's workers and report their class solidarity in our shops, unions, barracks, community organizations, churches and schools, while organizing direct working-class relief, as best we can, to the workers on Haiti's streets, bypassing the U.S. imperialists who have looted the country for over 100 years.

The profit system not only magnifies natural disasters' effects on workers but uses them to further exploit our class. Our Party's long-term goal is the earthquake of communist revolution that will bury the murderous billionaire class in the rubble of capitalism once and for all. ☪

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!**

PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY
P.O. Box 808 Brooklyn NY 11202

- www.plp.org
- email: desafio.challenge@gmail.com
- blog: challengenewspaper.wordpress.com
- 718-630-9440

CHALLENGE/DESAFIO (ISSN 0009-1049) published bi-weekly by Challenge Periodicals. 1 issue \$.50. One Year: \$15. Six months: \$10. Send address changes to CHALLENGE Periodicals, GPO Box 808 Brooklyn, NY 11202, February 17, 2010, Volume 42, No. 4

The fact is, each dollar of U.S. government assistance includes "33 cents for U.S. military aid," but only "nine cents for food."

Why Articles Are Not Signed

The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual. While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.



D.C. Metro Bosses Hike Fare, Kill 2 Workers; PL'ers' Target: Capitalism

WASHINGTON, D.C., January 27 — Tonight Metro bosses held public hearings, asking the public to comment on whether the transit system should raise fares, reduce service, or transfer funds from the maintenance budget into operations. Some choice! All of these actions would harm workers and intensify racism.

PLP'ers testifying at the hearing condemned the "choice," demanding no cuts in service, no fare increase, and no attacks on workers, calling instead for a mass militant movement led by labor to fight for proper funding (from the bosses who have made billions from the transit system). Another person declared that these cuts were fundamentally racist because of their disproportional impact on black and Latino workers. But today's capitalist system in crisis is unlikely to respond favorably even to the most militant actions of workers, making a revolutionary organization critical to the future.

The former president of the Metro workers' union condemned the Metro Board as the worst ever, putting the deaths of two track workers the day before squarely at the feet of the Metro Board. These deaths were not accidents,

but negligent homicide by Metro because of their forced overtime and failure to deploy flag people. Metro has systematically ignored the many safety problems that workers have brought to their attention because correcting them would cost money. Workers' lives aren't worth spit to the bosses.

Within 48 hours of the public hearing, the Metro Board raised fares, declaring that the testimony of the public favored that option. What liars! And exactly what we've come to expect from capitalism.

Which way forward? Many Metro workers read CHALLENGE and are beginning to understand the need to build a stronger PLP organization at Metro that targets the entire system of capitalism. As Obama's wars grow and a fascist police state becomes more and more apparent, revolutionary action against the racist system of capitalism becomes ever more urgent. Workers, riders: fight back with slow-downs and strikes, with the goal of fighting for workers' power — communism. Take up the red flag of revolution as we battle back against every attack from the bosses! ☪

PL's Ideas Catching On: Airport Cleaners Vote Strike vs. Bosses' Racism

MID-WEST AIRPORT, February 1 — At the packed SEIU union hall, metro area and airport cleaners voted unanimously to strike against the racist bosses. The metro area cleaners are preparing to fight against unfair labor practices, contract give-backs and racism. Meanwhile, janitors in a downtown office building filed two formal complaints against the cleaning bosses for blatant racism. New black cleaners are forced to wear different uniforms from the Latino cleaners at \$2.50 less pay!

This racist super-exploitation is designed to increase the bosses' profits and maintain a racially-divided work-force. But this divide-and-conquer attempt failed — all the black, Latino, white and Asian immigrants and citizens voted not to clean one single building until our demands are met.

At the airport, the cleaning bosses distributed a letter, implying that we would lose our jobs if we strike against them. The union steward immediately informed airport cleaners that this is just a fascist scare tactic; the bosses know the airport is crucial to the success of the metro area strike.

Greetings To Immigrant Strikers In France

Meanwhile, the airport workers sent a letter of international solidarity to the striking immigrant workers in France. We explained [in both English and French] that their situation is similar to undocumented Latino immigrants here who are targets of racist immigration raids in the U.S., and that all workers must fight racism globally. We also sent them a package of CHALLENGES.

We have a study group of airport workers to discuss CHALLENGE articles and PLP's revolutionary ideas. We are struggling with these workers to distribute the paper. The Party must grow to enable the international working class to destroy capitalism with communist revolution. ☪

Mass Anger Erupts Over Bloomberg's Racist School KKKlosings

BROOKLYN, NY, January 26 — Billionaire mayor Mike Bloomberg's Panel on Educational Policy voted to close twenty "failing" NYC schools today, some time after 3:00 am following nine hours of testimony from staff, students and parents at these schools protesting such a decision. Two thousand angry workers and youth drowned out NYC schools' Chancellor Joel Klein with chants during his entire opening remarks. Through long-standing ties at one of the twenty schools, three PLPers managed to gain early spots on the speakers' list. We used these opportunities to broaden out the already sharp attacks on Klein and condemn the overall racist nature of these school closings and education under capitalism in general.

This was an angry crowd. When a woman called Klein KKK, the crowd shouted out in agreement. When Klein checked his Blackberry, the entire room chanted "pay attention, Klein!" He left the table for a few minutes after a young woman ended her speech by warning him that he was "messing with the youth of New York City and that was not a smart thing for him to be doing." The crowd, limited by illusions of reform but feeling the power of refusing to obey, roared that he come back to his seat and do his job, which for that one night was to listen to regular workers and youth. The huge police presence in the room did nothing to dampen the fighting spirit of this crowd.

All 200 CHALLENGES we brought were distributed and important political ties to friends were re-affirmed. The bosses will go ahead and close these schools that their racist system neglected for so long. However, our analysis that such a system must go was well received. The union's stupid line that "our schools are good schools" rings hollow for everyone who knows how badly the system has abandoned so many thousands of children to failing schools in this city alone.

The bosses may attack, and the unions mislead, but we in the PLP will go ahead and do our work to condemn a system that treats our youth like trash to the dustbin of history. As a young comrade pointed out to the thousands in the room, there is no good education to be found in the schools under this racist capitalist system. Real education happens when workers confront the bosses and communists are there to inject revolutionary content into the fight.

This fight over school closures is not over, and the brutal logic of capitalism can only mean one thing: more fights are sure to come. Each attack the bosses mount on our class increases the opportunities we have to bring more of our friends into the communist movement. ☪

Chicago PL Youth Tie Haiti, Katrina to Capitalism on King-Day March

CHICAGO, January 16 — "We know what we're fighting for!" echoed down 63rd Street in Englewood, drawing people out to watch the multi-racial group of youth and adults march, chanting "No more rich and no more poor!" The march, hosted by a church in Hyde Park, was against poverty and for equality, to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, but the tone turned militant when youth around PLP, mostly Englewood residents, took over the chanting.

We distributed a flier connecting the capitalist-inflicted poverty and the devastation in Haiti following the earthquake to the similar economic-related Hurricane Katrina disaster. PLP's "Fight-Back!" chant had people dancing in the streets, at the bus stops, raising their fists and chanting. It was a welcome change from the usual gang members walking down 63rd Street!

After the march, there was a panel discussion with professors and community activists. Half the audience was youth, but the discussion was definitely not geared towards them. In fact, activists on the panel repeatedly said that students needed to try harder in school and listen to their elders to fight poverty. If that worked, we would have fixed these problems a long time ago!

The professor spoke with his back toward the students, holding posters that identified high poverty areas. We know where the poor people are — just walk through the segregated communities and look for boarded-up buildings! We walked past plenty of them on 63rd and King.

To engage the students, a PLP member wrote questions down and passed them around. The youth responded, read each other's respons-

es, and wrote more questions. This was a more insightful discussion! When the panel ended, three youth informed one of the speakers that the way she talked about students was 'adultist' — meaning it had a bias against youth and didn't value their opinions and abilities.

After we left the church, we had a student panel discussion over pizza. This gave us a chance to debrief. We agreed that the walk was too long and the panel was too dry, but it was overall a good day. We discussed how poverty came from the creation of class society; that it hadn't always existed, and that a lot of the poverty we see today is based in racism. Students who had been around PLP explained what the Party is and everyone who came took a CHALLENGE. Participating in events like this brings more youth around the Party and, at the end of the day, we gained a new member for PLP! ☪



The Great Train Robbery: Bosses Destroying Transit Jobs, Service

"Public-Transit Passengers Face Rough Ride." This is the happy New Year message from the Wall St Journal (WSJ) (Jan. 2, 2010). As spokesperson for the big financial capitalists like Goldman Saks, Bank of America, and Citibank, the WSJ only confirms what we transit workers already know about the destruction of transit jobs and service in our own particular cities.

Here are some Facts:

- \$8.4 billion of the \$787 billion federal stimulus package or 1% went to mass transit; while most of the \$787 billions went to bail out Wall St.
- The cost of riding public transit rose at a 17.8% annual rate in the six months ending in November. San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit increase will be 27% in Jan. 2010. Those on the economic margins will have to choose between giving up necessities or staying home.
- Budget deficit: NY, \$383 million, Chicago, \$300 million, S.F., \$129 million.
- 3.8% fall in riders over the whole year; rising to a 6.1% drop during October, November and December. Some cities estimate ridership could fall as much as 10%.

What Is Behind The Facts About The Crisis In Mass Transit?

- Finance capital and the big corporations which own property in every Center City in Urban USA caused the revenue and funding crisis as they refuse to pay for the value that a mass transit infrastructure adds to property and businesses in urban areas. They support the most regressive tax for transit, a "Sales Tax" which hits the poorest the hardest and shrinks in periods of economic bust.
- Financial Capital has made billions in profits off loans, public bonds, and financial schemes (like leases, buy-backs) used to pay

for transit infrastructure. Like everything in capitalism, transit must be profitable for some boss if it is to develop. Workers needing mass transit, its value as a "green" alternative, and transit workers providing an important social service are not reason enough for it to exist in an economic system that is based upon profit over human need.

- The funding crisis is a result of U.S. imperialism and the budget priority for wars around the world to control resources like oil.
- The capitalist class is dismantling jobs in the public sector like transit, teachers, medical workers, etc. much as they did after the 1970's in the industrial, manufacturing sectors of auto, steel, textile, etc. They cannot outsource transit jobs, but they have a consistent policy of part-timing, speeding up schedules, called "efficiencies," outsourcing to non-union, or subcontracting to cut labor costs.
- At the same time politicians and the corporate-owned mass media try to mobilize the working-class tax payers against their class brothers and sisters in the public sector. This is a divide-and-conquer strategy. In S.F., politicians characterized a legal provision that provides partial payment for dependent medical care as a "Year-end Bonus;" this spread in the media as a thinly-veiled attempt to link transit workers with bankers and fat cat Wall Street bonuses.
- The impact of this crisis is heaviest on the poorest riders, the disability community, black and Latino neighborhoods, the elderly, students, and transit workers (who themselves are predominately black and Latino), immigrant, single parents and sections of the working class that saw transit as a way to maintain a family and life in this economy. In New York City, subsidies passes for the mostly black and Latino students who commute to public schools are on the chopping

block — another example of the rulers' institutional racism.

- Ridership is down due to unemployment — a product of capitalism in crisis.

To understand what is really happening in transit, passengers and transit workers need a communist analysis of capitalism which explains the source of these attacks and helps develop class consciousness: knowing which side of the fence we're on and who's there with us. Mass transit moves people and goods; the vascular system of world capitalism. Transit workers have tremendous potential power to disrupt the smooth operation of the profit system.

Even though, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) and Transport Workers' Union (TWU) top leadership have encouraged and negotiated concessions, transit workers have the potential to step up and fight back. Groups of workers, with some communist ideas, like "make the bosses take the losses," have refused to accept that the working class must pay for the transit crisis.

Transit workers need unity with passengers to oppose fare hikes and service cuts. Work slowdowns, mass meetings over schedule cuts, newsletters to riders and drivers, rank-and-file caucuses, participation in Union elections and demonstrations with other public workers can organize the opposition to the racist fare hikes and attacks on transit workers that the bosses need to finance their expanding oil wars.

PLP members are immersed in these daily battles, as reported in CHALLENGE, but as long as the profit system remains in place, with financial capitalists running the show, mass transit will not be run to satisfy workers' needs. Communists organize now to develop collectivity, knowledge of how capitalism works, and class consciousness. These are some modest steps towards a revolutionary movement, eventually a class war, to get rid of the Wall St parasites. ☪

AIDS Protesters Picket White House, Slam Obama's Racist 'Freeze'

WASHINGTON, D.C., January 27 — PLP joined several friends in public health as well as 40 other AIDS activists as they picketed the White House on the afternoon of Obama's State of the Union address. Chanting, "Money for AIDS, Not for War" and holding signs saying, "Frozen AIDS Budget Means Waiting Lists for AIDS Housing and Treatment," we protested Obama's racist and sexist proposal to freeze federal spending on domestic programs for three years. These are areas where mostly black, Latino and female workers need services the most: public health, housing, literacy, and transportation.

As one activist wrote in her call to action, "This is a nightmare scenario. We're in the middle of an economic crisis, and people are losing their jobs, their homes, their healthcare. This budget freeze would devastate efforts to address HIV in our communities, and around the world. Waiting lists are growing every day for housing, and AIDS treatment and care. Syringe exchanges can finally get federal funding, but now there's no new money to fund them. We have to push back!"

Pushing back is okay, but is actually reformist. Such anger must be turned into action to destroy capitalism, a repressive economic system that forces and requires banks and big business to protect their profits at the expense of the working class. The capitalist system places ownership of production in the hands of those with the most wealth. The super wealthy ruling class, the bankers and corporate owners,

own the government, and dictate economic and political policy through their ability to control politicians like Obama. They don't get rich by providing money for free AIDS drugs or subsidized housing!

Already, one of the country's richest counties near D.C. has a waiting list for AIDS medications while people in Uganda wait for others to die so they can get care. The working class must join PLP in order to smash the bosses' state and create a communist world based on meeting each other's needs in order to solve these problems.

Communism is a system that prioritizes health because it operates without a capitalist wage or profit system. Communists fight for the working class as we are the ones who produce all value. Communists strive to equalize the opportunities for everyone to contribute to the good of the world. This future will take a great deal of personal and collective struggle to achieve, but it is the only alternative that can create a world without AIDS, poverty, racism, and inequality. Though our friends have not yet been won to fight for communism, more public health workers and students are struggling to find the solutions to these problems. Ultimately logic, the sharpening class struggle, and conversations with PLP must convince them that only revolution for communism can solve these problems.

PLP talked to friends about the freeze and their faith in the system on the way over to the protest. One admitted how frustrated she was that Obama would propose these cuts

and feared that it would be harder to find a job actually helping people improve their health. Another took it further and explained how the president always represents the interests of the rich. Others differed in their views of Obama. A young professional wrote how proud she was to see Obama applauded by such important people at his State of the Union speech, while another blasted him for betraying his supporters. These debates will continue.

PLP joined 65 public health students at a gathering of young professionals the previous weekend in order to discuss the road to struggle. Amid images of Haiti, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the homeless here, two speakers described the structure of capitalism in which a small minority control the wealth created by the masses of people. A public health student and a woman living with, and fighting HIV described their transformation into activists. Breaking into smaller groups, we spent the next hour discussing our role as social activists, identifying our fears and motivations, and providing collective support for each to do more.

It is up to our Party and its friends to point out that it is racism and sexism that allows capitalism to exist and that no amount of social activism will get rid of it. PLP needs to transform these good intentions and concern into an organized movement for communism that battles the bosses at every step so we can realize our goals of health and equality. ☪

France: Undocumented Workers' Strike Shows Need to Smash All Borders

PARIS, January 27 — Class struggle sharpens contradictions and reveals the truth, proven again by the undocumented workers' strike here, now in its fourth month.

Riot batons, tear gas and rubber bullets for the workers, and kid gloves for their bosses. Why? Because the racist bosses here want and need a permanent mass of super-exploited undocumented workers.

That's why, at the crack of dawn on January 20, 100 riot cops violently evicted 62 undocumented workers who were occupying the Hotel Majestic — a foreign ministry conference center undergoing renovation — since they struck on October 12. Workers were beaten, shot point-blank in the chest with a rubber bullet and had their teeth smashed in.

Despite the police attack, strike leader Old Douré declared, "With or without the building site, we will continue to tell the truth." Indeed, on January 22, 2,000 undocumented workers and their supporters protested near the French National Assembly to denounce the bloody eviction and demand across-the-board "legalization" for all undocumented workers.

Raid A Retaliation for Workers' Public Condemnation of Boss's Duplicity

The bloody eviction was retaliation for a press conference the 62 workers held at the French National Assembly on Jan. 13. They castigated Bouygues Bâtiment, which subcontracts work to ADEC Demolition — their employer — in these terms: Our boss "knows our situation [as undocumented workers] and profits from it. He has set things up so as not to hire us directly. He has us paid by temporary work agencies. He says he isn't responsible, that we are not his employees. And yet, we have been working for him for years, some of us for ten years."

Their boss is Martin Bouygues, French President Nicolas Sarkozy's "best friend." Bouygues Bâtiment is just one company in the Bouygues empire, which employs 145,000 workers around the globe and raked in 32.7 billion euros (\$46 billion) in profits in 2008.

The undocumented workers attacked the French

fascists' lie that undocumented immigrants come here to benefit from the social security system. "We pay social security contributions, we pay taxes," they declared. "When we are injured on the construction sites, no medical coverage, no sick time. And often: "Mission over" for those who are unfortunate enough to have their foot crushed by rubble or get burned by a blowtorch."

They also attacked the French government's lie that undocumented workers are "dangerous." Four workers even showed security clearances from having worked in French National Assembly offices.

The French government is also attacking undocumented students. On January 25, two Comorian students were arrested on their way to class at the University of Pau and sent over 400 miles away to a detention center here. Two days later fellow students demonstrated at a Pau police station to protest their arrest and transfer. Club-wielding cops broke up the demonstration.

Kid Gloves For The Bosses

While French rulers repress striking undocumented workers demanding "legalization," it treats their employers with kid gloves. On January 12, the police mistakenly arrested three directors of SENI, a cleaning company. Documents there showed that 500 workers — one-fifth of the workforce — are undocumented, the biggest such case in French history.

The following day, the government released the bosses, saying prosecution was being postponed indefinitely. Why? Because firstly, with the bosses in jail, 2,000 workers — documented and undocumented — would be sacked, impelling them to unite and possibly stage a sit-down.

Secondly, SENI is a subsidiary of Samsic, owned by Christian Rouleau, one of the 100-richest bosses in France. Samsic and its subsidiaries clean the French presidential palace and other government offices, as well as the Eiffel Tower. It also handles nuclear plants and submarines and works for the Roissy police, charged with hunting down undocumented workers. The government doesn't want it known how much it employs undocumented workers.

A bill enabling prosecutors to shut down com-

panies "that employ undocumented workers in a repeated and sizeable way" has now been postponed indefinitely, admitted the labor ministry to the weekly newspaper "Le Canard enchaîné." Such a law could shut thousands of companies and lay off tens, even hundreds, of thousands of workers, "legal" and "illegal."

Capitalism Needs Undocumented Workers

The savage repression of striking undocumented workers and the kid-glove treatment of their bosses proves that the bosses need and want undocumented workers. As the ADEC Demolition workers said on January 13: "We owe this life as workers without rights, as modern-day slaves, to our administrative situation. The government refuses to give us permission to work. And yet, the bosses hire us. Most of us have filed requests for 'legalization'...but that hasn't helped. It must be believed that the boss and the government want to keep us 'illegal,' the better to exploit us."

While undocumented workers are super-exploited, the fascists and the government fabricate racist lies about undocumented workers "stealing the jobs" of native-born workers, "taking advantage" of the welfare system, and "threatening national security." They use this stereotype to divide native-born and undocumented workers, the age-old bosses' weapon of divide-and-conquer.

Only communist revolution — which destroys national boundaries, along with the bosses and their system that creates them, and exploits all workers — can free the entire working class from this barbarism. ☺

Bulletin

The overwhelming majority of the 30,000 government healthcare practitioners — doctors and specialists — in two unions are in the 6th week of a strike for higher wages and better conditions. They say they're "ready to take blows from [police] riot sticks" to win their demands. (More next issue.)

Algeria: Pro-Boss Union Hacks Bust Autoworkers' Wildcat Strike

ALGIERS, January 18 — The SNVI autoworkers ended their nine-day wildcat and street protests yesterday as the UGTA union misleader, Sidi Saïd, succeeded once again in rapidly stifling worker protests.

The SNVI workers almost walked again when a UGTA communiqué said they'd have to make up the work-time their boss lost in the strike! "How can it be that the union is taking the place of management?" a group of workers told the press. There should be discussions with the rank and file...before anything is decided."

The strikers only obtained an opening of negotiations on their wage demands, modification of the minimum wage law and suspension of the increase in years needed to earn a retirement pension. The workers have established a committee to follow the negotiations.

The government mobilized thousands of cops, armed with water cannon, riot clubs and tear gas, to beat up workers whose families have suffered years of poverty. Labor Minister Tayeb Louh tried to discredit the strikers by saying they were "manipulated by political forces" hostile to the government.

But actually it was the union misleaders who delivered the crucial blow. "In truth," said R. Hasni, a strike leader, "we were pushed to go back to work by the undermining of the strike conducted by the union headquarters. Last Thursday [Jan. 14], very early in the morning, local union hacks went to the foundry, vehicle-body workshops, and the industrial vehicles division to persuade the work-

ers to end the strike. They even threatened rebellious workers, saying, 'Those who don't go back to work are likely to be fired.'"

At their January 14 general assembly local union officials reported on their negotiations with UGTA confederation leader Sidi Saïd. A group of militant workers told the press, "They talked to us about [repealing] article 87 of the labor laws, a wage hike in the upcoming industry-wide contract negotiations and a freezing of the new law on retirement until 2011."

One worker declared that, "Our union leaders act for the government, which pulls the confederation leaders' strings every time in order to stifle the workers' struggles....If this wage increase depended on Sidi Saïd alone, why didn't he decree it beforehand?...We've been on strike for over a week and now the trade union leaders say they have finally decided to grant us a wage hike. We didn't ask the UGTA to decide on...our demands, we only demanded that it put forward our demands....We demanded straightforwardly that our 'negotiators' withdraw and leave us alone," he concluded.

Another angry worker told interviewers, "They aren't paying attention to our demands; we're going to continue the strike. [Local officials] tell us that if we demonstrate in the street, they won't back us. That's what upsets them, street demonstrations. It's clear that 'sidhoum' [master] Saïd gave them the job of busting the strike. Today, we stayed inside the plant to debate the problem in depth, but next week we'll occupy the streets again."

But the pro-capitalist union misleaders had already broken the back of the strike, and yesterday the workers voted to end it.

However, the workers' poverty continues. "My doctor prescribed glasses for me, but I've never been able to buy them," said a 52-year-old SNVI truck driver, a 28-year veteran worker. "My basic monthly salary? \$193." That's roughly the average monthly wage in the Rouiba industrial zone.

Bonuses can push salaries up to between \$344 and \$413 a month," said a 42-year-old mechanic, father of four. "In a week, I'll be obliged to ask my family for money because my wages will already have gone up in smoke [all been spent]," he added.

"We who work in the tannery are the worst off in the Rouiba industrial zone!" shouted a tannery worker. "I've got 21 years seniority and I make \$275 a month!"

"Aysheene goutte-à-goutte, ash yam tmoot" is one chant the workers shouted during the strike — "we live from day to day and our [monthly] pay gives out in ten days."

These conditions will inevitably force the workers to strike again. But what's lacking is revolutionary communist leadership to turn these strikes into schools for communism, getting workers off the treadmill of reformism under which the bosses always have the power to take back any gains. The fight must be to destroy the profit system and establish a worker-run communist society in which the working class, led by its communist party, will collectively share the fruits of their labors. ☺

LETTERS



Criticism of Doctors Off the Mark

I've been a healthcare worker in the Bronx for more than 25 years and have read CHALLENGE for longer than that. I look forward to reading the sharp and accurate analysis every two weeks and sharing it with some of my good colleagues at our not-for-profit community clinic.

After reading the lead article on Haiti in the January 3rd issue, I must say that I was taken aback. The writer flippantly says that Doctors Without Borders is really 'Capitalists Without Scruples.' Despite the fact that Richard Rockefeller, with his long capitalist pedigree and service to the CFR and IMF, has managed to parlay the position of Chairman of the Advisory Board of the U.S. branch of the organization, this is a mischaracterization of an international group that has many wonderful committed doctors and other health workers in its following. These volunteers put themselves in harm's way to deliver care to some of the most hard-pressed workers around the world every day.

Contrary to vilifying Doctors Without Borders, we should commit communists to serve alongside such selfless people and attempt to win them to our movement. I would not be surprised if many already hold some of our anti-racist ideas and would agree with us in being opposed to having an economic hit man such as Rockefeller in their midst.

Red Healthcare Worker

[Ed. note: see current analysis on pp. 1-2]

9/11 'Truth Movement' Fraudulent, Right-Wing

I felt a letter in the February 2nd CHALLENGE regarding the 9/11 Truth Movement warranted stronger response. I've dealt with "Truthers" for the last seven years.

Firstly there's little substance to their stories of a 9/11 conspiracy (beyond the Al Qaeda one). The evidence used for such stories is largely and deliberately fraudulent (see links on PL website, plp.org). The promotion of such fraudulent stories of omnipotent elite conspiracies helps spread cynicism by giving credence to the ruling-class' myth of invincibility. After all how do you oppose people who know everything and have "unlimited capabilities"?

I understand that belief in 9/11 conspiracy stories has grown but that should be seen as the result of people's growing cynicism regarding the government and their own perceived lack of political efficiency. Much as in the Palestinian territories, belief in Holocaust denial has seen a marked increase (40% in some studies), as Palestinians feel the difficulty of opposing Israeli fascism. But as a Party we must acknowledge that workers are better served by the truth than by demoralizing fantasies.

The other problem with Truthers is the internal ideology of their movement. This ideology comes almost entirely out of the Alex Jones/Info Wars personality cult based in Austin, Texas, which promotes outright fascism. They're also attempting to popularize the anti-Semitic Protocols of Zion myth that has already done so much damage to the working class. I don't think we should write off everybody in the Truth Movement (we have won several away from it), but we should be careful what we say about it. It is largely a personality cult built around fascist ideas disguised as a "Left" alternative.

I've attached a letter response to the letter from the last issue as well as a longer analysis — written before the 2008 election [see PLP website, plp.org] — of the political roots of the Truther movement. It features a look at Alex Jones and Truther politics, a question and answer forum that I did with a Truther,

reporting the connections between Truthers and the Ron Paul campaign. Also attached is a CHALLENGE article (3/26/08) regarding Ron Paul, Alex Jones and the Truthers.

Keep up the good work, the article on the Daily Worker and Jackie Robinson was awesome.

Red Beard



Seizing Opportunities 2 Mobilizing Hundreds to Link War to Budget Cuts

NEW YORK CITY, February 6 — After the successful, but small, rally in front of our school (as reported in a February 3rd CHALLENGE article) planning for another rally took place on two levels: the union leadership and the rank and file. The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) was fully in support of having the rally, yet they wanted to make sure that the rally was within the narrow confines of their own political demands.

The union is not fighting the budget cuts, but instead pushing the misleadership of "fair budget cuts." The union's narrow politics might have dominated the rally, led to a small number of teachers that would have weakened everyone's confidence, and discouraged a lot of angry students who increasingly are seeing that the school system isn't working for them. None of this would bother a UFT that does not want to unite parents, teachers, and students in any case.

The Chapter Leader took the lead in organizing the rally and wanted it to be large in order for the media to show up and capture it. Our view is that relying upon the media is never a good tactic as the bosses own and manipulate the media in order to maintain their class rule. Our city is especially susceptible to media blackouts since the mayor basically owns the media, and widespread coverage of broad discontent would threaten his tight grip on the city.

Understanding the limits of the rally, PL saw that a state school challenging the state's needs has revolutionary potential. As communists we wanted to mobilize a mass action against the state and organize students and teachers to move to the left away from the narrow union politics of just opposing school closings. Our goal was to show the connection between the war and budget cuts, and to build a large mass protest that would give students, teachers and parents the unity and confidence to

carry the struggle even further.

Our PL club came up with two plans: plan A being to try to move the rally across the street to protest in front of a Citibank branch, and plan B to have the student PL'ers at the school break off from the main protest and move students to the Citibank in order to link the banks to the budget cuts. The interest and payments that are given to the banks are paid before the schools get their money, and are a major reason for the budget cuts.

Well, the bosses gave even more fuel for our fire as the transit authority announced that they would be cutting free Metrocards for students. This racist attack (which would basically reintroduce segregation by making it too expensive for black and Latino students to travel to schools outside their own segregated neighborhoods) made the students in our school livid. They saw it would increase the number of dropouts.

The day of the rally, several students organized to put out a flyer that was distributed to students telling them to join the rally. The administration told the Chapter Leader that this was against the contract, and she promptly confronted a PL'er about the flyer. The PL'er replied that he didn't print it nor distribute it. The flyer said, "rob from the banks not the schools," making a class analysis of why the rulers' oil wars lead to the budget cuts. This was not what the union wanted to say as the UFT refuses to lay the blame where it belongs — on the bosses and their banks. The students themselves organizing to write, print, and distribute a flyer that linked the war, the budget cuts, and the need to fight back against them. Party influence was illustrated in many areas, including students taking charge of making signs in an art class.

When a PL teacher came to the lobby to get the signs and plan the rally, a possible Plan C developed: march to the local park that has a Christmas shop-

ping center and shops there. Unsure of the forces we could organize, the PL teacher thought that maybe the rally across the street would be enough, and that they could march around the block, hoping to get the school nearby to join the rally. Much to the chagrin of the Chapter Leader, the PL teacher grabbed a sign made in one of the art classes that said, "Rob the banks not the schools" and joined another teacher outside the school. They started chanting and students joined in droves!

Though nobody from the media showed up, close to two hundred students, two parents, and nearly 20 teachers did and made the rally happen. We were loud as we marched six blocks to the park, had people join the march, join the rally at the park, and then marched back loudly shouting "fight back," and opposing the war. Instead of relying upon the media to spread the message, we relied upon the working class.

This rally is a sign of things to come as the Party can now mobilize hundreds against the needs of the ruling class. We moved the rally to the left with patient and careful organizing and many discussions, both in the classroom and individually. The students are excited and looking forward to the next rally.

Though the administration may help us to organize more rallies for their own reasons, PL views the struggle as long-term and these rallies as providing opportunities to build the Party. As Bob Dylan once sang, "The times they are a-changing"! The future for Party growth is great, and we must seize every opportunity that the bosses give us to organize, grow and spread communist ideas through increased struggle. ☺

Chicago PL'ers Lead Fight vs. Razing of Healthcare System

CHICAGO, February 1 — For three years now, the Cook County healthcare system — serving over 80% black, Latino and immigrant workers — is being deliberately dismantled in one of the most heinous racist attacks in recent history. Once a “safety net” for those without the ability to pay, it is becoming increasingly privatized and downsized. Besides hundreds of layoffs, the new governing board aims to shut two of three South Side hospitals which service primarily black workers segregated by the city’s racist gentrification. There are now one million uninsured workers here, more than the entire population of San Francisco!

The Chicago Tribune (12/18/09) reported a study showing the health status between black and white workers widening and being “worse in Chicago than nationwide.” It said, “The underlying issue here is racism and poverty. Black people in Chicago are forced to live in neighborhoods... [with] no stores to buy fresh fruits and vegetables, where schools are failing... [with no] parks to exercise in and where they tend to go to segregated health facilities that are poorly funded and, in different ways, failing.”

PLP has been the only force organizing against these attacks. On the job, within our unions and in our community groups we have fought to organize workers to not passively accept this assault. Union leaders sell out the workers at every step, trying to use the commissioner elections as a campaign to mislead workers, instead of fighting the layoffs.

Within the unions we’ve organized a demonstration in front of the hospital, attacking the governing board and its proposals, plus a series of town hall

meetings and smaller on-the-job forums. There we explained the root causes of the cuts and their relationship to the federal war budget and Chicago’s ruling class, the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club. We’re planning future actions and a solidarity dinner for workers who may suffer layoffs.

In a difficult process, we’ve become visible leaders and fighters for the workers on the job while the union hacks visibly sell out. We’ve expanded our CHALLENGE distribution and our “County CHALLENGE,” our communist shop newsletter. More importantly, we’ve expanded our base, including recruiting two new club members. We need to remain consistent in this fight.

Currently, many workers think the layoffs have been rescinded because of their union leaders’ lies. These hacks know there’ll be layoffs but just who is unknown because of the bumping-rights and seniority fiasco. Thanks to their mis-leaders, many workers have been displaced and pitted against each other, and to date have not planned any demonstrations against the cuts and layoffs.

Facing layoffs, transit workers and schoolteachers recently started a coalition to fight them, as well as school closings proposed by Board of Education CEO Ron Huberman, former head of the transit system. We’ve joined this coalition linking public transit and public education with public health, all under fire in Obama’s Democratic backyard.

Even if the Obama healthcare bill passes, best-case scenario will leave over 20 million people uninsured. And 100% of all undocumented workers will be denied this “option.” For those of us who can afford it, it will only mean a major cost shift,

saving business at workers’ expense. This “universal insurance” plan is a massive racist attack on our class. Given the nation-wide dismantling of public hospitals, this will be a death sentence for millions of workers.

Previously at public hospitals workers could essentially get “free” albeit inadequate care. Currently, private hospitals are even refusing patients with HMO’s, let alone a “public option.” As the public hospitals are either shut, privatized and/or downsized, it is these hospitals that will be “accepting” this new insurance, essentially caring for the same patient population but with less available services. This means longer lines and decreased access — and this only for those who have the ability to pay. In the current economy, this will mean more sickness and death.

This is fascist healthcare. In Chicago, the ruling class has overtly seized leadership over the County hospital. By sidelining the undisciplined self-serving commissioners to petty side deals, this new governing board directly represents the interests of the top banks and top private hospitals.

This take-over highlights the ruling class’s need to consolidate its wealth and discipline its own class. It also highlights their using the unions and mass organizations to win our class to supporting their “changes,” a hallmark of fascism.

Our Party faces such a situation, but it’s in this muck and mire where our friends and future Party leaders are, and in which we can and will build a revolutionary movement to destroy this racist profit system once and for all! Join PLP. ☺

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

US radios Haitians: Don’t come here!

NYT, 1/19 — MIAMI — America has a message for the millions of Haitians left homeless and destitute by last week’s earthquake: Do not try to come to the United States.

Every day, a United States Air Force cargo plane specially equipped with radio transmitters flies for five hours over the devastated country, broadcasting...a recorded messageOfficials say they are taking a hard line to avert a mass exodus from the island and that could lead to deaths at sea or a refugee crisis in South Florida....

They are also laying plans to scoop up any boats carrying “illegal” immigrants and send them to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The State Department has also been denying many seriously injured people in Port-au-Prince visas to be transferred to Miami for surgery and treatment.

Survival action is not ‘looting’

NYT, 1/20 — To the Editor:

Re “Looting Flares Where Order Breaks Down”(front page, Jan. 17):

The action of securing essential food and water during the life-and-death chaos of a natural disaster is not “looting”; it is human survival....

Working-class morals: Haiti shares

NYT, 1/26 — Maxi Extralien, a twig-thin 10-year-old...ate only a single bean from the heavy plate of food he received recently from a Haitian civic group. He had to make it last.

“My mother has 12 kids but a lot of them died,”he said....

For Maxi and countless others here in Haiti’s pulverized capital, new rules of hunger etiquette are emerging....Children are most likely to return with something to eat, but no matter what is found,

or how hungry the forager, everything must be shared....

A few doors down, Elsie Perdrial....now...has 20 mouths to feed instead of four: seven children,...a few extended relatives, and neighbors who lost their homes.

It is a miniature civilization focused on food....Work, a paycheck and disposable income all look a long way off....

Ms. Pedriel...displayed a pot.... “This should be for two people,” she said. “Now it will have to for 20.”

A bit late for US to love Haiti

NYT, 1/16 — For most of two centuries, the United States mishandled and manhandled Haiti and winked as dictators ran amok....

President Thomas Jefferson, fearing that the slave revolt that made Haiti independent would inspire American slaves, started a crippling policy of trade embargoes and diplomatic nonrecognition that lasted into our Civil War. “Confine the pest to the island,” he said....

The United States further crippled Haiti by occupying the country, often using brutal tactics, from 1915 to 1934; by coddling the Duvalier dictatorships for nearly three decades; and by using paramilitary thugs as CIA spies....

After Haiti’s first democratically-elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was overthrown in a 1991 military coup, the administration of the senior President Bush stopped thousands of fleeing Haitians at sea and sent most of them into the coup’s arms.

Blacks suffer, but ‘leaders’ relax

NYT, 1/19 — As the nation continues to wallow in the trough of widespread unemployment, black Americans are bearing a disproportional burden of joblessness....

For example,...the poverty rate for African-American children could eventually approach a heart-stopping 50 percent....

In some poor neighborhoods, a man or woman with a traditional full-time job is the exception, not the rule....



Some decades ago, you would have heard a sustained outcry against such dire conditions among blacks....You don’t hear much of that now. Too many co-called black leaders are much more interested in invitations to the White House and positive profiles in mainstream publications than in raising any kind of ruckus that might benefit people in real trouble.

As workers sacrifice, bosses rob

Minuteman.org, 12/27 — [In a] Bob Newhart [bit a]...commander spoke bluntly about the bloody horror the troops would face and the certainty that many of them wouldn’t survive. The officer rallied them with appeals to courage and sacrifice and then concluded by saying, “My only regret is that I, personally, will not be able to go with you.”

That’s a perfect expression of today’s corporate ethic....CEOs constantly sacrifice workers in the name of global competitiveness, but the chiefs never seem to join in the sacrifice....

...Four of the largest corporate bankruptcies of the last 10 years were disastrous for the employees’ pension funds....[The corporations]...had underfunded their employees’ retirement plans by \$11 billion — money essentially stolen from the workers. The corporations then abandoned any responsibility for the pensions....

But guess which employees did not suffer any cut at all in their retirement money? Right —the four chieftains quietly pocketed a total of nearly \$50 million in retirement pay for themselves.

MORE ITEMS AVAILABLE ONLINE:
www.plp.org

Racist Rulers Distort Black History to Hide Workers' Rebellions

As the U.S. government celebrates black history month this February, the bosses' media are still painting Barack Obama's presidency as the positive legacy of a pacifist-led civil rights movement. But the real history of the civil rights era is militant black workers rebelling violently against racism.

This is the history of the international working class that the Progressive Labor Party celebrates every day in our fight to smash capitalism — the system that gave birth to racism and continues to profit from it.

Militant, mass working-class struggle led to the gains of the civil rights era — the end of legal segregation, jobs for blacks, affirmative action — concessions given by U.S. rulers who were afraid that these often violent struggles might expand to attacking the capitalist system as a whole.

The civil rights movement involved thousands of black workers heroically putting their lives on the line. Many, many were killed in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and throughout the South in the fight against racism. While the movement also involved many white students and workers, including some who died, the opening of freedom schools, marching against segregation, integrating lunch counters and other struggles brought the full force of the racist system down on those black workers who stood up and fought.

There was tremendous political struggle within the anti-racist movement in the 1960's. At the famous 1963 March for Jobs and Freedom where King gave his "I have a dream" speech, King and other march organizers toned down a student's speech attacking Kennedy, the Democrats, and the Civil Rights bill itself for failing to address police brutality, racist unemployment, and low wages. King's own organization was largely funded by the Ford Foundation and he wasn't about to bite the hand that fed him.

This militancy wasn't only, or even mainly, inside

Black Workers' Armed Struggle

In 1964, the Louisiana-based Deacons for Defense emerged as an armed organization to defend non-violent civil rights workers and spread to 23 communities across the South. Their actions helped win integration battles and fight off racist terror from the police, the Ku Klux Klan, and racist white mobs ("The Deacons for Defense" by Lance Hill, 2004).

Then, in June 1964, the first mass big-city rebellion erupted in New York City's Harlem when masses of black workers and youth took to the streets to protest a police murder of a black teenager. They marched through Harlem's streets, displaying the front page of CHALLENGE as their "flag." PLM (Progressive Labor Movement, forerunner of PLP) was the only organization to support the rebellion — all the reformist black leaders and the "Communist Party" tried to cool the rebels and attacked PLM. The latter was barred from Harlem but defied the ban and held a mass demonstration, which sent several in PLM to jail. This rebellion laid the basis for many to follow, including in Newark, NJ in 1967.

The Detroit armed rebellion of 1967 led directly to 10,000 jobs in the auto industry for black workers. Many workers left the plants to violently confront the police. The fear of these black workers' violent expression of anti-racism impelled U.S. rulers to divert the 82nd Airborne troops en-route to Vietnam to Detroit to suppress the rebellion. When King was assassinated in 1968, anti-racist rebellions flared up in hundreds of U.S. cities. These rebellions led to an increase in jobs for blacks, especially in the public sector, although unemployment and underemployment remained (and remains) double for black workers than for white, as capitalism has reversed most of the gains.

the organized movement. In 1965, police harassment of a black man sparked an anti-racist rebellion in Watts, California. King went to Watts and supported the armed cops and National Guard troops, while urging rebels to be peaceful. When his pacifism was rejected, King phoned President Lyndon Johnson (who had sent him to Watts) complaining about "all of these tones of violence from people out there in the Watts area" (New York Times, 05/14/02). King's last campaign to support 1,200 striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee in the spring of 1968 is supposedly his most radical. But King fled the March 28th protest when a group of demonstrators, frustrated with pacifist leadership and racist oppression, smashed downtown store windows. Black workers' militant and sometimes armed struggle won the victories that are credited to King.

Obama: Picking up the Torch of Mis-leadership

Obama is part of King's legacy of misleading working-class anti-racists into the dead-end of supporting the bosses' politicians and laws. A year after Obama's election the racist unemployment rate for black and Latin workers has jumped to over 30%. Half of all black and Latin youth can't find jobs and the only "jobs" that Obama has created are 60,000 more chances to die and murder workers in Afghanistan for U.S. bosses' oil pipeline profits.

The U.S. bosses want us to focus on political victories for black politicians (like Obama) but these black bosses are part of the same racist ruling class that is responsible for the reversal of the civil rights gains and the racist conditions today. When Harold Washington was elected as the first black mayor of Chicago in 1983, his first major initiative in the midst of a fiscal crisis was to fire 3,000 mostly black city workers!

Despite decades of black, Latino, and Native American mayors, governors and lawmakers, racism thrives by every indicator — higher incarceration rates, lower wages, more unemployment, higher home foreclosure rates, less access to health care and fewer education opportunities for black, Latino and Native American workers. Over and over racist cops get away with racist terror — such as the murders of Avery Cody, Jr. in Compton, California and Leroy Barnes in Pasadena, California and countless more not named — while Jesse

Jackson and Al Sharpton urge us to be peaceful and seek victory in courts that acquit or slap cops on the wrist.

Like King, Obama can only offer empty hope and promises. His role is to win anti-racists to support the racist ruling class and to use racism when it's useful to build support for U.S. rulers' imperialist wars.

In referring to the "Muslim world" as a "clenched fist" Obama used anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism to win U.S. workers to support oil wars in Afghanistan and the continued occupation in Iraq, which has killed over 1 million Iraqis since 2003. (Opinion Research Business, Feb 2008). Obama constantly draws inspiration from racist slave-owning founding fathers who systematically committed genocide against Native Americans to increase their profits.

Stand on Shoulders of Giants

The mass anti-racist rebellions of the '60s were good, but the crumbs given to our class in response have been taken back, as is inevitable under capitalism. For our class to build a society that meets our needs, the fight against racism must take place within the context of fighting for communist revolution, the only outcome where workers can win power and establish a world free of capitalism, its racism and its wars.

This black history month we must concentrate our attention not just on the heroic history of black and white workers uniting in often violent struggle against racism but also waging our own anti-racist, anti-capitalist struggles to bring forth a better world — communism. ☸



1965 — An anti-racist rebellion in Watts, California. King went to Watts and supported the armed cops and National Guard troops, while urging rebels to be peaceful.

SUBSCRIBE or RENEW!

All the communist politics, news, and struggle from around the world!

....\$15 individual 1 year

....\$35 for institution 1 year

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Make check or money order to: Challenge Periodicals, PO Box 808, Brooklyn, NY 11202

