

## Imperialist War Criminals Meet at Hiroshima

# Only Socialist Revolution Can Defeat U.S. Imperialism's Drive to WWII

By Maeve

AUGUST 6 – On this day 78 years ago, the United States dropped a new and terrifying weapon – the atomic bomb – on the city of Hiroshima, Japan. Two-thirds of the city area was destroyed. No one can say exactly how many people the U.S. bombing killed, but the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* tells us that more than a quarter of Hiroshima's population was “killed outright or shortly after the blast” and that “approximately 140,000 people, or 55% of the population, were dead by year's end.” Thousands more would die from after-effects of the bombing.

International Center of Photography



Brendan Smialowski / AFP

May 2023: U.S. president Joe Biden and other leaders of the Group of Seven in front of building now known as the “Atom Dome.” At left, the same building, near ground zero of 6 August 1945 U.S. atom-bombing of the city.

The U.S. government's “Target Committee” had marked Hiroshima for annihilation as the “largest untouched target” in Japan's “larger population areas.” It noted that Tokyo was unavailable as a testing ground for the A-bomb, since it was “practically all bombed and burned out” already.<sup>1</sup> One of dozens of Japanese cities firebombed by the U.S. Air Force, the capital city had been turned to rubble on the night of 9 March 1945, when the most destructive bombing raid in history burned 100,000 Japanese civilians alive and left 1 million homeless.

But now the nuclear message of terror was to be repeated: Nagasaki was next on the A-bomb list. President Harry Truman's committee had chosen it too for mass death, he had approved the decision, and so, on 9 August 1945, the second A-bomb was dropped there.

The United States remains the only country to have used atomic bombs in war. In 1945, its cold-blooded murder of hundreds of thousands at Hiroshima and Nagasaki sent the message that the atomic bomb was ready for use against the Soviets and all who might stand in the way of American imperialism's drive for world domination. In 2023, “our” capitalist rulers are driving toward a thermonuclear Third World War. *The only way to prevent this is the revolutionary overthrow of this long outlived and deadly system, by the world's working class.*

Often, if we're taught about Hiroshima at all, it's just a quick and hazy reference; war criminals on the winning side largely get a pass. A central goal of this issue of *Revolution*

<sup>1</sup> See review of the film *Oppenheimer* on page 24. At the Target Committee's third meeting (28 May 1945), in which it decided the bomb should be aimed at the center of Hiroshima, it noted that “with the current and prospective rate” of bombings by U.S. air forces, “it is expected to complete strategic bombing of Japan by 1 Jan 46 so availability of future [A-bomb] targets will be a problem.” The committee's minutes are reproduced online as part of the National Security Archive (nsarchive2.gwu.edu) “briefing book” on the atomic bomb.

is to show the connection between U.S. imperialism's calculated mass murder then and the escalating threat it poses now. A powerful eyewitness account of the aftermath of the Hiroshima bombing and a Marxist review of the film *Oppenheimer* in this issue help show this crucial link. So too do the photos at the beginning of this article.

### The Meaning of Their Message

On May 19 of this year, U.S. imperialism's current commander-in-chief Joe Biden, harking back to his Democratic predecessor

Truman, used Hiroshima as a symbol and a threat. At the head of a conclave of imperialist leaders known as the Group of Seven (G7), he posed for a photo op, in front of the only structure left standing in the area where the U.S. bomb exploded in 1945. Known today as the “Atom Dome,” back then it was an exhibition hall, located about a third of a mile from Shima Hospital, which was ground zero of the A-bomb's blast.

The G7 is made up of six North Atlantic Treaty Organization powers: the U.S.,

Britain, Canada, France, Germany and Italy, plus Japan, which cooperates closely with NATO. Its gathering was followed on May 20 by a meeting of the Quad “Indo-Pacific” partnership (the U.S., Australia, India and Japan), also held at Hiroshima.

When we revolutionary Marxists describe the meaning of Biden & Co.'s message, it's not guesswork. The official U.S. broadcasting network proclaimed that “a strong signal was sent to Russia  
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## For Open Admissions, No Tuition!

# Supreme Court Axes Affirmative Action

By Amalia and Sade

On June 29, by a vote of 6 to 3, the Supreme Court of the United States declared affirmative action programs in college admissions unconstitutional, in a racist ruling tossing out the last scraps of these already minimal measures. This will undoubtedly mean a sharp drop in African American and Latino enrollment at elite American universities, public and private. The next day, the Court nixed the plan to forgive student debt for millions who have gone into hock to get their degrees. The axing of affirmative action comes a year after the Court, that “reactionary institution of unelected, appointed-for-life, black-robed dispensers of capitalist ‘justice,’” overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the basis for the constitutional right to abortion since 1973.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See “U.S. Capitalism and Its Supreme Court” and “Free Abortion on Demand: How Revolutionaries Fight for It,” *Revolution* No. 19, September 2022.

The shredding of basic rights, partial reforms and even tokenistic steps like college affirmative action plans is a symptom of capitalism's advanced state of decay. The education system both reflects and further deepens the vast inequalities in U.S. society. “Achievement gaps” between rich and poor have widened sharply, however they are measured. And since people who are racially oppressed tend to have less, in this racist society built on inequality, the whole set-up underscores deep class and racial disparities. Have “affirmative action” programs in education overcome this? Far from it – these meager programs only elevated small numbers of black students to elite schools. Nonetheless, revolutionary Marxists defend and critically support even these minimal measures against ingrained, systemic racial oppression.

We fight to throw open the doors of the universities to all. To do this requires a revo-

lutionary program to make quality higher education genuinely available. Thus we call for *open admissions* to all institutions of higher education, the *abolition of tuition*, and state-paid living stipends for students. This is linked to the Marxist program of *revolutionary integrationism*, key to black liberation and socialist revolution in the United States, in all spheres of social life, including education. We call for the *expropriation without compensation* of all the private universities, the *abolition of administrations and boards of trustees*, and for those who work and study at universities to run them through democratically elected councils.

Having “become steadily more segregated in all parts of the country since 1990,” U.S. schools today are more segregated than they were in the civil rights era (UCLA Civil Rights Project report, December 2020). Most segregated of all are the public schools  
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# World War III...

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and China as both the G7 and the Quad groups met at Hiroshima, the site of the first atomic bomb attack.” It went on to quote a U.S. foreign-policy pundit who “predicts ‘a more confrontational direction with the West on one side, and China and Russia on the other’” (Voice of America, 20 May).

Did the U.S., UK, France, Germany, Italy and Japan – whose historic and present-day crimes against the peoples of the world cannot even begin to be enumerated here – send their leaders to Hiroshima merely to grin into the cameras, lay some wreaths for “peace” (*sic*) and trade platitudes about “economic resilience”? (The U.S., top dog of world imperialism, plus the other six G7 powers have a combined GDP of \$40 trillion, just under half of the global economy.) No – heading the official Fact Sheet on their summit is “United on Ukraine” and “United on China” (whitehouse.gov, 21 May). United, that is, in the U.S./NATO proxy war against Russia that the imperialist powers are waging as a way station toward war against the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state.<sup>2</sup>

In point 1 of the “G7 Hiroshima Leaders’ Communiqué” (20 May), they vow to “support Ukraine as long as it takes.” Then they “commit to intensifying ... military support.” (So far since February of last year, the U.S. has officially pumped in \$43 billion in military aid, and this July it signed a declaration pledging “long-term security guarantees” to Ukraine.) The G7 communiqué goes on to blow some of the usual smoke about “disarmament” and wishing for “a world without nuclear weapons,” while the U.S. has 5,244 nuclear warheads (*Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 16 January) – and in July Biden announced that he would send widely banned cluster bombs to Ukraine, as part of an \$800 billion infusion of military aid.

As for “unity on China,” the G7 communiqué pledges to “support a free

and open Indo-Pacific” region, echoing Britain’s Opium Wars against China and the U.S.’ demand for an “Open Door” there going back to when its bloody 1898 conquest of the Philippines expanded its foothold in Asia. Early this year, Air Force general Mike Minihan sent a memo “predicting the U.S. will be at war with China in two years” (NBC News, 28 January), while the former chief of the U.S. Indo-Pacific command, retired admiral Philip Davison, warned that a war with China over Taiwan might begin by 2027 (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 March).

## Hiroshima 1945 and Today’s U.S. War Drive

For the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the A-bombing of Hiroshima, the co-chair of Princeton’s International Policy program published an analysis, in *Foreign Affairs*, the journal of the foremost foreign-policy think tank, of why the U.S. decided to drop the bomb in 1945.

“Of central importance, [Truman’s Target Committee] stressed that the bomb should be used as a terror weapon – to produce ‘the greatest psychological effect against Japan’ and to make the world, and the U.S.S.R. in particular, aware that America possessed this new power. The death and destruction would not only intimidate the surviving Japanese into pushing for surrender, but, as a bonus, cow other nations, notably the Soviet Union” (which was about to invade Manchuria).

And through this act of terror, Washington “could help shape the postwar world.”<sup>3</sup>

What about today? The U.S./NATO powers and allies met at Hiroshima this May to send a message from the ground zero of nuclear terror. Evoking the mushroom clouds of August 1945, their message was about imperialist war today and in the future. But in the words of one *Revolution* reader: “I get it about World War Two, but how come you Trotskyists say the U.S. is using people in Ukraine now as cannon fodder in a drive for war later on *against China* – does that even make sense?”

Don’t take our word for it. “Washington Must Prepare for War with Both Russia and China,” proclaimed *Foreign Policy* (18 February 2022), right before the start of the current war. A year later, an *AP* report, headlined “How Ukraine

<sup>3</sup> Barton J. Bernstein, “The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered,” *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 1995.

<sup>2</sup> The victory of the Chinese Revolution (1949) led to expropriation of capitalists and landlords, laying the basis for a planned, collectivized economy. But from its inception the Peoples’s Republic of China has been governed by a privileged Stalinist bureaucracy. Despite capitalist inroads, it remains a deformed workers state that Trotskyists defend against imperialism and counterrevolution, while calling for a proletarian political revolution to open the way to socialism.

Visit the League for the Fourth International/  
Internationalist Group on the Internet

<http://www.internationalist.org>

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## Revolution



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of the Internationalist Group (U.S. Section of the League for the Fourth  
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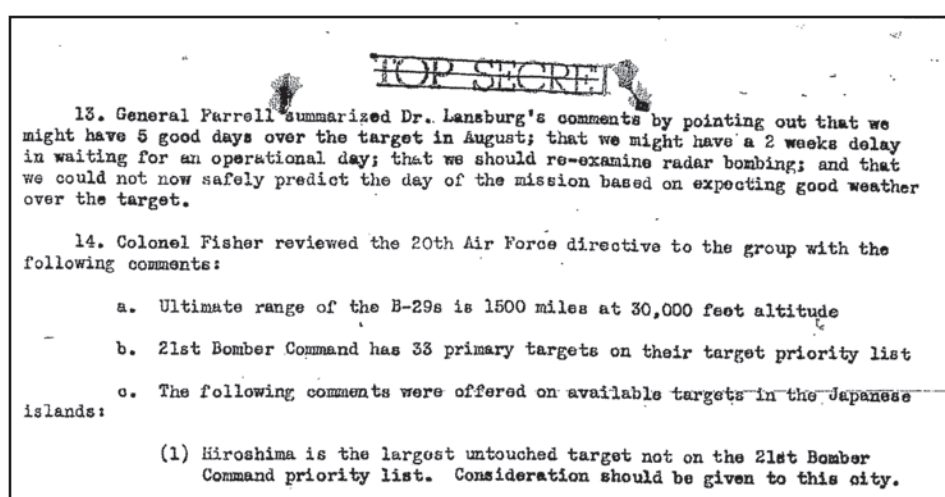
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Excerpt from Target Committee meeting notes, 27 April 1945. “Hiroshima is the largest untouched target....”

war has shaped US planning for a China conflict” (16 February), noted: “As the war rages on in Ukraine, the United States is doing more than supporting an ally. It’s learning lessons – with an eye toward a possible future conflict with China,” which “remains America’s biggest concern.”

There’s plenty more. “Ukraine war has made it easier for U.S. to isolate China in the Pacific,” enthused CNN (6 March). Then *Foreign Policy* (13 March) weighed in again: “A Russia diminished and made less threatening by Ukraine will also allow for an even more decisive U.S. pivot to Asia later. Military aid to Ukraine should therefore be prioritized....” The theme was repeated again and again; as in prior wars, the bourgeois media beat the war drums, both echoing and being echoed by, the White House and Pentagon masters of war.<sup>4</sup>

Let’s recall as well that last year Biden, predictably going back on a campaign promise, signed off on a “fundamental role of U.S. nuclear weapons” policy that leaves the door open for first use of nuclear arms “to defend the vital interests of the United States or its allies and partners.” While escalating its saber-rattling over “threats to our national security” from a “rising China,” Russia, etc., it is U.S. imperialism and its NATO allies that are driving toward World War III. Seven-plus decades after it dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima, then developed weaponry 1,000 times more powerful (the H-bomb), the U.S. has approximately 750 bases in 80 countries around the world, with nukes in five NATO member counties (Council on Foreign Relations, 30 March). As we wrote in our previous issue (*Revolution*, No. 19, August 2022):

“Today, as throughout the Cold War, the U.S. has nuclear missiles stationed in bases across Western Europe; aimed directly at the USSR until its dissolution, since then they’ve been aimed at Russia. With the current war set off by the U.S./NATO drive to encircle post-Soviet, now capitalist Russia, the decades-old ‘doomsday clock’ ticks closer to nuclear midnight. As we have indicated here, history amply shows that U.S. imperialism poses the biggest, clear and present, danger to the world. Intransigently opposing ‘our own’ imperialist bourgeoisie, revolutionaries call for revolutionary internationalist struggle to defeat its ongoing war drive against Russia and China.”

The threat that Biden & Co. broad-

cast from Hiroshima this May highlighted that the U.S./NATO imperialists, who threaten to blow up the world with their war drive against Russia and China, must be *defeated*. The workers and oppressed worldwide have a vital interest in defending Russia, China and other countries on the imperialists’ hit list against this war drive heading toward WWII, while giving no political support to their governments. To put an end to the menace of a new, nuclear world war that imperialism has held over humanity’s head since 6 August 1945, we fight for new proletarian revolutions like the one led by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky’s Bolsheviks in 1917.

## What They Did and What They Intend to Do

As Australian journalist John Pilger notes in his article “Another Hiroshima Is Coming ... Unless We Stop It Now” (excerpts of which we reprint on page 3): “The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was an act of premeditated mass murder....” When we read about what happened there (or in the less-discussed firebombing of Tokyo), we are faced with realities that can seem impossible to bear. We get glimpses in Pilger’s article, and in books like John Hersey’s *Hiroshima*, which in 1946 brought accounts by six survivors of the U.S. A-bombing to millions of readers.

In Steven Okazaki’s intensely moving documentary *White Light/Black Rain: The Destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (2007), 13 Japanese men and women who were mainly children or teenagers at the time, together with a woman who was part of the Korean community in Hiroshima, courageously tell us what it was like for them when the A-bombs hit.

The story of Hiroshima was told in a different way when the pioneering anime film *Hadashi no Gen* (Barefoot Gen) came out in 1983. It is based on the historical manga (graphic novel) series by Keiji Nakazawa, who was six when he lived through the atom-bombing of Hiroshima, his hometown. Among many other works, a small volume titled *The Bomb* (2010), by popular left-liberal historian Howard Zinn, opens with a wrenching account by Kinuko Laskey of what she experienced as a 16-year-old schoolgirl when the bomb exploded there.

We urge our readers to seek out these and other accounts. Here we will cite just one of the many excerpts included in Richard Rhodes’ *The Making of the Atomic*  
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<sup>4</sup> See “You Furnish the Pictures, and I’ll Furnish the War,” *Revolution* No. 19, September 2022.

# Some Things They Don't Teach Us Hiroshima and U.S. Imperialism Today

Many are the things we're not taught about the history and present-day realities of U.S. imperialism – and when the August 1945 atom-bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are mentioned, the topic is typically skimmed over quickly. Today, amidst threats of a new world war, many want to know more.

Below we print excerpts from an essay by Australian journalist John Pilger, who is also a filmmaker whose documentaries include *Paying the Price: Killing the Children of Iraq (2000)*, on the effects of U.S. sanctions, *The New Rulers of the World (2002)* and *The Coming War on China (2018)*.

Written to mark the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Pilger's essay was first published under the title "Another Hiroshima Is Coming ... Unless We Stop It Now" ([johnpilger.com](http://johnpilger.com), 3 August 2020). While Pilger is not a Marxist, he provides a powerful perspective on the devastation wrought at Hiroshima as well as by U.S. nuclear weapons testing in the Marshall Islands, which were part of the U.S. "Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands" for four decades after World War Two.

When I first went to Hiroshima in 1967, the shadow on the steps was still there. It was an almost perfect impression of a human being at ease: legs splayed, back bent, one hand by her side as she sat waiting for a bank to open. At a quarter past eight on the morning of August 6, 1945, she and her silhouette were burned into the granite.

I walked down to the river where the survivors still lived in shanties. I met a man called Yukio, whose chest was etched with the pattern of the shirt he was wearing when the atomic bomb was dropped. He described a huge flash over the city, "a bluish light, something like an electrical short," after which wind blew like a tornado and black rain fell. "I was thrown on the ground and noticed only the stalks of my flowers were left. Everything was still and quiet, and when I got up, there were people naked, not saying anything. Some of them had no skin or hair. I was certain I was dead." Nine years later, I returned to look for him and he was dead from leukaemia.

"No Radioactivity in Hiroshima Ruin" said a *New York Times* headline on September 13, 1945, a classic of planted disinformation. "General Farrell," reported

William H. Lawrence, "denied categorically that [the atomic bomb] produced a dangerous, lingering radioactivity." The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was an act of premeditated mass murder that unleashed a weapon of intrinsic criminality. It was justified by lies that form the bedrock of America's war propaganda in the 21st century, casting a new enemy, and target – China.

During the 75 years since Hiroshima, the most enduring lie is that the atomic bomb was dropped to end the war in the Pacific and to save lives. "Even without the atomic bombing attacks," concluded the United States Strategic Bombing Survey of 1946, "air supremacy over Japan could have exerted sufficient pressure to bring about unconditional surrender and obviate the need for invasion. Based on a detailed investigation of all the facts, and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders involved, it is the Survey's opinion that ... Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war [against Japan] and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated."

The National Archives in Washington contains documented Japanese peace overtures as early as 1943. None was pursued. A cable sent on May 5, 1945 by the German ambassador in Tokyo and intercepted by the U.S. made clear the Japanese were desperate to sue for peace, including "capitulation even if the terms were hard." Nothing was done.

The U.S. Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, told President Truman he was "fearful" that the U.S. Air Force would have Japan so "bombed out" that the new weapon would not be able "to show its strength." Stimson later admitted that "no effort was made, and none was seriously considered, to achieve



"A classic of planted disinformation": Bald-face lies from the *New York Times* (13 September 1945) after United States A-bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

surrender merely in order not to have to use the [atomic] bomb."

Stimson's foreign policy colleagues – looking ahead to the post-war era they were then shaping "in our image," as Cold War planner George Kennan famously put it – made clear they were eager "to browbeat the Russians with the [atomic] bomb held rather ostentatiously on our hip." General Leslie Groves, director of the Manhattan Project that made the atomic bomb, testified: "There was never any illusion on my part that Russia was our enemy, and that the project was conducted on that basis."

The day after Hiroshima was obliterated, President Harry Truman voiced his satisfaction with the "overwhelming success" of "the experiment."

The "experiment" continued long after the war was over. Between 1946 and 1958, the United States exploded 67 nuclear bombs in the Marshall Islands in the Pacific: the equivalent of more than one Hiroshima every day for 12 years.

The human and environmental consequences were catastrophic. During the filming of my documentary *The Coming War on China*, I chartered a small aircraft and flew to Bikini Atoll in the Marshalls. It was here that the United States exploded the world's first Hydrogen Bomb. It remains poisoned earth. Palm trees stood in unworldly formations. There were no birds.

I trekked through the jungle to the concrete bunker where, at 6:45 on the morning of March 1, 1954, the button was pushed. The sun, which had risen, rose again and vaporised an entire island in the lagoon, leaving a vast black hole, which from the air is a menacing spectacle: a deathly void in a place of beauty. The radioactive fall-out spread quickly and "un-

expectedly." The official history claims "the wind changed suddenly." It was the first of many lies, as declassified documents and the victims' testimony reveal.

Gene Curbow, a meteorologist assigned to monitor the test site, said, "They knew where the radioactive fall-out was going to go. Even on the day of the shot, they still had an opportunity to evacuate people, but [people] were not evacuated; I was not evacuated.... The United States needed some guinea pigs to study what the effects of radiation would do."

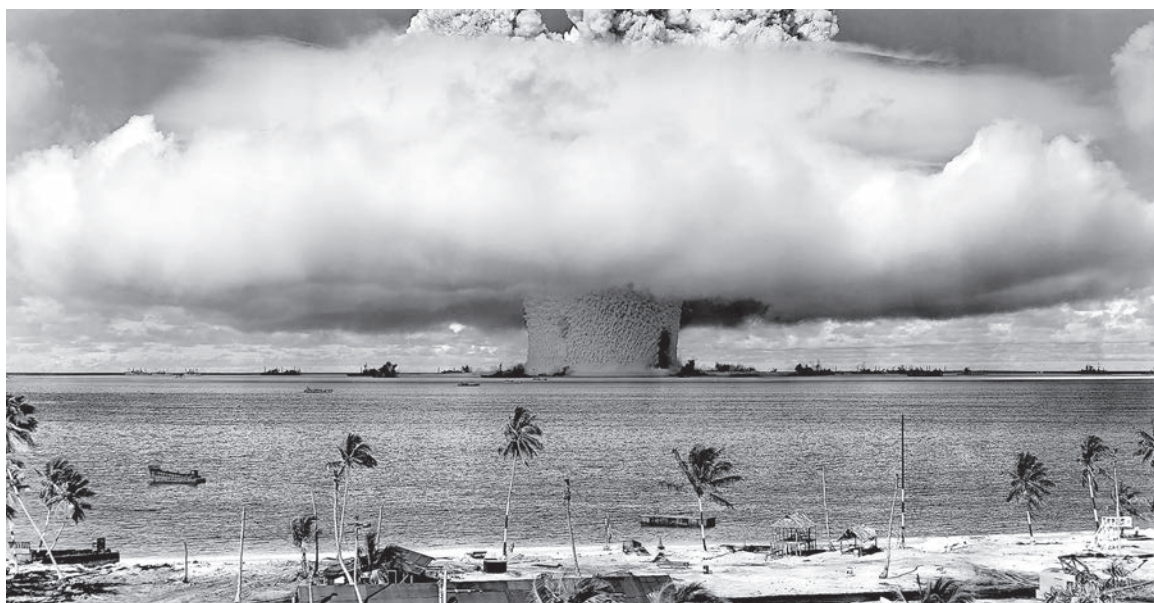
Like Hiroshima, the secret of the Marshall Islands was a calculated experiment on the lives of large numbers of people. This was Project 4.1, which began as a scientific study of mice and became an experiment on "human beings exposed to the radiation of a nuclear weapon."

The Marshall Islanders I met in 2015 – like the survivors of Hiroshima I interviewed in the 1960s and 70s – suffered from a range of cancers, commonly thyroid cancer; thousands had already died. Miscarriages and stillbirths were common; those babies who lived were often deformed horribly. Unlike Bikini, Rongelap Atoll had not been evacuated during the H-Bomb test. [A description of some of the effects on Rongelap's population follows.] U.S. official archive film refers to the islanders as "amenable savages." In the wake of the explosion, a U.S. Atomic Energy Agency official is seen boasting that Rongelap "is by far the most contaminated place on earth," adding, "it will be interesting to get a measure of human uptake when people live in a contaminated environment."

I have reported from five nuclear "ground zeros" throughout the world – in Japan, the Marshall Islands, Nevada, Polynesia and Maralinga in Australia. Even more than my experience as a war correspondent, this has taught me about the ruthlessness and immorality of great power: that is, imperial power, whose cynicism is the true enemy of humanity. This struck me forcibly when I filmed at Taranaki Ground Zero at Maralinga in the Australian desert. In a dish-like crater was an obelisk on which was inscribed: "A

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U.S. Defense Department



Mushroom cloud during U.S. nuclear bomb test over Bikini Atoll, March 1946.

## Hands Off Students' Rights – Abolish the Board of Trustees!

# CUNY Administration Joins Racist NY Post in McCarthyite Witch Hunt – Again

JUNE 2023 – The witch-hunting spirit of Joseph McCarthy is alive and well in the Board of Trustees and administration of the City University of New York. With a decades-long record of attacks on CUNY students and faculty, they jumped on the bandwagon when the gutter-press *New York Post* and Democratic machine politicians launched yet another lurid smear campaign against our rights. Their target this time: an immigrant student leader from the CUNY School of Law chosen by her classmates to give a commencement speech for the graduating class. Standing up against the witch hunters – at a time of growing calls for censorship in the service of bigotry – is imperative for defenders of our basic rights. The CUNY tops' outrageous actions highlight the need to *abolish the administration and Board of Trustees*, the junta of patronage appointees lording it over CUNY, replacing them with elected councils of students, faculty and staff.

Fatima Mousa Mohammed, a 24-year-old CUNY Law student who moved to the U.S. from Yemen as a child, was selected to speak at the commencement ceremony, held on May 12. Located in Queens, with its multiethnic, largely immigrant population, CUNY Law has defined itself as the “#1 public interest law school [for] social justice advocates,” and has been named the “most diverse law school in the nation” (*preLaw*, Winter 2023). The commencement first made news when students turned their backs on New York's pro-police Democratic mayor Eric Adams, who has pushed for cuts to CUNY.

More than two weeks later, the *New York Post* (29 May) splashed Fatima Mohammed's face across its front cover, with the headline “Stark Raving Grad: CUNY law alum calls for ‘revolution’ and attacks ‘fascist’ NYPD in speech.” The hit piece

by the notoriously unhinged *Post*<sup>1</sup> vituperated against the commencement speaker for “call[ing] on grads to dismantle capitalism, telling them she hopes their rage becomes ‘the fuel for the fight against capitalism, racism, imperialism, and Zionism around the world.’”<sup>2</sup> It ended by quoting Mayor Adams, who denounced Fatima's speech as an example of “negativity and divisiveness.”

The next day, CUNY's Board of Trustees – which is almost all hand-picked by New York mayors and governors – plus Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez joined the chorus of slander and attempted intimidation whipped up by the *Post*, a junk tabloid long notorious for racist demagoguery. In a revolting declaration combining flagrant dishonesty with moral bankruptcy, the CUNY tops branded the “remarks by a student-selected speaker at the CUNY Law School graduation” as hate speech (!), lying that the commencement address was “a public expression of hate toward people and communities based on their race, religion” (“or political affiliation,” they added to the usual definition, clearly seeking to cover their bases).

What does it mean for university authorities to brand opposition to racist governmental oppression as “hate speech,” and

<sup>1</sup> The *New York Post* is part of the notorious right-wing media conglomerate owned by the Murdoch family. As satirized in the hit HBO series *The Succession*, the Murdoch “news” empire embodies not only the cynical dishonesty, racism and boundless greed of this corporate sector, but the advanced decay of capitalism itself.

<sup>2</sup> Zionism is the guiding ideology of the state of Israel, based on oppression of the Palestinian people. On this and related topics, *Revolution* recommends “For an Arab-Hebrew Palestinian Workers State in a Socialist Federation of the Near East,” *The Internationalist* No. 31, Summer 2010, and the special issue “Defend the Palestinian People!” *The Internationalist* No. 9, January-February 2001.

to smear such opposition as equating to the promotion of racial or religious hatred of people and communities? This is not only a flat-out lie; it is one that poses a real danger to students, faculty and campus workers here and throughout the U.S. And sure enough, right on cue in accordance with a long-established pattern, the *Post*-manufactured “scandal” brought forth a chorus of racist hysteria, defamation, threats and calls for “meaningful action” (reprisals) against the speaker, the law school that had “allowed” her to speak, and the City University as a whole.

### What the Censors Sought to Silence

Early in Fatima Mohammed's commencement speech at CUNY Law, she addressed the graduating class of 2023, noting that they had begun studying there “during a season of grief” in which “ambulance trucks were the only noise in town, and ... we watched our immigrant parents keep the city on its feet, as they saw bodies packed into refrigerated morgue trucks.” It was, she said, “a class that saw nothing but black Zoom square boxes for the first two years,” amidst “the loss and the pain we've all endured.” The description could apply to a large number of students at CUNY and elsewhere in New York, which was the epicenter of the COVID pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

Fatima then referred to many students' aspiration to put newly learned skills to use against oppression, while facing “institutions created to intimidate, bully, censor and stifle the voices of those who resist.” Citing many activities of the



Sue Kellogg

At 2001 rally against CUNY Board of Trustees' “anti-immigrant war purge.” Revolutionary Reconstruction Club later became part of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs.

graduating class, she referred to their fighting for “incarcerated clients,” “for clients to get asylum,” going “to court to reunite families torn apart by ACS” (the city's Administration for Children's Services) and organizing against using a legal research company with links to Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The speaker's references to students' activism were accompanied by criticism of the NYPD and military, all of which would be met with a frenzy of condemnation when the *Post* launched its latest anti-CUNY “scandal.”

But what most drew the ire of the witch hunt crew were the couple of minutes in the 12-minute address in which the commencement speaker referred to CUNY Law students' advocacy in defense of the Palestinian people and alluded to the renewed bombing of Gaza that Israel had launched that same week. (See quotations from the speech in the statement defending Fatima Mohammed by the CUNY Jewish Law Students Association, which we reprint on page 19 of this issue.) Frank statements about the terror that Israel regularly inflicts on the Palestinians must – the would-be censors insist – be punished.

So once again the smear was wielded: the claim that it is anti-Semitic to criticize Israel or Zionism – while in Israel, the far-right government of Benjamin Netanyahu, built on open anti-Arab racism, was un-

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Smoke rises from building after latest round of Israeli attacks on Gaza, May 2023.

Hatem Mousa / AP

# Biden/“Squad” vs. Workers’ Most Basic Right

# AOC and the Democratic

# Strikebreakers of America

**Congress “Blocks Sick Days for Rail Workers, Averts Strike by Forcing Biden Agreement” (press headline, 30 November 2022).**

**“Ocasio-Cortez endorses Biden’s reelection campaign, sending a strong signal of Democratic unity” (press headline, 7 July 2023).**  
**“I think he’s done quite well,” said AOC.**

**Question:** What kind of “socialists” would trample workers’ right to withhold their labor, helping the White House use an anti-labor law to *ban a strike* by 115,000 railroad workers; vote for the capitalist government *forcing* them to stay on the job, under deadly dangerous work conditions; and *impose* a contract without a single sick day, after it was voted down by unions representing the majority of the workers?

**Answer:** The Democratic Socialists of America, of course, in the person of their #1 calling card: DSA “electeds,” most famously Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, in the House of Representatives. AOC and fellow DSAers Jamaal Bowman and Cori Bush were among the five out of six members of the Democrats’ “Squad” of self-styled progressives that voted to break the strike that rail workers were about to begin in December. Loyal foot soldiers of Joe Biden, Nancy Pelosi & Co., they helped shackle the workers with a contract mandated by the bosses’ government under the notorious Railway Labor Act.

**Question:** So are they really some kind of socialists?

**Answer:** Hell no.

Unlike left groups that helped pitch illusions in AOC et al., we’ve always told the truth about these capitalist politicians, who have shown their true colors – red, white and blue – over and over, and yet again now as Democratic Strikebreakers of America. We call to break from the Democrats and build a revolutionary workers party that fights for a workers government.

## By Will

JULY 2023 – With strikes by actors, film/TV writers and other labor groups, and the dramatic potential of a massive UPS strike, this summer is giving radical-minded youth opportunities to learn important things about the class struggle. Among these, the meaning of the motto “Picket lines mean don’t cross”; how union solidarity and workers’ class *power* must be central for any winning strategy; and some examples of the role played by the labor bureaucracy (the social layer of union officials seeking to balance between the workers and the employers).

And like clockwork, we see capitalist politicians make their appearance for their photo ops and speeches, vowing eternal loyalty to labor rights as part of the usual rhetoric of Democratic Party campaigning. Among them: some new cogs in the Democratic machine who, when convenient for marketing purposes, sometimes style themselves as “socialists.”

**Workers and youth, beware.** Capitalist politicians from the Democratic Party, including such DSA stars like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, say they stand for workers’ rights but work to subordinate them to U.S. imperialism and its government apparatus. This was starkly shown when the White House and Congress unleashed blatant strikebreaking against the rail workers late last year. Even a prominent opinion writer for the *New York Times* (1 December 2022) stressed that “the yawning gap between Democratic Party rhetoric and behavior” was “perfectly captured” when House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi made a speech denouncing railroad owners who make “obscene profits while demanding more and more from the workers,” and

then, “just one sentence later, announced ... that House Democrats would stand with the profiteers.”

Having ridden to office on claims to be lefty insurgents against the Democratic “establishment,” AOC and the “Squad” serve as loyal lieutenants to Pelosi and Biden, including when it comes to outright strikebreaking. “I don’t like going against the ability of unions to strike,” claimed Pelosi when lining up votes for the imposition of Biden’s contract last November, but “weighing the equities [*sic*], we must avoid a strike.” After all, “our” economy would have been disrupted by a massive rail strike, said the Democrats. No kidding – using the power of the working class to disrupt the normal operation of capitalist exploitation has always been the way to actually *win* strikes.

## Deadly Conditions, Enormous Profits

What was behind the railway conflict? Last December, after working three years without a contract, some 115,000 railroad workers represented by 12 unions were poised to go on a national strike for crucial, urgent demands. During the pandemic, railroaders were deemed essential. Yet they have been worked to the bone without sick days for years. While lengthening freight trains, many of which are now two or more miles long, the railroad barons have ruthlessly slashed the train crews. Over 45,000 workers were cut from the payrolls in the last six years. Forced to be available at the bosses’ whim, those still employed are required to be on the job for intolerable lengths of time (with workweeks reaching almost 80 hours) and routinely deprived of sleep. This exposes everyone to the con-



Internationalists at December 2022 NYC rally supporting rail workers.

stant risk of deadly accidents.<sup>1</sup> But for the train barons it has brought record profits.

The last railroad strike occurred decades ago, in 1992. With then-president George H.W. Bush and the “business community” screaming bloody murder at the impact of that strike, after two days Congress used the Railway Labor Act (RLA) to break it and order the railroaders back to work. Liberal Democrats like Edward Kennedy, head of the Senate’s Labor and Human Resources Committee, praised the “settlement.”<sup>2</sup> Government strikebreaking helped pave the way for the intolerable conditions described above. Established in 1926 and used 18 times over the years, the Railway Labor Act was enacted after a series of hard-fought rail strikes showed the workers’ power. These went back to the huge labor rebellion of 1877 and the 1894 Pullman strike led by Eugene Debs, which was broken by presidential order with the use of federal troops. Imprisoned for his role in the strike, Debs became the most prominent socialist leader in the U.S. and was again sent to prison for his opposition to the imperialist First World War.

When President Joe Biden signed the strikebreaking act of Congress into law on 2 December 2022, it was the culmination of months of federal intervention in negotiations between the huge railroad companies and the rail workers unions. December 9 was when the strike was due to start, after the tentative agreement pushed by Biden was voted down. For the owners, holding the line against workers’ demand for 15 paid sick days reflected the determination to bolster the dictatorial control that helped them squeeze billions of dollars in profit out of the workforce. For the capitalist class at large, the government’s open strikebreaking was a boost to efforts to stave off the spectre of a major labor upsurge by U.S. workers who have been on the receiving end of the employers’ offensive for decades.

<sup>1</sup> Two months after Biden and Congress banned the railway strike, the companies’ profit-driven degradation of safety conditions led to a horrific train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. See “Norfolk Southern Derailment in Ohio: A Capitalist Disaster” as well as the in-depth article “Democratic Party Strikebreakers Shackle Railroad Workers,” in *The Internationalist* No. 69-70, January-May 2023.

<sup>2</sup> In college, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez interned for Senator Kennedy. (See “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to the Rescue of the Democratic Party,” *The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018.)

For the Democratic Party, a fig leaf was needed. House “progressives” stepped in to provide one. Having voted “Yea” for the bill to break the strike and impose Biden’s contract, they then had a second one voted on, for seven paid sick days – knowing full well that this would not make it through the Senate. It didn’t. Then they could try to alibi themselves: “All right, we voted ‘Yea’ to stop the strike and impose the contract, but look, we tried to get the sick days! Sadly, those pesky Republicans and Joe Manchin blocked it.” It was a classic ploy from the grab bag of bourgeois politicking.

## “Accountability” Charades

Similarly cynical was the response by the Democratic Socialists of America to the actions of their Congressional stars. On 30 November 2022 an official DSA statement “call[ed] on Biden and members of Congress to force the billionaire railroad bosses to accept workers’ demands.” (*As if*.) It went on: “Any member of Congress who votes yes on the tentative agreement is siding with billionaires and forcing a contract on rail workers that does not address their most pressing demand of paid sick days.” And then the congressional DSAers and other members of the Squad (Rashida Tlaib being the one exception) went ahead and did just that.

So what did the DSA do then? After a few days, they issued another statement, declaring, “We disagree and are disappointed with” their star members’ vote in Congress. Here and there, some voices within the group called for measures to be taken for more “accountability” by the “electeds.” A handful even said they should be ousted. Needless to say, this led nowhere. In reality, the DSA as a whole, from top to bottom, is responsible for the strikebreaking by its most prominent members.

The DSA has since its inception been a pressure group in and on the Democratic Party, which it exists to serve.<sup>3</sup> Since AOC’s 2018 election the group has increasingly staked its future on having capitalist politicians it can claim as its very own. For such “electeds,” though, tossing aside the “democratic socialist” brand name would hardly be a problem, if such marketing got in the

<sup>3</sup> On the DSA’s origins and history, see the *Internationalist* pamphlet *DSA: Fronting for the Democrats* (2018).



Official AOC merchandise sold on her website. While the t-shirt claims union members stand with AOC, she stood with bosses' government strikebreaking.

way of their political careers. Some already have. Mirroring claims that the Democratic Party, the oldest capitalist party in the world, could be transformed into its opposite, “leftists” of many descriptions cozied up to the DSA when it experienced major growth, claiming it could be reformed and pushed to the left. Instead, the group has moved even further to the right.<sup>4</sup>

As for the rail companies, the terrible conditions that led to last year’s strike threat, followed by months of bad press, have made it even harder for them to retain skilled workers. Beginning this spring, some of the companies made deals with some of the unions to permit a tiny number (4-5) of paid sick days, while trying to squeeze concessions from the unions in return. (Some states also require that employees have sick days.) True to form, the Democrats and their supporters in the labor bureaucracy have tried to use this as a cudgel against unionists who denounce the Biden government’s trampling of the railroaders’ right to strike.

What does Ocasio-Cortez say about all this? In an interview with *Jacobin* (11 April), a journal closely associated with the DSA, she notes that “we worked with Senator Bernie Sanders” during the rail crisis, which is certainly true – and Sanders certainly helped the Democrats pull off the operation. Then AOC goes on to claim that what she and her fellow Squad members did was what “we were asked to do by the rank and file” of the railway unions! “‘Get us a paid leave vote.’... That was the request that was made of me, and that is what I agreed to deliver on.” So she promised sick days and delivered a strike ban. That’s called bait and switch, and here we see the cynicism of politicians who blame their anti-labor actions on the workers them-

<sup>4</sup> Still, the “Left Voice” website, which enthused repeatedly over the DSA’s growth, isn’t finished aiding such illusions. It just put up an item (27 July) proclaiming that the DSA’s upcoming 2023 convention “can set a new direction for the organization,” as it “position[s] itself to be a greater force in the labor movement” (etc.). Written by a slate within the DSA running for seats on its National Political Committee, the piece uncritically published by Left Voice goes on about the DSA now having the chance to “develop a concrete identity as a socialist political organization,” vowing to “push to take the organization in the direction of independence, unity, and discipline in the pursuit of a class-independent socialist party in the United States.”

selves. The strike is the most basic tool of the working class. Anyone who votes to take that away from workers is an enemy of workers’ rights.

In seeking to alibi her vote to *break the strike* with the claim that she was just doing what she was “asked to do,” Ocasio-Cortez argues that she worked “in tandem with” various groups within the unions. In the same interview, she says: “Because, for example, with the rail vote, the only partners that I had leading up to that were railworkers.

And if that’s what they asked us to do, then that’s what we did.” She specifically cites Railroad Workers United (RWU), an organization of railroaders across different craft unions with ties to the social-democratic left, saying: “When you look after the vote, folks like RWU were saying, ‘This is what we asked them to do.’”<sup>5</sup>

Railroad Workers United wrote to *Jacobin* (15 April) stating that this was not true. While they “cannot speak with any certainty as to what the official position of the various craft unions’ respective leadership was on the question of blocking the strike,” the RWU wrote that it “would never be in favor of any legislation denying railroad workers our human right to withhold our labor when all else fails in our struggle for safe working conditions and dignity, regardless of whatever concessions may be dangled.”

### Bringing It All Back Home

The April interview with the DSA’s leading elected official is titled “AOC: The Biden Administration’s Rightward”<sup>5</sup> In a characteristic bait against criticism from the left, she adds: “I think that got drowned out by the noise of people operating more on the theory of the situation.”



Revolution photo

Marching through Grand Central Station during December 2022 protest denouncing White House/Congress strikebreaking against railway workers.

Turn Is ‘a Profound Miscalculation’.” In it, Ocasio-Cortez repeatedly refers to an ostensible “lurch to the right” by the Democratic president. Clearly referring to the services to the ruling party carried out by the Democratic “left,” she said it would be “very perilous should the Biden administration forget who put him over the top” in the elections.

Three months later, she endorsed Biden’s reelection campaign – no surprise there. Back in February she said she’d “enthusiastically support him” if (i.e., when) he got officially chosen as the Democratic nominee. Speaking on the “Pod Save America” podcast on July 7, she stated: “I think he’s done quite well,” making sure to add the standard Democratic escape clause, “given the limitations that we have.” On the same day, the U.S. confirmed that it was sending cluster bombs to Ukraine, for its U.S./NATO proxy war.

AOC & Co. scrambled to distance themselves from that particular weapon – apparently preferring ones like the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) they voted to fund last year as

part of the tens of billions in military spending they voted for the war. (See “NATO ‘Socialist’ War Squad,” *Revolution* No. 19.) Squad members have earned their stripes, many times over, as lieutenants in the imperialist war machine. Meanwhile on the home front too, Biden has been “doing quite well” for the racist capitalist

order. Racist cop terror rages on, living conditions for huge numbers of workers and youth are miserable to say the least, and the administration has ramped up deportations. In mid-May, the “Title 42” COVID-related policy at the U.S.-Mexico border ex-

pired. Between then and late July, Biden deported 85,000 migrants – up 65% since the same period in 2022 (nbcnews.com, 27 July). Biden, formerly Barack Obama’s VP, is truly living up to Obama’s legacy as “Deporter-in-Chief.”

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has brought the real politics of the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America home. Back in March, she and fellow Democratic congressional representative Adriano Espaillat hosted a “Student Services Fair” at the Renaissance High School in the Bronx, which advertised that “We will be joined by special guests from: U.S. Naval Academy, U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Military Academy ... U.S. Coast Guard Academy,” together with the Department of Education and a merchant marine academy. In other words, the event served to lure African American and Latino students into the officer corps of U.S. imperialism’s armed forces.

Leftists rightly protested this clear act of militarism, and in response, Ocasio-Cortez took to Instagram live, saying, “Today, someone made up a rumor that I, me, was hosting a military recruitment fair for high schoolers. Does that sound like something I would do? No.” If her defense over helping Biden break the railroaders’ strike was victim-blaming, here it was gaslighting.

Notably, the Renaissance High School event was consistent with current military doctrine to “diversify” the officer corps, reiterated in the government’s *amicus* brief in the recent Supreme Court decision to ban affirmative action in all universities except for military academies. Ocasio-Cortez does her duty as a servant of capital again and again, this time helping the imperialist armed forces recruit yet more black and Latino students to rain death on the oppressed from Puerto Rico to the Far East.<sup>6</sup>

From the fight to defend workers’ most basic rights, to the struggle to defeat U.S. imperialism, make no mistake. Capitalist politicians working to rope young people into the Democratic Party – and those seeking to give it and them a “left” cover – are on the other side. ■

<sup>6</sup> Readers of *Revolution* might like to take a look at materials from some of our first issues featuring items about struggles to drive military recruiters out of campuses in the Bronx and elsewhere, such as “Bronx Community College Students Drive Out Military Recruiters,” *Revolution* No. 3, November 2005.

# STUDENT SERVICES FAIR

**hosted by Representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Adriano Espaillat**

Renaissance High School Auditorium  
3000 E Tremont Ave  
Bronx, NY 10461

Monday, March 20th  
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Join to learn about the resources available to students through our district office! We will be joined by special guests from:

- U.S. Naval Academy
- U.S. Air Force Academy
- U.S. Military Academy
- U.S. Merchant Marine Academy
- U.S. Coast Guard Academy
- U.S. Department of Education
- as well as former Congressional Interns!

Scan the QR code below or visit [bit.ly/NY14studentservicesfair](http://bit.ly/NY14studentservicesfair) to register.

Questions? Call (718) 662-5970

Advertising from AOC’s Bronx office for high school fair she co-sponsored this spring, featuring military recruiters.

## Political Clarity Is Crucial

# More on Revolutionaries and the Fight for Abortion Rights

Over the past period, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs have engaged in many struggles, including the fight against racist police terror; pickets, rallies and organizing drives by striking nurses at NYC hospitals, workers at Amazon, UPS and Starbucks, the CUNY faculty and staff union and screen actors and writers; defense of Drag Story Hours menaced by rightist bigots – and on many other fronts.

The last issue of *Revolution* (No. 19, September 2022) was headlined “Free Abortion on Demand: How Revolutionaries Fight for It,” and included a number of in-depth articles on this topic. The fight for abortion rights remains a burning issue. We follow the Marxist guideline that seeking political clarity is crucial for those aiming to carry out effective struggle. In contrast, for groups whose leftist words are at odds with their opportunist deeds, clarity can be an obstacle to the “real” business of opportunist maneuvers and gimmicks (sometimes shielded by censorship).

We print here a number of materials in which these and related topics are discussed. The first item, below, was initially published in November 2022 as a leaflet by the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, based on one of the presentations at our forum the previous month on “Socialism: What It Is and Why We Fight for It.”

### Democrats: Faux “Friends” of Women – Fight for Abortion Rights with Class Struggle

In June [2022], we watched a fundamental right stripped away before our eyes: the right to abortion, which was taken away from millions of people when *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. For many, this was the first time they had witnessed such a thing. Others lived through the time when abortion rights were won, and now once again find themselves living in a time when it’s basically being illegalized for a big part of the U.S. population. And for doubly and triply oppressed parts of the working class, the attack on abortion rights hits even harder. It is a racist attack on our rights.

For us here in New York, where abortion is still legal, getting one costs an arm and a leg if you don’t have insurance or are on public assistance. Around the country, many people were left wondering what to do, when the Supreme Court, that undemocratic, unelected body of judges who keep their jobs for life, got to make the final decision on people’s right to decide whether or not to give birth to a child.

For us, the fight for the right of women or any pregnant person to get an abortion – for free, unrestricted abortion on demand – is part of the struggle to achieve the real and full emancipation of women and all the oppressed. You can’t have socialism without the liberation of women, and you can’t liberate women without a socialist revolution. The struggle for socialism, and the struggle for women’s liberation which is intimately connected to it, is based on a particular type of politics: class politics, working-class politics, revolutionary politics. This is the opposite of bourgeois politics.

Key to that is the basic Marxist principle of fighting for the *political independence of the working class*. This is why we fight to free the working class and oppressed from domination by all capitalist parties, which in the United States in very large part means breaking the chains that have long subjugated the workers and oppressed to the Democratic Party, and still do. We call to break with the Democrats and all capitalist parties and to build a revolutionary workers party that would actually fight in the interests of the working class.

We don’t just say that in between elections. We stick to that principle even when a lot of people really don’t want to hear it, like during midterm elections, which are right around the corner. The Democrats, and Trump and his lackeys in the Republican Party, all represent capitalism, which means imperialism and war; it means oppression and poverty; it means racism and the oppression of women. The Democratic Party has sought women’s votes by pointing to Republican opposition to abortion. Yet even when Democrats have controlled both houses of Congress and the White House early in the administrations of Bill Clinton, Barack Obama and now Joe Biden, they have never even pushed through bills that would enact the (limited) abortion rights contained in the *Roe v. Wade* decision.

To fight for abortion rights, to fight for women’s liberation, is a question of *power*. This means – and this is a key aspect of genuinely socialist politics – unchaining the power of the workers and the oppressed.

This is the power that needs to be brought into the fight for abortion rights on a massive scale. That’s what we’ve been talking about when we coined that slogan calling to fight for abortion rights with class struggle. To carry this out means fighting for a program that connects the fundamental daily needs and struggles of the working class to taking power in a socialist revolution.

What the CUNY Internationalist Clubs aim to do is win students over to that struggle. This means telling the truth: that the institutions and politicians of the ruling class are not our friends. The struggle for abortion rights is a struggle *against* them. Revolutionaries explain that workers and the oppressed need to rely on their own power, and to have absolutely no confidence in the people who profit off of their exploitation and oppression. Groups that practice what Marxists refer to as opportunism and reformism have an opposite approach, which obscures the truth and stands in the way of effective struggle.

Part of our job as revolutionaries is to honestly address these issues too, since political differences have real effects, especially when the stakes in the struggle are high. You can see that in a lot of different struggles, including workers’ strikes and in struggles against racist police brutality, for women’s rights and in many other cases.

We had a local example of such differences in a very concrete way here at Hunter College quite recently. Who here went to the protest on October 6 [2022]? It was publi-



Internationalist Club at Hunter College protest in support of abortion rights, 6 October 2022. Fight for abortion rights with class struggle!

cized as a walk-out and rally in defense of abortion rights, so we went – actually the Internationalist Club brought out the largest single organized contingent there. But we did so under our own revolutionary slogans. This was doubly important since the reformist grouping calling the protest, CUNY for Abortion Rights (“C4AR,” a coalition initiated by the Left Voice group, which sponsors the Bread and Roses organization), did so with a flier whose demand was to “pressure CUNY admin to take a stand on abortion rights.” This remained posted up all over the Hunter campus for the two weeks leading up to the event, and after it.

So it was important to counteract that kind of call for illusions in an institution that carries out repression against the students and workers of CUNY. And it was important to link this to some of the basic aspects of what genuine socialist politics is – and isn’t – which is really important given how much miseducation there is about what leftist politics is about. We put out a leaflet explaining how that demand, for the bosses of CUNY to “take a stand on abortion,” exemplified the overall reformist approach of spreading illusions in institutions and politicians of the capitalist ruling class, and seeking alliances with them. [Reprinted below.] In our paper *Revolution*, the CUNY Internationalists have also analyzed the history of class-collaborationist vs. revolutionary positions and approaches to the fight for abortion rights. This has important lessons for today, when reformists seek to revive a lot of what their predecessors did fifty years ago.

The fact is that the fight for abortion rights faces powerful enemies nationwide, and defeating them requires bringing out a stronger power: that of the working class. And this can’t be achieved when that potential power is subjugated and chained to the Democratic Party. If anything right now it is even *more* important than ever to underline that the Democrats, this government party of U.S. imperialism, administers and upholds the racist capitalist system in the United States while trying to lord it over the whole world.

This is the government party of U.S. imperialism that runs the big cities where police murder black people on a daily basis. That rips children away from their mothers at the border and puts them in cages. One U.S. war after another has been waged under Democratic administrations. Today their relentless drive for world domination, with their ever-escalating imperialist war drive against both Russia and China, poses the growing danger of World War Three.

Not one vote for the U.S. rulers and their system of exploitation, racism and women’s oppression. Not one penny or person for their imperialist wars – which must be defeated, part of the fight for international socialist revolution. The fight for socialism, against this decaying capitalist system, is what we’re about.

### How to Fight for Abortion Rights: Compare and Contrast

The item reprinted here was first published as a leaflet by the CUNY Internationalist Clubs on 27 September 2022, in the lead-up to a protest event (publicized as a “walk-out”) on abortion rights held at Hunter College on 2 October 2022.

The fight for abortion rights, like all serious struggles, requires political clarity. Since this is essential for action, it is important to compare contrasting approaches. Early this past May [2022], when the Supreme Court draft opinion striking down *Roe v. Wade* was leaked, the CUNY Internationalists called a speak-out outside Hunter College, to defend abortion rights and for free abortion on demand. Our flier invited students, faculty and staff to come out and express their views and determination in the fight for abortion rights, and stated:

“For our part we Internationalists hold that to defeat this onslaught, it’s crucial to look to the independent power of the workers and oppressed, not capitalist institutions or politicians. This means breaking with the Democrats, who despite all their pretenses stand in the way of winning the struggle for the unrestricted right to abortion, and

whose imperialist war drive today threatens humanity with a third world war. Capitalism means women's oppression – we stand for women's liberation through socialist revolution."

At the speak-out, students together with union and immigrant-rights activists spoke about the importance of the struggle, and many described their own experiences regarding abortion rights. (See the in-depth report in our newspaper, *Revolution* [No. 19, September 2022].)

This fall, some meetings were called by CUNY for Abortion Rights (CUNY4AR), initiated by the Left Voice (LV) organization.<sup>1</sup> At Hunter, its coalition includes the May Day Student Organization (MDSO) and Young Democratic Socialists of America. While having fundamental political differences with the approach put forward by CUNY4AR and its component groups, Internationalist activists sought to stay informed of any plans for protests and attended as observers at two meetings about potential protest at Hunter.

Then a couple of days ago, new CUNY4AR fliers appeared at Hunter. These are centered on a new slogan (not mentioned in the meetings to our knowledge) – “to pressure CUNY admin to take a stand on abortion.” The total lameness of this “demand” has a political logic and class content.

Revolutionaries emphasize the need for independent class struggle, “not capitalist institutions or politicians.” In contrast, the reformist coalition calls on *the CUNY administration*, hand-picked by New York's capitalist elite and bourgeois politicians, to “take a stand” on abortion. That is, it acts as if the administration were some kind of potential ally. Yet the administration, lord-ing it over students and tens of thousands of campus workers and faculty, is an *enemy* of our struggles (which it has repeatedly used its cops and the NYPD to try to repress).

Though the reformists' call does not even state what kind of “stand on abortion” it wants the CUNY tops to make, let's suppose the admin did agree to come out with some statement “supporting” abortion rights. What would that mean? It would cost them nothing to do so, and would simply be an empty gesture to try to make themselves look good. In other words, calling on the CUNY bosses to “take a stand” means inviting them to try to delude people. Worse than useless, such class-collaborationist appeals are a recipe for defeat, showing the meaning of calls for a “heterogeneous movement” (in LV's phrase), counterposed to class struggle to defend abortion rights. (See “Why History Matters in the Fight for Abortion Rights” in *Revolution* [No. 19].) Doubtless LV's bloc partners in the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America's youth group concur with the approach. Is that also the case with the supposed revolutionaries of the Maoist MDSO? Sure looks like it.<sup>2</sup>

Against the spreading of dangerous reformist illusions, we stand for militant class struggle, and in protests for abortion rights at CUNY (including walk-outs, etc.), we will mobilize under our own revolutionary slogans.

<sup>1</sup> Left Voice is part of the international “media network” of a current that calls itself the Trotskyist Fraction. (*Editor's note.*)

<sup>2</sup> Our leaflet's reference to the MDSO led to a number of polemical exchanges in the form of correspondence between them and the Internationalist Clubs. In the meantime, however, the MDSO seems to have virtually disappeared from campus. (*Editor's note.*)

## Yet Again, Censorship Stands in the Way of Struggle

*The following was published as a box in the November 2022 CUNY Internationalist Clubs leaflet reprinted on page 7. Note: As this edition was closing, a McCarthyite-style hit piece about “Chinese propaganda” was launched by the New York Times (5 August) against the People's Forum and others, and picked up by Sen. Marco Rubio. In line with basic workers democracy, we stand opposed to this smear job and to any attacks on or infringement of the rights of members of the left and labor movement.*

At October 6 [2022] protests for abortion rights at Hunter and two other CUNY campuses, the CUNY for Abortion Rights coalition (C4AR, referred to above) invited protesters to attend a subsequent event, titled “All Out for Abortion Access! Organizing at CUNY and Beyond.” This publicly advertised meeting was held on October 15, the week after the protests and as a follow-up to them.

CUNY Internationalist activists wanted to bring our revolutionary views and program to the attention of participants in the October 15 event. Discussion and debate on different strategies is crucial, and this is very much the case when it comes to advancing the struggle for abortion rights.

However, the location chosen for the event – the People's Forum (PF) – has a standing rule against the distribution of leftist literature. This rank anti-communist ban had already been used to keep the Internationalists out of an important CUNY organizing conference (which our comrades had in fact initiated) in 2019.<sup>1</sup> To thus block free exchange of views and denature that 2019 adjunct organizing conference, the PF's “#1 rule” was invoked, stating that no “outside” group could “pass out fliers, put them on the tables or sell newspapers. If anyone does, they will be removed from the space by staff immediately.” Now if on October 15 of this year that standing threat had been carried out against leftist activists inside the abortion-rights event (for giving out our fliers on abortion rights or our paper, for example), the example of such repressive measures being used against us reds would have been used to intimidate many other young activists at CUNY, and beyond.

Facing all of this, three young women comrades from the Internationalist Clubs went on October 15 to distribute our literature on the public sidewalk, *outside* the People's Forum building. What happened then was that a PF employee came out onto the sidewalk, went up to the youngest of the three and demanded: “Are you holding a party paper? What group are you with?” Told that it's the Internationalists, he stated that “we have a policy against party publications” and repeatedly insisted that “you can't sell your paper” there – *on the public New York City sidewalk.*

After going inside, he then came back out and confronted the other two comrades, telling them they couldn't sell the paper “out front of our building – these are the rules of the venue.” In the face of this barrage and seeking to avoid being hassled even more, the comrades moved further away on the

<sup>1</sup> This was the CUNY-wide conference on “7K or Strike” (organizing for minimum adjunct pay of \$7,000 per course) in March 2019. On this conference and the struggle against the anti-red ban, see articles in *Revolution* Nos. 16 (May 2019) and 18 (September 2021). The ban was wielded as a political bludgeon by an anti-communist grad student grouping called CUNY Struggle (which later started “Rank and File Action”); tailing and promoting them, Left Voice joined in ramming through the ban.

public sidewalk. Yet it didn't stop. Two security guards in PF shirts came out, one of them fingering a walkie-talkie, in an attempt to intimidate them. It didn't work.

Nobody came out from the building where the event was being held to protest any of this or defend the basic democratic right to distribute political literature. It should be noted that the C4AR coalition was initiated and is led by the Left Voice organization, which sponsors the Bread and Roses “socialist feminist” group. Left Voice is all too aware of the People's Forum's policy: it vociferously supported the

ban on leftist literature being imposed on the 2019 CUNY organizing conference, as we have documented in our press. Now it chooses to have the recent October 15 event on abortion-rights organizing at CUNY at this same locale. It also held a prior conference, on “Labor for Reproductive Rights,” at the People's Forum in July.

Censorship, bans on distributing leftist literature at organizing events (of CUNY activists!) – and the kind of disdain for the most elementary principles of workers democracy all this exhibits – can only harm the struggle for abortion rights. ■

### At Public Meeting About ... Dorms

## DSA Tries Bringing Its Anti-Red Clause to Hunter

Anti-communism is a serious business, but every once in a while it takes forms that can seem like a satire. “Public Meetings on Dorms (No Commies Allowed)” might sound like the title of a grade-B campus comedy skit. Unfortunately that's not the case.

This spring, full-color fliers were posted up at Hunter College campus inviting all and sundry to an on-campus meeting about the City University's plans to tear down the Brookdale Dormitories, where several hundred Hunter students are housed. (A new laboratory facility is slated to take the place of the dorms, on East 25th St. in Manhattan.) “Voice your support for AFFORDABLE Student Housing,” the flier invited, giving the date, time and location of the public event and offering free snacks. At the bottom was a logo reading “DSA for a New Deal for CUNY.” As our readers doubtless know, DSA stands for Democratic Socialists of America.

Two Hunter undergrads who are part of the Internationalist Club attended the event, one a Brookdale resident, the other a former Brookdale resident. Both of these young women have been involved in work on the Brookdale dorms issue; during the discussion, one of them was called on and asked a question about perspectives regarding the planned demolition. As the event (which turned out to double as a Young Democratic Socialists of America meeting) seemed to be winding down, they headed out the door. At this point things took a turn.

A DSA honcho headed over. “Are you with the Internationalists?” she asked. Answered in the affirmative, she said, “We have a bylaw that says members of democratic-centralist organizations can't attend our meetings.... You can't come to any more meetings.” So guess what? These “democratic socialists” are definitely Democratic with a big D, but – surprise, surprise – they're not very democratic.

What's up with this? In short, they clearly don't want reds at their public meetings. What about this bylaw business? The DSA's bylaws do indeed include a clause (in Article I, no less) stating that “members can be expelled” if they “are under the discipline of any self-defined democratic-centralist organization.” The same anti-red clause is part of the “Membership” section of the constitution of the Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA). The term *democratic-centralist*, used by Lenin to

describe the organizational norms of a revolutionary vanguard party, is invoked by the DSA/YDSA social democrats as another way of saying communist.<sup>1</sup>

It's bizarre to hear them proclaim that their anti-communist internal rule for excluding reds from their own organization somehow applies to public events on issues of common concern, to which the student body at large is invited. Perhaps the old House Un-American Activities Committee has been reanimated for a Hunter encore to interrogate “Are you now or have you ever been a member of...?” We do confess that we are not now, nor have we been members of the DSA. In any case, you can't really invoke anti-red rules on membership in your own organization to ban us from a public meeting...

But while absurd, this stuff isn't actually funny. Red-baiting and anti-communism have caused incalculable damage to the left and labor movement, innumerable social movements, and overall political/cultural life in this country. On college campuses, McCarthyism took a heavy toll. We always have, and will continue to, uphold the principles of workers democracy, for ourselves and others. That includes militant opposition to every manner of anti-red ban and exclusionism against members of the left and labor movement.

P.S. In light of red-baiting as well as the history of repressive measures by CUNY authorities, let's make a basic point of political education, which even a few “democratic socialists” might benefit from: a student club like the Hunter Internationalists is not a “democratic-centralist organization,” as that term applies to a revolutionary *party*. (Needless to say, we militantly defend the rights of members of left *parties*, too, against attempts to impose red bans at public meetings.) As Leon Trotsky explained in the “Transitional Program” (1938), the inner structure of a Leninist party is based on “the principles of democratic centralism: full freedom in discussion, complete unity in action.” This is a mark of the seriousness required for building a revolutionary leadership, which says what it means and means what it says, essential to the goal of socialist revolution. We CUNY reds are proud to support that objective. ■

<sup>1</sup> DSA founder Michael Harrington was notorious for having invoked red-exclusion clauses when he locked Students for a Democratic Society leaders out of their offices in 1962 for allowing a young “red” to attend the SDS convention.



# Supreme Court...

continued from page 1

of New York City, and the deep crisis of education here is compounded by the fact that approximately 10 percent of NYC students are homeless.<sup>2</sup> The entrenchment and growth of school segregation in the U.S. is partly a consequence of the 1970s defeat of busing for school integration, at the hands of white racist mobs and liberal Democratic politicians (including Joe Biden). Now the Supreme's Court's ruling further heightens racist barriers to the basic democratic right to a quality education. It will take nothing short of a socialist revolution to allow for a truly egalitarian education system.

As in the aftermath of *Roe v. Wade's* overturn, the Democratic Party sees the racist ruling on college admissions as an opportunity to make hay and harvest votes. As it issues glib "diversity" and "social justice" sound bites, off the campaign stage it promotes union-busting charter schools that drain money, resources and students from public schools. Democrats preside over unabated racist police murder as mayors of major cities. And as they escalate the anti-China war drive that threatens humanity with World War Three, Joe Biden & Co. head up the U.S./NATO imperialist proxy war against Russia. For the workers, oppressed and youth seeking to defend our rights against Washington and Wall Street's racist rule, what's urgently needed is a revolutionary workers party, to bring down the capitalist system.

## Rise and Demise of the "Harvard Plan"

The overall rubric of "affirmative action" is applied to many policies and programs, but it means something particular with regard to college admissions. Before discussing this, it is important to contrast a key episode from the history of the City University of New York to the rise of affirmative action plans at upper-crust institutions like Harvard University and the University of North Carolina, defendants in the recently decided Supreme Court case.

Amidst upheavals in the 1960s against racist oppression, the lily-white composition

<sup>2</sup> "New York City Schools Most Segregated in the Nation," *Public School Review*, 2 July 2022; "More than 104,000 New York City Students Were Homeless Last Year," *New York Times*, 22 October 2022.

of most higher-ed institutions was increasingly challenged. In 1969, African American and Latino students at the City College of New York launched a strike that wound up adopting the demand "Open Admissions for All." After city labor unions came on board, this led to an important victory: *winning open admissions throughout the CUNY system*. This was different from just about every variant of what's called affirmative action. Dramatically increasing access for students from doubly oppressed sectors while offering increased opportunities for working-class whites as well, it had the effect of cutting against racism.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, some universities tailored to members of the capitalist elite began adopting what came to be known as the "Harvard Plan." This maintained highly exclusive admissions policies, but provided a little "diversity" (as opposed to actual *equality*) – in line with sectors of the ruling class that saw that some "black faces in high places" were needed to help keep the masses in line and administer U.S. imperialism. This was eventually personified by Barack Obama, who after attending elite schools became the first black president of the Harvard Law Review in 1990. Cultivated by Goldman Sachs, he became a senator and then the CEO, deporter- and commander- in-chief of U.S. imperialism.

Beginning in 1969, the "Harvard Plan" set the pattern for "selective" (elite) universities to open their doors a crack and bring in a small layer of black students. As student strikes were shaking even this bastion of ruling-class privilege, Harvard administrators "enacted race-conscious, holistic admissions first at the Law School and later at the College," as the *Harvard Crimson* (14 April) put it. In 1978, the Supreme Court ruled that while race could not be the "definite and exclusive" criterion, colleges could (as at Harvard) consider race as one among other factors in admissions decisions.

So it's not coincidental that Ivy League icon Harvard is one of the two universities featured in the decision that the Supreme Court just issued, known as *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*. The other is the University of North Carolina, with an admis-

<sup>3</sup> See "How Open Admissions Was Won in 1969," *Revolution* No. 6, April 2009. In 1976, NYC rulers imposed tuition at CUNY. Pushing to roll back open admissions, they succeeded in eliminating it completely by 1999.



Jose Luis Magana / AP

Protesters in front of Supreme Court on June 29.

sions process similar to Harvard's. While a public institution, UNC is (together with NYU, UCLA, Reed and others) one of the schools sometimes dubbed the "New Ivies." The Court's ruling against affirmative action was delivered in a pair of lawsuits brought by Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. (SFFA), a "legal advocacy organization" headed by longtime conservative activist Edward Blum.

Affirmative action in college admissions has been challenged in court many times since its inception, with a few prominent cases making it to the Supreme Court. While many states and colleges were eliminating or whittling down affirmative-action admissions programs, up until this June the Court's decisions did not rule out any consideration of applicants' race. Now, with its ruling in the suits brought by SFFA against Harvard and UNC, the Court has done so.

The Court's new decision overturns the precedent set in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, a 2003 case in which a white student sued the University of Michigan's law school on the grounds that her race was a factor in the decision not to admit her. In *Grutter*, the Supreme Court ruled that race could be considered, together with other factors, if universities did this in a "narrowly tailored" way. But when a statewide referendum led to Michigan banning "race-conscious" admissions entirely, the Court upheld this in a 2014 decision whose arguments raised echoes of the "states' rights" banner that Jim Crow politicians waved in the 1950s and '60s.

What about "Students for Fair Admissions"? Eager to use test cases to strike down legislation and policies on conservatives' hit list, mega-donors give it millions. Blum, who heads the "Project on Fair Representation" as well as SFFA, has used them to take aim at voting rights and promote the failed effort to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census (*Slate*, 25 October 2022). In the 2010s, Blum propelled a case called *Fisher v. University of Texas, Austin*, in which a white woman sued UT for denying her admission, using trademark racist claims of "reverse discrimination." Ruling on *Fisher* in 2016, the Supreme Court upheld the precedent set by *Grutter*. The 2023 *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* case is essentially a second, successful attempt at what *Fisher* and its backers had not achieved six years ago.

Blum's SFFA sued both UNC and Harvard in 2014. Plaintiffs claimed UNC discriminated against white and Asian applicants by giving preference to African American, Latino and Native American students. The

Harvard case accused the university of seeking to advance less qualified students of other races at the expense of Asians, keeping the latter's enrollment artificially low through subjective criteria about students' personality traits. Harvard strongly denied the discrimination against Asian students the plaintiffs alleged and argued that non-race-conscious methods were insufficient for maintaining a diverse student body.

Of course, racist reactionaries don't give a damn about Asian students. What's equally certain is that liberal and conservative sectors of the bourgeoisie use, each in their own way, divide-and-conquer tactics to pit sectors of the workers and oppressed against each other. Against this, revolutionaries put forward a program to unite and win the struggle against every form of racist oppression. In the university context, this underscores yet again how crucial it is to fight for open admissions as part of such a program to win genuine equality for all. This is diametrically opposed to a situation in which people are supposed to wage cage-fight combat against each other, in the hope of gaining access to educational class privileges reserved for the capitalist elite and the highest-paid members of its entourage.

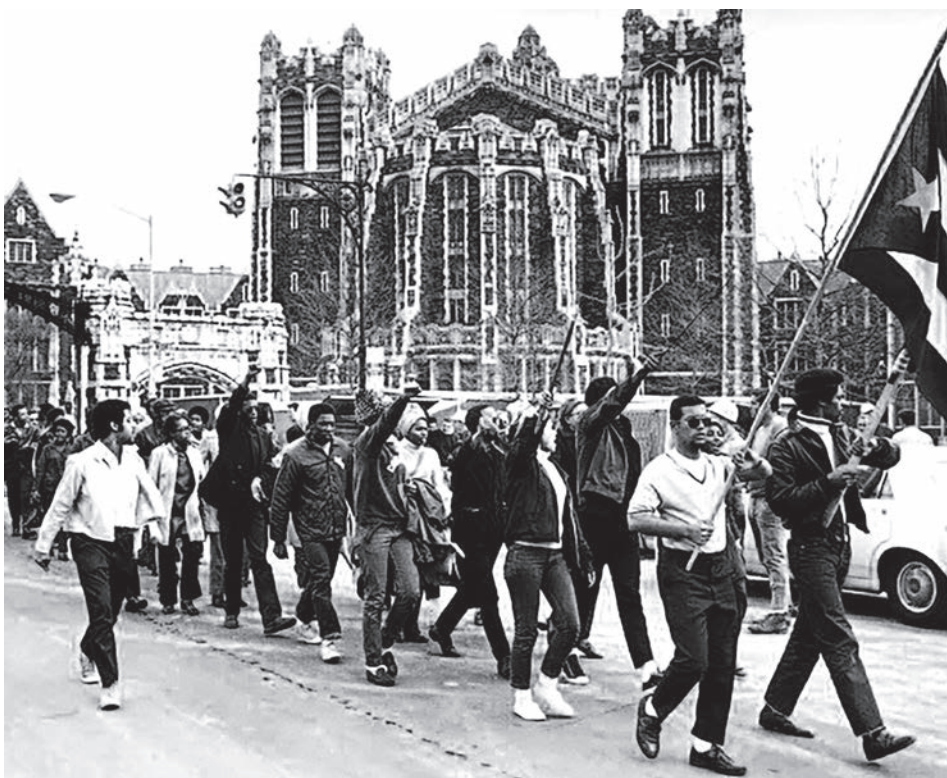
## Court Debates "Compelling Interest"

On June 29, when the Supreme Court met to issue its ruling, Chief Justice John Roberts read the majority opinion. Then ultra-reactionary Clarence Thomas held forth with an oral concurrence. Justice Sonia Sotomayor followed, reading her dissenting opinion. Like so many other liberal speeches, hers ended with an allusion to Martin Luther King in which she expressed the hope that eventually in America, "the arc of the moral universe will bend toward racial justice."

Someday over the rainbow won't cut it – we've had it with pious liberal clichés and sermons. All three branches of the government – executive, legislative and judicial – reflect the reality that the bourgeois state is, as Karl Marx put it, the executive committee of the ruling class. The particularly anti-democratic powers of the Supreme Court, like those of the presidency, Senate and Electoral College, go back to their original design as bulwarks for the interests of the slaveowners.<sup>4</sup> They help ensure that any gain for the oppressed can be taken away, if it is not militantly defended with the power of the multiracial working class and independent proletarian class politics. Having

<sup>4</sup> See "Slavery and the Constitution," *Revolution* No. 17, August 2020.

New York Times



Protest march through City College in 1969. Student strike and support from city labor helped win open admissions at CUNY the following year.

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zero confidence in any part of the capitalist state, we fight for a *workers* government.

In her lengthy dissenting opinion, Sotomayor repeatedly cited the *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) brief filed in the *SFFA v. Harvard* case by 35 top former military leaders, including four ex-chairmen of the Joints Chiefs of Staff. Stating that the U.S. has a “compelling interest” in “diversity” as a matter of “national security,” they expressed particular concern that if the Court ruled against affirmation action, this could negatively affect military service academies.

As the *Military Times* (29 June) summed up the *amicus* brief:

“The retired leaders emphasized that the officer corps already is significantly less racially diverse than the enlisted troops. Increasing that gap, they warned, could diminish the military’s legitimacy in the eyes of some Americans, hinder engagement with foreign countries and threaten internal morale.”

In her dissenting opinion, Sotomayor – joined by fellow Obama nominee Kagan and Biden nominee Jackson – highlighted the *amicus* brief’s argument that during the Vietnam War, lack of diversity “threatened the integrity and performance of the Nation’s military” because it fueled “perceptions of racial/ethnic minorities serving as ‘cannon fodder’ for white military leaders.”<sup>5</sup>

The Court’s liberal minority, in leaning heavily on arguments advanced by former Pentagon brass (including literal war criminals), underscored a key political reality. Not only has U.S. imperialism’s military been massively boosted in the Obama/Biden years; the Democratic Party has headed most U.S. wars for well over a century. Revolutionary Marxists, at the same time as we oppose discrimination in the military as everywhere else, say: “Not a person, not a penny for the imperialist armed forces,” and salute the heroic Vietnamese fighters whose defeat of U.S. imperialism was a victory for the workers and oppressed worldwide.<sup>6</sup>

For its part, the Supreme Court majority opinion only mentioned the issue of military academies in a footnote, noting that none were a party to the cases. “This opinion also does not address the issue,” it stated, “in light of the potentially distinct interests that military academies may present” – i.e., the academies were exempted from the ruling. The liberal justices responded that “diverse” leadership is crucial to strategic interests of “the Nation” in the civilian sphere as well as the military. Such debates were an object lesson in divisions within the ruling class over how best to advance U.S. capitalism’s overall interests and imperialist objectives.

## Deep Roots of Educational Racism

The education system is “where race and class intersect in the U.S., a country built on a bedrock of capitalist slavery,” as our comrades of Class Struggle Education Workers often stress. “That is why the fight

<sup>5</sup> *SFFA v. Harvard* dissenting opinion by Justice Sotomayor, joined by Justices Jackson and Kagan, October 2022. This also quotes a similar *amicus* brief by the federal government arguing that “the Nation’s military strength” depends on a racially diverse “pipeline of officers ... prepare[d] to lead increasingly diverse forces.”

<sup>6</sup> See “Vietnam: A Historic Defeat for U.S. Imperialism,” *Revolution* No. 15, September 2018. The 2005 documentary *Sir! No Sir!* details turmoil and resistance within the U.S. military during the Vietnam War.

for free quality education for all has been a fundamental issue since the fight for abolition” (*Marxism and Education* No. 6, January 2022). In the context of the Supreme Court decision, it’s important to look at some of this history.

The withholding of quality education from the black population has been a tool of capitalist oppression since the outset of this nation. In the South, slaves were forbidden from learning to read and write, lest they use it as a tool to escape servitude. After rebellions like the Nat Turner revolt (1831), the slave-owning wing of the ruling class passed additional anti-literacy laws and prohibitions, often for free as well as enslaved black people, and generally opposed public education for poor whites as well. Though after the abolition of chattel slavery former slaves were no longer legally prevented from getting an education, the feasibility of obtaining one was low.

The Freedmen’s Bureau set up a number of “free schools” for the education of black children, but the effort was devastated by the counterrevolutionary overturn of Reconstruction, with white-supremacist thugs terrorizing the schools that did exist. While upper-class whites attended school, and some went on to higher educational institutions, black children rarely had the opportunity, generally remaining in conditions similar to those of their formerly enslaved parents. The adoption of Jim Crow laws, as well as *de facto* forms of segregation, ensured that the black condition would not improve.<sup>7</sup>

The Supreme Court’s 1896 ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* centered on the segregation of transportation, but its “separate but equal” precedent was applied to schools as well. The idea of creating separate yet equal-quality facilities for blacks and whites was obviously utter nonsense. Black children’s schools had fewer funds and fewer teachers, they spent less time in the classroom, and this led to lower literacy rates and test scores. With the rise of the post-WWII civil rights movement, the fight for integrated education was at the forefront; if schooling continued to be so overtly unequal, there would be no progress for black Americans. Schools were one of the most volatile sites of civil rights struggle, and white racist terror groups had no problem making black children their targets.

Black children who lived close to white schools were forced to travel long distances to lower-quality black schools. In 1951, Oliver Brown, father of a black child refused admittance to a nearby all-white school, sued the Topeka, Kansas Board of Education. In 1954, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was delivered, overturning the *Plessy v. Ferguson* “separate but equal” precedent – but it took over a year for the court to deliver its implementation decision.

Known as Brown II, this stated that individual school boards would bear the responsibility of desegregation and should do so “with all deliberate speed.” This joke of a plan gave states and districts even more leeway to refuse integration. Proudly bigoted politicians vowed to dismantle the public school system before allowing for integration; others simply stated that the ruling did not apply to their state. Racist “citizens councils” organized KKK-type terror in their neighborhoods.

After years of struggle, the structure of *de jure* segregation was struck down. Jim  
<sup>7</sup> “The Emancipation Proclamation: Promise and Betrayal,” *The Internationalist* No. 34, March-April 2013.

Crow had become an embarrassment and impediment for U.S. imperialism’s self-promotion as a supposed force for “democracy” in its Cold War drive against the Soviet bloc. The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, but neither it nor *Brown v. Board of Ed* applied to the *de facto* forms of segregation predominant in the North. Segregation was a tool of the racist rulers not just “Down South” but “Up South” too; private-sector measures (such as “red-lining” by real-estate agencies) combined with government policies and the working of the capitalist economic system to produce the North’s *de facto* segregation. This ensured unequal and segregated housing and schooling, with the added bonus of legal deniability.

A decade after Southern schools began to be integrated, Boston schools were the most segregated in the county. Yet in Northern cities, activists often struggled to even prove that this segregation existed, let alone remedy it. And after the passing of Civil Rights legislation in the 1950s and ’60s, Democrats largely washed their hands of the matter.

In 1974, the U.S. District Court for Massachusetts ruled in favor of a lawsuit brought on behalf of black parents and children against the Boston school system, finding that it had “knowingly carried out a systematic program of segregation.” The city’s schools were ordered to begin desegregation by “busing” students to other school districts. Claiming busing would lower their children’s education quality to that of black children, mobs of racist white parents launched a violent backlash. Gathering outside of schools to terrorize and attack black students, they were joined by Klansmen and Nazis.

Against the racist terror, revolutionary Marxists fought for labor/black defense, defending busing and calling for its extension to the suburbs. But busing was defeated in Boston and the backlash against it was further pushed in Congress (together with racist “law-and-order” measures) by Joe Biden, who allied with Republican segregationists like North Carolina’s Jesse Helms. Today, city schools in Boston and across the North remain intensely segregated.

## Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

After the inception of affirmative action college admissions programs, by the early 1980s the number of black and Latino students at U.S. colleges and universities had grown somewhat. The modest advances were soon challenged by reactionaries seeking to bar them not only from the hallowed halls of Ivy and other elite universities, but from decent state schools as well. Community colleges, overwhelmingly more diverse and working-class, repeatedly faced budget cuts and tuition hikes.

Long before this summer’s Supreme Court ruling, meanwhile, “race-conscious” admissions were outlawed not only in Michigan but in eight other states, including Arizona, California and Florida. The Supreme Court’s 1978 *Bakke* decision, based on a case from the University of California, banned racial quotas in admissions, while stating that affirmation action could be constitutional in some circumstances. We do not support quota-based measures, as they are in themselves exclusionary mechanisms, but *Bakke*, backed by reactionaries around the country, was a stick to beat back gains for minority students.

In 1996, California banned affirmative action in its state and public entities. Within

two years, black student enrollment at UCLA was more than halved, to 3.43% (*New York Times*, 29 June). And this in a city with a long history of black struggle, where some of the most burning outbursts of anger at police terror and racist oppression had exploded. A similar decimation of the share of black students took place in Michigan. In the wake of the new Supreme Court decision, a sharp erosion of the numbers of black students at a large number of U.S. colleges and universities is the expectation for the rest of the country.

For decades, college affirmative action programs were challenged with the argument that they “discriminated” against whites (as well as Asians in the Harvard and UNC suits). From the outset, the programs were designed in a way that led to black people being scapegoated for the worsening conditions of many white students. Today, millions face the crisis of student loans, a despicable feature of the business of higher education. In the aggregate this debt long ago surpassed the total credit card debt in the U.S. and is also greater than the total auto loan debt (*Washington Post*, 6 March 2012). In large part it affects those from the working class and lower strata of the middle class who don’t receive financial aid and can’t afford to pay outright for their education, feeding resentment against affirmative action.

Another important yet frequently overlooked aspect has to do with the class, income and wealth gap in educational “achievement.” For example, research on the gap in reading and math scores between children of high- and low-income families found it to be more than twice as large as that between white and black students (*Child Trends*, 22 August 2016). At the same time, the structural racism of American capitalism means that black people, largely concentrated among the working class and poor, often still last-hired, first-fired and least paid, tend to have a lot less wealth and resources than whites. A bedrock of U.S. capitalism since the beginning, racial oppression continues to be so today.

After the Supreme Court decision, the urgency of the situation we face has increased. What we want: not to merely lift small numbers of black and Latino students into elite institutions, maneuvering them around a structure that would otherwise bar them, but to destroy the foundation of the system that produces and depends on such oppression. The working class as a whole – Asian, Latin, black and white, immigrant and U.S.-born – faces the same enemy in achieving a quality education: the capitalist system. At the same time, racial oppression is woven into the fabric of U.S. capitalism, and taking on what Marxists call *special oppression* is essential to uniting the working class to overthrow this decaying system. Affirmative action admissions programs, never more than a dent in the structure, were never even meant for the vast majority, and now have been consigned to the scrap heap. What is needed is for the entire system of oppression, in all spheres of society, to be uprooted.

Closely linked to the fight for black liberation, the key to universal high-quality, integrated and free education, at all levels, lies in bringing out the power of the multinational, multiethnic proletariat, with a class-struggle program and revolutionary leadership. To win, we have to liberate the resources and wealth needed for education, and all society’s urgent needs, from the death grip of the profit system. ■

Drop All Charges Now!

# Atlanta's "Cop City": Sinister Center for Racist Police Repression

Early this year, Georgia state police raided a protest encampment in a forested area that used to be part of the notorious Atlanta Prison Farm, where a "public-private partnership" of Atlanta's political and business elites is determined to build the huge police facility known as "Cop City." It was there, on January 18, that Tortuguita (the chosen name of Manuel Esteban Paez Terán) was shot dead by the cops, who claim to have opened fire after the 26-year-old activist supposedly shot and wounded an officer. Yet a private autopsy found that Tortuguita's hands were raised when they were shot multiple times by different firearms. As for the official autopsy by the county medical examiner's office, its release was delayed for three months. When it was finally made public, it stated that "gunpowder residue was not found on the hands" – and that Tortuguita, a member of the Defend the Forest group prominent in "Stop Cop City" protests, had been shot 57 times.

No cameras recorded the killing, according to the Georgia State Patrol – though body-cams of other cops near the scene recorded them saying "Man ... you fucked your officer up?" and "Did they shoot their own man?" As the Paez Terán family said in a 9 February statement, the "clearing of the forest was a paramilitary operation," in which "Manuel was massacred in a hail of gunfire." The police murder of Tortuguita, together with that of Tyre Nichols which occurred on January 7 in Memphis, Tennessee, led to protests in different parts of the country. This included at the City University of New York, where the CUNY Internationalist Clubs held a speak-out against racist police terror. (See article on page 12 of this issue.)

At an Atlanta demonstration days after Tortuguita's murder, police arrested protesters and charged many of them with "domestic terrorism" (!), even though none were accused of seriously injuring anyone, and most of the charges are based on "the equivalent of misdemeanor trespassing" (*Independent* [UK], 10 February). This charge is used against a growing number of people in city and state authorities' drive to suppress demonstrations seeking to stop Cop City. In June, leading members of a group raising

bail for protesters were themselves arrested.

The repression – like the campaign to build a new "Public Safety Training Center" in a mainly African American zone of DeKalb County just outside city limits – brings together Atlanta's liberal black Democratic administration, Georgia's right-wing Republican governor and the corporate heavy hitters that call the shots in the rapidly gentrifying city. The struggle over Cop City shines a spotlight on issues that are important for everyone opposed to racist repression nationwide. It illustrates yet again the key political point that in big cities across the U.S., "Democrats Are the Bosses of the Racist Killer Cops." And it underscores that to fight the bipartisan assault on democratic rights, it is essential to unchain the power of the multiracial working class, breaking free of subordination to capitalism's parties and politicians of racist repression.

## A Tale of Four Summers

To understand the fight over Cop City, it's helpful to look at events over the course of four summers from 2020 to the present.

**Summer 2020:** The racist police murder of George Floyd touches off the largest sustained protests in the history of the United States. Weeks after Floyd's murder by Minneapolis police, cops in Atlanta shoot Rayshard Brooks, a 27-year-old black man, in the back, killing him in a Wendy's parking lot. Mass demonstrations convulse the city, almost half of whose population is African American. Democratic politicians nationwide, including Atlanta's black mayor, Keisha Bottoms, seek to divert mass anger with illusions that capitalism's racist police terror can be reformed away. Many spread the slogan "defund the police," with Nancy Pelosi approvingly citing such empty appeals to "shuffle some of that money around." Against claims by Democrats and reformist left groups that "justice" can be achieved under capitalist rule, chants and banners of Internationalist Group/Revolutionary Internationalist Youth contingents call for *workers action against racist police terror* and declare: "Only Revolution Can Bring Justice."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See "Only Revolution Can Bring Justice" and other articles in *Revolution* No. 17, August 2020; "Why We Need a Socialist Revolution," *Revolution* No. 18, September 2021.



Internationalist contingent in Juneteenth 2020 march in Brooklyn, NY.

**Summer 2021:** Legislation is introduced for Atlanta's City Council to authorize Mayor Bottoms to lease land to the Atlanta Police Foundation (APF). The purpose, in her words: to join with "philanthropic and corporate partners to build a new state-of-the-art Public Safety training facility" – Cop City. The APF states that since 2003 it has provided "vital strategic support to Atlanta's Mayor, Police Chief, and Police Department," and that its "pillars" include "Technology," "More Officers" and "Increased Enforcement." Among its board members: top executives of AT&T, Delta, Georgia Power, Home Depot, JP Morgan, Merrill Lynch, UPS, Wells Fargo and other major corporations.<sup>2</sup> Coca-Cola, headquartered in Atlanta, also backs the project. Soon, the City Council approves the lease of 85 acres of land that was part of the former Atlanta Prison Farm, in the South River Forest area. It is here that they intend to build the \$90 million "Cop City," which is to include a mock city with apartments, a gas station, convenience store, plus a firing range and other facilities.

**Summer 2022:** Across the U.S., by this time, Democratic pols that had used the rhetoric of "defunding" police have switched to that of "defending" and further building up the police. In Washington, President Biden's budget calls to hike "law enforcement" spending to \$37 billion, including for helping police departments hire and train another 100,000 cops. In Georgia, the state Democratic Party sends constituents a "Reminder: Georgia Republicans Voted Against Funding Police," referring to their vote in Congress "against billions of dollars in funding for state and local police departments and first responders included in President Biden and Democrats' American Rescue Plan."

In June of '22, in the lead-up to mid-term elections, "President Biden Announces Former Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms as [His] Senior Advisor for Public Engagement" (whitehouse.gov). A fel-

<sup>2</sup> "Our work is far from over," proclaims the sinister APF (atlantapolicefoundation.org).

low black Democratic machine politician, longtime City Council member and Cop City supporter Andre Dickens, becomes Atlanta's new mayor. While boosting Atlanta as "the home of the Civil Rights Movement," he pledges to "surge" (build up) the police. The Cop City project moves forward; so does repression. In August 2022, charges against the Atlanta cops who killed Rayshard Brooks are dropped. Later that year, five protesters are hit with "domestic terrorism" charges, which can bring 5-35 years in prison.<sup>3</sup>

**Summer 2023:** Half a year after the police murder of Tortuguita, and three years since the massive anti-racist protests of 2020, the number of "Stop Cop City" protesters facing "domestic terrorism" charges has risen to over 40. In June, in a raid by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and Atlanta police, a heavily armed SWAT team arrests three leaders of the Atlanta Solidarity Fund, which has helped raise bail and find lawyers for arrested "Stop Cop City" activists. The three are charged with "money laundering" and "charity fraud." Two days later, with hundreds packing the City Council chamber in protest, the council approves \$31 million in public funds for Cop City.<sup>4</sup> The ACLU and other liberal groups call on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to "investigate" its own surveillance of Atlanta protesters. The Vote to Stop Cop City Coalition launches a drive to collect 70,000 signatures for a referendum on cancelling the city's lease for the police center.

In the struggle against Cop City, protester Matthew Johnson told NBC News (26 January): "We've tried everything. We went through City Council, we've taken the legislative route, we've done tons of advocacy,

*continued on page 16*

<sup>3</sup> As of 2017, Georgia law expanded the definition of "domestic terrorism" from acts intended to kill or injure at least ten people to those involving a range of property crimes, including acts intended to "disable or destroy critical infrastructure, a state or government facility, or a public transportation system."

<sup>4</sup> See the recent NBC News special, "The Fight Over 'Cop City': Inside the Protests Against Atlanta's New Police Training Center" (27 July).



Manuel Esteban Paez Terán (Tortuguita), murdered by police at protest encampment against "Cop City."

September 2023

# Under Democratic and Republican Parties of Capitalism Racist Cop Terror Never Ends Only Revolution Can Bring Justice!

*Under the racist rule of capitalism in the United States, police terror never stops. Yet with Joe Biden in office, protests against racist cop terror have largely subsided, since the bulk of the supposed left and “social movement” leaders back and are beholden to the Democratic Party. Reformists and liberals largely ditched their empty talk of “defunding” the police, whose racist rampage continues in cities across the country under Democratic mayors, the bosses of killer cops from NYC to Memphis, Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, etc.*

*On January 31, in response to the police murders of Tyre Nichols and Manuel Esteban Paez Terán, whose chosen name was Tortuguíta, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs held a speak-out outside Hunter College. Tyre Nichols, a 29-year-old black man, was chased down and beaten to death by the elite “SCORPION” unit of the Memphis, Tennessee police department on January 7. Tortuguíta, an activist against the construction of “Cop City” near Atlanta, Georgia, was killed in a hail of police gunfire on January 18. (See the article on “Cop City” on page 11 of this issue.)*

*Some of the speeches from the protest are printed below, edited for publication. A message to the speak-out was also sent from Memphis by Cleo Silvers, a former member of the Black Panther and Youngs Lords parties who is a long-time union activist. (See “Message from Memphis,” The Internationalist No. 69-70, January-May 2023.)*

**Jeannette:** My focus will be Tyre Nichols. Tyre Nichols was a 29-year-old black man, originally from Sacramento, California, who resided in Memphis. He was the youngest of his four siblings and a father to his four-year-old son. Tyre Nichols’ mother described him as a “beautiful soul.” Along with skateboarding, Tyre Nichols had a passion for photography. According to his mother, Tyre would visit Shelby Farms park, near Memphis, each night to watch the sunset and take pictures. Tyre will never be able to watch another sunset, take another photograph, ride his



**Juneteenth, 2020: Longshore workers shut down Port of Oakland protesting police terror and systemic racism.**

skateboard or be a father to his son. Tyre Nichols is not just another name added to the long list of black men murdered by the police. There is no amount of “reform” in this world that will change the fact that the police originated from catching enslaved Africans. There is no such thing as a “few bad apples” when the roots of the apple tree are rotten. The only solution is to dig up the apple tree and plant a new one.

**Amalia:** The brutal beating and protracted killing of Tyre Nichols is the latest high-profile police murder in a very long history of racist police murders. We are bombarded by horrific stories and images of police violence, incessant wanton killings of black people. Many of these incidents don’t even reach national prominence. Those that do are tacked onto a never-ending list. Why does this racist police terror rage on? Because it is a function of the capitalist system. When people talk about *systemic* racism, it’s important to name that system – it is capitalism. Racial oppression is integral to the functioning of capitalism in the U.S., which was built on the basis of chattel slavery and where capitalism continues today to depend on and continually produce racial oppression. The

role of the police is to uphold and defend that capitalist system.

After seeing, time and again, police officers take the life of a black person and get away with it, people are left asking, how can justice be achieved? It can be easy to feel like it’s impossible to eradicate racism, or to do anything meaningful about this endless police terror. I’m here to say that it’s not impossible. Can we do away with racial oppression? Yes. Can we live in a society where black and Latino kids don’t need to be taught how to interact with the police because it might cost them their life? Yes. But can we achieve this, and more, under the same system that produces this oppression – and the despair that goes with it – in the first place? No. Nor can we rely on the very institutions that prop up and serve this system and the people who profit from it.

The courts, the legislature, the judiciary – these are all tools of the ruling class. The claim that voting for capitalist representatives would curtail the power of the police – we’ve been told this repeatedly, and seen that it’s a total lie. In 2020, we saw and some of us participated in, the largest wave of anti-racist protests in U.S. history, just to be told that voting for Joe Biden was the solution. Where are we now? Each year, since 2020, a new record is reached for the number of people killed by the police. Last year, at least 1,200 people were killed by the police.<sup>1</sup>

So what is needed? All forms of racist oppression must be fought. But just as with anything worth fighting for, this issue ultimately comes down to a question of power. The ruling class would like us to believe that we only have power every four years when we vote for a new imperialist-in-chief. In reality, it is the *working class* that *right now* holds the power to change society. The working class, which makes society run, is the sector of society with the strength and the leverage to do away with police terror, through the needed workers strikes and massive labor upheaval against incidents of racist police violence, pointing toward the

need for a real contest for political power.

There are already some significant examples of labor actions – such as the International Longshore Workers Union port shut-downs in 2008 against imperialist war, in 2010 over the murder of Oscar Grant, and – amid the mass protests over the murder of George Floyd – on Juneteenth 2020 against police brutality and systemic racism.<sup>2</sup> As CUNY students, as the children of the multiracial working class, and some of us as workers ourselves, we have a real role to play in this struggle. We in the Internationalist Club and the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth call for *black liberation through socialist revolution, because only revolution will bring justice.*

**Lydia:** I am sure that we are all here right now because we are angry, and we are tired. We are tired of murders and violence by the police, aimed especially against black and brown people. We are tired of the claims that this would be changed through so-called reforms like body cameras, police accountability committees, and bias training for cops, when time and time again this has proven to be a lie. And as time goes on we hear new name after new name added to the list, over and over, as yet another life is viciously taken by police murder.

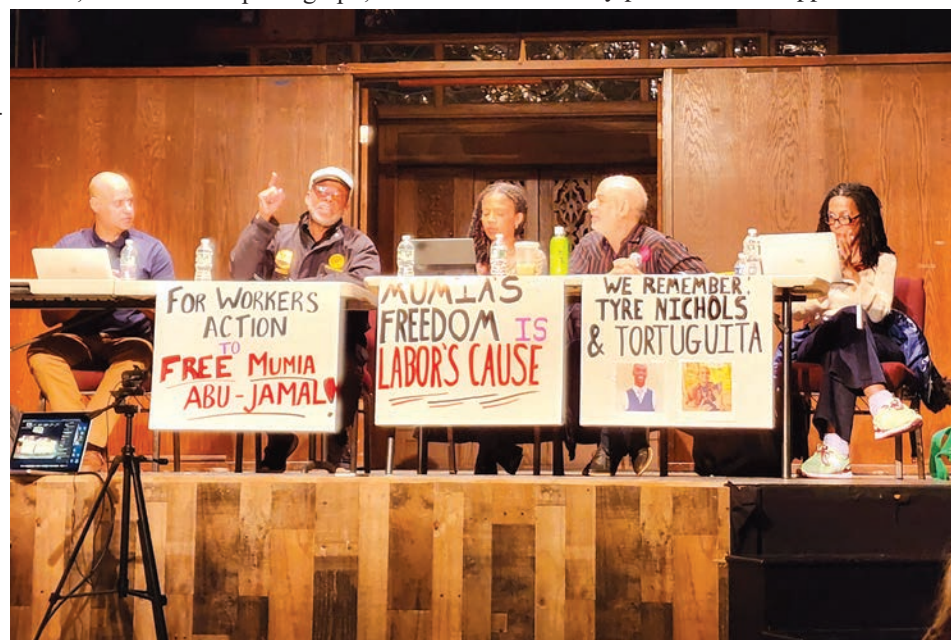
Because that’s what this was, plain and simple. Murder. Not a “confrontation,” as the original statement by the Memphis Police Department on the death of Tyre Nichols called it. This was a murder, committed by a racist police department, in a racist country, living under a racist system. And that system is capitalism. Police are the watchdogs of capitalism. They are the protectors of the ruling class. It is their job to keep working-class, oppressed and marginalized people in line, no matter what specific department the particular police may fall under, whether it’s I.C.E. immigration cops or the Memphis PD, the NYPD, LAPD, or others. And let’s keep in mind that in big cities across the U.S., the bosses of the cops are Democratic mayors.

The brutalization techniques used by police officers on Tyre Nichols and so many others are used by I.C.E. and Border Patrol officers on immigrants and asylum-seekers at the border and around the United States. Just yesterday (January 30) in our city, immigrants and asylum-seekers who have been living at the Watson Hotel on West 57th Street were – and they still are – being forcibly removed and shuttled to what is essentially an enormous holding cell in the Red Hook cruise terminal. The conditions at this terminal are inhumane, to say the least, with some reports of no heat or working restrooms. The people targeted by this NYPD “sweep” were given

*continued on page 20*

<sup>2</sup> See “May Day Strike Against the War Shuts Down All West Coast U.S. Ports,” *The Internationalist* No. 27, May-June 2008; “ILWU Shuts Ports Demanding Justice for Oscar Grant” and “Fruitvale Station and the Fight for Black Freedom,” *Revolution* No. 8, April 2011, and No. 10, October 2013; and “ILWU Shutdown of West Coast Ports Points the Way Forward,” *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-July 2020.

<sup>1</sup> “2022 Police Violence Report,” *Mapping Police Violence Database* (policeviolencereport.org).



**Speakers’ platform, February 16 “Mumia’s Freedom Is Labor’s Cause” NYC teach-in. Free Mumia Abu-Jamal now!**

## From Our International Women's Day Forum

# Women's Liberation, Black Freedom and the Fight for Socialism

The working-class, socialist roots and real meaning of International Women's Day has been a theme of many events and activities of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs since our inception.<sup>1</sup> On March 16, 2023, we held a forum titled "Women's Liberation, Black Freedom and the Fight for Socialism," in a theater at Hunter College that club activists decorated with posters bearing pictures of revolutionary fighters for women's emancipation and black liberation, as well as slogans highlighting aspects of our revolutionary Marxist program.

Over 60 participants in the event heard presentations, accompanied by vivid graphics. These were followed by a lively discussion. Several questions from the audience focused on our program for women's liberation through socialist revolution, and how this differs from the feminist program that serves to subordinate the fight for women's rights to capitalism's overseers in the Democratic Party. Talks included one on the origins and material roots of women's oppression, and presentations by working groups of club members who had carried out research about Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, Rosa Luxemburg and Assata Shakur, as well as the Cuban literacy campaign of 1961.

Below is a presentation given at the forum by Kaitlan Russell, titled "Women's Oppression, Black Oppression and Capitalism: Bound at the Roots," which has been edited for publication.

During tonight's forum in celebration of International Women's Day, many of us have highlighted how women workers are doubly

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, "Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!" *Revolution* No. 16, May 2019.



One of the presentations at March 2023 International Women's Day Forum, Hunter College. Photo on screen shows young Cuban women marching with giant pencils to celebrate revolution's victorious literacy campaign.

oppressed in this society. They are oppressed as workers and as women. For black women, it actually adds up to triple oppression. When we discuss race, racism, women's oppression and sexism, or when we talk about oppression in general, it is often painted to be just like something that hangs over all of us – sort of like the sky. No beginning, no end, just there, all the time. From that standpoint it feels insurmountable, which is probably one reason why some writers, especially in the wake of the mass protests of 2020, have been talking about "black fatigue."

Racial oppression remains pervasive.

In 2021, a year after the COVID pandemic went into full swing here in the United States, statistics were being released on the effect it was having on African American and Latino women. Spoiler: it was crushing. Schools were closed, which created a burdensome situation for women. And if it's crushing for the population at large, then, given double and triple oppression, it is even more so for black, Latino, and immigrant women. Schools being closed meant kids were at home – and many black women don't have jobs that allow them to "work from home."

Black people's unemployment rate

reached 16.6 percent in May 2020 – according to the official figures, which systematically undercount unemployment. (In terms of job losses at the height of the pandemic, the Latino population was hit even harder.) What about "normal" times? Here the special oppression of black people means that the "typical" ratio of black to white unemployment is 2 to 1. This trend of black unemployment being double that of white unemployment has been shown to be the norm since 1954.<sup>2</sup> Official unemployment rates for black women are lower than for black men – but the triple oppression of black women workers is manifested not only on the job but in child-rearing, household drudgery, discrimination, medical care and sexist treatment of all kinds.

Let's look at health. Last year, a study of the pandemic's effects on black women found that over half stated that it had negatively affected their mental health, increasing anxiety over job insecurity,

<sup>2</sup> *New York Times*, 19 July 2021. Also see Center for American Progress, "The Persistent Black-White Employment Gap Is Built Into the Labor Market," 28 September 2020, and Brookings, "Historical Unemployment for Black Women and Men in the United States: 1954-2021," 13 February 2023.

bills, personal and family health. Household chores increased, and one in four reported being caregivers for sick or disabled family members. Of the black women surveyed who reported having negative mental health outcomes because of the pandemic, 73% did not seek treatment from a mental health professional. Of them, 41% said treatment was too expensive, too difficult to access, or that they did not have time to pursue it.<sup>3</sup>

The study noted a broader aspect: that many black women were and are affected by discrimination in healthcare – and this means fear. Fear of a "tendency for their concerns not to be taken seriously." This fear is very real, thanks to the long history of racism in the U.S. medical system. A study from 2016 found that as many as half first- and second-year medical students believed that black people have "thicker skin" and felt less pain than whites. In many cases this leads to inadequate treatment recommendations for black patients' pain. A 2019 study found that black patients were 40% less likely to be given medication for acute pain than whites.<sup>4</sup> Although "race" has been proven to have no biological basis, a patient's skin tone can still determine their likelihood to – for example – receive a life-saving kidney transplant, be diagnosed with respiratory illness or get proper treatment for a urinary tract infection.

Meanwhile there's the ever-present menace of racist police murder, which takes the lives of black women too, though this generally gets less media attention. It doesn't end there. The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* has emboldened and pushed through racist abortion bans in many parts of the country. But even prior to this, many black and Latino women were unable to


<sup>3</sup> National Women's Law Center, "Resilient but Not Recovered: Black Women in the COVID-19 Pandemic," 31 March 2022.

<sup>4</sup> "You Are Not Listening to Me," *Today*, 27 July 2020.

**INTERNATIONALIST CLUB  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY FORUM**

**WOMEN'S LIBERATION, BLACK FREEDOM  
AND THE FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM**

**MARCH 16  
6:00 P.M.  
LANG RECITAL HALL  
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HUNTER NORTH  
BUILDING)**



Above: "My role has been important in the struggle to organize the unorganized." Elizabeth Cartlett, 1947

Join us on March 16 at 6:00 P.M. for presentations and discussion on:


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## How to Understand the Roots of Oppression?

When we are taught about oppression, or when oppression is spoken about, it's usually as a matter of ideas – the way people think about things. Of course, we must examine ideas, and formulate our own about how to understand oppression. But do black oppression and women's oppression fundamentally *come from* ideas, or does material oppression as part of the workings of society give rise to ideas that “explain” it, in ways that justify it?

This intersects two predominant approaches to the issues of black oppression and women's oppression: privilege theory and feminism. I am going to talk a little about both. And here the materialist conception of history and society upheld by Marxists conflicts head-on with the idealist conceptions (that what's in people's heads is the root cause of social structures and relations) put forward by liberals and bourgeois ideology in general.

Many people are under the impression (and quite a few are taught in college) that the origin of racial oppression is in what's called “white supremacy.” In other words, the origin of racial oppression is in ... race? Quite a few liberal historians argue “as though the chief business of slavery were the production of white supremacy rather than the production of cotton, sugar, rice,” tobacco and other crops for money, as Barbara J. Fields points out in her famous polemical essay “Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America” (1990). Why do you think they're called “cash crops”?

It was the material realities of the slave plantation system, and the class interests of its rulers, that gave rise to the ideology of race and racism in the U.S. Today, the ideology of race and racism continue to be reproduced every day in capitalist America. This is not because of some timeless disembodied power of “white supremacy,” but because the material realities of unending social inequalities and stark racial oppression in this capitalist society continue to generate and reproduce this ideology.

I personally have heard many times that slavery existed for the purpose of perpetuating white supremacy. When this is said, it usually does *not* refer to the rule of the slavocracy, the Confederacy or the terror of the hooded white-supremacists of the Ku Klux Klan – but rather a society dominated by an undifferentiated mass of white people. Yet “white Americans” in general did not impose slavery; the planters did, while merchants and bankers shared in the profits (until divisions between them and the slavocracy finally broke out in the Civil War).

The rulers of the U.S. today are not white people in general, but the owners of capital and their politicians. “White supremacy” is a term now used by many, including on the left, to depict a political and global system where white people is the category of those holding the power and resources. For Marxists, power is held by the ruling class, since it is the

<sup>5</sup> See “Free Abortion on Demand: How Revolutionaries Fight for It,” *Revolution* No. 19, September 2022.

capitalists who own the means of production and extract profit from workers. Obviously racial oppression means that black people overall have less, are subject to special oppression as a “race” that capitalism has kept at the bottom; and that for the multiracial U.S. working class to free itself, it must be won to using its power against black oppression. *Against* this understanding, the framework of “white supremacy” treats all white people as a monolith with fundamentally common interests, while in reality they are divided by class.

## A Word on “Privilege Theory”

What about privilege? Many young people who have absorbed privilege theory would like to understand the racist society we live in, and to do something about it – but in reality this liberal/guilt-trip outlook stands in the way of a real fight to *uproot racial oppression*. In a society like this, in which racism is a central characteristic, in a whole series of ways black people find themselves being treated worse. Privilege theory equates that not with oppression but with privilege. In other words, that it's not a question of black people being denied and excluded from rights deemed normal for the majority, but that having those rights is a “privilege.”

Thus, privilege theory perpetuates the idea that racism is actually a good thing for most people – in a society where black people are a minority. It says that racism benefits white people *per se* and therefore they need to make a display of “checking their privilege,” give things up and actually live worse. In other words, that black freedom and equality would come at the expense of most white people – which is exactly what the racists claim. So does racism benefit anyone? *Yes*: it benefits the capitalist ruling class. We fight racial oppression every day. But to win that fight we have to defeat, overthrow and expropriate that racist ruling class, uprooting its system of exploitation and inequality, to pave the way to a socialist society here and around the world.

Thus as Marxists, we want to demystify racism, demystify how it began and rooted itself in a society based on class inequality. We're referred to as radicals, and we are – because we want to get to the root of all the things we and so many others oppose in this society. We situate racism in its historical and present interconnections with capitalism. Our analysis explains how class society is at the root of all manner of social oppression.

Sometimes, Marxists are accused of “reducing” everything to class. It's not that race, gender, sexuality, etc. are frivolous “extras” that revolutionaries think people pay too much attention to. Nor do we subscribe to “color-blind” rhetoric. That's not our conception; to the contrary, it is typical of social-democratic and liberal opponents of revolutionary Marxism. (Bernie Sanders and the stereotypical Bernie bros come to mind.) Since we question, critique and show what's wrong with “discourses” like privilege theory or feminism, some people imagine that we are denying black oppression or women's oppression. To the contrary, Marxists are *emphasizing* black oppression, the special, specific, double oppression – or in the case of black women, triple oppression – arising from the history and the very construction of this society.

This oppression is continually reestablished and reconstructed through the innate functioning of this capitalist society. We expose how ideology, language and culture arise out of this functioning, to mask, “naturalize” and reinforce the real relations of class domination and racism. At the same time, Marxists have always exposed the ways in which history is told, who's in those stories, and how who's being glorified and erased matters, especially when books are being banned in whole swathes of this country. With the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow segregation, virtually every struggle to defend democratic rights requires fighting against the embedded racist ideology that justifies the segregation of black people at the bottom of the socioeconomic order. Unlike proponents of identity politics or other aspects of liberalism, we put forward a revolutionary program – the program of revolutionary integrationism, for *black liberation through socialist revolution* – that addresses the structural racism embedded in capitalism.

## Women's Liberation – or Feminism?

I want to talk briefly about feminism. First, I want to say that the fight for women's liberation – a call you see all around this room on our posters, as we are serious about carrying it through to victory – is not the same thing as feminism. Feminism is often defined simply as the desire for the political, economic and social equality of the sexes. Equality between men and women, isn't that the goal? Yes. Here's the problem: feminism pursues equality fundamentally on the basis of the existing class society. And it sees the sex/gender line as fundamental, in opposition to the class line. Thus its classic modern proponents proclaimed the “sisterhood” of exploiters and exploited. It is a bourgeois ideology.

Feminism explains women's oppression as something basically caused by sexist and misogynist *ideas* imposed by men; and that the fight for equality is in essence a fight against those ideas. Of course, as partisans of women's liberation, Marxists fight every day against male-chauvinist ideas and all manifestations of oppression. But to win that fight requires uprooting their *material* basis. Feminism does not provide such a materialist explanation of the oppression of women, let alone a real program for uprooting it.

What is this “material basis”? At the most basic level it's the nuclear family. As the previous speaker explained, the rise of class society was intertwined with the subjugation of women in the family (as emphasized by Friedrich Engels in *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* [1884]). The modern institution of the “nuclear family,” a social unit consisting of a couple and their kids, consolidated as capitalist development led to more concentration of wealth, which would be passed on through the familial line to a man's children. Meanwhile, the nuclear family is where the next generation of laborers are reproduced, brought up and trained to obey the rules of the existing society. This building block of capitalist society is the keystone of women's oppression. Enforcing and policing the boundaries of the nuclear family is also the basis of the oppression of gay, lesbian and trans

people, who are branded as going against the traditional oppressive norms of this oppressive structure.

Since its inception, Marxism has emphasized that achieving women's emancipation is integral to the fight against class exploitation and the building of a socialist society. But there's no way to replace the nuclear family in a society based on profit, based on exploitation. To do this requires the widespread establishment of collective, social institutions to replace and do away with women's subjugation and imprisonment in the bourgeois family's domestic drudgery, child-rearing, etc. To open the way to this requires a socialist revolution.<sup>6</sup>

Feminism doesn't explain women's oppression, or what to do about it, in this way. Some feminists will recognize the nuclear family as something that oppresses women, but the connection to capitalism is vague or absent altogether. It's not seen as something that is irremovable from the economic system we live in, but sometimes explained as simply created by men. We need to uproot the system whose very structure (supplemented by its ideologues and apologists) generates and uses ideologies like sexism/male chauvinism to justify the oppression of women. But for feminism, it's fundamentally changing how men *think* of women, or how women think of themselves, that will truly create equality. Meanwhile, for the dominant brands of feminism, it boils down to having more “representation,” more women in the ruling class! According to this, we're supposed to be “sisters” of the likes of Hillary, Kamala and AOC. We're not.

Today, different brands of feminism are available: intersectional feminism, “socialist feminism,” etc. – which claim to make up for mainstream feminism's record regarding African American, Latino, immigrant, indigenous and other doubly-oppressed women; feminist icon Betty Friedan's efforts to exclude lesbians and trans women, etc. Yet the attempted new branding or formulations share feminism's same basic premises, and the reality that feminism is not rooted in a materialist analysis of society. It does not get to the root, or at best misunderstands the root, of women's oppression. Given its premises and program, it can't get to the bottom of where sexist ideas come from, and why they *never seem to go away*, as they come from the reality of material oppression and are necessary to the capitalist order.

What much of this comes down to is the distinction between materialism and idealism. Black workers, including black women workers, work in some of the most dangerous and underpaid sectors of labor. Their oppression is palpable, but these sectors are also a huge source of power. That power needs to be unchained, unchained from capitalist parties – and from these idealist “discourses” that never get to the root of oppression nor how to do away with it. There are many people out there who are serious in their desire to fight for the liberation of women and black people. We want to win them over to the fight for socialism, the fight for the liberation of all oppressed people. We want women's *liberation*, we want black *liberation*, it's about time. ■

<sup>6</sup> See the Internationalist pamphlet *Marxism and Women's Liberation* (2017).

## Solitary, Shackles and Triple-Digit Heat

# Kids Held at Angola Penitentiary, Symbol of Racist Barbarity

By Joseph

The Louisiana State Penitentiary, known as Angola, is the largest maximum-security prison in the United States. Occupying 28 square miles, it is bigger than the island of Manhattan. Built over the site of a massive former slave plantation, for almost a century and a half Angola prison has been a dreaded symbol of racist cruelty and terror. Today, it houses the state's execution chamber, over 5,000 adult prisoners – and “children in the custody of Louisiana's Office of Juvenile Justice” (cnn.com, 20 July).

The minors incarcerated at Angola are held in an old death row building. When they arrive, they are placed in “routine” solitary confinement for 72 hours. Subjected to shackling, handcuffing and other punishments, and sometimes returned to solitary, they are imprisoned in windowless units in 100+ degree temperatures. The barred cells have “only a metal bed and metal toilet/sink, unclean faucets and no drinkable water source,” according to an emergency filing (17 July) in *Alex A. v. Edwards*. This is an ongoing lawsuit on the imprisoned youths' behalf, against Governor John Bel Edwards and officials of Louisiana's “corrections” and juvenile “justice” departments.

As we go to press, the number of minors imprisoned at Angola, and their ages, is hard to ascertain. However, a summary of the court filing reports that “since October 2022 when the state transferred the first group of children to Angola, the state estimates they've sent 70-80 children there,” for periods of four to eight weeks, sometimes repeatedly (aclu.org, 18 July). The “vast majority,” it states, are black boys. In terms of Angola's adult prisoner population, 74 percent are black – and all of them are assigned to work the prison's field crops, such as cotton, soybeans and sugarcane, when they arrive.<sup>1</sup>

### From Slavery to Jim Crow “Justice”

Angola's direct link with chattel slavery embodies the fact that racial oppression is indeed systemic – and the system is capitalism. This underscores a central part of the Internationalist program: the burning urgency of the fight to break the chains of black oppression, through socialist revolution. In this fight, the need for a multiracial workers party is clear. When you hear Democratic politicians claim to stand for “justice” – remember Angola prison in the state of Louisiana, whose Gov. Edwards and fellow state criminals are Democrats. When you study the American injustice system – remember that Joe Biden, key man for Bill Clinton's notorious 1994 “crime bill,” is known as the godfather of mass incarceration. There is much to remember when we learn about Angola.

<sup>1</sup> *Captive Labor*, University of Chicago Law School (2022). Also see the chilling description and photos of the prison in “History of the State Penitentiary,” [angolamuseum.org](http://angolamuseum.org).



“Convicts building a levee,” 1901 photo from collection of Louisiana prison labor photos.

Louisiana's State Penitentiary was originally located in Baton Rouge. After the Civil War, despite the defeat of the slave owners' “Confederacy,” the penitentiary, and its inmates, were leased to a former Confederate major named Samuel James. He subleased some convicts to landowners, while others were assigned to railroad and levee construction. In 1880 he purchased Angola plantation and moved some of the convicts there (angolamuseum.org). Louisiana formally banned convict leasing in 1898, but Angola's prison farm, terrifying cellblocks, sadistic punishments and lethal injections (which in 1991 replaced its electric chair) have been known far and wide as emblems of America's prison barbarism.<sup>2</sup>

The penitentiary's legacy of racist terror is encapsulated by the case of the Angola Three. For starting a chapter of the Black Panther Party within the prison walls in 1971, Robert King, Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox spent decades in solitary confinement. Woodfox, who died last year of COVID, spent over 43 years “inside a 6-by-9-foot cell for 23 hours per day, enduring claustrophobia, gassings, beatings and other forms of torture.” “I spent a lot of time reading, writing – self-education,” he recalled. In addition to teaching himself civil and criminal law, he taught others how to read and write (NPR, 5 August 2022). Herman Wallace died three days after he was released from Angola in 2013, having spent 41 years in solitary. Robert King, who was in solitary for 29 years, was released in 2001; 81 years old, he is the only surviving member of the Angola Three.

While Louisiana's Angola prison has long been widely known for its horrors, and referred to in countless songs, memoirs, novels and films, the state's incarceration centers specifically designated for youth have largely escaped national attention. Hundreds are held in them, among

<sup>2</sup> “Jim Crow Justice and the Capitalist State,” [internationalist.com](http://internationalist.com), February 2016; and “The Emancipation Proclamation: Promise and Betrayal,” *The Internationalist* No. 34, March-April 2013.

them the minors transferred to Angola. The initial two dozen teens were sent there from the Bridge City Center, a former convent that was transformed into a youth prison. The background to that transfer was that half a dozen youth had escaped from Bridge City, and 20 had purportedly tried to take over parts of the building.

Horrible conditions at the state's youth jails caused repeated local scandals such as the one that broke out over the Jetson Center for Youth in Baker, Louisiana, which led to its closing in 2014. One teenager who testified that he was beaten repeatedly stated: “You feel hopeless and helpless every minute you're in there. You know no one is going to help you” (Baton Rouge *Advocate*, 20 July 2022). Last year, the state government announced plans to reopen Jetson.

### Angola Prison, Racist Hellhole Close It Down Now!

It was in July 2022 that Democratic governor Edwards announced plans to move youth from the Bridge City juvenile facility to Angola. Half a million dollars were put into preparing the “facility” for the transfer. A motion for a restraining order against the move stated that the mother of lawsuit plaintiff “Alex A.” was “terrified that her son will be locked in a windowless cell for 24 hours a day” and exposed to other dangers. Who denied the motion and cleared the way for the youths' transfer to Angola? A federal judge appointed by Barack Obama. Chief U.S. district judge Shelly Dick gave the green light, even as she stated that “locking children in cells at night at Angola is untenable” and would “likely cause psychological trauma and harm.”

Like so much else about the system of racist repression, the crimes of the state against black youth in Louisiana are bipartisan. Republican state senator Patrick Connick (a prominent local proponent of anti-abortion and anti-trans bigotry) hailed the transfer to Angola of the youth from the Bridge City juvenile center, calling them “the worst of the worst.” “The

facility at Angola is up and running. The Governor and his team did a great job,” he proclaimed. “It's a good thing that this is taking place” (Louisiana Radio Network, 18 October 2022).

During nationwide anti-racist protests in 2020, some Democratic politicians sought to score points and win votes by calling to “defund” the police, by which they meant cosmetically moving funds around a bit. That's old news in '23: overwhelmingly they call for more cops, more prisons, more funding. In March, highlighting his decades-long pro-cop and -prison record, President Biden accused Republican critics of his budget of being the ones trying to “defund” the cops. And Bernie Sanders? He was up-front when he proclaimed: “I never called for the defunding of the police” (*Business Insider*, 13 June 2022). After all, for Sanders police forces are supposedly public services and thereby part of “democratic socialism” (i.e., Democratic Party bourgeois politics counterposed to actual socialism).

The cops and jails are central parts of the capitalist state, whose purpose is to defend the property and class rule of the bourgeoisie. Racist repression is indeed systemic to capitalism in the U.S., which grew on the basis of chattel slavery and genocide against indigenous peoples, coining profit ever since from exploitation and massive inequality. The police and prisons cannot be “reformed” or “defunded” away. The capitalist state must be smashed in a socialist revolution and replaced by a workers state, opening the way here and internationally to a classless and stateless communist society.

As part of the *Alex A. v. Edwards* lawsuit demanding that minors sent to Angola prison be moved away from there, and that all such transfers to Angola stop, declarations were filed by two of the incarcerated youth. In one, 17-year-old “Charles C.” states:

“When I first got here they locked me in my cell for 3 days. I have seen other kids locked in their cells for several days and even up to weeks for minor infractions and incidents with the guards....

“My cell is incredibly small and I have no room to move. I can't drink the water out of the faucet because it has a color, tastes bad, and would make me sick. I worry about my mental health because I'm forced to be in these cells....

“We are only let out of our cells an hour or so a day in the yard. The yard is covered with barbed wire and a black tarp.... Before I came here, staff always threatened me that if I was bad I would be sent here.

“I want to get out of here.”

Angola prison, infamous symbol of capitalist America's racist repression, **must be shut down, now!** The struggle to sweep away the whole apparatus of racist oppression is a fight for **black liberation through socialist revolution.** ■

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# Cop City...

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we've sent in letters, and all we've been responded with is force." Noting that solidarity actions have been held around the U.S. and in other countries, the network reports, "Johnson says that is proof that people are desperate for change as news of police violence consistently makes headlines." However, Johnson said: "People haven't seen anything change."

## "A War for the Future of Urban America"

That is how an extensive article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (22 June), laying bare much of the back story to Cop City, characterizes the events unfolding in Atlanta over the past years. It notes that for Atlanta's "civic leaders," Cop City "is less a construction project and more of an in-your-face mission statement – that 2020's protests were a moment of temporary insanity [sic] and that an aggressive public safety regime" is required by local and national elites.

It is not coincidental that Atlanta is the site for this salvo in the class war. The case of Cop City exemplifies the deep roots of systemic racial oppression and police terror in capitalist America. The expansion of cotton plantations in the early 1800s was a driving force for the brutal expulsion of the Muscogee ("Creek") indigenous people who lived in the Weelaunee River area, i.e., the South River zone where construction of Cop City is now underway. This was part of the murderous "Indian removal" and forced marches, known as the Trail of Tears, ordered by slaveowner president Andrew Jackson, a key figure in the rise of the Democratic Party, against the Creek, Cherokee and other Native peoples. The area was partly used for slave plantations and subsequently, in the Jim Crow era, a dairy farm was built there.

In 1918, the superintendent of prisons was put in charge of the farm, becoming notorious for whipping incarcerated women there. In 1922 it formally became the Atlanta Prison Farm, a grim location of forced labor, slavery-like conditions and racist torture that produced food for other area prisons. The prison farm would remain in operation through the civil rights era (in 1967 Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee leader Stokely Carmichael was briefly held there) up until 1999. Under Atlanta-born Martin Luther King and other mainstream civil rights leaders, the Southern system of *de jure* segregation (Jim Crow), having become a liability for the U.S. during the Cold War, was broken down – while the bedrock of racial oppression integral to American capitalism nationwide remained.

In the Atlanta area in the wake of the civil rights movement, a significant African American middle and upper-middle class arose. While economic power is dominated by huge corporations like those backing Cop City (and the capitalist ruling class in the U.S. remains overwhelmingly white), Atlanta has been named the "No. 1 hub" for black-owned businesses in the U.S. (Atlanta News First, 13 February). This includes a number of banks as well as H.J. Russell & Co., one of the largest black-owned construction and real-estate development firms in the country. The city is also emblematic of how, after the upheavals of the 1960s, the racist ruling class thought it prudent to allow "black faces in high places" to help administer the U.S.

capitalist plantation.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, "Atlanta has the highest income inequality in the nation," headlined the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (28 November 2022), referring to census data on large U.S. cities, while the official poverty rate for the city's African American population is well over twice the figure for whites.

The in-depth *Philadelphia Inquirer* article on Cop City that we have cited above quotes a local community activist:

"The nice way of saying it is that Atlanta is a public-private partnership city.... The realistic way of saying it is that elite, white-led corporations working with black political leadership run the city in the service of the rich and powerful, and at the expense of working-class and black communities."

**It will take a socialist revolution to open the way for black freedom.** In Atlanta as well as across the country, racist American capitalism has an Achilles heel: the multiracial working class, with African American workers occupying a strategically powerful place in transport, communications and other key sectors. On Juneteenth (June 19), 2020, amidst the nationwide protests after the murder of George Floyd, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union shut down West Coast ports against police brutality and systemic racism. As a militant ILWU activist stated at an Oakland, California rally during the shutdown: "In the cities of this country, all of the transit is run by majority black and brown workers. They have a stake in this fight. We can shut the whole damn country down," he stated, adding: "We need a revolution."<sup>6</sup> In Atlanta, workers at companies like UPS, AT&T, Delta and many others have enormous potential power.

There are many groups that have responded to the drive to build Cop City, some focusing on fending off damage to the South River Forest ecosystem, while others underline the racist character of the project to build an enormous, menacing police facility in a predominantly African American part of DeKalb County. A number of groups take a "not-in-my-backyard" stance, proposing that the "training center" be built elsewhere and/or emphasizing that they don't want "our tax dollars" to be spent on it. A local organizer featured in NBC News' "The Fight Over 'Cop City'" (27 July), Rev. Keyanna Jones, says the project's location was chosen due to "environmental racism, racialized capitalism" and the fact that since the site is in an unincorporated area formally outside Atlanta's city limits, residents "cannot vote against it." Shown leading chants that "Cop City will never be built," she states: "We don't want Cop City here and we don't want it anywhere."

The nationwide implications of the drive to build Cop City are sinister indeed. As *The Internationalist* (No. 69-70, Janu-

<sup>5</sup> This leads to some notable local examples of the "interlocking" of capitalist business and political personnel that V.I. Lenin discussed in his classic *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916). Take, for example, the fact that Derek Bottoms, husband of Atlanta's former mayor (and subsequent senior advisor to Pres. Biden), is a VP of, and the Chief Diversity Officer of, Home Depot, another of whose vice presidents is on the board of the Atlanta Police Foundation (APF) that promotes Cop City in "private-public partnership" with the city government. The Home Depot Foundation, plus the family foundation of the company's co-founder, are also donors to the APF (*In These Times*, 8 June).

<sup>6</sup> "ILWU Shutdown of West Coast Ports Points the Way Forward," *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-July 2020.

ary-May 2023) noted after the murder of Tortugueta, the APF is "one of many corporate 'police foundations' founded in recent years to promote direct capitalist control of the police." This goes back to 1971, when the New York City Police Foundation was created after a city investigation of police corruption (sparked by revelations depicted in the 1973 film *Serpico*). In the old days, "business owners paid off the cop on the beat in a Mafia-style protection racket." Now banks, real-estate and other business titans funnel millions to police departments, part of the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state whose function is to defend the class rule, property and profits of the capitalist class.

When mass protests and urban upheavals against racist oppression and the Vietnam war broke out in the 1960s, the U.S. Army built a number of simulated cities, known as "Riotsvilles," for troops and police to practice repression against "civil unrest."<sup>7</sup> In 2020, mass protests against racist cop terror led both Democratic and Republican national, state and local administrations to intensify measures long underway to rev up urban counterinsurgency. Atlanta's Cop City is a weapon in the capitalist rulers' class war against the workers and oppressed.

On June 3, UE (United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America) released a statement titled "Repression of Atlanta Protesters a Threat to All Working People," in which the union's national officers condemn the violent police attacks, including the murder of Tortugueta, as well as the charges of "domestic terrorism" and other measures against those opposing Cop City. Denouncing as a "chilling development" the arrest of the Atlanta Solidarity Fund organizers for helping raise bail for protesters against Cop City, they state: "This attack is reminiscent of the federal government's prosecution of a similar bail fund run by the Civil Rights Congress in the 1950s to defend those who, like many UE leaders, were charged with the thought-crime of 'communism' during the McCarthy era."

The UE declaration follows an earlier statement by the president of the Interna-

<sup>7</sup> See "Riotsville, USA: the shocking story of fake army towns that militarised police," *The Guardian*, 21 September 2022, reviewing a documentary film on this topic.

tional Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) declaring that "as a construction trades union representing over 100,000 workers across the United States, including across the Atlanta metro region, we are saddened to see rapid escalation of force towards protesters of the 'Cop City' construction project." Noting that IUPAT supported anti-racist protests in 2020, he states that "today we stand in solidarity with the protesters in Atlanta" facing violence from the police, ending: "It has to stop. Our rights as working people must be upheld and we deserve to live in a society free from police violence." Organizers for Home Depot Workers United, which seeks to unionize the retail giant, have also spoken out against police repression directed at opponents of Cop City.

Statements in defense of the Atlanta protesters by leaders of two important unions are noteworthy – but bringing out workers' power against police repression is most crucially needed. The UE statement notes the importance of opposing attacks on basic rights "at a time when workers across the country are increasingly willing to strike and use other militant tactics...." But while some labor actions such as West Coast longshore shutdowns have indicated the potential for *workers strikes against racist cop terror*, the fight to bring this to fruition means fighting for class-struggle leadership. In other words, it is inseparable from the fight for workers and the oppressed to break from the Democrats and build a revolutionary workers party.

The recent NBC News report on "The Fight Over 'Cop City'" intersperses scenes of protesters chanting "Viva Tortugueta" with an interview with Belkis Terán, mother of the slain activist, whose murder by the police she quietly and accurately characterizes as "a horrible crime." After spreading Tortugueta's ashes in the forest, she says, "I took the torch to continue."

As we remember Tortugueta, Tyre Nichols, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and so many others cut down by capitalism's unending racist terror, the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth says: **Drop all charges against the Atlanta protesters and their supporters! Stop Cop City – for workers action against racist police terror! Only revolution can bring justice!** ■

### Order Now!

The racist police murder of George Floyd brought millions into the streets in 2020. Revolutionary Internationalist Youth intervened with a class-struggle program, laid out in the pages of our publication. Our August 2020 issue (*Revolution* No. 17) features articles on black liberation through socialist revolution, slavery and the U.S. Constitution, why Bernie Sanders' "political revolution" was a scam, and much more.

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Joe H.

Like many kids I knew growing up, the imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan sparked in me a deep suspicion of capitalism, something that I didn't yet know how to explore. My thinking about capitalism and its endless wars grew under the impact of the Occupy Wall Street movement and its populist theory that bourgeois democracy had been corrupted by the "1%" and could be reclaimed "for the 99%" through "direct action" and political reform. When in the summer of 2014, the police murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri sparked mass protests, my readings hardened the conviction that police murder and mass incarceration were related to a broader system of exploitation and racial oppression. Thanks to two history teachers in my high school, I saw the protests as part of a long history of resistance to racism and capitalism, one they encouraged me to take part in.

In 2018, I was arrested at a protest after the police murder of Stephon Clarke. After that I became more tied to radical environmental groups within the city. My brother and two neighbors, who had helped me get out of jail, introduced me to circles of "ecosocialists," anarchists, and populists connected to different left and climate groups in the city. In 2019, I took part in a "die-in" to bring greater media attention to the climate crisis. While lying on the ground waiting to be arrested and doing "masculinity workshops" in jail with my fellow "extinction rebels," it became clear that neither "civil disobedience" nor pressuring the bourgeois media could do anything to slow that crisis of capitalism. We were literally patting each other on the back, self-congratulating. I wondered, for what?

At my first college, while participating in events for the "democratization" of the university, I went to an International Marxist Tendency meeting. While I was impressed by their apparent seriousness, I didn't see them provide any political program to be put into practice. While they denounced the Democrats, and even the DSA, they couldn't explain to me a way to tie struggles at the school to the historic struggle of the working class to overthrow capitalism.

In 2020 I transferred to CUNY, where I thought I would be more able to answer my questions about social power and revolution. When millions of protesters came out following the police murder of George Floyd, I thought that the burnt police station in Minneapolis would mean ever-increasing actions by masses of people in every city. My excitement, however, was quickly disappointed as the protests began to change. Given the lack of revolutionary leadership, a hole seemed to burn through the resolve of the youth as many were brutalized, penned and arrested by the police. Revolutionary propaganda was scarce, while liberal infographics and leaders called to vote for Democrats and hold them "accountable." Meanwhile, corporations and celebrities rebranded and apologized for one thing or another. My hope that the protests could somehow scale into a revolution was diminished.

I drifted towards a Maoist organization operating "serve the people programs" near my neighborhood and became a member of a "mass organization" of the New African Black Panther Party

[a group with little to no relation to the original Black Panther Party formed in 1966]. Later renamed the Revolutionary Intercommunal Black Panther Party (RIBPP), after a split, the RIBPP held that conditions of neoliberalism had dispossessed workers to the point where the unemployed and lumpenproletariat would serve as the new base of a social revolution. Its associated organizations were to supposedly build "parallel institutions" that would somehow submerge capitalism. Additionally, the group was structured around its view of the world as being composed fundamentally of different racial "masses," who would have to engage in struggle separately, in "their own communities." Within this view, the role of the "white masses" (and white revolutionaries) was unique, as they were not supposed to engage in class struggle head-on but instead support it from a distance, essentially relegated to changing their own "worldview."

When in-person classes resumed at Hunter, I was drawn to the Internationalist Club by its flyering and its ardent and vocal advocacy of the socialist program. What stood out to me was the historical depth of the Internationalist Club's political analysis. While I had read some Marx, I had little sense of the history of the Marxist movement and now had to confront the actual history of Maoism. It had only given me dogma, while the Internationalists offered a program for mobilizing and organizing the workers of the world to overthrow the bourgeoisie of every country. This included showing how this program was forged through the Bolshevik Revolution, and Trotsky's struggle against its Stalinist degeneration.

In contrast to the Maoists' simple expectation that I agree to their minimalist 10-Point Program, I learned about the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth (RIY) which seeks to actually help develop professional revolutionaries. It became clear that Maoists cannot reconcile with their own history and positions, and so actively forget them. They claim China somehow went from being a "socialist state" to being a "social-imperialist," capitalist power that they essentially equate to U.S. imperialism and its NATO allies. In the Maoist group's "serve the people" programs we would bring canned goods and questions to street corners, promising to return with a supposed class analysis, while the nature of social power and social revolution were mystified. The organization's Maoist politics were hidden behind the minimalist "survival program" we handed out. Even after I became a member, I could not understand how these "serve the people" programs built "people's power," what "people's power" was, or how these handouts would help in overthrowing capitalism.

The RIY, on the other hand, was straightforward, emphasizing revolutionaries' tasks of helping to break the working class from bourgeois parties and to build a revolutionary workers party as part of a reformed Fourth International. Of all the groups I've known on the left, only the Internationalist Group/Revolutionary Internationalist Youth has a clear concept of what a socialist revolution is and what it demands of revolutionaries. Thus, it has so compellingly won me over to its Trotskyist program of proletarian internationalism. ■

## Witch Hunt...

*continued from page 4*

leashing massive police violence against its Jewish critics' large-scale protests against his overhaul of the judicial system. As even the *Washington Post* (26 February 2018) has noted, "Netanyahu enables anti-Semitism" as his government "make[s] common cause with [Steve] Bannon ... Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban" and other ultra-rightist and anti-Semitic demagogues. At the same time, Israel's government massively funds campaigns to smear as anti-Semitic those at U.S. universities who criticize it or stand up for Palestinian rights.

As the American Civil Liberties Union already noted five years ago, "On college campuses, a growing number of students and teachers have been disciplined or threatened with discipline for engaging in actions in support of Palestinian rights or in opposition to Israeli policies" (ACLU, "The Latest Attack on Free Speech in the Israel-Palestine Debate," 5 June 2018). Like his Republican predecessor Donald Trump, Democratic president Joe Biden is all in for the crusade to stigmatize and silence those who speak out against the repression and racism built into the foundations of the Israeli state. It's a bipartisan commitment by the U.S. imperialist government. This May, the *Post's* hit piece brought out a parade of bourgeois politicians showcasing their support for Israeli repression, many of whom featured in previous witch hunts (see below).

Democrats and Republicans vied to see who could hurl the most vitriol against the young Yemeni American speaker from CUNY Law. With CUNY branded for the *n*th time as a nest of leftist "lunatics" (as one of the many follow-up articles in the tabloid press put it), enemies of public education – especially for students from working-class, minority and immigrant families – ramped up calls for it to be defunded ... even more than it is already. From Bronx Democratic congressman Ritchie Torres to Brooklyn Republican city councilwoman Inna Vernikov, Dov Hikins (formerly of the fascistic "Jewish Defense League" terror group), to state assembly members and wannabe governor Lee Zeldin, they joined the hue and cry. Down in abortion-banning Texas, Ted Cruz got into the act, doubtless seeking airtime amidst all the play his fellow bigot Ron DeSantis has been getting. Avid

to join the pack trying to intimidate, bully and silence us as CUNY students, they united with the mayor, right-wing tabloid press, a columnist for the liberal *Nation* ... and the CUNY administration.

Against this onslaught, a number of groups came out in defense of Fatima. In addition to CUNY Law's own Jewish Law Students Association and student government, many other student groups there did so, together with faculty. The Professional Staff Congress (PSC – the CUNY faculty/staff union) called on the trustees to retract their statement calling the commencement remarks "hate speech." It is good that the union called for a retraction. But, frightened by blowback against the resolution in defense of the Palestinian people that the PSC's Delegate Assembly passed in 2021, the union's leaders did not call the CUNY Board's statement what it is: a dangerous slander emboldening bigotry, censorship and repression. Instead, the issue was framed in a narrow and tepid way in a brief declaration titled "PSC Response to CUNY Board of Trustees' Overbroad Description of Hate Speech" (12 June).

Faced with slanders, threats (including death threats) and a blatant attempt to intimidate her by university and political bigwigs, Fatima did not back down. In a sympathetic interview, *Jewish Currents* (21 June), a left-leaning journal published since the 1940s, asked if, having experienced the blowback, she "would give the same speech again." Her response: "I would not change a single word of my speech – and I would say it louder."

For our part, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth stand forthrightly in defense of Fatima Mohammed, the CUNY student she was chosen to represent, and the right of students here and elsewhere to speak out against racism and repression. What about the powers-that-be, who from their high places and plush offices seek to denigrate and defame those who do speak out and stand up for their convictions? (As young people are supposed to do, in case you forgot.)

In viciously targeting and slandering student activist Fatima Mohammed for calling on her fellow graduates to "fight against capitalism, racism, imperialism and Zionism," the witch-hunters are not only insulting the CUNY student body at large, they are trying to silence us all. **They will not succeed!** It's high time for these minions to take a hike. **Hands off our**



United-front protest initiated by the Internationalists against CUNY purge of immigrant students, Hunter College, November 2001.

Sue Kellogg

*rights – abolish the administration and the Board of Trustees!* We demand the elementary democratic right of those who work and study at CUNY to elect our own representatives to govern the university.

### CUNY Tops' Witch-Hunting Record

To get a sense of how a notorious right-wing tabloid got the CUNY Board of Trustees (BoT) to join its latest anti-CUNY smear campaign, it's important to look at some of the history of what we might call the "media/politicians/CUNY trustees/administration witch hunt industrial complex." It's been a feature of New York life for a long time.

- Even before the City University system formally existed, Brooklyn, Hunter, Queens and City colleges (which today are all part of CUNY) made headlines in the early 1940s when hearings targeting "subversive" faculty and students were held by the Rapp-Coudert committee of the state legislature. Over 500 people were subpoenaed and questioned in this witch hunt, a forerunner of those spearheaded by Republican rightist Joseph McCarthy – and liberal Democrats like Hubert Humphrey – when the Cold War took off after World War Two.

- Fast forward to 2001: As the U.S. under George W. Bush ramped up for war after 9/11, the *New York Post* (3 October 2001) blared "CCNY Bashes America" in a banner headline. Railing against what it called the "anti-Americanism and anti-war sentiment" expressed at a City College teach-in sponsored by the PSC-CUNY faculty/staff union, it denounced four professors who spoke there, as well as a number of students. In response, CUNY's then-chancellor came out with a statement smearing those who supposedly spoke at the event to "justify or make excuses for" the 9/11 attacks. The professors named by the *Post* were soon subjected to innumerable threatening calls and messages.

- The following month (November 2001), after a racist state senator ranted that allowing "illegal aliens" to study at CUNY was a threat to "national security," the Board of Trustees more than doubled tuition for undocumented students. The united-front campaign launched by the Internationalist Group against this "anti-immigrant war purge" resulted in it being rolled back for many immigrant students. The CUNY Internationalist Clubs were born out of that campaign. (See *Revolution* No. 1, September 2002.)

- CUNY has been no exception to the targeting of faculty and students who speak out against Israeli repression of the Palestinian people. Just for example, in early 2011, the Brooklyn College administration – facing pressure from then-assemblyman Dov Hikins – cancelled adjunct Kristofer Petersen-Overton's appointment due to his defense of Palestinians. "'Anti-Israel' Prof Canned," exulted the *Post* (27 January 2011). A campaign of protest got his job back. However, the Murdoch media goons had highlighted the message: Criticize Israel (and/or Zionism), you pay.

- That message was delivered again in spring 2011. When the faculty of John Jay College decided to award an honorary degree to Tony Kushner, author of *Angels in America* (a 1991 play on the AIDS crisis) and other works, CUNY's Board of

Trustees overturned the decision. Why? Because a headline-seeking rightist on the CUNY BoT declared that since Kushner had criticized Israel's oppression of the Palestinians, he should be denied the award. When Kushner defended his views, the *Post* (5 May 2011) published an editorial titled "Tony Kushner: Crybaby," blaring: "Finally, one lefty loudmouth is paying a small price for being a critic of Israel. Three cheers for CUNY." After widespread expressions of indignation against the trustees' action, it was reversed. Meanwhile, a number of CUNY campuses have sought to censor Students for Justice in Palestine.

- In 2013, at the instigation of the American Enterprise Institute, the Board of Trustees made the provocative political decision to hire former general David "Death Squad" Petraeus – who had commanded the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and subsequently headed the CIA – to "teach" at CUNY's Macaulay Honors College. The CUNY Internationalist Clubs initiated a united-front campaign of protest and exposure. Editorials in the *Daily News* and *Post* railed against protesters; Fox News' "O'Reilly Factor" show did an "ambush interview" targeting Hunter adjunct Sándor John for his participation in the campaign, with Bill O'Reilly calling for him to be fired. At one mid-September 2013 Petraeus protest, the NYPD was unleashed to brutally beat and arrest six activists from a CCNY-based student group; two others were suspended after a later rally on the City College campus. The CUNY Board soon announced a new policy to curtail "expressive conduct" (protests) – but this was defeated by student and faculty protests.<sup>4</sup>

- The list goes on... In terms of organized reactionary backlash against those who stand up in defense of the Palestinian people, the *Post* and *Daily News* (among others) went wild, publishing multiple calls for retribution, when in June 2021 the PSC's Delegate Assembly passed a resolution titled "In Defense of the Palestinian People," prompted by one of Israel's many bloody military onslaughts against Palestinians in Gaza.

After hailing "at least 50" PSC members – out of a union representing 30,000 faculty and staff – that the *Post* (25 July 2021) said quit because of the Palestine resolution, the paper hyped a lawsuit against the union. Then it celebrated City Council hearings based on the disgusting slander that equates anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. Using this to smear the union and teachers at CUNY, it continued to promote the long-standing racist political vendettas against the largest urban public university in the U.S. ■

<sup>4</sup> For further information on some of this history, see: *Defend Immigrant Students – Stop CUNY's "War Purge"!* (Internationalist pamphlet, 2001); "Witch-Hunters Target 'The Unpatriotic University,'" *Revolution* No. 3, November 2005; "Witch Hunt Against Tony Kushner Spiked," *The Internationalist* No. 33, Summer 2011; "Stop the Zionist Witch Hunt! Defend Free Speech at Brooklyn College," internationalist.org, February 2013; articles on repression against Petraeus protesters in *Revolution* No. 10, October 2013; "Would-Be Witch Hunters Cannot Silence Protest at CUNY," internationalist.org, November 2015, on yet another *Post*-incited smear campaign; material on Rapp-Coudert hearings in "Real Reds Don't Bow to Anti-Communist Bans," *Revolution* No. 18, September 2021, and online exhibit "The Struggle for Free Speech at CCNY, 1931-42."

## Jewish Law Students Association Statement in Solidarity with Fatima Mohammed

*Revolution reprints below the statement issued by the Jewish Law Students Association (JLSA) at CUNY's law school, in defense of 2023 commencement speaker Fatima Mousa Mohammed. The statement, which CUNY Law's student government and many other groups at the campus signed on to, is a forthright expression of opposition to and indignation against the campaign of smears and attempted intimidation by the New York Post, Fox News, Mayor Eric Adams and others, including CUNY's chancellor and trustees. We have retained the original format (capitalization, etc.) of the declaration by the JLSA, noting that of course the CUNY Internationalist Clubs' Marxist analysis and program differ in some significant ways.*

The CUNY School of Law Jewish Law Students Association stands in solidarity with our friend and classmate Fatima, who is currently being targeted by a racist hate campaign from external organizations after delivering a commencement speech that addressed the struggle for Palestinian freedom. Our class, including its members in the Jewish Law Students Association, proudly chose Fatima as CUNY Law's commencement speaker.

For years, Zionist organizations have been enacting targeted harassment campaigns against Palestinian and Muslim law students at the CUNY School of Law. As a public-interest focused law school, we have a duty to stand with Palestinians against Zionist oppression, as Fatima has done. In her commencement speech, Fatima describes the unique nature of CUNY Law and the values it embodies that brought many students to our school. She explains, "we join this institution to be equipped with the necessary legal skills to protect our communities, to protect the organizers fighting endlessly day in and day out, with no accolades, no cameras, no votes, no PhD grants, working to lift the facade of legal neutrality and confront the systems of oppression that rend violence on them." Speaking out against oppression is one of the skills we cultivate, and we aim to apply our principles consistently. As Fatima reminds us, "Palestine can no longer be the exception to our pursuit of justice."

We, as Jewish students at CUNY Law, oppose and condemn the racist organizations like Canary Mission who are spreading disgusting lies about our friend. The organizations currently attacking Fatima and the rest of CUNY Law's student body, with absurd and false claims of antisemitism, are doing so against the wishes of the majority of CUNY Law's Jewish students, who wholeheartedly stand with Fatima and have been grateful to have her as our classmate throughout law school. As Jewish students attending an institution

structured around social justice, we denounce both the murder and dispossession enacted in our name through the Zionist project and the harassment and lies that Zionist organizations are using to punish Fatima for her bravery and commitment to Palestinian freedom.

In her commencement speech, Fatima rightly condemned that "Israel continue[s] to indiscriminately rain bullets and bombs on worshipers, murdering the old, the young, attacking even funerals and graveyards, and as it encourages lynch mobs to target Palestinian homes and businesses, as it imprisons its children, as it continues its project of settler-colonialism, expelling Palestinians from their homes, carrying [out] the ongoing nakba."<sup>1</sup> It is disingenuous to characterize these factual descriptions as antisemitic, when they describe the conditions of Palestinian life.

We call on CUNY Law to listen to, support, and defend its student body. Our condemnation of Zionism is based on outrage at the way it has harmed and continues to harm Palestinians, not, as external Zionist organizations would have people believe, on antisemitism. As long as Zionism has existed, there have been Jewish people fighting against its racist and imperialist logic – to equate anti-Zionism with antisemitism is to erase the history of Jewish anti-Zionism, throughout the world and at CUNY Law.

If CUNY Law wants to show it cares for its Jewish students, it can do so by showing it cares for Fatima. We are endlessly grateful for Fatima's courageous work and her inspiring message to the CUNY Law class of 2023. "Let us remember," as Fatima said in her speech, "that just this week, Gaza has been bombed with the world watching; that daily, Black and Brown men are being murdered by the state at Rikers; that there are Palestinian political prisoners like the Holy Land Five in U.S. prisons; that there are refugees at the southern border, still locked up; that yesterday [May 11, 2023] marked one year since the murder of U.S. journalist Shireen Abu Akleh; and that the murder of Black men, like the murder of Jordan Neely by a white man on the MTA is being dignified by politicians like Eric Adams. We leave our classes, and we leave this school to a world that so desperately needs us to stand alongside those who have given up, for the sake of liberation, far more than we could imagine." We implore CUNY Law to stand alongside its students and alumni and to act in alignment with its mission and mandate by supporting Fatima and denouncing the racist lies being spread about her. ■

<sup>1</sup> *Nakba* (disaster or catastrophe), also spelled *naqba*: the mass expulsion of Palestinian Arabs in 1948, integral to the state of Israel, its continued expansion and its official ideology, Zionism. (*Editor's note.*)

# Racist Terror...

*continued from page 12*

little to no warning. When some attempted to resist, armed police and immigration officers forced them onto the buses.

The Mayor's Office of Immigration Affairs, now under former cop Eric Adams, New York's current Democratic mayor, has been terrorizing immigrant and asylum-seeking populations in this city non-stop. Adams also recently visited the U.S. border with Mexico, and said, with regard to immigration, "This is a national crisis and we need a national solution." I can only shudder to think what sort of "national solution" would happen under someone like Eric Adams. He is putting the real politics of the Democratic Party on display. I bring up Eric Adams to highlight the connection between anti-immigration repression and the systemic racism of "policing" in U.S. society, from New York to Memphis to Atlanta to the border. We remember the horrific images of immigration cops whipping and beating Haitian asylum-seekers and forcing immigrants into cages and camps.

No matter what name or agency the different forces of state repression fall under, the system is the same. The capitalist system has no basic distinction between an officer with NYPD and an officer with I.C.E. Their job is fundamentally the same: repress, beat, brutalize, kill, keep out or keep in line – against the exploited and oppressed. There is no way to reform this system. There can be no justice under a system like capitalism. **Only revolution can bring justice!**

**Wally:** The police murders of Tyre Nichols, a black man on his way home in Memphis, and Tortuguita, a protester in the forest outside Atlanta where the new "Cop City" is being built as a training ground for the bosses' armed drones of repression, bring up for us the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, who is what we call the foremost "class war prisoner" in the United States.

The incarceration of Mumia Abu-Jamal in 1982 was a part of the repressive campaign against the Black Panthers and other black liberation activists under the FBI's deadly COINTELPRO ("counterintelligence") program that worked together with municipal police terror squads. An example of this was the joint raid in December 1969 by the FBI and a Chicago PD hit squad, in which Black Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were assassinated in their beds.

Under the impact of police terror in his home town of Philadelphia, Mumia Abu-Jamal (born Wesley Cook) joined the Black Panther Party in 1967, when he was 15 years old. He became a radical journalist championing the working class and oppressed people, and an ardent critic of police terror. He helped expose the reality of racist terror in Philadelphia against the MOVE organization, whose home was bombed on 13 December 1985 by a police helicopter, on the orders of black Democratic mayor Wilson Goode with support from the federal government under Republican Ronald Reagan. The murderous attack on the mainly African American commune killed 11 black people, five of them children.<sup>3</sup> The fire burned more than 60 houses.

<sup>3</sup> In 2021 it was revealed that the remains of two of the children, Delisha and Tree Africa, had for decades been held by and transferred between Princeton University and the museum of the University of Pennsylvania (*Daily Pennsylvanian*, 25 August 2021).

It was Mumia's vocal opposition to and incisive exposures of police terror, the injustice system, the unhinged brutality of the Philadelphia Police Department and the FBI, and the capitalist system underlying all of this, that led to him being targeted for repression. Mumia was, by 1971, put on the FBI's Security Index, of people called a threat to "national security," and in Category II of the Administrative Index listing people who would be put in a concentration camp in a "national emergency."<sup>4</sup>

In December 1981, Mumia was shot, arrested and then beaten almost to death by the Philadelphia police. He was put on trial and convicted on frame-up charges of having killed a police officer. The trial consisted of a concocted confession, falsified evidence, perjured witnesses and a stacked jury. The former Black Panther was denied the right to represent himself, and was even excluded from the courtroom. He was sentenced to the death penalty – a legacy of slavery. After years of protest internationally, the death sentence against Mumia was dropped in 2011, only to be changed to the "slow death" of life without parole.

For over four decades the bourgeois courts under Democratic and Republican capitalist rule have kept Mumia in prison to, at the very least, ensure that he never be allowed to walk freely another day in his life, while prison officials have repeatedly used medical neglect in efforts to kill him outright. Continued collusion across party lines to bury Mumia points to the glaring reality that we cannot look to the bosses' parties and courts for justice; there is no justice for the oppressed under the capitalist system.

We need to look to the power of the working class. In October 2022, the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades Local 10 in Portland, Oregon drew on a legacy of struggles internationally for Mumia's freedom, adopting a resolution that cited actions going back to the first strikes for this demand, carried out by Brazilian teachers and West Coast U.S. dock workers of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) in 1999. The Painters union's resolution called on "workers of all countries to use their power to free our brother Mumia Abu-Jamal." In a message of solidarity with Portland's Painters Union Local 10, Mumia emphasized the significance of workers actions in the struggle against police repression and imperialist militarism. As he stated, "When Marx and Engels got together ... they were calling for workers of the world to unite, for workers across countries to unite, that labor has no country and that they must unite against capitalism." The police and military are the core of the capitalist state, the bosses' state, whose primary purpose is to repress the working class in its march for freedom.<sup>5</sup>

This is a "global reality," as Mumia put it. In order to end police terror and repression and the unending murder of black people in the streets, it is a global reality that what's needed is international workers action and international workers revolution.

<sup>4</sup> For background on this and other aspects of Mumia's case referred to here, see "It Will Take Workers' Power to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal," "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and All Black Panther and MOVE Prisoners!" and "No Execution by COVID – Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now!" in *The Internationalist* No. 26, July 2007, No. 46, January-February 2017, and No. 62, January-March 2021.

<sup>5</sup> "Portland Painters Call for Workers Action to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal" and "Message from Mumia: Workers of the World Unite!" *The Internationalist* No. 67-68, May-October 2022.

**Editor's note (1 August 2023):** In the most recent display of blatant capitalist injustice in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, on March 31 Judge Lucretia Clemons slammed a steel door on Mumia's most recent appeal. Meanwhile, on February 16, the dock workers of ILWU Local 10 in the San Francisco Bay Area shut the ports there down to demand freedom for Mumia, in conjunction with the call by the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (Africa's largest labor union) for an international campaign to free the former Black Panther and renowned radical journalist. In solidarity, on the same day a Black History Month forum titled "Mumia's Freedom Is Labor's Cause" was held in New York City, bringing out union activists from the Teamsters, subway, education and health workers, immigrant worker organizers and many others. See "Bay Area ILWU Shuts Ports Demanding Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal," "NYC Forum: 'Mumia's Freedom Is Labor's Cause'," "Judge Slams Door on Mumia Appeal" and related materials in *The Internationalist* No. 69-70, January-May 2023.

The NYC forum was chaired by Kaitlan Russell of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, whose activists worked hard – together with the Internationalist Group/Revolutionary Internationalist Youth and other left and labor activists – to help make it a success. Reflecting this, the crowd at the February 16 forum included many students from the City University, Columbia and other campuses. The CUNY Internationalist Clubs, which over the years have participated in and organized many events on the fight for Mumia's freedom, invite you to contact us ([cunyinternationalists@gmail.com](mailto:cunyinternationalists@gmail.com)) to learn more about this crucial struggle. ■

## Pilger...

*continued from page 3*

British atomic weapon was test exploded here on 9 October 1957." On the rim of the crater was this sign:

WARNING: RADIATION HAZARD  
Radiation levels for a few hundred metres around this point may be above those considered safe for permanent occupation.

For as far as the eye could see, and beyond, the ground was irradiated. Raw plutonium lay about, scattered like talcum powder: plutonium is so dangerous to humans that a third of a milligram gives a 50 percent chance of cancer. The only people who might have seen the sign were Indigenous Australians, for whom there was no warning. According to an official account, if they were lucky "they were shooed off like rabbits."

Today, an unprecedented campaign of propaganda is shooing us all off like rabbits. We are not meant to question the daily torrent of anti-Chinese rhetoric, which is rapidly overtaking the torrent of anti-Russia rhetoric. Anything Chinese is bad, anathema, a threat: Wuhan ... Huawei. A virulent racism is the sub-text of this propaganda. The Chinese are the only ethnic group to have been banned by an "exclusion act" from entering the United States, because they were Chinese. Popular culture declared them sinister, untrustworthy, "sneaky," depraved, diseased, immoral.

The current phase of this campaign began not with Trump but with Barack Obama, who in 2011 flew to Australia to

declare the greatest build-up of U.S. naval forces in the Asia-Pacific region since World War Two. Suddenly, China was a "threat." This was nonsense, of course. What was threatened was America's unchallenged psychopathic view of itself as the richest, the most successful, the most "indispensable" nation. What was never in dispute was its prowess as a bully – with more than 30 members of the United Nations suffering American sanctions of some kind and a trail of the blood running through defenceless countries bombed, their governments overthrown, their elections interfered with, their resources plundered. Obama's declaration became known as the "pivot to Asia." One of its principal advocates was his Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, who, as *WikiLeaks* revealed, wanted to rename the Pacific Ocean "the American Sea."

Whereas Clinton never concealed her warmongering, Obama was a maestro of marketing. Obama increased spending on nuclear warheads faster than any president since the end of the Cold War. A "usable" nuclear weapon was developed. Known as the B61 Model 12, it means, according to General James Cartwright, former vice-chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that "going smaller [makes its use] more thinkable." The target is China. Today, more than 400 American military bases almost encircle China with missiles, bombers, warships and nuclear weapons. From Australia north through the Pacific to South-East Asia, Japan and Korea and across Eurasia to Afghanistan and India, the bases form, as one U.S. strategist told me, "the perfect noose."

A study by the RAND Corporation – which, since Vietnam, has planned America's wars – is entitled *War with China: Thinking Through the Unthinkable* [2016]. Commissioned by the U.S. Army, the authors evoke the infamous catch cry of its chief Cold War strategist, Herman Kahn – "thinking the unthinkable." Kahn's book, *On Thermonuclear War* [1960] elaborated a plan for a "winnable" nuclear war.<sup>1</sup>

[The essay goes on to quote Republican Mike Pompeo, who was then Secretary of State.] "I was CIA director," he boasted, "We lied, we cheated, we stole. It was like we had entire training courses." Pompeo's obsession is China....

*P.S. by Revolution: Today, under Biden and the Democrats, U.S. imperialism – the one power that has actually used nuclear weapons – escalates its anti-China war drive, in which the U.S./NATO proxy war against Russia is both a way station and a testing ground on the road to a thermonuclear Third World War. "Another Hiroshima is coming ... unless we stop it now," Pilger wrote three years ago. But how? Pacifist pleas for imperialism to "disarm" just spread dangerous illusions. The only way to stop it – as the founder of U.S. Trotskyism highlighted in a powerful polemic against reformist illusions at the height of the Cold War – is intransigent class struggle by the workers of the world, which must "culminate in the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist society" (James P. Cannon, *The Road to Peace [1953]*). ■*

<sup>1</sup> In 1962 Kahn came out with his better-known sequel, a book titled *Thinking About the Unthinkable*. (See article on U.S. nuclear war preparations in *Revolution* No. 19, September 2022.)

# Trans Rights...

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mean don't cross." Since its inception the CSWP, which works fraternally with the Internationalist Group, has played an important role in Portland-area struggles.

An example was Portland Labor Against the Fascists, the June 2017 labor mobilization calling to stop white-supremacist and fascist groups from marching days after a local Nazi carried out a double murder. Three hundred workers from 14 unions came out, helping to stop the planned fascist parade. (See "Portland Labor Mobilizes to Stop Fascist Provocation," *The Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017.) The June 2017 action built on a resolution for unions to stand ready to mobilize against racist provocations. Put forward by CSWP members, this was passed by the Painters and other local unions. (Later adopted by the Painters union in Chicago, in August 2019 it was also passed by IUPAT's national convention.<sup>1</sup>)

In November 2018, the CSWP brought out Iron Workers, Painters, IATSE members and others in defense of women's rights, against a misogynist provocation that fascist groups dubbed "#HimToo." The CSWP highlights the demand for "Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants" and the call to "Form Workers Defense Guards to Defeat the Fascist Threat," as headlined in *Bridge City Militant* (Spring 2019).

In numerous parts of the United States, racist and fascist groups are often prominent among those inciting anti-trans bigotry. In Portland, news media have reported violent attacks including one in which a trans woman was beaten with baseball bats in September 2019.

Last year's Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*, together with racist efforts against the teaching of black history, book-banning drives, etc., have fed into the current barrage of virulent anti-trans bigotry whipped up in bills introduced, and in some cases passed, in states across the U.S. Many of these are particularly aimed at imposing reactionary state regulation of the lives of transgender youth – in the name of "good old American freedom," of course. This includes a supposed "religious liberty" to discriminate against trans people, gays, lesbians and others deemed a threat to the nuclear family. A "threat," that is, to this building block of capitalist society,

<sup>1</sup> The resolution reads: "Whereas there has been a sharp increase in racist and anti-immigrant attacks across the country in recent days; and Whereas white supremacist groups have announced they would stage menacing provocations across the country; and Whereas the KKK and other racist organizations represent a deadly threat to African-Americans, Latinos and immigrants, as well as to Muslim, LGBTQ, and Jewish people, among many others, and directly to the members of this union and the labor movement as a whole; and Whereas the white supremacist forces are related to the origins of anti-labor 'right to work' laws in order to destroy unions because they believed unions would lead to 'race mixing' among workers; and Whereas unions are considered a threat to racist organizations because they are a working class defense organization for all workers in the community, Therefore be it resolved that the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades stands ready to join with communities in mobilizing against the clear and present danger that racist organizations' provocations pose to us all."



At the June 2016 Pride march in Portland, Oregon, members of the Painters, IATSE (stagehands) and several other unions marched with banner declaring "Hard Hats for Gay Rights!"

embodying women's oppression and domestic drudgery, "traditional family values" and young people's regimentation, bolstered by religious obscurantism and stifling conformity. It's one big reactionary "American way" package, peddled for both political and financial gain.

The anti-trans bills proposed, and in some cases laws that have passed, take many forms, in the drive to sadistically shame, ostracize and intimidate trans people (as well as those who associate with, provide care to, teach or write about them). This ranges from vicious and idiotic "bathroom laws," censoring of teachers and libraries, targeting of performances involving trans people, etc., to brazen intrusions into people's health care.

Early this year, the *New York Times* (26 January) reported on bills in Oklahoma and South Carolina to make it a felony for health care professionals "to provide hormonal or surgical transition treatment to transgender people younger than 26 – an uncharted incursion into adults care." In May, Oklahoma's governor signed into law a measure threatening imprisonment on felony charges to those who provide such care for people under the age of 18.

Readers have doubtless seen a lot of coverage about the whirlwind of anti-trans measures whipped up in Florida, whose Trump-trailing Governor Ron DeSantis hopes they could catapult him into the White House. Less reported are states like Mississippi, where, as the same *NYT* article noted, this year's anti-trans bills included one declaring that "'separate is not inherently unequal,' an allusion to *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the 1896 ruling in which the Supreme Court upheld segregation."

## Bigotry Crusade's Racist Roots

This points to a fact often ignored, or deliberately omitted: **racism** is a huge part of what fuels the anti-trans onslaught. This parallels the origins of the anti-abortion "movement," as well as such anti-gay crusades as the one launched in 1977 by Florida orange juice promoter and "born-again" zealot Anita Bryant under the name "Save the Children." As the last issue of *Revolution* (No. 19, September 2022) pointed out: "Like similar movements, [these] drew on the model of how the politicized Christian right cohered in the 1960s on the basis of racism against black people, to 'save' white families from school integration and 'save' society from secular education and the separation of church

and state." Today, the crusade for anti-trans bigotry is being pushed as the "Protect the Children platform."

Events in Virginia highlight racist realities about the anti-trans "movement" – notably Loudoun County, Virginia, subject of a lengthy recent feature story in the *New York Times Magazine* (5 August). This presents the county as a kind of ground zero for a series of "culture-war" battles, over library books and a range of other topics. In 2021, numerous anti-trans bills were coming up in Virginia and the Ku Klux Klan was distributing leaflets seeking to capitalize on school-board issues. Loudoun County made headlines after a fight broke out at a school-board meeting, with parents of a student saying that a sexual assault had been carried out in a bathroom by a boy in a skirt. This was promptly weaponized by opponents of transgender rights.

Soon all kinds of professional backlash promoters got into the act. Virginia gubernatorial candidate Glenn Youngkin seized on the furor, vowing to make schools less "un-American" and to push back against transgender rights. After winning the election, Youngkin enacted a series of measures against the rights of transgender students. Against this, 1,400 students in 12 Loudoun County public schools walked out in protest, in September 2022.

What the *Times*' feature story does not mention is what the words "Loudoun County" and "school board" evoke for anyone familiar with the history of the South. The county was the focal point for a major onslaught by white racists against civil rights. Having been a "hotbed" of the slaveowners' Confederacy, it became a hotbed against school integration after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision overturned the "separate but equal" Jim Crow segregation that *Plessy v. Ferguson* had enshrined in 1896.

Virginia's state government, like those across the South, was run by "Dixiecrat" (Southern Democratic) politicians. In 1956, Virginia's Senator Harry Byrd promoted the "Southern Manifesto" against school desegregation, which was signed by over 100 Southern congressmen – and declared a campaign of "Massive Resistance." As part of this, Loudoun County's Board of Supervisors voted to withhold funding for the schools and shut them down unless they remained segregated. Jim Crow laws, "Old South" plantations, racist paeans to Virginia's Robert E. Lee, Klan terror – these are what reactionary

bigots hark back to when they rail about resisting "all the changes threatening traditional values" and pine for "the way things used to be."

Prowling for targets, rightists, including outright fascist groups, have targeted Drag Story Hour events from New Hampshire to New York, Florida to the Pacific Coast. Against the rightist thugs, our comrades have participated in the physical defense of Drag Story Hour in several locations, including Portland and New York, where we have also been active in the defense of abortion clinics menaced by "god squad" bigots. By spring of this year, 18 states were considering bills against drag performances.

In Tennessee, the governor signed a law prohibiting performances by "topless dancers, go-go dancers, exotic dancers, strippers, male or female impersonators [*sic*], or similar entertainers" if they occur in locations where they "could be viewed by a person who is a minor." Shortly thereafter, at a "Love Rising all-star LGBTQ benefit concert" held on March 20 in Nashville, singer Maren Morris took the stage declaring: "And yes, I introduced my son to some drag queens today, so Tennessee, fuckin' arrest me." Tucker Carlson brands her "Lunatic Country Music Person," but we say: You go, Maren!

## Break with the Democrats – For a Class-Struggle Workers Party

Learning more about the organizing by comrades in Portland brings to mind the film *Pride* (2014), based on the true story of a group that was called Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners. In Margaret Thatcher's Britain during the 1980s, they made common cause with the National Union of Mineworkers in the great miners strike of 1984-85. While the movie does take a bit of artistic license with the history, it does a good job of depicting this inspiring example of both labor solidarity in the fight against gay and trans oppression and the need to have a solid understanding of the class line. "Which side are you on?" asks the old U.S. miners song.<sup>2</sup>

We often explain that the power of labor needs to be unchained from the parties, politicians and institutions of the capitalist state. Another important initiative by CSWP activists was the resolution that IUPAT Local 10 passed in August 2017, to reject the Democratic and Republican parties, or "any Party of the Bosses," and to "call on the labor movement to break from the Democratic Party, and build a class-struggle workers party." In the recent period, a resolution calling for workers action to free Mumia Abu-Jamal was passed by the Painters in Portland (see page 20 of this issue) as well as other areas, and by IATSE Local 28, Iron Workers Local 29 and the Northwest Oregon Labor Council.

We in RIY, youth section of the Internationalist Group, help win radical-minded youth to the understanding of how crucial it is to help build a revolutionary leadership in class struggles throughout society. The fight against oppression must be carried on now, it can't be postponed – but to carry it through to victory requires a socialist revolution. This would replace capitalist rule, which

<sup>2</sup> A classic 1941 rendition of "Which Side Are You On" can be found available at: [youtube.com/watch?v=BEwE0R\\_7TDc&t=125s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEwE0R_7TDc&t=125s)

feeds on and profits from oppression and exploitation, with a workers state – spreading revolution internationally to open the way to a classless, stateless society. Clearly, this revolutionary standpoint is a far cry from identity politics, which the Democratic Party uses as yet another means to harvest votes.<sup>3</sup>

Some might hope that living in a “blue state” means living without transphobic violence. The brutal murder of O’Shae Sibley on July 29 in Brooklyn, New York, is a recent reminder that this isn’t the case. Capitalist politics in the U.S. is a two-headed beast. The Republicans are currently seeking to drum up votes via anti-trans bills and laws (though Trump and others sometimes postured as pro-gay in past campaigns). The Democrats, supposed purveyors of hope, change, “progressive ideals” and so forth, just use trans people as bargaining chips – as they have with immigrants, DACA recipients, labor unionists, etc. Meanwhile President Joe Biden follows in the footsteps of Deporter-in-Chief Barack Obama; uses a strikebreaking law against the railway workers, with the aid of Nancy Pelosi plus AOC and the “Squad” (see article on page 5), etc.

Democratic politicians’ response to the bigoted attacks on trans rights is similar to their response to the onslaught against abortion rights, including the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*. They seek to channel widespread outrage not to defend those rights in reality, but to coin that anger into electoral gold for this ruling party of capitalist oppression. They hope people won’t know, or will forget, that Joe Biden (and Jimmy Carter) were instrumental in pushing through the racist Hyde Amendment that barred federal funding for abortions. Or that two years after Biden and Bill Clinton rammed through the 1994 crime bill accelerating mass incarceration, Clinton signed the anti-gay “Defense of Marriage” Act. We could go on. The point is that you can’t fight reactionary bigotry by voting for or building illusions in the Democratic Party, whose mayors are the bosses of the racist cops from NYC to Chicago and Atlanta to Oakland and L.A. – and whose imperialist war drive against China and Russia threatens to blow up the world.

How did the Democratic Party, which was the party of the slaveowners, eventually become the party that pretends to represent different downtrodden and discriminated-against sectors? In the wake of the civil rights movement, Dixiecrats went over to the Republicans, and the Democrats decided to let a layer of African American politicians administer a series of cities for the capitalist rulers. It employed its traditional “pork-barrel politics” (using patronage to incorporate different ethnic groups, e.g., Irish Americans) to bring in and subordinate new sectors. In the late 1960s and early ’70s, the “sectoralist” outlook of the New Left wound up helping the

<sup>3</sup> “This form of bourgeois ideology feigns a fight against oppression through ‘check-your-privilege’ liberal idealism and ... is used to deepen the wedge between different sectors of the workers and oppressed, claiming to unite those who share a sectorally defined identity, including members of the exploiting class” (*Revolution* No. 14, January 2018). Far from explaining that this is the opposite of a program for actually winning liberation, opportunist groups (Left Voice being one constant example) pander to and tail after every “latest thing.” (*Editor’s note*.)

Democratic Party co-opt new constituencies. (This is discussed in the article “Gay Rights and Socialist Revolution,” which we quote below.)

In 1984, the Rev. Jesse Jackson launched a presidential campaign under the name of the “Rainbow Coalition.” This did not refer to a symbol for gay, lesbian and trans rights, but in the words of his Democratic National Convention speech: “Our flag is red, white and blue, but our nation is a rainbow – red, yellow, brown, black and white....” This campaign for the Democratic nomination sought to refurbish the image of the U.S. imperialist party of Hiroshima and the Vietnam War (as Bernie Sanders’ campaigns aimed to do decades later). In adopting the name of “Rainbow Coalition,” it recycled and co-opted a term previously used by Fred Hampton, the courageous Black Panther leader murdered by the Chicago cops under notoriously racist Democratic mayor Richard J. Daley in 1969.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, Democratic strategists employed “pork-barrel politics” to bring in many gay, lesbian and trans activists in the decade after the Stonewall rebellion. In 1976, the San Francisco Gay Democratic Club was founded, changing its name to Harvey Milk Democratic Club in 1978 after the gay SF Board of Supervisors member was murdered by a homophobic former cop. It became a mainstay of the Bay Area Democratic machine that boosted Nancy Pelosi, who advertises herself as a staunch “LGBTQ+ Ally.”

In the House of Representatives, Pelosi has been instrumental in countless capitalist crimes against the workers and oppressed here and around the world. Over the recent period this has featured everything from strikebreaking against the railway workers to rabid warmongering – from helping push and fund the U.S./NATO proxy war in Ukraine to her trip, on a U.S. Air Force jet, to Taiwan last year (see “U.S. Anti-China War Provocations Over Taiwan,” *The Internationalist* No. 67-68, May-October 2022).

And get this: today, the U.S. Navy has a ship named *Harvey Milk*, which refuels aircraft carriers at sea. At its naming ceremony in 2016, Nancy Pelosi accompanied the Secretary of the Navy, whose office tweeted that the warship honors “#LGBTQ #Sailors & #Marines.” Against the Democrats and Republicans, Marxists stand for the *defeat* of U.S. imperialism and its endless bloody wars.

In a wide-ranging article on the origins of gay oppression, the difference between “sectoralism” and our Marxist program for uprooting all forms of social oppression, and other key topics, *Revolution* wrote:

“Marxists seek to build a genuine revolutionary party that, as V.I. Lenin put it in *What Is To Be Done?* (1902), acts as a ‘tribune of the people ... able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears,’ mobilizing the *power* of the working class, whose emancipation cannot be accomplished except by uprooting all forms of social oppression.”

– “Gay Rights and Socialist Revolution” *Revolution* No. 4, September 2007.<sup>4</sup>

**Join us in the struggle for socialist revolution! ■**

<sup>4</sup> Reprinted in the *Internationalist* pamphlet *Marxism and Women’s Liberation* (2017).

## World War III...

*continued from page 2*

*Bomb* (1986). It is from a six-year-old boy: “Near the bridge there were a whole lot of dead people. There were some who were burned black and died, and there were others with huge burns who died with their skin bursting, and some others who died all stuck full of broken glass. There were all kinds. Sometimes there were ones who came to us asking for a drink of water. They were bleeding from their faces and from their mouths and they had glass sticking in their bodies. And the bridge itself was burning furiously....”<sup>5</sup>

Two months before, U.S. Secretary of War Henry Stimson recorded in his diary (7 June 1945) some comments that he had made during a meeting with Truman, noting that he had told the president he was a “little fearful that before we could get ready the Air Force might have Japan so thoroughly bombed out that the new weapon would not have a fair background to show its strength.” Stimson was just one of the U.S. officials giving voice to the eagerness to test the A-bomb on a large populated area, an urgency that combined with the government’s urgent desire to use this to “subdue the Soviets” (see review of *Oppenheimer* on page 24.)

In August, when Truman received word that the bomb had worked, destroying Hiroshima, he declared: “This is the greatest thing in history” (*Newsweek*, 5 August 2020).

And what of the war criminals who had made Tokyo, Osaka, Yokohama and so many other Japanese cities “unsuitable” for A-bombing because U.S. terror firebombings had already reduced enor-

<sup>5</sup> In *Hiroshima Nagasaki* (2011), author Paul Ham states: “The schools ‘completely burned’ or ‘totally destroyed’ in Hiroshima included 21 middle (secondary) schools and 18 grammar schools. Schools partially destroyed included eight junior high schools and six grammar schools. Of the 12,000 schoolchildren aged between 12 and 17 who worked in the city as mobilised labour – and who had attended these schools – 8500 were killed instantly or within weeks; most of the surviving child labourers were severely wounded and irradiated.”

mous swathes of them to corpse-strewn rubble?<sup>6</sup> Among these men were Major General Curtis LeMay, who as head of the 21st Bomber Command planned and organized the low-altitude incendiary bombing of Tokyo and other cities. (He later went on to advocate that the U.S. bomb Vietnam “back into the Stone Age.”) LeMay’s assistant and tactical analyst for the firebombings was Robert McNamara, who became president of Ford Motor Company before overseeing the genocidal U.S. war against Vietnam as Secretary of Defense under JFK and Lyndon Johnson, later moving on to head the World Bank.

Years after leaking the “Pentagon Papers,” the U.S. military’s inside story of the U.S. War on Vietnam, former war-planning expert Daniel Ellsberg recounted some of what he knew about “general war plans” for the use of hydrogen bombs and other weapons in a world war against the “red menace.” These had projected roughly 600 million direct deaths, including not only the Soviet Union and China but also through “collateral damage” in U.S.-allied and neutral countries. At this point one can only surmise what the Pentagon’s detailed plans for war against China entail.

Almost 78 years after the U.S. imperialists unleashed atomic death and destruction on Hiroshima, the current Democratic warmaker-in-chief, at the head of the G7 grouping of imperialist powers whose wars have piled up tens of millions of corpses, went to Hiroshima. Together they broadcast far and wide the message that they are driving toward a new world war. The imperialists cannot and will not be coaxed, pressured or voted out of it. Pacifist pleas asking them to disarm won’t do it; the task is to “defeat, expropriate and disarm the bourgeoisie,” as Lenin wrote during the first imperialist world war. The Bolsheviks’ revolutionary-internationalist program of class war against imperialist war points the only way forward today: the imperialists can and must be stopped and overthrown – only *international socialist revolution* will stop them. ■

<sup>6</sup> In February 1945, the historic German city of Dresden was also immolated by firebombing when the U.S. and British air forces dropped over 2,500 tons of explosives and incendiaries, massacring tens of thousands of people.

## The Internationalist



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# Oppenheimer...

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killed hundreds of thousands in the blink of an eye were warning shots heralding the imperialist offensive on the Soviet Union we know as the Cold War. (Meanwhile even ... ex-general and president Dwight Eisenhower, who played a key role in expanding U.S. nuclear weaponry, later admitted that the criminal bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had little military significance in the inter-imperialist war with Japan.)

In *Oppenheimer* this is reflected, briefly, when Oppenheimer says that Henry Stimson, secretary of state under Harry Truman – the Democratic president who ordered the bombings – “tells me we bombed an enemy that was already defeated.”

In the wake of the film’s release, a number of articles have enumerated top U.S. military leaders from World War Two whose statements directly contradict the official story about why the A-bombs were dropped.<sup>1</sup> Chester Nimitz, for example, who was commander-in-chief of the U.S. Pacific fleet, said: “The use of atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan, [which was] already defeated and ready to surrender.” Carter Clarke, a brigadier general who summarized intercepted cables for Truman, said: “When we didn’t need to do it, and we knew we didn’t need to do it ... we used [Hiroshima and Nagasaki] as an experiment for two atomic bombs.”

## First Blast of the Cold War

A mountain of research demonstrated, years ago, that Truman and other leaders of U.S. imperialism were certainly avid to test the bomb on large populations in cities that had not “already been destroyed,” in the words of the official Target Committee. Already at the committee’s first meeting, held at the Pentagon on 27 April 1945, the decision was made to target “large urban areas of not less than 3 miles in diameter existing in the larger populated areas.”<sup>2</sup>

The willingness to use Japanese civilians in this “experiment” – as Truman referred to it (see article on p. 3 of this issue), was facilitated by virulent anti-Asian racism. Widespread in the U.S., this was systematically intensified during WWII, both abroad and “at home,” where liberal icon Franklin D. Roosevelt put Japanese Americans in camps.

A key factor in the U.S. decision to bomb Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, was that the Soviet Union was about to declare war on Japan, which it did on August 8. Truman’s “human sacrifice” of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was in this sense the first blast of the Cold War: a message of terror that U.S. imperialism, intent on world domination, directed against the Soviet Union. This fact was always clear to the Trotskyists, who upheld military defense of the USSR, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state, while opposing the inter-imperialist war of our “own” capitalist rulers in WWII. But not only to us. It was abundantly clear to the Soviets, 27 million of whose citizens died in that war, in which the Red Army defeated Hitler. It

was apparent to millions around the world, from the “democratic” Allies’ colonial subjects in Africa, Asia and Latin America, to the huge numbers of communist workers in war-ravaged Europe.

That the atomic bomb was a threat directed against the USSR was stated repeatedly, but of course not publicly, by a range of U.S. officials. Among them: the military head of the Manhattan Project himself, General Leslie Groves. “Groves said that, of course, the real purpose in making the bomb was to subdue the Soviets,” noted Manhattan Project scientist (later a Nobel Prize winner) Joseph Rotblat. Though the USSR was then allied to the U.S., Groves said that since shortly after taking charge of the A-bomb project he was quite aware “that Russia was our enemy, and the Project was conducted on that basis” (*Los Alamos Reporter*, 19 July).

After 1945, the United States – the only country that has ever used atomic weapons in war – would repeatedly threaten to use them again, and repeatedly come close to doing so over the following decades.<sup>3</sup> The Soviet Union’s development of its own nuclear weapons was crucial to staying the hand of U.S. rulers itching to nuke the USSR and China (with “general war plans” that would have resulted in approximately 600 million direct deaths) as well as insurgent colonial peoples from Southeast Asia to the Caribbean.

As moving as *Oppenheimer*’s explosive scene about the Trinity test is, this is about as far as the film goes when depicting the effects of real-life nuclear bombs. One of the controversies swirling around Nolan’s movie is that throughout its three-hour length, the viewer is never shown any images of the death and devastation wrought by U.S. bombs in Hiroshima or Nagasaki.<sup>4</sup> Thus the history is seen from the subjective perspective of the “father” of the “gadget” (as Oppenheimer dubbed the A-bomb) rather than the reality of the mass murder and destruction that it caused. Nor is there a glimpse of the effects the bomb tests (and uranium mining for nuclear weapons) would have on Native American, Hispano and other people in New Mexico.<sup>5</sup>

Obviously this was a conscious choice by the writer and director, who follows the protagonist-eye-view conventions of many biopics. While beset by “qualms” and unnerved by the subsequent drive to build the hydrogen bomb – a thousand times more powerful than the A-bomb – Oppenheimer continued (in the film and in real life) to defend the decision to bomb Hiroshima for the rest of his life. Some argue that the film’s omission of scenes of the bombing is intended to evoke Oppenheimer’s desire to “look away” from the results of his Project. We watch him trying to do just that at one point, as images (that we do not see) of Hiroshima’s devastation are projected on a screen at a meeting he attends. Earlier, amidst a flag-waving celebration at Los Alamos after the news of the bombing arrives, he hallucinates vague faces disintegrating. Outside the

<sup>3</sup> See “Mad Bombers on the Loose (in the White House),” *Revolution* No. 19, September 2022.

<sup>4</sup> The film closely follows the biography *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (2006), by Kai Bird, an editor and columnist for the liberal *Nation*, and Martin J. Sherwin.

<sup>5</sup> The term *Hispano* is traditionally used in New Mexico by descendants of the Spanish-speaking population that was conquered by the U.S. in the Mexican-American War (1846-48).

cheering, foot-stomping conclave, one young scientist vomits into the bushes.

Other reviewers have argued that Nolan’s decision not to show images from the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is some subtle incitement for viewers to go out and find them on their own. For our part, we hope those questioning the social set-up served by U.S. imperialism’s masters of war will be impelled, after watching the film, to dig deeper. The “values” of this social system were on display yet again when Warner Brothers’ “social media engagement” involved hyping the film via “Barbenheimer” mashups making light of the atomic bomb. Facing an outcry in Japan that might affect ticket sales, the company “apologized.”

## Witch Hunt Paradox?

From the beginning of *Oppenheimer*, a central theme is the anti-communist witch hunt that took off in the postwar United States. Kicked off by Democrats and personified by Republican senator Joseph McCarthy, the Cold War purge led to thousands of people losing their jobs and passports, being blacklisted (such as the “Hollywood Ten,” as shown in the 2015 film *Trumbo*), censored and jailed. The red hunt reached a deadly frenzy as the capitalist state used Sing Sing prison’s electric chair to murder Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1953 on charges of passing the Soviet Union information on the atomic bomb. (See “Honor the Heroic Rosenbergs,” *The Internationalist* No. 18, May-June 2004.)

It might seem a paradox that the father of Washington’s pride-and-joy weapon would be a witch hunt target, but it was a sign of the times. The film dedicates most of its last hour to closed-door interrogations, backroom scheming and public hearings against Oppenheimer. These led, in 1954, to the Atomic Energy Commission revoking the security clearance that he had held since ’42, due to associations “beyond the tolerable limits” with “persons known to be” Communists. In part this was because, after the war, he began urging the U.S. government to replace “coercion” with “persuasion” in its foreign policy. He also fell afoul of H-bomb enthusiasts such as Edward Teller, sometimes known as “the real Dr. Strangelove” – a reference to Stanley Kubrick’s hit 1964 film satirizing the U.S. military/nuclear-weapons establishment.

From the beginning of the film, Oppenheimer’s left-wing associations going back to the 1930s generate tension. While he was never a member of the Communist Party, various friends and family members were or had been; and for some time he backed CP-promoted causes, from unionizing lab workers

to fundraising for anti-Franco forces in the Spanish Civil War. By this time, the party had moved far away from its revolutionary origins. The “popular front” politics of class collaboration, which Stalin imposed as a corollary of his anti-revolutionary dogma of “socialism in one country,” made the Stalinized CPUSA the most energetic booster of FDR. During the Second World War, it demanded that unions adhere to the “no-strike pact” – and grotesquely hailed the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima.

At one point, *Oppenheimer* shows its protagonist responding to the red scare’s disruption of his career by declaring: “I’m a New Deal Democrat!” This was true. And clearly for the film’s director, as for so many liberals then and now, the problem with the red scare was that it wound up unfairly besmirching those “innocent” of actually *being* communists. Which is what we Trotskyists are – revolutionaries who seek to take the red flag of Lenin and Trotsky to victory here and around the world.

Washington’s supposed desire for “peace” (*sic*) was, after all, part of the sales pitch for the U.S. using the bomb in the first place. An end to nuclear terror can’t come through pacifist pleas to the imperialists to “come to their senses” and “learn to get along” with the rest of humanity. They can’t: imperialism is not a “bad policy” but the highest stage of capitalism, which long ago became a reactionary system. It has to be overthrown by the workers of the world, before it actually does turn the world into a ball of thermonuclear fire.

“I am become death, destroyer of worlds” – if we listen, we can hear capitalism itself speaking to us in these words. It is up to us to stop it and to “bring to birth a new world” – a socialist world – fit for all humanity. ■

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, article quoting “WWII’s US Top Brass,” *Consortium News*, 9 August.

<sup>2</sup> “Notes on Initial Meeting of Target Committee,” declassified in 1975 and reproduced online at National Security Archive site, nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB162/4.pdf.

## A Review of *Oppenheimer*

# Socialism or Nuclear Armageddon

By Luca and Karla

A crucial moment in *Oppenheimer*, this summer's biggest blockbuster, comes after a long build-up to the film's depiction of "Trinity" – the test of the atomic bomb developed by J. Robert Oppenheimer's team of physicists at a secret military site in Los Alamos, New Mexico. When the countdown reaches zero at 5:29 a.m. on 16 July 1945, the button is pushed to detonate the "gadget" – and sound stops. The screen fills with the terrifying sight of the nuclear blast, flames, flying debris, the mushroom cloud. All this the viewer experiences in silence. Unbearable seconds seem to go on forever – and then we're hit with the deafening sound of the explosion at the moment an "air blast" of wind and dust reaches the scientists shown on screen.

What was tested at Trinity was a prototype for the bomb that three weeks later, on August 6, the United States dropped on the civilian population of Hiroshima, Japan. On August 9, the U.S. dropped a second atom bomb, on the civilian population of Nagasaki. It is estimated that over 200,000 people were killed in the A-bombing of these two cities, which came after U.S. firebombing of Tokyo (estimated deaths: almost 100,000) and dozens of others had been carried out using "conventional" weapons. These historic crimes, and so many others committed by "our own" U.S. imperialist rulers, must

be burned into the consciousness of students and youth today.

"Now I am become death, destroyer of worlds," says J. Robert Oppenheimer in the film (as in real life), quoting a phrase from an ancient Hindu text. We later see him reminding Albert Einstein that at the inception of the Manhattan Project (the government's highly classified project to build the bomb), "We thought we might create a chain reaction that would destroy the entire world."

"What of it?" Einstein asks. "I believe we did," says Oppenheimer. An image of nuclear flames consuming the world fills the screen – and the closing credits roll.

Certainly the fear of thermonuclear war – and if people don't know this danger is escalating fast, they're not paying attention – is one reason many are flocking to see *Oppenheimer*. Others seem just to seek a few thrills from the latest widely-hyped flick from writer and director Christopher Nolan (*Dark Knight*, *Batman Begins*, *Interstellar*). The cast of Cillian Murphy (playing the title character), Emily Blunt,



*Oppenheimer* director Christopher Nolan stands in front of a screen promoting the film.

Matt Damon, Robert Downey Jr. and many others plays its assigned roles to the hilt, and the film definitely makes an impact. What's being debated widely in the media and elsewhere is just what that impact is.

For young Marxist activists like those of us working to put out this issue of *Revolution*, and hopefully for readers of our paper, *Oppenheimer* poses questions and topics of great importance. In a short review like this, we can only touch on some of these, while emphasizing how important it is to learn about these crimes of U.S. capitalism, as part of the fight to overthrow

it. Together with books and films such as *Hiroshima* (1953), *The Atomic Cafe* (1982) and *White Light/Black Rain* (2007), resources include articles in this and other issues of *Revolution*. In an article on NYC's "Nuclear Preparedness PSA" in our previous issue (*Revolution* No. 19, September 2022), we noted:

"To this day, American schoolchildren are taught that the U.S. mass murder of the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ... was 'necessary' to 'save American lives.' In reality, the nuclear attacks that

*continued on page 23*

## From Portland, Oregon

# Workers Solidarity Against the Anti-Trans Onslaught



Painters Local 10 banner at Portland Pride march, 16 July 2023.

By Fred and Lydia

Working-class militants brought a bold and timely message to this year's Pride march in Portland: a striking banner reading "DEFEND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE," with the image of a lion stand-

ing up, teeth bared, claws raised, and the words "Painters United/Pintores Unidos, Local 10." The lion logo is the emblem of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT); the decision to carry the banner was made by unanimous

vote at a membership meeting of IUPAT's Portland local. In the picture here, you can also see comrades of the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth proudly accompanying the Painters' banner. It's also an encouragement for us to learn more about working-class struggles here in the Pacific Northwest, including historic ones for basic democratic rights like the "free speech fights" that the Wobblies (Industrial Workers of the World) led before and during World War I. Three years ago, anti-racist workers and youth here had to stand up for the right to protest when then-president Trump sent in the feds, and Portland's Democratic mayor "Teargas Ted" Wheeler sent his cops, to try to quash mass protests following the murders of George Floyd

and Breonna Taylor. The Painters' banner defending the rights of trans people is an example of what class-struggle unionism looks like, at a time when these rights are under major attack in the United States.

Bringing workers power and solidarity into fights against capitalist oppression and bigotry is a major part of our program. In 2016, a union-sponsored "Hard Hats for Gay Rights" contingent marched in Portland's Pride parade (see photo on page 21), as an expression of solidarity days after the horrific anti-gay massacre at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. The contingent was initiated by activists from the building trades, IATSE (International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees) and other unions who are supporters of Class Struggle Workers – Portland (CSWP). The CSWP, as the first issue of its newsletter *Bridge City Militant* (Fall 2015) explained, was started by unionists active in "working-class struggles fighting for labor solidarity and independence from the capitalist state." Some, it noted, were "prominent in Cross Trades Solidarity, which sought to organize construction workers across craft-union divisions, insisting that picket lines

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