

All-Purpose Bigot Trump or Genocide Joe's VP Harris?

The Only Choice: Build a Revolutionary Workers Party

By Jacob and Ray

After Joe Biden's July 21 withdrawal from the presidential race and replacement by his vice president Kamala Harris, the mood in U.S. capitalism's governing Democratic Party turned from gloom to what it's hyping as an explosion of "joy." In Gaza, the explosion of bombs provided by the Biden-Harris administration to Israel continued to obliterate schools, hospitals and entire neighborhoods, burying whole families under the rubble.

For the Democrats, though, the big news was Biden bowing out – until then, fears of a landslide victory by all-purpose bigot Donald Trump had kept the party faithful plugging along, but just barely. But once party heavyweights opted for "Top Cop" Kamala Harris to head the ticket, millions of dollars that elite donors had withheld from Biden flowed into the campaign coffers. Liberals were swept with a wave of enthusiasm and at the Democratic National Convention, held August 19-22 in Chicago, 100,000 red-white-and-blue balloons were dropped from the ceiling. Among those getting starring roles were Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Bernie Sanders.

And on the DNC's final day, Harris gave her acceptance speech, vowing: "As Commander-in-Chief, I will ensure that America always has the strongest, most lethal fighting force in the world." On the same day, in Gaza, the U.S.-armed Israeli military killed at least 47 Palestinians.

As the genocidal war on the people of Gaza rages on, and U.S. imperialism's bipartisan drive toward World War III accelerates, the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth and CUNY Internationalist Clubs say: **No to the Democrat/Republican war machine – No to Harris and Trump – For workers action against the U.S./Israel war on Gaza – Build a workers party that fights for socialist revolution!**

War Criminals Pander to Youth Vote

With Kamala Harris and her running mate Tim Walz formally nominated by the DNC, a little over 10 weeks remained before the U.S. presidential elections. While Trump hurls racist rants and spews vile misogyny with his sinister sidekick JD Vance, the rebranded Democratic campaign sees pandering to the youth vote as a key com-



Vast destruction in Gaza City, March 20, by U.S.-supplied bombs dropped from U.S.-built planes.

ponent of its political marketing offensive. With Harris highlighting how much she "loves" Gen Z, her social media team tries to blot out the haunting images from Gaza with neon green-colored "Kamala is Brat" memes, imitating Charli XCX's latest album. Online outlets make much of

"Coach" Walz's debut "TimTok" video with his dog and go on about the wholesome corniness of his jokes.

Do capitalism's political marketeers think we're foolish children to be dazzled and distracted by their grotesque gimmickry and antics? Over the past year, what our

whole generation has seen unfold in real time is an actual genocide armed and paid for by the Biden-Harris White House and the Democrat/Republican-run Congress, while racist cop terror rages on and deportations are ramped up yet again as a vote-getting strategy. From Washington to the state capitols, city halls and university administrations, they launched vicious slanders and brutal police repression against the Gaza solidarity protests. And now they expect us to turn a blind eye, let their patriotic pageantry stun us into silence and vote war criminals into office once again? The answer is "No."

Last school year, many youth and students were newly politicized by what they saw and experienced. With mounting pressure on them to fall in line come election day, the next months could mark a real crossroads for the most thoughtful, posing the question of which direction they will go. Towards decisively rejecting the deadly con games of bourgeois politics and joining the fight for socialist revolution? Or continuing the endless cycle of "lesser-evil" subjugation to *continued on page 11*

A Struggle for Survival: Women in Gaza Today

The following is based on a presentation by Hannah, Luca, Mateo and Max at the CUNY Internationalist Clubs' International Women's Day 2024 event "From Vietnam and Haiti to Gaza Today: Women and the Struggle Against Imperialism." Incorporating additional points and information as we go to press, it has been expanded into an article by Joseph.

Women in Gaza today – under the bombs supplied to Israel by U.S. imperialism's Biden-Harris administration – face a desperate daily struggle for survival. Driven from one part of the besieged enclave to another, feeding their children becomes nearly impossible. Homes, hospitals and entire neighborhoods have been reduced to rubble, with families buried beneath the ruins. With critical water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure devastated, disease is rampant. Famine looms, and the starva-

tion is intentional.¹ To students here who wonder about students there: in Gaza as of the end of July, almost 10,000 students and 500 teachers and university professors had been killed, according to U.N. statistics. The massive overall death toll grows daily. This is a *genocidal U.S./Israel war*.²

The sealing off of Gaza and mass killing of its population build on the blockade in place since 2008, which Israel imposed as yet another phase in its efforts to make life unlivable for Palestinians. As for U.S. backing of the Zionist state,³ this is not just

some kind of misunderstanding – it is a strategic part of imperialist domination of the Middle East. U.S. rulers arm and fund these crimes while feigning sympathy for the women and children who are the most vulnerable targets of the bombs and fighter jets they supply.

Now bourgeois feminists who wanted Hillary Clinton to become Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism in 2016 hope to pass that torch to Kamala Harris. On college campuses this fall, promoters of the Democratic Party will be ramping up the hype for the VP of "Genocide Joe" Biden. Against them and in solidarity with the besieged people of Gaza, we will not cease to put front and center the fact that she shares responsibility for the slaughter with him and the whole two-headed Democrat/Republican capitalist government.

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¹ See "Israel Is Using Starvation as a Weapon of War," *The Nation*, 1 August, and "As Israel inflicts starvation, I am fighting to feed my baby in Gaza," *Al Jazeera*, 1 July.

² "Gaza Genocide Made in U.S.A.," *The Internationalist* No. 73, June-August 2024.

³ Zionism is the guiding ideology of the state of Israel, based on oppression of the Palestinian people.

Remember the Free Speech Movement! Stop Repression of Pro-Palestinian Students!

Fight Against Censorship At Hunter College Continues

Like a number of other items in this issue of *Revolution*, those printed below are related to struggles against the repression and attempted censorship that college administrations across the country have unleashed – in sync with capitalist politicians from the White House and Congress to governors' offices and city halls, seeking to intimidate and silence those protesting the U.S./Israel war on Gaza. Footnotes are reproduced from the originals.

The first item is a statement that the Internationalist Club at the City University of New York's Hunter College in Manhattan issued in defense of students who faced threats of disciplinary action for the alleged "offense" of briefly chanting against the war on the Palestinian people during a small on-campus protest on May 3.

The administration's response? Threatening to suspend the Internationalist Club for the 2024-25 academic year. The pretext: that the leaflet had (like innumerable other materials at Hunter) been posted on campus bulletin boards and, supposedly, "Flying is only per-

mitted for approved club events." There has been no such rule – and if they now create one, this would mean enshrining administration censorship and restriction of the most basic rights of students, faculty and staff.

The materials below describe the context and recent developments. Meanwhile, everything points to the need to step up the struggle to free the campus from the whole range of administration efforts to curtail, restrict, control and repress free speech and organizing by students, faculty and campus workers.

It's time to remember the famous Free Speech Movement that broke out in Berkeley, California on October 1, 1964. The catalyst: the UC administration was lashing out at "unapproved" political activity on campus, where activists were exercising free speech and academic freedom by flyering and organizing in solidarity with the black freedom struggle in the South. Sixty years later, let's commemorate that crucial history by fighting to reassert and defend those rights in the here and now.

sion of the Palestinian people (*Israelism*).¹ Now the Hunter administration has placed disciplinary charges against a number of students on the accusation of briefly chanting some slogans in defense of the Palestinian people on May 3 on the third floor of the Hunter West building, and hesitating before showing ID cards to Public Safety. This is flat-out ridiculous. **We demand that all the charges be immediately dropped!**

Anyone familiar with the Hunter campus will be struck by the location where these supposed "violations" of administration rules allegedly occurred. The third floor of Hunter West is a place where innumerable student and faculty/staff protests (often including speeches, chants and other exercises of free speech rights) have occurred over the years, as well as innumerable other events from big-band concerts to bake sales, tabling by clubs, faculty groups (and sometimes companies hawking their wares), etc. Clearly, it was the topic (defense of the Palestinian people) of students' chants there on May 3, and the fact that they occurred two days after CUNY called the cops onto City College, that underlies the ridiculous and arbitrary charges our fellow students face for exercising their right to protest this war.

Lastly, we would like to note the pretext for the disciplinary measures: supposed violations of CUNY's "Henderson Rules." In reality, the administration is stretching and distorting even those rules. We must also all be aware that the very purpose of the Henderson rules – decreed by the Board of Trustees amidst the historic 1969 upsurge of CUNY student protest against racism and the Vietnam War – has always been to provide pretexts for repression and undemocratic restrictions, strengthening the control of CUNY campuses by unelected and arbitrary authorities hand-picked by the capitalist elite. Together, students, faculty and staff must protest the ongoing attacks on basic rights at CUNY and other campuses, which includes demanding the immediate and unconditional dropping of all legal and administrative charges against all those targeted by the repression against pro-Palestinian protesters.

An injury to one is an injury to all.

Hunter Internationalist Club, 22 May 2024

¹ See CUNY Internationalist Clubs leaflet, "McCarthyite Film Ban at Hunter College Struck Down by Student/Faculty Protest," 30 January, reprinted on p. 5 of this issue.

Campus Union Denounces "Serious Blow" to Student Rights

Reprinted below is a letter that the executive committee of the Hunter College chapter of the CUNY faculty/staff union sent to the campus administration on June 3.

We are writing with regard to two related issues of considerable concern to us as the elected leadership of the Hunter College chapter of the Professional Staff Congress. Both are related to freedom of expression.

1) Approximately 6 students are reportedly facing discipline, after a brief protest in solidarity with Palestine on the third floor of Hunter's West building on May 3. There have been gatherings of many kinds in that same location many times over the years, including some involving our union chapter, and the chanting of slogans has often occurred there. Disciplinary measures against students accused of participating in the May 3 protest is reportedly being pursued currently, as the students did not agree to write letters essentially confessing to their alleged violations of college rules.

2) The Internationalist Club at Hunter College, which has a long record of supporting the activities of our union chapter, has been threatened by the Office of Student Activities with a one-year suspension on the accusation of having posted a leaflet calling for the dropping of disciplinary charges against the above-mentioned students. This is a serious blow to student freedom of expression and would establish a precedent detrimental to all members of the Hunter community.

Especially alarming is the fact that these recent incidents at Hunter echo the increasing encroachments on the rights of faculty, students, and staff at many campuses throughout the U.S. today, including at our own university. We call on the Hunter administration to a) drop all disciplinary measures against the students allegedly involved in the May 3 protest, and b) rescind the threat to suspend the Internationalist Club.

Sincerely,

Executive Committee, Hunter College Chapter
Professional Staff Congress

On June 12, the Hunter administration officially stated that it "will not file" disciplinary charges against the six students.

As for the threat of suspension against the Hunter Internationalist Club, this has still not been rescinded. With over two decades of existence at Hunter, during which it has repeatedly faced previous instances and threats of administration repression, the club won't be silenced as it continues to defend the rights of all who work and study at CUNY.

Internationalist Club statement (22 May, reprinted above left) protested Hunter admin's censorship. Their response? Threat to suspend the Club for a year. The pretext? It got posted on bulletin boards (see photo). Will we stand for this? No. And neither should you. Remember the Free Speech Movement!



At Hunter, CUNY and Other Campuses: Drop the Charges and Disciplinary Measures Now!

MAY 22 – Across the country, campus protests against the U.S.-armed and funded war on the Palestinian people have been met with police repression and brutality, McCarthyite witch hunting and administrative reprisals that threaten basic democratic rights of students, faculty and staff. At CUNY, the administration called the notorious NYPD onto the City College campus on the night of April 30-May 1 to violently dismantle the Gaza solidarity encampment, with close to 200 protesters (including the president of Hunter College's undergraduate student government and four members of the Hunter Internationalist Club) among those arrested.

Here at Hunter College, we and many other student activists have organized against repression and censorship, together with participating in and initiating speak-outs, protests and other events against the

U.S./Israel war on Gaza. Together with CUNY-wide solidarity, we call for the faculty/staff union together with students to hold a mass student/labor march, bringing in all area campuses and key sectors of city labor, demanding that charges be dropped against all the arrested pro-Palestinian protesters, cops off campus, and an end to police lockdowns and occupations. Defenders of democratic rights must also oppose outrageous attempts to pressure students to sign confessions/"apologies" for protesting this genocidal war ("Why Is N.Y.U. Forcing Protesters to Write Apology Letters," *New York Times*, 17 May).

Last semester, the Hunter administration made headlines and unleashed a storm of protest by flagrantly violating academic freedom with its cancellation of a faculty-sponsored screening of a film critical of Israel's oppres-

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

<http://www.internationalist.org>

Write to the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth:
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Write to CUNY Internationalist Clubs: cunyinternationalists@gmail.com

Revolution



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Hunter College Students, Faculty Demand: “NYPD, Out of CUNY Now!”

Speak-Out Against Repression of CCNY Gaza Solidarity Encampment

On May 1, the Internationalist Clubs at the City University of New York held a speak-out outside Hunter College, bringing out approximately 200 students and 20 members of the CUNY faculty/staff union, to protest the New York Police Department’s violent dispersal of Gaza solidarity encampments at City College and Columbia University the previous night and early that morning. The NYPD attacks were part of the nationwide wave of repression launched by university administrations, as well as state and local politicians, who unleashed the cops to brutalize and disperse campus protests against the joint U.S./Israel genocidal war on the Palestinian people. Taking its cue from the Democratic administration of “Genocide Joe” Biden and far-right Republican witch-hunters in Congress, this repression is part of the “home front” of this war.

The repressive onslaught reached CUNY on the night of April 30, when the NYPD raided City College, site of an encampment established five days earlier. The cops’ occupation of the historic CCNY campus began hours after units from the NYPD’s Special Operations Bureau stormed onto Columbia University, about a mile downtown, to dismantle the Gaza encampment there. Just before midnight, riot-clad cops from the notorious Strategic Response Group entered CCNY and proceeded to destroy the encampment and brutalize student and faculty demonstrators. Some protesters were pepper-sprayed, others ruthlessly pummeled; a 73-year-old adjunct professor had a rib broken and her knee injured. A number of Muslim women students reportedly had their hijabs ripped off by the cops.

In the face of the capitalist rulers’ attempt to use state repression and slander to silence students into conformity with U.S. imperialism’s war aims, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs say: **Drop all charges against pro-Palestinian demonstrators! Cops and security guards off campus – NYPD out of CUNY now!** We demand the

ouster or resignation of CUNY chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez and City College president Vincent Boudreau for calling the NYPD onto the CCNY campus to carry out this attack on CUNY students’ right to protest this U.S.-backed, armed and funded war. Defense of the basic rights of those who work and study at the largest urban public university in the U.S. requires **massive protest action by students, faculty, and staff at CUNY and beyond, linked to the power of NYC’s multiracial working class.**

The role of the Democratic Party in the current campaign of repression is underscored by the fact that the police invasion of the Columbia campus, right before their invasion of CCNY, was instigated by a group of 21 congressional Democrats who in a letter on April 29 warned the Columbia administration: “It is past time for the University to act decisively [and] disband the encampment.... The time for negotiation is over; the time for action is now.” Called in by the Columbia administration, the NYPD arrived to assault demonstrators on the night of April 30, anniversary of the violent police attack on Columbia’s 1968 student strike against racism and U.S. imperialism’s war on Vietnam.

With students now protesting yet another U.S. war, as U.S.-supplied bombs and planes rain death on the people of Gaza, on April 30 the cops violently cleared the Columbia encampment and the student occupation of Hamilton Hall, renamed “Hind’s Hall” by protesters to memorialize the six-year-old Palestinian girl Hind Rajab, shot dead, together with two paramedics who tried to save her, by Israeli troops in Gaza. Police wielding high-powered saws forced their way into Hamilton Hall through the main entrance, while militarized cops used a ramp on an armored tactical truck to enter through a window. Within the building, cops employed “flashbang” stun grenades against protesters before beating them – and one police officer fired his gun (allegedly by accident).

By 8 p.m. that night, large deployments



Revolution photo

On two hours’ notice, almost 200 students and faculty joined emergency speak-out called by CUNY Internationalist Clubs at 12 noon, May 1, against arrests of pro-Palestinian protesters at CCNY hours earlier.

were gathering outside the gates of City College on Convent Avenue in Harlem. Soon they had virtually sealed off the campus. Inside, CUNY Internationalists who were part of the encampment were among those holding up signs facing onto the street and chanting in defiance of the impending police incursion. Other Internationalist activists arrived rapidly and other students and faculty from Columbia, CUNY and elsewhere joined crowds outside the gates to protest the police crackdown. After launching repeated attacks on these protesters, the NYPD burst into CCNY, “swept” the encampment on the quad, deployed its riot gear, clubs and fists, and shortly after midnight seized about 170 of the total of approximately 300 arrested at Columbia and CCNY that night.

Sitting beside top NYPD officials at his press conference the following morning, held at One Police Plaza, Democratic mayor Eric Adams bragged that a total of nearly 300 people had been arrested in this coordinated police operation at the two campuses. Deploying a timeworn reactionary smear, he

grotesquely and ludicrously claimed that the protests were the work of “outside agitators” and “professionals.” He went on to call the flying of a Palestinian flag at the encampment “despicable,” launching a jingoistic tirade in which he praised the NYPD for tearing it down and raising the star-spangled banner of U.S. imperialism there. “That’s our flag, folks,” declaimed the mayor, himself a former captain in the NYPD, ranting: “We are not surrendering our way of life to anyone.”

Four members of the Hunter Internationalist Club were among those arrested in the NYPD’s forcible eviction of the CCNY encampment. From the beginning of the encampment, CUNY Internationalists were present day and night to put forward a revolutionary program for workers action to defeat the U.S./Israel war and for a binational Palestinian Arab-Hebrew workers state as part of a socialist federation of the Middle East. Comrades remained there until the very end, chanting alongside other protesters as they were shoved and forced into handcuffs by the cops, “This is for Gaza!”



Revolution photo

“Anti-terrorism” police of NYPD Strategic Response Group mass outside entrance to the City College of New York (CCNY) late on April 30.



Revolution photo

CUNY Internationalist Clubs at CCNY before police bust early on May 1. Four club members were among the 170 protesters arrested.

Hunter Students and Faculty Speak Out

Early on the morning of May 1, CUNY Internationalist Clubs activists protested outside the CCNY campus demanding “Cops Off Campus” and the dropping of all charges against those arrested. A little before 10 that morning, we issued a call to hold a speak-out rally under the slogan “Protest NYPD/CUNY Repression Against Pro-Palestinian Demonstrators,” to be held at noon at CUNY’s Hunter College.

After intensive fliering by Club activists, a crowd of students together with members of the Professional Staff Congress faculty/staff union, several of whom are part of the Hunter PSC chapter’s executive committee, gathered outside the main campus building. Our ability to bring out Hunter students and unionists on short notice reflects the Internationalists’ years of work there mobilizing students against racist oppression and imperialist war, and on many other issues. This includes our speak-out the previous semester against McCarthyite witch-hunts and role in the campaign against the administration’s cancellation of the faculty-sponsored screening of *Israelism*, a film critical of Israel, which made headlines and drew nationwide interest.¹

At the Hunter protest, students chanted “Defend Gaza Against Israeli Terror!” and “NYPD out of CUNY Now!” Occurring as it did on International Workers Day, the speak-out featured several speeches that connected the fight against police repression and the war on Gaza to the struggle of workers around the world. An important aspect was helping inform students and unionists about the appeal by the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions for *international labor action* against the U.S./Israel war.

The protest was emceed by Kaitlan from the Internationalist Club, who kicked it off by denouncing the repression of the CCNY and Columbia encampments by servants of the capitalist ruling class, from its politicians and university administrations to one of the most infamous police forces in the country. She linked present-day protests today to the events of 1968 at Columbia, and the following year’s CCNY student strike, launched by black and Puerto Rican students, which led to a crucial gain (later reversed by the racist city rulers): open admissions at CUNY.²

“Demonstrators were thrown down. They were beaten. They were pepper-sprayed. They were dragged out.... [Yet] yesterday was a very special day: anyone know what happened on April 30th, 1968? Students at Columbia University were outraged at the Vietnam War, and they were taken down by the NYPD. Columbia likes to reminisce about its ‘mistake’ of 1968, but yesterday they did the same thing.

“Similarly, CUNY likes to reminisce about the 1969 struggle to open admissions and for no tuition. Yet they repress student demonstrators exercising their right to oppose this war! Are we opposed to this war, to the slaughter, the bombing of Palestinians that is funded and supported by the United States? [Crowd yells “Yes.”] We’re here because we’re opposed to this war; to repression by the CCNY adminis-

tration, by the CUNY administration and the NYPD, of our brothers and sisters here at CUNY, at Columbia, and at UCLA.”

Izzy, another Club member, described the scene of police violence outside City College the previous night as well as efforts in defense of the arrested students:

“I saw police kettle us, riot cops gather around, hundreds of them, slowly pushing us in, detaining us. I wasn’t able to see much of what was happening inside the gates of CCNY; my comrades and friends from the Internationalist Club at Hunter were inside there. We on the outside remained there as long as we could until the police split us up and we were made to disperse.

“When the SRG [Strategic Response Group] rushed in to beat people, they were grabbing people by the hair, beating people with nightsticks and making arrests. I went to One Police Plaza at 3 a.m. and later at 6 when [arrestees] were released. “What happened was a brutal display of violence towards protesters, towards students demonstrating against a blatant genocidal war, against the bombs that level Palestinian neighborhoods in Gaza.”

Mateo, one of the four Hunter Internationalist Club members arrested at the City College encampment, expressed outrage at the brutality of the NYPD repression ordered by the CUNY administration, and urged students to join the fight against the war on the Palestinians. “This fight does not end here,” he said. “Students must continue to mobilize against this repression and call on NYC workers all over the city to mobilize and not only defend the students, but to defend Gaza.”

The following speaker was Lydia, a member of United Auto Workers Local 2179 who was active in the successful unionization drive at Brooklyn’s Nitehawk Cinema. She spoke of the role of Democratic politicians like Governor Kathy Hochul and Mayor Eric Adams in instigating and ordering the repression of pro-Palestinian students. After highlighting the need to mobilize workers’ power to stop the shipment of arms to Israel, she highlighted the call by the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions for international labor action: “For the workers and trade unionists of Palestine, this is their demand for all of us as international workers. And we are here to answer their call, as you are all here today to answer the call of those who were arrested last night.”

Internationalist Club speakers linked the CUNY/NYPD repression to the previous semester’s months-long struggle to defeat interim Hunter College president Ann Kirschner’s cancellation of the screening of the *Israelism* documentary organized by Hunter’s Film and Media Department and Arabic Program. Among faculty speakers at the rally were several who had been active in that struggle and members of the executive committee of the Hunter PSC including chapter chair Jen Gaboury. Professor Chris Stone of the Arabic Program described the “unacceptable and horrifying” police assaults on student demonstrators he had witnessed the previous night. Renowned Hunter filmmaker Tami Gold connected the war on Gaza to the long history of U.S.-backed military coups in Latin America as well as attacks on immigrant rights. She also spoke about New York State’s notorious Taylor Law, which bans public sector workers – including CUNY faculty and staff – from going on strike.

Referring to the denunciations of the protests by Mayor Adams and the CUNY administration, Gold said: “In the media today, newscasters were saying most of the organizing is done by ‘outside agitators.’ So I’m going to ask: Are you ‘outside agitators?’” The crowd corresponded with an emphatic, “No!” Several shouted: “We’re students!”

A member of Class Struggle Education Workers linked the fight against the genocidal war and police repression to the broader struggle of the working class, speaking to the significance of May Day, international workers day, and the bravery of immigrant workers who have played a crucial role in the history of the labor movement. Addressing comparisons between protests against the Vietnam war and today’s protests against the barbarous war on Gaza, he emphasized that it was not peace marches, let alone votes for “lesser-evil” candidates, but the victorious revolution of Vietnamese workers and peasants that inflicted a major defeat on U.S. imperialism.

He then spoke of the lessons of the 1999 strike at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Workers action in solidarity with students was decisive – in the face of threats by the army to invade Latin America’s largest university – to winning the strike’s central objective of preventing the establishment of tuition.

“When the World Bank tried to force the



Revolution photo

Bringing revolutionary program into the struggle. Internationalist tent at CCNY Gaza encampment.

Drop Charges Against the CCNY Arrestees!

Of the more than 170 people arrested in the police repression of the CUNY Gaza solidarity encampment on the night of April 30/early May 1 (see article on page 3), 27 were subsequently charged with felonies, with potential sentences of up to seven years in prison, by Manhattan DA Alvin Bragg. On July 25, ten decided not to accept a “deal” from the DA’s office to dismiss the charges and for six months’ probation, provided they meet certain requirements. Their case will proceed to grand jury action in September. The CUNY Internationalist Clubs and the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth demand: Drop all charges against the arrested protesters, now!

Mexican government to impose tuition and the Mexican government said, ‘Yes sir, Uncle Sam!’ the students went on strike and they took over the university. And when the Mexican army with U.S. weapons threatened to invade the campus, some students [from the Grupo Internacionalista] went to the electrical workers and asked them to form a workers defense guard, 24-hours a day, to surround the campus. And if the army invaded, those workers could turn off the switch – they could turn off the electricity for all of Mexico City. As a result, UNAM is still free.

“I want to say something about the Taylor Law. Those of us who work at CUNY, we need to smash, rip up, tear up and bury forever that law administered by the Democratic and Republican parties of U.S. imperialism and capitalism. To do that, we need to reach out to and connect with the power of the working class of this city, and with the thousands and hundreds of thousands of undergraduate students....

“If we talk about capitalism, we need to talk about what to do about it. What needs to be done is to break with all of the capitalist politicians – Democrat, Republican, Green or whatever – and build a revolutionary workers party, to carry out a socialist revolution.”

Our call on students to join with the struggle of the working class here in New York and around the world echoed inspiringly later that afternoon, when many Hunter students joined the Internationalist contingent of 75 people at the citywide May Day rally and march in downtown Manhattan. As chants reverberated through the streets, we connected our International Workers Day call for labor action in defense of the Palestinian people to our slogan, “Asian, Latin, Black and White: Workers of the World, Unite!” ■

SPEAK-OUT 12 NOON TODAY OUTSIDE HUNTER COPS ARREST STUDENTS AT CCNY, COLUMBIA AND ELSEWHERE PROTEST NYPD/CUNY REPRESSION AGAINST PRO-PALESTINIAN DEMONSTRATORS

Late last night, the NYPD arrested dozens of protesters at CUNY’s City College campus and at Columbia University. Hundreds of cops dressed in riot gear aggressively confronted the protesters, throwing many to the ground and beating some. This came hours after a statement from the CUNY administration threatening the CCNY Gaza solidarity encampment that had begun a week prior. Now CCNY and Columbia are locked down under NYPD occupation. Across the country, police, security-guard and administration repression has been spreading against students protesting in defense of the people of Gaza imprisoned, starved and massively bombed by U.S.-supplied weapons.

The CUNY Internationalist Clubs calls on *students, faculty, staff, clubs, groups, etc. to come speak out in protest against the repression* of pro-Palestinian demonstrators, demanding the immediate end of the NYPD occupation of CCNY and Columbia, and the dropping of all charges against the arrested protesters. Repression has ramped up across the country, as Democratic president “Genocide Joe” Biden smeared and denounced protesters, while Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives Mike Johnson staged an inflammatory speech at Columbia, where he said the National Guard should be called in to disperse the encampment if the protests weren’t stopped.

On this May Day, the International Workers Day, workers around the world are coming out in solidarity, with defense of the besieged Palestinian people being one of their key themes. This power must be brought to bear against the genocidal U.S./Israel war on Gaza – with yet another air-strike on the city of Rafah last night – and in defense of our right to protest. We Internationalists say: *Arab, Jewish, Black and White – Workers of the World Unite*. The power of NYC labor must be brought into the struggle to defend the student protesters, now! Following the 12 noon speak-out outside Hunter, and other protests, we also invite you to come to the May Day rally and march called for 4 p.m. at Foley Square.

NYPD out of CUNY now! CUNY, Columbia, NYPD: stop arresting students! The escalating acts of repression against pro-Palestinian protesters are a threat to the rights of us all, including here at Hunter, throughout CUNY and beyond. **Come out today in front of the Hunter West building at 12:00 noon and speak out against this!**

For more information: cunyinternationalists@gmail.com Labor donated

Leaflet of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs calling emergency speak-out at noon on May 1 to protest the middle-of-the night arrest of 170 CCNY Gaza encampment participants and defenders.

¹ See “Hunter College Speak-Out Defies Intimidation Campaign,” 12 November 2023, and “McCarthyite Film Ban at Hunter College Struck Down By Student/Faculty Protest,” 17 March, at igclassstruggleblogspot.com.

² See “How Open Admissions was Won in 1969,” *Revolution* No. 6, April 2009.

Defend the Palestinians! Defeat the Witch Hunters!

McCarthyite Film Ban at Hunter College Struck Down By Student-Faculty Protest



Revolution photos

15 November 2023: At Hunter Senate addressed by college's then-president Ann Kirschner (on screen, right), Internationalist Club activists protest her cancellation of faculty screening of documentary critical of Israel.

The following Revolution leaflet was distributed early last semester.

JANUARY 30 – As the genocidal U.S./Israel war on Gaza rages on, with the official death toll nearing 27,000, campus administrators have joined government authorities in the drive to stifle expressions of solidarity with the besieged Palestinian people. For months Gaza has been subject to terror bombing, brutal ground assaults, deliberate starvation, the targeting of hospitals and journalists, and the violent uprooting of the vast majority of its 2.3 million people. The mass murder armed and funded by U.S. imperialism – headed by the Democrats' "Genocide Joe" Biden, soon to face off against all-purpose bigot Donald Trump – is awakening large numbers of youth to the nature of the capitalist society we live in.

As the new semester begins at the City University of New York, pro-Palestinian activists seek to redouble their efforts. A crucial part of the struggle is building cross-campus solidarity against the ramped-up repression – part and parcel of the U.S./Israel war – that brings to mind the McCarthyite bans and witch hunts of the Cold War period. At Hunter College, CUNY Internationalist activists were centrally involved in last semester's fight to defeat the college president's attempt to stop the screening of a film critical of Israel.

We link the struggle to defeat the U.S. rulers' "war censorship drive" to our call for *workers action to stop the arms shipments*, as part of the fight to *bring out the power of the international working class* to defend Gaza and to defeat the genocidal U.S./Israel war against the Palestinian people.

Campus Repression on U.S. War's "Home Front"

School administrations across the country have shown yet again that U.S. imperialism's wars abroad mean increased repression on the "home front." In early November, NYC's Department of Ed issued a gag order on teachers discussing Gaza. The Biden administration's own Department of Education soon announced that it would launch investigations of schools, promot-

ing the vile lie that opposition to Zionism (the official ideology of the state of Israel, based on oppression of the Palestinian people) is equivalent to anti-Semitism.

In early December, self-styled "ultra-MAGA" Republican congresswoman Elise Stefanik, from upstate New York, led a Joe McCarthy-style congressional inquisition against the presidents of MIT, Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania. Her witch hunt was immediately echoed by Democratic NY governor Kathy Hochul, who threatened "aggressive enforcement action," including a probe of CUNY, with the pretext of the false and slanderous claim that protesters against the genocidal war on Gaza have supposedly fueled a wave of anti-Semitism on college campuses. In reality, those who back Israel's war and identify it with Jewish people in general are fueling anti-Semitism – as does Stefanik, notorious for using the anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant "great replacement" conspiracy theory in her campaign ads.

Beginning in October, many private universities suspended Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) chapters, including Brandeis, Rutgers and George Washington University. At Columbia, both SJP and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) were suspended. The Barnard administration removed a faculty statement titled "Solidarity with Palestine" from a departmental website.

At CUNY, administrators ran rampant, with the chancellor smearing and targeting pro-Palestinian demonstrators with the claim that they supposedly "glorify" violence. At least three CUNY colleges prevented rallies in defense of the Palestinian people, while the Baruch administration cancelled a History Department teach-in on Gaza. At Hunter, "Public Safety" officers harassed a number of students and told the Muslim Student Association to take down a Palestinian flag and several posters. Meanwhile a "defamation truck" (aka "doxxing truck") parked outside Hunter and other campuses, vilely slandering faculty members as "anti-Semites" for signing a statement titled "We Reject the Palestine Exception to Free Speech at CUNY."

Now on January 19, Columbia stu-

dents protesting the war on Gaza were attacked by two former members of the Israeli military, who sprayed them with a dangerous chemical, causing multiple hospitalizations for nausea, burning eyes and headaches. Solidarity against this vicious attack is crucial for us all.

Hunter President Cancels Israelism Screening

As repression escalated in the fall, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs built a speak-out protest on November 7 outside Hunter College, titled "Stop McCarthyite Witch Hunts at CUNY and Other Campuses!" Club activists publicizing the event soon experienced new examples of why the protest was needed. At CCNY, security officers took down the speak-out fliers and demanded the ID of an activist who was posting them. At Baruch, after being harassed by pro-Israel students, two Internationalists had the fliers ripped out of their hands by an older man who yelled to get off "his" campus.

Undeterred, over 100 students and faculty attended the November 7 Hunter speak-out and marched around the Hunter West building chanting "Defend Gaza Against Israeli Terror," "Joe Biden Is a War Criminal" and "Arab, Jewish, Black and White – Workers of the World Unite," in defiance of the witch hunters. (See "Hunter Speak-Out Defies Intimidation Campaign," igclasstruggle.blogspot.com.)

One week after the speak-out, on November 14 Hunter College's interim president Ann Kirschner unilaterally canceled the long-programmed screening by the Film and Media Department and Arabic Program of a film titled *Israelism*, on the pretext that her censorship was supposedly a response to "the danger of antisemitic and divisive rhetoric." The screening of this award-winning 2023 documentary, scheduled for that same evening in Hunter's Lang Recital Hall, had been organized by renowned Hunter film maker Tami Gold. The film follows two young American Jews raised in Zionist families, and the experiences visiting Israel that led

to their own realizations about how it has dispossessed, oppressed and brutalized the Palestinians.

Upon receiving the news that Hunter's president had canceled the film screening, a number of faculty union activists organized a meeting for that evening, which drew 60 students and faculty members from various departments and campus clubs, incensed at this blatant censorship. Though some Public Safety and high-level college officials stood outside the door as people gathered, the apparent attempt to intimidate attendees did not work. Professor Jen Gaboury, chair of the Hunter chapter of the Professional Staff Congress (CUNY faculty/staff union), read a statement by the chapter's executive committee characterizing the film cancellation as an "egregious and illegitimate violation of ... academic freedom." The statement emphasized: "This action taken by Acting President Ann Kirschner of Hunter College is unacceptable."

Greeting the campus union chapter's stance, students and faculty at the meeting decided to circulate a petition demanding that the president allow the film to be shown. After some debate, it was emphasized that rather than an end in itself, the



Poster for the 14 November 2023 film screening of *Israelism* documentary. On the day of the event, it was canceled by Hunter College president Ann Kirschner.



New documentary by filmmakers Jan Haaken and Jennifer Ruth, on “the fierce battle for academic freedom as campus administrators crack down on protesters,” covers Hunter College censorship fight. Interviewees include union leader Jen Gaboury and Internationalist Club activist Kaitlan Russell.

petition would be used as part of the drive to reverse the film ban. Most students, faculty and staff were still unaware of what the college president had done, and an in-person petition was a way to inform, talk with and organize them against this censorship, always emphasizing the link between campus repression and the war against Gaza.

The next day, ten students from the Hunter Internationalist Club attended a meeting of Hunter’s academic Senate – formally the principal governance body of the college – holding placards denouncing McCarthyite censorship and defending the right to protest in defense of the Palestinian people. When acting president Kirschner began to address the meeting over video call, the Internationalist activists stood and chanted, “Let the film be shown!”

Jen Gaboury of the PSC put forward the Hunter union chapter’s executive committee statement against the film cancellation, in the form of a resolution for the Senate to vote on. An intense debate followed, with an amendment then added to the resolution, demanding that the administration provide a large, suitable space for *Israelism* to be shown by the end of November. By a vote of 32 to 7 (with 16 abstentions), the amended resolution passed. Several faculty members spoke to us after the meeting to express the view that having vocal student activists present was crucial to the outcome.

Word about Hunter’s censorship of the film and the resulting outcry reached local and national publications, including the *New York Times* (“Hunter College Pulls Screening of Film Critical of Israel,” 16 November 2023), *Inside Higher Ed* and *PEN America*, as well as Hunter student publication *The Athenian*, which published a vivid account. The extent of coverage underscored that the struggle against the Hunter president’s outrageous ban was a significant front in a national (and international) fight for the very right to tell the truth about and organize against the oppression of the Palestinian people.

At Hunter, student activists intensively collected signatures, explaining that a battle over free speech – under sustained attack in the effort to stop protest against the U.S./Israel war on Gaza – was taking place at their school. Of the hundreds of students we spoke to, most were appalled to learn of the film ban and readily signed the petition. On the morning of November 27, over 1,000 signatures, overwhelmingly collected by Internationalist Club activists, were submitted to the president’s office, demanding that the film be shown.

Israelism Finally Shown (With Limitations)

Finally, as a result of the campaign of protest waged by students and faculty, Hunter issued an announcement that the screening of *Israelism* would be held, on

December 5 in the Lang Recital Hall. Yet even while backing down on her *de facto* film ban, Hunter’s acting president sought to control and circumscribe the showing.

For starters, the administration insisted that a rabbi moderate the event, drawing sharp protest from the original organizers, who protested having a religious figure with no expertise on the topic being imposed to run it. Kirschner then unilaterally excluded the Arabic Program, one of two co-sponsors of the cancelled screening, from co-sponsoring the December 5 event. In solidarity with their Arabic Program colleagues, the Film and Media Department withdrew its sponsorship. When another academic Senate meeting was subsequently held, Internationalist activists held up signs to protest the grotesque exclusion of the Arabic Program and highlight the call to defend the Palestinian people.

As the December 5 *Israelism* screening approached, Hunter authorities increased their efforts to control and circumscribe the event. It wasn’t until December 4, less than 24 hours before the screening, that an invitation to it was sent to Hunter students. The email contained no information on what the film was about, nor did it mention the president, even though it was now effectively her event. In order to be let into the hall, students and faculty had to RSVP and then show their IDs at the door. Yet the RSVP form was only open for a few hours, leaving many unable to attend.

Despite this, the space was filled to its 149-seat capacity. Throughout the event, campus security attempted to intimidate students and faculty. The head of Public Safety stationed himself right behind an Internationalist Club activist for the entirety of the screening and an officer wearing a jacket with a skull and crossbones patch stood at the main exit.

As the credits rolled, faculty and Internationalist Club activists stood up and handed out a flier linked to a chronology that faculty members had prepared, titled “Timeline of Events Leading Up to the Hunter Administration’s Co-option of the *Israelism* Screening.” When the discussion began, the audience was informed that no questions could be asked directly; instead, they had to be written on index cards that would be given to the moderator, Rabbi Andy Bachman. This new act of censorship gave the moderator, hand-picked by Hunter’s president, control over what questions were asked.

It soon became apparent that he had been chosen to run the event in order to give him multiple opportunities to push a pro-Israel agenda, seeking to counteract the message of the film, and to virtually drown out the film’s protagonist, who was sitting next to him on the stage. Ignoring or selectively “rephrasing” almost all questions from the large stack of cards in his hand, the “moderator” repeatedly inter-

rupted the film maker and the star of the film, anti-Zionist activist Simone Zimmerman, when they tried to answer.

The audience started to become agitated, and Professor Sarah Chinn of the English Department spoke up from one of the front rows, demanding that Bachman read people’s questions. A number of students then took the opportunity to speak. At the end of the discussion, Hunter adjunct and union activist Sándor John spoke, connecting the urgent defense of the Palestinian people to the fight against McCarthyism. He announced that students and faculty were planning a Palestinian film showing on campus before the end of the semester.

Activists Organize Palestinian Film Screening

In the aftermath of the Hunter president’s push to prevent and then co-opt the screening of *Israelism*, many of the students involved in the organizing efforts felt strongly that a second film screening should be held focusing on the experience of Palestinians living under the Zionist onslaught. This was also important in order to drive home the point that we refuse to let the college administration decide what can and cannot be shown, heard, discussed, etc. Internationalists and others stressed that it was crucial that this take place before the end of the Fall semester to demonstrate that defenders of Palestinian rights will not be silenced by McCarthyite methods of intimidation.

After intensive efforts, the Palestinian film screening was held on December 13, sponsored by an “Ad Hoc Committee for Academic Freedom and Against Censorship” and endorsed by the Bengali Student Association, Internationalist Club, Pakistani Student Organization, Palestine Solidarity Alliance and Revolution Film Club. Though we had only one day to promote the event, over 50 students and faculty members attended to watch two films by Palestinian filmmakers: *Where Should the Birds Fly?* (2013), a documentary centering on Israel’s 2008-09 war on Gaza, and *Fateneh* (2019), a short, powerful animated film about a Gazan woman seeking treatment for breast cancer.

Seats were quickly filled, with students and faculty crowding on the floor to attend. In the intense and passionate discussion period following these two very moving films, many attendees made important comments. Among CUNY Internationalists’ remarks, we described the Trotskyist program for international workers action against the U.S./Israel war on Gaza, and for a binational Arab/Hebrew Palestinian workers state as part of a socialist federation of the Middle East. Our comrades also emphasized that the role of “Genocide Joe” Biden and the whole Democratic Party highlights the urgency for all opponents of oppression to break with this and all capitalist parties

and politicians. We fight for a revolutionary workers party built on the program of international socialist revolution.

For Workers Action Against Israeli Terror

As increasing numbers of student youth are being politicized by the horrific images of unending Israeli terror against Gaza (as well as escalating attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank), revolutionary Marxists stress the importance of going beyond university bounds and orienting to the power of the working class, here and internationally.

In 2008, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union shut down all 29 West Coast ports, against the U.S. war on Iraq and Afghanistan. On January 13 of this year, longshore workers refused to cross a 3,000-strong picket against a military ship at the docks in Oakland, California. A recent resolution passed by the Painters and Iron Workers union locals in Portland, Oregon indicates the potential of workers action, stating in part:

“Working-class opposition to this U.S./Israel war goes hand in hand with the Labor motto, ‘An injury to one is an injury to all.’ ... We salute dock and transport workers in Barcelona, Belgium, Italy, and elsewhere who have stated their refusal to handle arms shipments for this war; and ... support and encourage efforts for such workers’ actions here in the U.S. to stop the arms shipments.”

The same Democratic-led imperialist government that backs, arms and funds genocide in Gaza is, together with its NATO allies, waging the ongoing proxy war in Ukraine against Russia, a way station toward war against China. In other words, as we emphasize in the current issue of *Revolution*, newspaper of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth. U.S. imperialism is driving toward World War III – and only socialist revolution can stop it.

There can be little doubt that repression against pro-Palestinian activists will continue to escalate, including on campuses this semester. After all, in the hallowed halls of capitalism’s Congress, the House of Representatives voted by a large majority on December 5 to officialize the bald-faced lie that “anti-Zionism is antisemitism.” Among them was witch-hunting Rep. Stefanik, purveyor of the anti-Semitic “replacement theory” spouted by white supremacists in Charlottesville in 2017 and the racist gunmen who murdered 10 black people in Buffalo in 2022.

The forces seeking to censor and stop pro-Palestinian protest are dangerous and powerful – but the multiracial working class has a greater power: to shut down and overturn the whole machinery of capitalist oppression. It is to this class power that radical-minded students must turn in the struggles to come. ■

Spartacist League: A Weird and Desperate Frenzy For Mass Student/Labor Action Against U.S./Israel War and NYPD Repression

Revolution photo



CUNY Internationalists at CCNY encampment early on May 1 as mass arrests loomed.

The following is a leaflet by the CUNY Internationalist Clubs that was distributed last semester.

MAY 11 – Late on April 30 and in the early hours of May 1, close to 300 students at Columbia University and the City College of New York were arrested, some beaten and brutalized, by the notorious NYPD, after university administrations called in the cops to “sweep” campus Gaza solidarity encampments. At CCNY, which is part of the City University of New York, protesters in the encampment and in the crowds outside the gates that rushed there in solidarity were assaulted. Hunter College student government president Bassrou “Bashir” Juwara was the first arrestee; young Muslim women reportedly had their hijabs pulled off by the thugs in blue; a 73-year-old adjunct professor had a rib broken and her knee injured. Plus innumerable other outrages.

The cop attacks were part of the nationwide onslaught, that is still continuing, incited by capitalist rulers from Democrat “Genocide Joe” Biden and Republican House of Representatives speaker Mike Johnson to New York governor Kathy Hochul and her fellow Democrat, NYC’s cop mayor Eric Adams. Against this, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs call for **mass mobilization of students, faculty and staff from all area campuses, together with powerful sectors of NYC labor, to demand: Drop all charges – Cops off campus! End the NYPD occupations/lockdowns!** As for CUNY chancellor Félix (“Felo”) Matos-Rodríguez and CCNY president Vincent Boudreau, who called in the cops, we say, **Felo and Boudreau must go!**

Four young activists from the Hunter Internationalist Club, including its president, were among those arrested at CCNY, charged and held overnight. From the encampment’s first day (April 25) through its forcible eviction by the cops, CUNY Internationalists stayed there night and day, putting forward our revolutionary program in defense of the Palestinian people, for international workers action to defeat the genocidal U.S./Israel war, and for a Palestinian Arab/Hebrew

workers state as part of a socialist federation of the Middle East. As the NYPD’s Strategic Response Group and hundreds of other cops were deployed in the buildup to the raid, more Internationalist Club members rapidly mobilized alongside other students and faculty/staff unionists outside the entrances sealed off by the police. Then after the arrests, at 6 a.m., Club members again protested outside the CCNY gates, denouncing the cop occupation of the historic campus and demanding the immediate freeing and dropping of charges against the arrestees.

Four hours later, at 10 a.m. on May 1, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs started distributing the flier we crashed out titled “Protest NYPD/CUNY Repression Against Pro-Palestinian Demonstrators,” calling for a speak-out protest at noon outside Hunter College’s West building. The speak-out drew close to 200 students together with members of the CUNY faculty/staff union, the Professional Staff Congress, DC37 and others. In addition to many students, the speakers included five members of the PSC’s Hunter chapter, with members of other union chapters attending too. Key to bringing out this

crowd on such short notice was the Clubs’ consistent and serious history with students, campus workers and faculty. Over the recent period, this included our 7 November 2023 rally against the McCarthyite witch hunts, playing a leading role in the successful campaign to defeat the administration’s attempt to ban the showing of a film critical of Israel’s oppression of the Palestinians (*Israelism*), helping build a Palestinian film festival on campus, and repeatedly bringing out Hunter students to innumerable protests against the war on Gaza.¹

At the noon protest on May 1, Club speakers emphasized a point highlighted in our flier calling the protest: “On this May Day, the International Workers Day, workers around

the world are coming out in solidarity, with defense of the besieged Palestinian people being one of their key themes. This power must be brought to bear against the genocidal U.S./Israel war on Gaza – with yet another air-strike on the city of Rafah last night – and in defense of our right to protest. The power of NYC labor must be brought into the struggle to defend the student protesters, now!” Concretely, this means well-organized mobilization of students together with workers and the mass-based organizations of labor (the unions). Speakers highlighted resolutions that our comrades in Portland, Oregon got passed in Painters Local 10, Ironworkers Local 29, the Portland Federation of School Professionals and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48, calling for “labor everywhere to stop the shipment of arms for this U.S./Israel war” and “for the immediate end to Isra-

¹ See “McCarthyite Film Ban at Hunter College Struck Down by Student/Faculty Protest” (17 March), on page 5 of this issue, and “Gaza Solidarity Encampments and Cop Repression Spread Across U.S.” (30 April) on internationalist.org.



NYPD outside entrance to CCNY on the night of April 30.

el’s bombing of Gaza; Israel out of Gaza and the West Bank; end all arming and funding for it now.”²

Enter the Spartacist League...

As for the Spartacist League, it put out three brief fliers for May 1, 2 and 3, calling to “Strike the Campus!” and for a walkout at Hunter College. There was no strike or walkout, and in response to their failure to suck one out of their thumb, the SL issued an unhinged leaflet (dated 2 May) that it passed out at Hunter, titled, “Just Asking: Is the Internationalist Club Opposed to a Walk-Out?” Mind you, this was the day after the CUNY Internationalist Clubs had organized an emergency speak-out on 2 hours’ notice to protest the busts earlier that day, which drew some 200 students and unionists, and where the SL had a speaker. Not a word about any of that, or our arrested comrades, in the SL’s bizarre and ranting leaflet.

This is from the used-to-be-revolutionary group going under the misnomer Spartacist League/International Communist League that sat out the mass protests against racist police terror after the murder of George Floyd. (We say misnomer because it has since renounced just about everything the SL/ICL once fought for.) The “new” SL denounces itself as having repeatedly betrayed the working class on a whole range of key issues, and is now rapidly embracing openly class-collaborationist politics. Those familiar with the spectacle of political degeneration of the SL/ICL won’t be surprised to learn that when the arrests came down on April 30-May 1, the Spartacist League was nowhere to be seen on the CCNY campus. (At Latin America’s largest university, the National University of Mexico [UNAM], they’ve never lived down their comrades’ similar absence when 1,000 students were arrested during the huge 1999-2000 strike that kept UNAM tuition-free.)

The SL’s 2 May tract trying to scapegoat the Internationalist Club for the SL’s failure to make good on its latest gimmick – a “strike” and walkout at Hunter which they apparently thought would materialize because they wanted it to – ignores the fact that it had no contact with Hunter campus unionists, let alone consultation with them, the Hunter workforce (or the arrestees), and that these fakers have no base or systematic work there in the past. The SL is not the only gimmick-prone outfit around. In recent years, petty-bourgeois groups like CUNY Struggle and Left Voice have proclaimed “walkouts,” immediate “strike” and/or “sick-out” calls, etc., seeking ever new stunts to go around the workers’ unions and with virtually no backing among the masses of undergraduate students. What actually does “stand as an obstacle to the necessary struggle” (to use a phrase from the SL’s 2 May leaflet) is the kind of performative unseriousness they display.

To repeat: we CUNY Internationalists are **for** real mass mobilizations (including an actual worker/student strike, which our comrades have fought for in the unions and among students at CUNY for years), including walkouts – which to actually happen re-

² See “Portland-Area Unions Call for Workers Action Against U.S./Israel War on Gaza” at www.internationalist.org.

Spencer Platt/Getty Images

quire serious organizing, preparation and roots.

The SL leaflet rants that we supposedly “undermine[d]” their efforts. This is an odd claim given that, immediately after our successful May 1 noon speak-out, a contingent of Internationalist Club activists made up the majority of the (small number of) students that attended a protest called by the SL at 2 p.m. that day. We had a speaker there, and two at a subsequent one they called on May 3. At the end of the May 3 protest, the SL announced a “planning meeting” to be held in the same location outside Hunter West on May 6. We showed up for that too – but the SL didn’t.

With its erratic behavior and unshakable belief that the world revolves around itself, and desperate to recruit some youth, no matter how, the SL is angry that, with a grand total of one student supporter at CUNY (none were part of its contingent of eight people at the huge Palestine march from Hunter into Central Park on May 6), reality has not obeyed its calls and wishes. Meanwhile, on the morning of May 6, over 60 faculty/staff unionists came out to protest in front of CUNY’s central office on 42nd Street, demanding “Drop the charges” and picking up a class-struggle militant’s chant of “Felo must go – Cops off campus!” What wasn’t there was the SL. As we continue to systematically bring out students against the police repression and the war on Gaza, class-struggle activists in the faculty/staff union are fighting for a *mass CUNY- and city-wide union/student march against the repression and witch hunts targeting pro-Palestinian protesters*.

At the SL’s small protest on May 1, we saw a microcosm of its galloping opportunism and latest gimmicks, which include boosting a caucus in the Democratic Socialists of America, an appendage of U.S. imperialism’s Democratic Party of genocide, whose star Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is boosting Biden for re-election; calling for an “anti-imperialist front” with the president of Mexico, who is acting as a border guard for the U.S., etc. Supporters of the “Revolutionary Communists of America” (RCA, formerly International Marxist Tendency), which had joined them in calling the 2 p.m. May 1 event, raised the chant, “The students united will never be defeated.” This is a studentist variant of the slogan of the popular front of class collaboration in Chile (“the people united...”) that paved the way for the 1973 military coup of General Augusto Pinochet. The SL loudly joined its RCA bloc partners in chanting this. It also did and said nothing when the RCA tried to shout our speaker down for referring to the IMT/RCA’s long record of supporting police and prison-guard “unions.”

Large numbers of student youth are being radicalized today as they seek a way to struggle effectively against the genocidal war on the Palestinian people armed, backed and funded by U.S. imperialism under the Democratic Party of Biden, Sanders, AOC & Co. It’s clear that to *defeat* the murderous onslaught against the Palestinian people, and to smash the capitalist system of imperialist war, racist oppression and exploitation, what’s needed is not only seriousness but a *fighting program* to do it. This program to link up with the power of the working class, and fight for socialist revolution here and around the world, is what the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, working with the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth (youth section of the Internationalist Group), are bringing into the struggle, in the protests, on the campuses, in our paper *Revolution*, our Marxist study groups and everything that we do. Join us in the struggle! ■



Palestinian woman carries her child amid buildings destroyed after Israeli attacks on Al-Maghazi refugee camp, Gaza, 6 November 2023.

Gaza Women...

continued from page 1

Many students, as we have seen across the country, want to take action to stop the mass murder in Gaza. Many have become increasingly politicized as they questioned the “official story” of the U.S. role in the world that they were taught, in which the crimes of the capitalist rulers around the globe are presented in humanitarian garb, “human rights” rhetoric,⁴ or sometimes in feminist garb. This highlights how crucial it is to see that the slaughter won’t be stopped by looking to the very same U.S. capitalist class that backs and perpetrates it. But looking to them is, frankly, what most current strategies boil down to.⁵

Instead, we need to turn to the power of the working class. The workers whose labor makes everything run in capitalist society have the power to carry out *strikes and labor actions against the shipping of arms to Israel* – an urgent call that Internationalist supporters in the unions are fighting for. This points to the need for a revolutionary political program, for unchaining workers’ power and breaking with the Democrats and all capitalist politicians. As part of this, we fight for women’s liberation through socialist revolution. And we call for *an Arab/Hebrew Palestinian workers state in a socialist federation of the Middle East*.

Where Should the Birds Fly? and Fatenah

At the City University of New York and elsewhere, we in the Internationalist Clubs work to bring this revolutionary program to students, who here at CUNY are mostly the sons and daughters of New York City’s working class. Last year’s fall semester highlighted the conflict of interests between CUNY’s administration and trustees – who are hand-picked by the city’s rulers and committed to U.S. imperialism’s alliance with Israel – and the students, faculty and campus workers who should control the university. When the acting president of

⁴ Seeking to rebuild the “moral” authority of U.S. imperialism after its defeat in Vietnam, Jimmy Carter (U.S. president, 1977-81) made “human rights” rhetoric a mainstay of the war drive against the former Soviet Union. In this crusade, for example, Carter and his Republican successor Ronald Reagan armed murderous enemies of women’s rights such as the *mujahedin* (“holy warriors”) in Afghanistan.

⁵ See “‘BDS’ Dead End: Liberal Divestment Schemes, No Road to Liberation of the Palestinian People,” *The Internationalist* No. 73, June-August 2024.

CUNY’s Hunter College, Ann Kirschner, unilaterally canceled a screening of the film *Israelism*, we protested together with other students and faculty. As a result, the ban was struck down. (See article on page 5.)

As part of asserting student/faculty rights to hold on-campus Palestine events, we and other activists followed up by organizing a showing of two Palestinian films right before final exams in December 2023. Drawing over fifty students and faculty members, though we only had a day to build it, the event’s impact was underlined during the discussion period by participants’ intense, thoughtful comments on the films. The first was *Fatenah* (2019), a short but powerful animated film about a Gazan woman seeking treatment for breast cancer. The second film shown that evening was *Where Should the Birds Fly?* (2013), a documentary about Israel’s 2008-09 war on Gaza.

Watching the two films, we saw that the current genocidal war draws on and escalates many of the deadly tactics that Israel used previously against the Palestinians. In late 2008, it launched an attack that killed at least 1,400 Palestinians and devastated large swaths of Gaza. As background to that attack, *Where Should the Birds Fly?* shows several aspects of Israeli oppression: the attacks on farmers working their fields, the violent harassment of fishermen, the use of bulldozers and U.S.-made missiles to attack Palestinian homes.

The heart of the film focuses on a ten-year-old girl named Mona, from the Zeitoun district in Gaza, who lost 21 members of her extended family during this time. Because of the Israeli attack, she and her family members, along with about 100 others, sought refuge in a building that was then targeted in an Israeli missile strike.



Fleeing Israeli air strike, Gaza City, 12 October 2023. Most of those killed in the war are children and women.

When asked, “Were many people killed in your family?” Mona replies: “Not many, just my mother, my father, both my sisters-in-law and my nephew ... my cousin and my neighbor.” Over and over again, the annihilation of Palestinian families has been a feature of Zionist ethnic cleansing.

Fatenah, which was the first-ever animated Palestinian film, also depicts unendurable realities of Israel’s oppression of the Palestinians. Inspired by a true story, it is about a young Palestinian woman struggling to receive proper medical care. “Last year I was very busy,” she says at the start of the film, “but now I am free and I can tell you my story.” Six months after finding a lump in her breast, Fatenah is finally diagnosed with breast cancer and begins her medical treatment.

However, she repeatedly runs up against Israeli restrictions, barriers and checkpoints, where she is delayed, harassed and humiliated by the Israeli military. Her parents try to visit her but are forced to turn back when they cannot pay the money demanded. When her tumor spreads, the Red Crescent ambulance transporting her comes under fire. The film ends with Fatenah dying in bed, surrounded by her parents as she looks out at the sea one last time.

“We know from the start that Fatenah does not make it through the film,” a prestigious British medical journal stated in its review.

“She dies from breast cancer. But that is just the final cause... She dies because the soldiers at the checkpoint will not let her cross into Israel to attend the hospital where she can get the care that she is entitled to. She dies because her local hospital does not have a constant supply of chemotherapy (it does not even have a constant supply of electricity). Fatenah dies because she falls ill and she lives in Gaza.”

– *The Lancet Oncology*, October 2009
And remember, this came out fourteen years *before* the present genocidal war.

Women Face the Genocidal Onslaught

Today, amidst Israel’s onslaught armed and funded by the U.S. government, only about a *third* of Gaza’s hospitals are even partially functioning, while medical and aid workers are continually being targeted and killed. For pregnant women, the situation is increasingly dire: from October 2023 to July 2024, fifteen percent of childbirths had complications, while the incidence of premature childbirth increased by 30 percent – and miscarriage rates shot up by a staggering 300 percent.⁶ Many women have to give birth in public bathrooms or in tents, with little to no medical assistance or privacy. Some have been subjected to Caesarean sections with no anesthesia due to widespread destruction of medical facilities and scarcity of surgical supplies.

The double oppression of women, as we Marxists emphasize, is a fundamental part of capitalist society. The effects of women’s oppression are further compounded by imperialist domination and national oppression, as Club members discussed in their presentation on Haiti during our International Women’s Day forum. Even before the current war on Gaza, women and girls there faced enormous burdens. And now, together with the rest of its 2.3 million people, they are in the crosshairs of this genocidal war.

⁶ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 3 July 2024; OCHA, “Gaza nine months on, pregnant women carry the burden of conflict,” 10 July.

Even the most intimate aspects of daily life are intertwined with the struggle for survival. The lack of clean water has made maintaining hygienic conditions for personal health, food and medical care extremely difficult. Basic personal hygiene supplies like soap and shampoo are increasingly rare and, if available, they are many times more expensive than before. There are reports of desperate mothers resorting to the use of sand to clean their children.⁷ Israel has prevented most aid from entering Gaza, and what little aid that does get through rarely includes menstrual hygiene products. Some women on their periods have had to resort to cutting up diapers, scraps of tents and other cloth to use instead, and this has put them at risk for infection. Painkillers are near impossible to obtain.

As part of the war on Gaza, women face multiple forms of sexual harassment and assault, including being stripped naked, searched by male Israeli officers, threatened with and sometimes subjected to sexual violence. This reality has been downplayed by the bourgeois press, while imperialist politicians have used their vast resources to spread every accusation or rumor that they find useful in dehumanizing the Palestinians. While Joe Biden dutifully parroted lies about having seen photos of beheaded Israeli babies, a falsification typical of imperialist war propaganda, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller claimed he could not “independently confirm the reports” that Palestinian women and girls had been sexually assaulted and threatened with rape by Israeli army officers.⁸

“Ethno-State” of Oppression

Israel’s apologists have long pitched it as “the only democracy in the Middle East,” even trying to dress up its predations in the garb of “democratic values” like women’s rights. For example, according to propagandists for Zionism, the conscription of women into the “Israel Defense Forces” supposedly proves that the country is a liberal democracy that safeguards “civilized” treatment of women. In fact, it is a religiously and ethnically based state and, as such, inherently discriminatory to Arab Muslims and Christians, who within Israel are second-class citizens, and in Gaza and the West Bank have no rights at all. As a religiously based state it is, moreover, inherently oppressive to Israeli Jewish women as well.

⁷ “Due to Israel’s siege, Gaza’s women are forced to use sand to clean their children,” *The New Arab*, 17 July.

⁸ U.S. State Department, “Department Press Briefing – February 20, 2024.”

With religious obscurantists’ ever-increasing weight in Israeli society, even the bourgeois press reports: “Growing Segregation by Sex in Israel Raises Fears for Women’s Rights” (*New York Times*, 12 August).⁹ Religious rightists in Israel are, of course, also virulently hostile to gay, lesbian and trans rights, while some liberal Zionists try to depict it as an “LGBT rights oasis.”

Some even seek to use this claim as ammunition for backing the genocidal war. In November 2023, a photo was posted on social media showing an IDF soldier holding a rainbow flag inscribed “In The Name of Love” – while standing over ruins in Gaza.¹⁰ “The first ever pride flag raised in Gaza,” stated the post on X, in yet another revolting attempt to present Zionist terror as the expression of some kind of liberatory force.

On July 29 of this year, ten Israeli soldiers were arrested due to a leaked surveillance video showing the gang rape of a male prisoner at the military’s Sde Teiman base. The Sde Teiman “detention facility,” where thousands of Gazan prisoners have been held, is notorious as a torture site. In reaction to the arrests, rightist mobs stormed the facility in support of the soldiers, while members of the cabinet and other Israeli politicians defended them.¹¹ So much for “civilization.”

Defend Gaza – For International Workers Action!

The genocidal war on Gaza represents the barbarism of the entire capitalist system, a system built on oppression, racism and war. It is being carried out in the context of U.S.

⁹ While many U.S. backers of Israel seek to distance themselves from current prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and religious-right and outright fascist members of his government, liberal/“Labor” Zionists have, since Israel’s inception, been among the bloodiest oppressors of the Palestinians.

¹⁰ “In Gaza, a photo of Israeli soldier raising a pride flag ‘in the name of love’ goes viral, ‘pinkwashing’ a war,” *The Conversation*, 26 November 2023.

¹¹ “‘Everything is legitimate’: Israeli leaders defend soldiers accused of rape,” *Al Jazeera*, 9 August.



A mother holds one of her two newborn children who were killed in Israeli air strike in Rafah, Gaza, next to their wounded father in one of the few functioning hospitals in the enclave.

imperialism increasingly threatening to engulf the planet in a Third World War. This is the reality of what we’re being asked to support when they tell us to vote for the latest imperialist candidate to supposedly save the world. In *Revolution*, we’ve discussed how the Democratic Biden-Harris administration has accelerated that drive toward WWII, in which the U.S./Israel war on Gaza and the U.S./NATO Ukraine war against Russia are way stations toward war against China. To stop this, the working class must intervene, which means we must fight for a socialist revolution here in the United States and internationally, including in the Middle East.

One of the central aspects of Marxist politics is that we draw a class line between the oppressed working-class masses around the world and the capitalist rulers that oppress and exploit them. In the U.S., the Democratic Party arming and funding the Gaza genocide has its feminist “front-women” such as Kamala Harris, her close friends Hillary Clinton, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez et al. Our opposition to them goes beyond helping educate youth about their real record and policies, though of course it’s important that we do that.

But something even more basic is involved: the *class line* we just mentioned. We and they are on opposite sides of it. They, like Biden, Trump and all bourgeois politicians, are representatives of the capitalist ruling class, and of the capitalist state that protects the capitalists’ property and social system. We stand for independent class politics, revolutionary Marxist politics, representing the interests of the working class and oppressed. They boast of being the “proudest patriots” of U.S. imperialism. We’re internationalists: we say, “Arab, Jewish, black and white – Workers of the world, unite!” And neither Harris, Clinton, AOC and the U.S. Congress nor the U.N. or “international community” of bourgeois states can be turned into forces for liberation, in Palestine or anywhere else.

But there is such a force. As we have emphasized, it is the *power of the working class* that must be brought to bear. Faced with the war on Gaza, that power must be unchained from support to any and all capitalist parties and politicians, and brought into the struggle to *defend Gaza* and to *defeat the U.S./Israel genocidal war*. Struggles for workers action against the war have been and are being carried out. Dock workers in Italy, for example, have carried out actions in defense of the Palestinian people. Four [now five] Portland, Oregon unions have adopted resolutions

for U.S. workers to stop arms shipments to Israel. Internationalist supporters in the union movement fight for this – it needs to be spread and put into effect. All this shows the need for revolutionary leadership.

The people of Gaza are imprisoned in a small enclave, with the Zionists’ threat to drive them into the desert looming over them. The attempt is to cut them off and isolate them in order to carry out Israel’s deadly ethnic cleansing campaign. But millions of workers in Egypt, Turkey, Iran and the rest of the Middle East have enormous potential power that can and must be brought into the struggle to break through this and defeat this horrific war. With regard to the Hebrew-speaking workers in Israel, revolutionary internationalists understand that to defeat Zionism it is necessary that they be broken away from the capitalist rulers running the deadly “garrison state” of Israel. This is no easy task, but it can and must be done as part of revolutionary upheaval throughout the region. All this is connected to our call for an Arab/Hebrew Palestinian workers state as part of a socialist federation of the Middle East.

We are up-front in putting forward our perspective that to win, the struggle needs to be international, and that this means it needs an internationalist program. Zionist and imperialist oppression and war can’t be defeated through a nationalist program. We are also up-front in saying that Marxists’ militant defense of Gaza in this war does not imply political support to the existing leadership, governmental or religious authorities. To give an example, after becoming the governing party in Gaza, Hamas – which Israel originally helped set up¹² – launched an oppressive religious “Virtue Campaign” to have gender segregation in schools, impose use of the hijab by women students at Al-Aqsa University and other restrictive measures.

As revolutionaries, we fight for the full emancipation of women everywhere, through class struggle. This is a central part of the program of socialist revolution. Over the next period, we will face the challenge of sharply exposing and opposing efforts to keep workers, youth and oppressed communities subjugated to U.S. imperialism through the genocide-arming Democratic Party of Biden, Harris & Co. For us, this is indispensable to our struggles as revolutionary internationalists – in solidarity with the heroic women of Gaza. ■

¹² See “The Origins of Hamas” in “Defend the Palestinians Against U.S./Israel Genocidal War on Gaza!” *The Internationalist* No. 71, June-October 2023.



Internationalist contingent in May Day 2024 NYC march calls for workers action to stop military cargo for genocidal U.S./Israel war on Gaza. September 2024

Then and Now: Democrats' War Abroad, Police Brutality at Home

The 1968 DNC Protests

By Sade

As the Democratic National Convention assembled this August, its organizers put final touches on the red-white-and-blue spectacle promoting “joy” for a new Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism. They hoped the stage show’s hoopla and slick graphics would blot horrific images of the U.S./Israel war on Gaza out of viewers’ minds, together with those of last spring’s violent police repression against pro-Palestinian campus protests. Yet the fact that the quadrennial imperialist shindig was being held in the city of Chicago inevitably harkened back to the infamous DNC of 1968. It too was held in Chicago, amidst nationwide protests against the mass murder being carried out by another Democratic administration: U.S. imperialism’s dirty colonial war on the workers and peasants of Vietnam.

In August of 1968, it seemed as if U.S. society was coming apart at the seams. With the military draft in full swing, the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam had reached over 535,000. In April of that year, Martin Luther King was assassinated. In June, Robert Kennedy. At Columbia University, police had violently removed student strikers protesting against the war and racism. Americans watched on TV as the U.S. dropped napalm bombs and burned villages in Vietnam in the name of “freedom” and “democracy,” while massive antiwar protests and “riots” against racist police terror occurred in one city after another. Internationally, the general strike of 10 million French workers in May ’68 dramatically showed the potential for socialist revolution.

Having assumed the presidency after the assassination of JFK in 1963, Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson claimed U.S. warships had been attacked off the coast of Vietnam, as a pretext to escalate the war. Despite the massive flow of U.S. weaponry and troops, the heroic fighters of the National Liberation Front (“Viet Cong”) were winning, as the NLF’s January 1968 Tet Offensive demonstrated to the world. Johnson, in the gutters of public opinion, decided not to run for reelection. Revolutionary Trotskyists called for the imperialists’ defeat and *victory* to the Vietnamese revolution. But (similar to most groups organizing protests at this year’s DNC), reformists saw the 1968 convention as “an opportunity to put on a lobbying ef-



Bethman Archive

Police attack protesters outside Conrad Hilton hotel during 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

fort aimed at the delegates.”¹

That effort reflected the growth of “bourgeois defeatism” among some capitalist politicians who had come to consider the war on Vietnam unwinnable. A number now postured as “peace” candidates. Leading up to the 1968 DNC, the Democratic Party was divided: Hubert Humphrey, who as LBJ’s vice president was directly co-responsible for the war (sound familiar?), was favored for the presidential nomination by those who wanted to “stay the course” in Vietnam. Opposed to Humphrey were supporters of “doves” (bourgeois defeatists) like Senator Eugene McCarthy, who sought an exit route from the war in order to better safeguard long-term imperialist interests.² A whole layer of ’60s activists responded to the call to “Get Clean for Gene” and do Democratic Party donkey work for his campaign.

¹ PBS Retro Report “1968 Democratic National Convention” (2020) interview with Tom Hayden, who eventually became a Democratic politician but in 1968 was a New Left organizer of DNC protests. (Another echo of the ’68 convention protests is the “Cease Fire Now” demand you can see in some photos of placards carried then.)

² For more on these topics, see “U.S. Imperialism’s War Crimes and Mass Murder in Vietnam” and “Vietnam: A Historic Defeat for U.S. Imperialism,” *Revolution* Nos. 10 (October 2013) and 15 (September 2018).

Imperialist War Abroad, Repression “At Home”

Planning to protest outside the 1968 DNC were thousands from a range of groups, from liberal and reformist outfits to Abbie Hoffman’s “Yippies” (who nominated an actual pig for president) to currents like Students for a Democratic Society that had moved to the left under the impact of the war. Chicago’s mayor (from 1955 to 1976) was Richard J. Daley, a notoriously corrupt and racist mainstay of the national Democratic Party machine determined to “keep order” in the city. This meant deploying 12,000 police officers backed up by 6,000 National Guardsmen and 7,000 army troops. Daley had previously deployed the forces of state violence on a massive scale in April. When black neighborhoods exploded in outrage after King’s assassination, the mayor called in the Guard and federal troops, while specifically instructing police to “shoot to kill” arsonists and “shoot to maim or cripple” looters.

From the first night of the Democratic convention, police violence was rampant, with the cops bloodying protesters and reporters in Lincoln Park and making a particular point of smashing news photographers’ cameras. TV news showed convention security officers roughing up Dan Rather, who was then a reporter for CBS news, while on the streets and in Lincoln Park the cops went

into a frenzy of brutality. (Documenting the cops’ “unrestrained and indiscriminate violence,” an official report later spoke of a “police riot” – though in fact the Chicago PD’s violence was ordered by Mayor Daley.)

In a detailed account, a journalist eyewitness reported:

“City hospitals were telling demonstrators not to bring their wounded to the regular hospital emergency rooms because cops were waiting at the door to jam the wounded into paddy wagons. The cops stormed into improvised hospitals ... and jerked transfusion needles out of arms and, broken bones or no broken bones, crammed the wounded into vans.”

– John Schultz, *No One Was Killed: The Democratic National Convention, August 1968* (1969)

Wednesday, August 28, the third night of the convention, was a bloodbath: Daley delivered on his promise to use force to prevent any protesters from gathering near the convention center. Thousands gathered on Michigan Avenue, near the Conrad Hilton hotel where many delegates were staying. Soon after, cops in riot gear, together with National Guardsmen, began their assault on the protesters. For 17 minutes straight, as filmed by news media, they mercilessly brutalized demonstrators, striking them to the ground with clubs, beating them with batons, then dragging them by their limbs to police vans. They used tear gas and Mace and spared neither reporters nor medics. As reported by *The New York Times* (29 August 1968):

“Even elderly bystanders were caught in the police onslaught. At one point, the police turned on several dozen persons standing quietly behind police barriers in front of the Conrad Hilton Hotel watching the demonstrators across the street.

“For no reason that could be immediately determined, the blue-helmeted policemen charged the barriers, crushing the spectators against the windows of the Haymarket Inn, a restaurant in the hotel. Finally the window gave way, sending screaming middle-aged women and children backward through the broken shards of glass.

“The police then ran into the restaurant and beat some of the victims who had fallen through the windows and arrested them.”

“Law and order” was their watchword. Scenes of the attacks interrupted TV coverage

Photo from Ken Burns’ documentary *The Vietnam War*.



Imperialist war on Vietnam. In January 1968, the National Liberation Front (“Viet Cong”) launched the Têt offensive. As U.S. forces counterattacked, a major was quoted saying it was “necessary to destroy the town to save it.” Israeli spokesmen cite U.S. tactics in Vietnam to justify leveling Gaza.



Life Magazine

Repression on the home front. During the August 1968 Democratic National Convention, the National Guard was mobilized to keep antiwar and civil rights protesters away from the meeting. Today, Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Kamala Harris try to outdo each other with “law and order” rhetoric.



Fred Hampton, leader of the Black Panther Party in Chicago, at a rally outside the federal courthouse in October 1969 protesting against the trial of the Chicago Seven, who were accused of conspiracy to riot during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. A little over a month later, on 4 December 1969 he was murdered in an FBI-instigated raid by the Chicago Police, in which Panther Mark Clark was also slain.

of convention proceedings and were broadcast across the world. The televised police violence against antiwar protesters on Chicago's streets was another example of how imperialist war abroad means escalated repression "at home." Less publicized was the fact that four months previously, at least nine people were killed, hundreds were injured and over 2,000 arrested when police savagely attacked residents of Chicago's black West Side community after the assassination of MLK.

As cops were brutalizing protesters on the streets, liberal Connecticut senator Abraham Ribicoff took to the convention stage to nominate George McGovern, one of the Democratic "doves," for president. (McGovern would subsequently become the Democratic candidate in 1972.) In a famous face-off, Ribicoff denounced the "Gestapo tactics" of the Chicago police and a gesticulating Daley yelled curses at him from the convention floor. Ultimately Johnson's man Humphrey would receive the nomination, only to lose in the November elections to Republican Richard Nixon, who claimed to speak for a "silent majority" turned off by protests and challenges to the status quo.

Aftermath

The upheavals of 1968 had a big impact on many young people as the Vietnam War and opposition to racist repression continued to polarize U.S. society. The decade had already seen the growth of the civil rights movement, rebellions against police terror from Harlem to Watts, the Cuban Revolution's defiance of liberal icon Kennedy's attempts to crush it, and a seemingly endless U.S. onslaught against Vietnam. Whole layers of youth who had once admired figures like JFK now despised and rejected the Democratic Party.

In March 1969, eight activists who had been leading figures in the DNC protests were indicted by a grand jury on charges of "conspiracy" and crossing state lines with intent to incite riots. Like the police brutality during the convention itself, this lurid frame-up trial had an impact on the consciousness of millions. Few could forget the image of defendant Bobby Seale, a co-founder of the Black Panther Party (BPP), gagged, bound and chained in the courtroom on the orders of the judge, who sentenced him to four years in jail for "contempt of court."

In December 1969, an agent that the Chicago Police Department had placed in the BPP laid the basis for the raid on the party's local headquarters in which Fred Hampton, one of the Panthers' foremost young leaders, was murdered together with party activist Mark Clark. The assassination was part of COINTELPRO, the FBI "counterintelligence program" in which dozens of Panthers were murdered or imprisoned on frame-up charges. One who is still in prison to this day is radical black journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal. Fighting for Mumia's freedom is an important part of the struggle against racist repression today. (See "Toward Black Liberation" in this issue of *Revolution*.)

In 1972, George McGovern won the Democratic presidential nomination (but lost to Nixon). The McGovern campaign accelerated the process seen in 1968's McCarthy campaign, channeling many young activists into the Democratic Party of the A-bomb in Hiroshima and napalm in Vietnam. Soon, the end of the draft would take the air out of the antiwar movement, while more than a few volunteers in McGovern's campaign made it a steppingstone toward a career in bourgeois politics. (Among them were Bill and Hillary Clinton, who worked together on the McGovern campaign; he would become Commander-in-Chief and she Secretary of State of U.S. imperialism.) Though shaken by the upheavals of the Sixties, U.S. politics continued under the stranglehold of the capitalist parties. The historic task of breaking that stranglehold and forging a revolutionary workers party remains on the agenda.

The U.S. war that brought the billy clubs of Chicago cops down on the heads of young protesters in 1968 caused the death of over 3 million people in Vietnam. "Peace" did not come through the machinations of Democratic imperialist politics. The victorious revolutionary struggle of the Vietnamese masses defeated the U.S. imperialists and in 1975 swept away the puppet "South Vietnam" regime they had installed.

And the Democrats? Fifty-six years after their 1968 convention nominated yet another war criminal, they – and their rivals/partners in imperialist rule, the Republicans – continue their genocidal crimes.

Both these aspects of '68's aftermath remind us that only revolution can bring justice. ■

Only Choice...

continued from page 1

U.S. imperialism's ruling parties?

The very real dangers and crises that face us are the product not only of the Democrat/Republican duopoly, in power for well over a century, but most fundamentally, of the terminal decay of the capitalist social system of exploitation, racism and war that they uphold. As *The Internationalist* (June-August 2024) points out, "in November, U.S. voters will have the 'choice' between immigrant-bashing fascistic Republicans preparing to introduce police state measures, and a Democratic ticket that smears pro-Palestinian protesters as 'antisemitic' and is careening toward a thermonuclear World War III. 'Pick your poison' is no answer. We say no vote to any capitalist party or politicians." The multiracial working class needs its own party, built on a program of class struggle, that fights for a workers government.

The urgent need for this is underlined by a resolution for a class-struggle workers party being put forward by militant labor unionists on the West Coast. The resolution was initiated by Class Struggle Workers – Portland, whose work has been key to bringing out labor's power against fascist, white-supremacist and misogynist provocations in the Pacific Northwest. CSWP supporters have won five area unions – mainly in the construction trades – to putting forward the call "for labor everywhere to stop the shipment of arms to this U.S./Israel war" on Gaza.

"Progressives" claim the answer to Trump's authoritarian threats is to vote Democrat. But **breaking with the Democrats** is essential to the ability of workers and the oppressed to actually defend ourselves against attacks on our hard-won rights. And as starkly highlighted by the Democrats' convention, their accelerating drive toward world war is literally an existential threat to us all. The CSWP resolution points out: "History in the U.S. and internationally has repeatedly shown that you can't fight threats to the basic rights of workers and oppressed people" if their power is "chained to the employers' parties and politicians." To continue that subordination today "will only deepen the threats facing the working people," including "the growing threat of a third world war against China and Russia that either a Democratic or Republican administration would continue to escalate." It calls to break with the bosses' parties and build a "class-struggle workers party to lead the struggles of the working people and all those ground down by capitalism."

We of the Internationalist Clubs at the City University of New York and the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth, which publish *Revolution*, couldn't agree more.

Harris for Prosecutor-in-Chief?

Well all right, readers will ask, but wouldn't the ascendance of an African American and Asian American woman to the presidency represent a notable shift in this racist society? When Barack Obama, the first black president, was elected in 2008, our comrades noted that this was a "considerable social change in this country founded on chattel slavery.... But this has

not changed the system of imperialist capitalism one iota."¹ The political meaning of Kamala Harris' 2024 presidential run is not to change but to preserve U.S. capitalism's oppressive status quo. Her career as a major player in the repressive machinery of the capitalist state, going back to her years as San Francisco DA and California attorney general, is the centerpiece of her campaign. With their pollsters claiming "Kamala the Cop' Doesn't Sound So Bad in 2024" (*Politico*, 23 July), "Democrats Want a Prosecutor-in-Chief Now" (*Time*, 23 August). A profile of their prosecutor presidential candidate was headlined "Ka-

Two days before he was murdered in December in an Israeli airstrike, the Palestinian poet Refaat Alareer posted on X, in response to a video in which Kamala Harris reaffirms Israel's "right to defend itself" as it rains death upon Gaza. Alareer's message read:

"The Democratic Party and Biden are responsible for the Gaza genocide perpetrated by Israel."



mala Harris and the Return of 'Tough on Crime'" (*New York Times*, 17 August).

As was front and center when millions marched against the murder of George Floyd, the police/judicial and prison apparatus of the U.S. injustice system enforces the oppression of black people, which is fundamental to U.S. society. And as with the war on Gaza, here too prosecutor/VP and presidential candidate Harris represents continuity with Biden, who wrote the Omnibus Crime Bill of 1994 (signed into law by Bill Clinton), which ramped up the mass incarceration system.

Among the speakers at the Chicago DNC were the Central Park Five, now known as the Exonerated Five, who were railroaded to prison on false charges of rape in 1989. The men spoke powerfully of how Donald Trump took out newspaper ads calling for their execution in 1989. But the Democratic Party's seeking to use their story to win votes is a bitter irony, given Harris' history of withholding evidence to keep innocent people incarcerated (see "The Rap Sheet of 'Top Cop' Kamala Harris," on page 14 of this issue) as well as the party's removal of opposition to the death penalty from its platform this year. As the Democrats' campaign hails the prosecutors, DAs and cops of America's racist frame-up system,² the basic truth is shown again: this system cannot be reformed – it must be uprooted through socialist revolution.

¹ "Obama Presidency: U.S. Imperialism Tries a Makeover" (also see "Barack Obama vs. Black Liberation"), *The Internationalist* No. 28, March-April 2009. In a gross and bizarre twist, Democrats have now set up "White Dudes for Harris" and a range of similar fundraising groups, which held separate Zoom calls, in what even the liberal *Daily Show* mocked as an effort to supposedly "make segregation progressive."

² At Harris' August 6 rally in Philadelphia, the first person she thanked was Ed Rendell, former Democratic National Committee head and a vocal supporter of her candidacy. Rendell used a stint as prosecutor in Philly as a steppingstone to being elected mayor of Philly and then governor of Pennsylvania. As District Attorney in 1982, he ran the frame-up prosecution of former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal, seeking and obtaining a death penalty sentence against Mumia, an innocent man. In 2011, this was changed to life in prison, where Mumia remains after more than four decades. See "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal," *The Internationalist* No. 46, January-February 2017.

“Out-Toughing” Trump on Immigration

Trump’s use of racist, sexist and anti-immigrant themes against Harris has rightly repulsed many (and plenty of viewers would doubtless enjoy seeing him out-debated on TV by a black woman). Harris’ response to Trump’s provocations has been to try to *out-do* him in anti-immigrant rhetoric. In 2021, she already made headlines by going to Guatemala to tell migrants: “Do not come. Do not come.” Now, with her presidential campaign in full swing, “Kamala Harris is going on the offensive on border security,” proclaimed *Business Insider* (12 August).

Ahead of an early August trip by Harris and Walz to Arizona, their campaign released a TV ad titled “Tougher,” emphasizing her credentials as a “border-state prosecutor,” featuring footage of the border wall and Harris with Border Patrol agents. It blasts Trump for blocking “the toughest border control bill in decades” and blares that as president, Harris “will hire thousands more border agents.” Doubling down in her August 22 acceptance speech at the DNC, Harris boasted: “Joe and I brought together Democrats and conservative Republicans” to write the border bill, “the Border Patrol endorsed it,” but Trump “ordered his allies in Congress to kill the deal.” “As president,” she vowed, “I will bring back the bipartisan border-security bill ... and sign it into law.”

Media outlets noted that in championing the bill, Harris is promoting the allocation of hundreds of millions of dollars to extend “Trump’s border wall,” which she and Biden had speechified against to get into office four years ago. “Since Ms. Harris announced her candidacy,” wrote the *Times* (26 August), the Democrats’ “message on immigration ... has been decidedly more hard-line than it has been in decades.”

In fact, competing with Trump in immigrant-bashing has been a central Biden-Harris theme for some time. “Trump Says He Wants to Deport Millions. He’ll Have a Hard Time Removing More People Than Biden Has,” headlined *Politico* (28 July). Wielding Trump’s pandemic-era Title 42 policy justifying removals for reasons of “public health,” the Democratic administration rapidly accelerated deportations, surpassing Trump’s record. And on June 4, the White House announced: “The Biden-Harris administration will bar migrants who cross the southern border unlawfully from receiving asylum” – a flagrant violation of basic democratic rights that, as the ACLU has noted, “echoes an effort in 2018 by former President Trump to cut off migration.”

Back in 2020, they sought immigrant families’ votes by promising a temporary pause on deportations and Biden said deporting so many people when he was Obama’s VP was a “big mistake.” (Deporting more people than any other president

in U.S. history, Obama earned himself the moniker “Deporter-in-Chief” – and it was the Obama-Biden administration that built the notorious cages for kids at the border.) Despite Democrats’ efforts to cash in on outrage at Trump’s “zero tolerance” policy of tearing migrant children away from their families, the Democrats’ Biden-Harris administration continues to routinely separate, detain and deport migrant families.³

“But Project 2025...”

At this point, those bombarded with Democratic talking points may reply: “OK, but what about Project 2025, the Heritage Foundation blueprint for a second Trump administration? Also, why do you focus so much on denouncing the Democrats?” The answer to the second question is simple: support to the Democratic Party by labor, left and social-movement leaders has long been key to chaining workers and the oppressed to the capitalist state. And readers of a paper like ours scarcely need convincing to oppose the likes of Trump – whereas even youth disgusted by U.S. imperialism’s current governing party often have difficulties rebutting “lesser-evil” appeals to back the Democrats. It is essential to provide revolutionary Marxist answers on these questions.

On Project 2025: this 900-page play-book is indeed a backlash wish-list for reactionary rightists, calling to intensify presidential power and carry out even more attacks on our rights. But as we’ve emphasized, you can’t fight right-wing reaction by tying yourself to a different faction of U.S. capitalism’s racist ruling class. The Democratic Party is today the foremost defender of the powers of the FBI, CIA and other U.S. spy agencies, and has been central to attacks on basic rights, from Woodrow Wilson’s 1917 “Espionage Act” (under which pioneer socialist Eugene Debs was imprisoned and stripped of his citizenship for giving a speech against WWI) to Biden signing into law the extension of a notorious surveillance law this April.

Trumpists’ push to even further increase the power of the “imperial presidency” builds on its massive expansion under one Democratic administration after another. Democratic mayors are the bosses of the racist killer cops in cities across the country and, as we’ve noted, Biden, ex-veep to the former Deporter-in-Chief, is the godfather of mass incarceration. The Clinton-Obama-Pelosi-Biden-Harris (& AOC et al.) party relies on the military/intelligence apparatus – U.S. imperialism’s Murder Inc. – to supposedly “defend democracy.” And think about: during the Gaza solidarity encampments last spring, over 3,100 protest-

³ *Cruel Indifference: Family Separation at the U.S.-Mexico Border*, UCLA Center for Immigration Law and Policy (2024); “Biden Administration Routinely Separates Immigrant Families,” National Immigrant Justice Center, 2022.



Kamala Harris campaign ad.



Nathan Howard / SIPA USA

Careening toward World War III. Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris gave a sabre-rattling speech at Democratic National Convention, August 22, vowing to keep the U.S. military the “most lethal” in the world.

ers were arrested, overwhelmingly ordered by Democratic authorities. Over the past period they have repeatedly used the forces of repression to attack our rights to speech, assembly and protest against their wars.

Where did Trump come from? After years of hobnobbing with the Clintons and other liberal mainstays of the capitalist elite, even as he stoked racism and xenophobia, Trump perceived that widespread disaffection with the Democrats among sectors hit hard by “neoliberal” policies – despite years of empty “hope and change” promises – gave him a chance to turn media notoriety into political stardom. *The Democrats paved the way for Trump*. Contrary to their claims to be “the only hope” for safeguarding rights, to be “friends of labor,” etc., the rise of Trump and the sordid characters in his entourage was prepared by the Democrats’ attacks on the working class and “abandonment” of downwardly mobile middle-class sectors.

And every four years, the plight of these sectors is cynically exploited on the campaign trail, by both big bourgeois parties.

Take Trump’s running mate JD Vance. A recent video of his visit to a small town in Georgia has gone viral because this supposed “just folks” spokesman proved ridiculously unable to make normal small talk with employees in a local donut shop. But Vance is no joke: who he *does* channel is the “MAGA movement’s” fascist wing. Today Vance is notorious for railing against “childless cat ladies” who don’t fulfill what this misogynist creep calls their maternal “purpose,” and for proposing to reduce the electoral power of people without children. But before Trump chose him, he seized on last year’s Ohio train disaster to build a “populist” image.

Initially a “Never Trumper” who even likened his current boss to Hitler, Vance went with Trump in a visit to the site where the massive February 2023 derailment

DNC: Militarism on the March

- **July 21:** Joe Biden withdraws from presidential race, endorses Kamala Harris as Democratic nominee, exhorting: “Let’s do this.”
- **July 30-31:** Israel stages provocative assassination in Lebanon, followed by another in the Iranian capital of Tehran, on the eve of the inauguration of Iran’s new president.
- **August 2:** With threat of a regional war looming, Biden-Harris administration dispatches an aircraft carrier, battle ships and a squadron of fighter jets to the Middle East.
- **August 9:** U.S. announces it will send Israel an additional \$3.5 billion to buy U.S.-made weapons and military equipment.
- **August 19:** Democratic National Convention opens; delegates recite Pledge of Allegiance, punctuate speeches with “U-S-A, U-S-A” chant. *Law and Order*-themed video presents Harris as Prosecutor-in-Chief. War criminal Hillary Clinton vows Harris will “protect America from enemies foreign and domestic.” AOC gets prime-time spot hailing Harris and Biden.
- **August 20:** *New York Times* announces that in March, President Biden signed a highly classified “Nuclear Employment Guidance” strategy for confrontation with China, Russia and North Korea.
- **August 21:** Delegates outside convention cover their ears as protesters read

names of Gazan children killed by U.S.-supplied bombs. *Politico* notes: “Speaker after speaker has strutted onto [the DNC] stage and delivered their own take on why Vice President Kamala Harris and the Democrats as a party are the quintessence of modern American patriotism.” U.S. sends second aircraft carrier equipped with F-35 fighter jets to back up Israel.

- **August 22:** On DNC’s final day, former “Defense” secretary and CIA chief Leon Panetta says “Trump would abandon our allies” but Harris will “keep America’s military the strongest in the world, the strongest ever known.” “Our warriors need a tough, cool-headed Commander-in-Chief,” he declares. DNC ends with Harris’ law-and-order/militarist speech.

- **August 23:** *NYT* details contents of new \$20 billion weapons package for Israel approved by Biden-Harris administration, including up to 50 F-15 fighter jets, tens of thousands of tank munitions, and other weaponry. Defense Department announces U.S. will also send \$125 million more in arms to Ukraine following its invasion of the Kursk region of Russia.

- **August 24:** Israel launches “pre-emptive” strike on Lebanon.

- **August 26:** Israel’s “Defense” Ministry announces that Biden-Harris administration has completed 500 airlifts of weapons to Israel since war on Gaza began.



Yearning for a police state. Ex-president Donald Trump and Republican vice presidential candidate JD Vance vow to use military against protests, immigrants. At campaign rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 20.

threw 38 railcars off the tracks, dumping 100,000 gallons of toxic waste and causing immense damages. The train wreck came three months after Biden, with bipartisan Congressional backing, used strikebreaking legislation to block a looming rail strike spurred by highly dangerous working conditions. Among those voting for the strike ban were Democratic (Party) Socialists of America star Ocasio-Cortez and other DSA “electeds.”⁴ Despite Trump’s role in scrapping rail safety regulations, he and Vance grabbed the opportunity to parlay the silence of Biden’s Department of Transportation boss Pete Buttigieg into a day of photo ops at the site.

The calamity wrought by the Democratic Party strikebreakers enabled Vance to solidify his MAGA credentials, pose as an enemy of the rail companies and work to block *class* consciousness with the racist lie that the disaster happened because Midwesterners are “too white” to draw the concern of the “bicoastal elite.” On the campaign trail, Vance continues to invoke the train disaster and project himself as a champion of “the forgotten.”

In numerous other ways, the Democrats have contributed to the rise of reactionary forces that cynically exploit anger among some middle- and working-class sectors, to further their own plans to administer the racist, repressive machinery of the capitalist state and carry out still more brazen attacks on the exploited and oppressed. As heated as debates between the two parties get, on how best to run this system, they’re looking out for the inter-

⁴ “AOC and the Democratic Strike Breakers of America,” *Revolution* No. 20, September 2023.

ests of the same ruling class. As Obama explained after Trump’s 2016 election, “We’re all on the same team,” explaining that Democrat vs. Republican conflicts and rivalry for votes are all just an “intra-mural scrimmage.”

The idea that backing the Democratic Party of genocide in Gaza and the imperialist drive toward WWII is just the “practical” price you have to pay if you don’t want to lose your rights is not only obscene and dangerous but flat-out false. The stranglehold of bourgeois parties and politicians is what’s pushed U.S. politics more and more to the right – and what holds back the power to actually defend our rights. Breaking that stranglehold is essential to an effective fight.

A vivid example is the fight for abortion rights. For vote-corralling purposes the Democrats’ convention stressed abortion rights as a campaign theme. But for decades the Democrats have failed to codify abortion rights as law at the national level, or even the limited expression of them in the now-overturned *Roe v. Wade* decision. The Democratic administration of which Kamala Harris is vice president and political heir claims to champion these rights – seeking to obscure Joe Biden’s instrumental role in pushing the racist Hyde Amendment that barred federal funding for abortions, essentially banning poor African American, Latina and working-class women on Medicaid from getting abortions. This was just one of many ways Democrats helped fuel the anti-abortion crusade. What’s urgently needed is to **defend abortion rights through class struggle**, fighting for free, unrestricted abortion on demand, which is integral to fight to achieve real

AOC: Biden-Harris’ Prime-Time Promoter

At the forefront of efforts to sell a new Democratic presidency to disillusioned voters have been Democratic “socialists” Bernie Sanders and “AOC.” “How Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Became One of Joe Biden’s Most Valuable Boosters,” explained *Time* (16 February). *The Hill* announced: “Ocasio-Cortez emerges as key Biden surrogate for progressives, young people” (24 April). A Bloomberg newsletter presented a profile: “Meet Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, political pragmatist and Joe Biden surrogate” (25 June). And in the lead-up to the Democratic National Convention, *The Economist* (15 August), mouthpiece of London finance capital, observed that AOC was “a stalwart supporter of Mr Biden until he dropped out, and is now of Ms Harris.”

At the DNC, Sanders took the platform to rile up the crowd for Kamala. Asked later about her “*most lethal fighting force*” vow, he griped a bit about arms firms’ high profit margins but declared: “I agree with the vice president, we want the strongest defense in the world.” As for AOC, she was given a coveted prime-time speaking slot. With a crowd ovation and a fawning speech praising Genocide Joe (“Thank you, Joe Biden, for your leadership”), her performance and reception showed she has made it to the big leagues, with a presidential run of her own doubtless in the cards. The following morning, the *Times* listed her speech as the top “Best Moment” of the convention’s first day. “This socialist [*sic*] just became an establishment favorite,” headlined *Politico* (23 August). Meanwhile, Harris’ campaign uploaded a TikTok of AOC’s convention paean to her, for supposedly “working tirelessly to secure a cease-fire in Gaza [*sic*] and bringing hostages home.”

Some elements in the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America now express disappointment with AOC and other DSA “electeds” for alibiing Genocide Joe. The fact of the matter is that today, as part of the Democratic “establishment” she once decried, AOC no longer has need of an auxiliary of “socialist” canvassers and door-knockers. As major media lined up to tell AOC “Thank you for your service” to U.S. imperialism, the NYC-DSA continues to endorse her. No surprise there – since her election,

their political kinship has been its calling card.¹ Members of the DSA’s youth organization (YDSA), whose fliers long featured AOC’s image, now voice indignation about her actions and anger at the DSA. The obvious question is: so then why are you still in that group? So long as you are, you share the responsibility.

The genocidal U.S./Israel war on the Palestinians has revealed even more clearly who the Democratic “socialists” serve. When the Palestinian-led activist group Within Our Lifetime protested a June 22 campaign event in the Bronx for DSA Congressman Jamaal Bowman, featuring AOC and Sanders, for their support to “Genocide Joe,” high-profile DSAers tried to smear them, with *Jacobin* founder and *Nation* magazine president Bhaskar Sunkara posting: “Objectively, this is serving the interests of AIPAC [the American Israel Public Affairs Committee] and the Israeli state.”

The smear was aimed at activists targeted for months by witch hunts and repression. The objective? Covering for capitalist politicians, who voted for the Congressional resolution equating anti-Zionism with antisemitism (H.R. 888) as well as an anti-Palestinian immigration bill (H.R. 6679) condemning refugees from Gaza as “terrorists.” In Bowman’s case, he actually voted for billions of dollars to arm and fund the Israeli war machine and was defended by the DSA leadership – and members of the DSA’s “left” wing – against those calling for his ouster from the organization.²

Revolutionary Internationalist Youth activists participated in the June 22 demonstration. A police barrier separated pro-Palestinian protesters from the DSA campaign organizers. As one new RIY member said, it marked the class line – and the fact that the Biden-Harris boosting “socialists” are *not* on the side of the oppressed. ■

¹ While in AOC’s home base of NYC, the DSA maintained its endorsement, the national DSA made its re-endorsement conditional but, since this pressure group in Biden’s party claims to be pro-Palestinian, it eventually withdrew its endorsement of her. Actual socialists (communists) have always told the truth about AOC’s real role (“Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to the Rescue of the Democratic Party,” *The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018).

² See “NATO ‘Socialist’ War Squad,” *Revolution* No. 19, September 2022.

and full emancipation of women and all the oppressed. Breaking with the Democrats and all capitalist parties is key to this fight.⁵ Marxists stand for **the political independence of the working class**. Against all capitalist parties and politicians, we fight for a **revolutionary workers party**.

“Strongest, Most Lethal” War Makers

While the Democrats’ DNC “joy”-fest in Chicago sought to silence opposition to the U.S./Israel war on Gaza, in reality it shines a spotlight on the fact that aspiring Commander- and Prosecutor-in-Chief Harris is co-responsible with Biden for this genocidal war in which every 2,000-pound bomb and the fighter

⁵ See “Free Abortion on Demand – How Revolutionaries Fight for It” and other articles in special issue of *Revolution* (No. 19, September 2022).

planes that drop them has been supplied by the U.S. “Kamala Harris Can’t Escape Gaza Any More Than Joe Biden Can,” noted columnist Jamelle Bouie (*New York Times*, 30 July).

When pro-Palestinian protesters interrupted Harris at a campaign event in Michigan, she shut them down with accusations of supporting Trump, as her supporters applauded. The next day, Harris’ national security advisor announced that the vice president is absolutely opposed to any arms embargo on Israel. At the DNC, her campaign officially rejected the request that a Palestinian American be given a speaking spot, while the Democrats’ 2024 Platform, approved by the convention, reaffirms – twice – their “ironclad” commitment to supporting Israel. (It also makes a special point of calling to “fund the police” and repeatedly demanding “more police.”)



Internationalists protest outside Bronx rally of Democrats Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Bernie Sanders and Jamaal Bowman, shills for “Genocide Joe” Biden. September 2024

Central to the Chicago convention was broadcasting the brazen U.S. imperialist arrogance typified by Biden's statement, in his big July 5 ABC TV interview: "Not only am I campaigning, but I'm running the world.... [W]e are the essential nation of the world." The patriotic jingoism reached a crescendo with Harris' August 22 acceptance speech. After telling Biden that she's "filled with gratitude – your record is extraordinary" (echoing the convention's endless chants of "Thank you, Joe"), she soon segued into the speech's central themes: how her "decades in law enforcement" prepared her to preside over the U.S. government and empire, "secure our border," crack down harder than Trump on immigration, while further bulking up the military and cops.

"As vice president," she declaimed, "I have confronted threats to our security, negotiated with foreign leaders, strengthened our alliances, and engaged with our brave troops overseas," following this with her pledge to keep U.S. imperialism's war machine the most massive and deadly in the world. Denouncing Trump for "threaten[ing] to abandon NATO," she said, "I helped mobilize a global response, over fifty countries," to back the U.S./NATO imperialist war against Russia, reiterating that "as president, I will stand strong with Ukraine and our NATO allies." From the Ukraine front to the South China Sea, the shadow of the U.S./NATO war drive hung over the "joyful" militarists' proceedings.

On Gaza, Harris shed rhetorical crocodile tears over the scale of suffering and postured vaguely about how she and Biden were supposedly seeking a ceasefire – while restating the bottom line that she will "always ensure Israel has the ability to defend itself" (*sic*). As the Zionist garrison state threatened to spark a regional war, she declared: "As president, I will never hesitate to take whatever action is necessary to defend our forces and our interests against Iran."

Harris' DNC performance culminated in a fusillade of denunciations against those who "denigrate America" and chauvinist paeans to "the greatest democracy in the history of the world," "the greatest privilege on Earth – the privilege and pride of being an American," etc. *ad nauseam*. Next-day coverage in the *Washington Post* described it as "a speech a Republican of years gone by could have delivered: heavy on crime-fighting, securing the border ... keeping America's military the 'most lethal' in the world," standing up to Russia, etc. The *Times* called it a "patriotic speech that was hawkish on foreign policy and border security," while *Middle East Eye* observed: "Kamala Harris's speech killed any hope she would end the Gaza genocide."

At a conclave filled with vows to even further intensify imperialist militarism, Harris' promise to see to it that "America, not China, wins the competition for the 21st century" is a sinister sign of the times. Days earlier, the press revealed that President Biden had signed a highly classified "Nuclear Employment Guidance" strategy for confrontation with China as well as Russia and North Korea. "America prepares for a new nuclear arms race," observed the conservative London *Economist* (12 August). Under Obama, Trump and Biden-Harris, U.S. provocations against China have rapidly mount-

Democrats' Response to Protests Against Racist Police Abuse The Rap Sheet of "Top Cop" Kamala Harris

The following article is reprinted from *The Internationalist* No. 61, September-October 2020.

Kamala Harris, the senator and former state attorney general from California, is a fitting vice-presidential choice for a Democratic Party "law-and-order" campaign. Born to Jamaican and Indian immigrants, she became a prosecutor in 1990. For the next 27 years, Harris dedicated herself to putting people behind bars, and particularly to keeping them there. Endorsed by the San Francisco police and deputy sheriff "unions," in 2004 she was elected San Francisco District Attorney running on a "tough on crime" platform against the incumbent DA, Terry Hallinan, who was from a prominent SF "progressive" family. (He was a member of the Communist Party's W.E.B. DuBois Clubs, his father Vince ran for U.S. president in 1952 for the CP-backed Progressive Party.)

Then, from 2011 to 2017, Kamala Harris was California's "top cop," as she herself put it. In these days of bourgeois identity politics, Harris is billed as representing women, black people and Asians, yet her career was based on unleashing the terror of the capitalist criminal "justice" system against black people, poor people and those doubly and triply targeted by capitalist oppression. Today she paints herself as a "progressive" supporting bail reform, but as SF DA she fought to *increase* bail costs, saying "people come to San Francisco to commit crimes because it is cheaper to do it."¹ She has said she opposes the death penalty, but as state AG, she defended California's death penalty even after it was ruled unconstitutional by a federal court.

From putting trans women in male prisons, where they are subject to sexual assault and even murder,² to enforcing brutal mandatory sentencing minimums, to evading even token calls for requiring body cameras for police or a special prosecutor to investigate deadly police shootings, Harris carefully cultivated her "tough on crime" reputation. She took the lead in championing California's grotesque 2011 truancy law, which punished poor parents, largely black and Latino, with steep

¹ <https://www.businessinsider.com/kamala-harris-supported-raising-cash-bail-costs-district-attorney-2004-2019-3>

² In 2013, Carmen Guerrero, a trans woman, was bound, gagged, tortured and murdered by her cellmate in a California state prison (NBC News, 6 December 2019).

ed.⁶ The Chicago DNC marked a new step in this escalation.

"Only Socialist Revolution Can Defeat U.S. Imperialism's Drive to WWII," headlined our previous issue (*Revolution* No. 20, September 2023), which went into the war threats broadcast by Biden and other imperialist leaders as they met in Hiroshima, one of the two cities the U.S. A-bombed in 1945. Some of those who got our paper back then

⁶ This includes then-House speaker Nancy Pelosi flying on U.S. military aircraft to Taiwan despite repeated warnings by China against this provocative stunt. Ever since the 1949 Revolution that created the People's Republic of China (a bureaucratically deformed workers state), the U.S. has targeted it for reconquest and capitalist counterrevolution. (See "U.S. Anti-China War Provocations Over Taiwan," *The Internationalist* No. 67-68, May-October 2022.)



Kamala Harris, then California attorney general, with Long Beach police chief Jim McDonnell (left), Los Angeles police chief Michel Moore, and Los Angeles interim county sheriff John Scott.

finest and jail time if their children missed too many classes. Today Harris says she's for marijuana reform, but during her stint as the state's chief "law enforcement" officer, more than 1,500 Californians were jailed for marijuana-related offenses.

Kamala Harris is the very embodiment of prosecutorial abuse. She wrote in her campaign memoir, *The Truths We Hold* (2019), "America has a deep and dark history of people using the power of the prosecutor as an instrument of injustice." She added: "I know this history well – of innocent men framed, of charges brought against people of color without sufficient evidence, of prosecutors hiding information that would exonerate defendants, of the disproportionate application of the law." Yes, she knows it well, because she was a prime perpetrator.

The following are just some of the examples of what this meant:

- In 2010, a state supreme court judge slammed the SF DA's office for violating defendants' constitutional rights by withholding information about a crooked drug lab technician. As a result, 600 drug cases were dismissed.

- Then, as state attorney general, after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that California's prisons were so overcrowded that it violated the Constitutional prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment, her office fought against releasing prisoners who were eligible for parole, citing a need for cheap prison labor (the state uses inmates to fight wildfires for \$2 a day).³

³ "Kamala Harris' AG Office Tried to Keep Inmates Locked Up for Cheap Labor," *Daily Beast*, 11 February 2019.

thought that maybe we were indulging in "rhetoric" or hyperbole. This August's Democratic convention should be a wake-up call.

"The risk of nuclear conflict is rising," warned the *New York Times* in a detailed article on what a nuclear strike would be like in an urban center today, the first in a series called "The Brink" (7 March). Rather than "saving the world" from Trump, Harris and the Democrats' saber-rattling brings us closer to the brink of a thermonuclear World War III. As our last issue stated:

"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

- Harris' office fought for years against the release of Daniel Larsen, sentenced to 28 years to life for supposed possession of a concealed weapon, after his innocence was determined by the Innocence Project, a judge and an appeals court, and after he was finally released, fought against him being compensated for wrongful imprisonment.⁴

- And then there is Kevin Cooper, who, as Judge William Fletcher of the U.S. Court of Appeals Ninth Circuit wrote, "is on death row because the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department framed him."⁵ Harris now says she supports obtaining advanced DNA testing of evidence used to convict him, a black man, of a quadruple murder that the sole survivor said was committed by three white men. But as California AG she refused to order the testing which could prove the innocence of Cooper, who has spent 35 years on San Quentin's death row.⁶

The nomination of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris is the Democrats' answer to the mass movement against racist police terror, as they seek to show that they are the best and most effective enforcers of capitalism's murderous "law and order" repression. ■

⁴ See "When Kamala Was a Top Cop," *The Atlantic*, 28 August 2019, and "'Top Cop' Kamala Harris's Record of Policing the Police," *New York Times*, 9 August 2020.

⁵ Nicholas Kristof, "Was Kevin Cooper Framed for Murder?" *New York Times*, 17 May 2018.

⁶ See "Protesters Warn of San Quentin Prison Death Trap," *Revolutionaries in the Class Struggle*, 15 May [2020].

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.*"

At the Democrats' Chicago convention, the ritualized chant was "We're not going back." But for youth who have been seeing what U.S. imperialism, with its militarism and racist repression, means here and around the world, "going back" to the deadly embrace of its war criminal politicians is no option at all. To open the way for a real future for the world's working people, joining the fight for socialist revolution is the only real choice. We hope this issue of *Revolution* will help show why this is so. ■

Facing U.S. Rulers' Democrat/Republican Duopoly Party for Socialism and Liberation: A Revolutionary Alternative?

By Lucy, Roser and Rosario

CHICAGO, August 24 – Over the past days, a team of Revolutionary Internationalist Youth (RIY) comrades has been distributing revolutionary literature and talking with leftist-minded protesters outside the Democratic National Convention, held in the United Center on Chicago's Near West Side. As Kamala Harris – the VP of “Genocide Joe” Biden – and her running mate Tim Walz formally accepted their nomination, the chant (actually, war cry) of “U-S-A!” repeatedly resounded in the convention hall. Thousands of hand-held flags were waved.

From the huge elevated stage, veteran Democratic war-mongers and mass deporters like Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama pledged fervent support for the nominees. Backing them up and doing their bit for the red, white and blue were “electeds” like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America. Yet demonstrators we spoke with outside haven't forgotten the genocidal war against the Palestinians in Gaza, armed and funded by the Biden-Harris administration of the Democratic Party, which like the Republicans has carried out an endless list of atrocities in the service of U.S. imperialism.

At protest events here, we've intersected a good number of young people who have been drawing some radical conclusions from society's multiple crises, can't stomach backing war-criminal politicians and push back against attempts to “guilt” them into doing so. Facing the seemingly eternal Democrat/Republican duopoly, a few, though not many, express some interest in the Green Party, which is running Jill Stein for president. A minor bourgeois party whose purpose is to pressure the Democrats, its confrères in Europe have long been part of war-waging government coalitions. A handful pay some heed to Cornel West, the sometime presidential candidate presenting an eclectic and eccentric platform of “Truth, Justice and Love.”

To their left is the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), which is running Claudia de la Cruz for president and Karina Garcia for vice-president. Calling to “Vote Socialist,” this is the fifth time the group has run its own presidential candidates. However, while the fight for a clear and sharp break from the Democratic Party is at the center of genuinely revolutionary politics in the United States, the PSL's



Jill Stein, presidential candidate of the Green Party (left), and Claudia de la Cruz, candidate of the Party for Socialism and Liberation, speaking at PSL-sponsored “Chicago People's Assembly,” August 18. On the same day an “Abandon Biden Convention” (below) was held nearby with the same featured speakers, plus Cornel West, in a “popular front” of class collaboration acting as a pressure group on the fringes of the Democratic Party.



actual politics cut against that struggle. Throughout its history – and today – it advances “tactics” that help tie workers and youth to the Democrats, as we will show in some detail below.

The PSL was established in 2004 as a split-off from the Workers World Party, which had been founded by former Trotskyist Sam Marcy and a number of his co-thinkers in 1959. It maintained the WWP's core politics of adapting to nationalist and Stalinist movements and regimes abroad, while pursuing “popular front”-type alliances of class collaboration domestically – but projected a more energetic radical vibe. It has recently attracted some former DSAers

and others seeking a leftist alternative to vanilla-flavored social democracy. One of the areas where it's been active is the Denver region, where PSL supporters who led protests against the August 2019 racist murder of Elijah McClain were targeted with frame-up charges. In solidarity, against this attack on basic rights, we called to defend the PSL



Gimmickry aimed at liberal Democrats: PSL-backed ANSWER Coalition organized a “Biden, We Are Your Red Line” event surrounding the White House, June 8.

Start with the question of the bourgeois state – which marks the fundamental line between revolutionary and reformist politics – including the question of the capitalists' military apparatus. Going back to the origins of the modern socialist movement, the revolutionary call is “Not a person nor a penny” for the imperialist war machine.¹ In contrast, the PSL's 2024 platform promotes outright reformism, calling to “Cut the Military Budget by 90%.” Let's see: according to defense.gov, “On March 11, 2024, the Biden-Harris Administration submitted to Congress a proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 budget request of \$849.8 billion for the Department of Defense...”

So what the PSL's demand boils down to is for U.S. imperialism's murderous military machine to have a budget for next year of “only” \$84.98 billion, which over a 10-year period would amount to going on a trillion dollars.² Hardly the program of international socialist revolution put forward by communist revolutionaries like Lenin and Trotsky, based on the need for the working class to smash the bourgeois state and establish what Marx called the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., a workers state.

Let's take a look at the PSL's 2024 campaign video, which is featured on the site of its newspaper (liberationnews.org) and gives more of a sense of what they're campaigning on than any fine print or formal platform. Produced in the style of a standard slick campaign ad, it does list some key ills of capitalism, but says not a word about revolution, the need for a workers state or working-class internationalism, instead talking Sanders-like about billionaires taking over “our [!] government,” and the need for “an economy that puts people over profits.” (For that matter, it's hard not to notice that the PSL's constant “for the people” populist appeals evoke the same “We the People” bourgeois ideology this capitalist country was founded on, as does the motto of Kamala Harris' “people-powered” campaign, “For the People.”)

What's *really* striking is how the PSL's 2024 ad echoes the famous 2018 “Courage to Change” Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez 2018 campaign ad that launched AOC's career (though the PSL video's production values are much better). From the subway platform scenes and “people vs. money” rhetoric to the music – literally the same music! – the parallels are unmistakable, and clearly deliberate. It's like a 2-minute and 42-second object lesson in electoral opportunism.

It's an indication of the purposes pursued by the PSL in its campaign: not to bring revolutionary Marxist consciousness

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¹ At least as far back as 1887, Karl Marx's close friend Wilhelm Liebknecht popularized the phrase “Not One Man, Not One Penny for Militarism” in his pamphlet in German bearing that title, which became a central slogan of the socialist movement.

² The U.S. military budget corresponding to the PSL's campaign demand is also more than 70 times what Cuba spends for its military defense – a pertinent example in light of Yankee imperialism's continual aggressions against the Cuban Revolution.

What We Saw – and Didn't – at Important Met Exhibit

Black and Red Keys to Harlem Renaissance Story



Aaron Douglas/Anna-Marie Kellen/Courtesy The Met

“From Slavery Through Reconstruction” (1934) by Aaron Douglas, part of his mural cycle, *Aspects of Negro Life*, commissioned by the Works Progress Administration for the Countee Cullen branch of the New York Public Library.

By Yalina, Roser and Ray

This summer, activists from the Internationalist Clubs at the City University of New York and the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth visited the “Harlem Renaissance and Transatlantic Modernism” exhibit at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was exhilarating to see the incredible art in the exhibit, which showcased around 160 works. But we were disappointed by some of its glaring omissions. The whole group of comrades who went there wound up discussing and debating the inspiring aspects of the exhibit, but also the way the museum’s presentation of it left so much of the “red” – the radical political

connections and reverberations of the Harlem Renaissance – out of the picture.

As we often point out in *Revolution*, learning about history is vital for revolutionaries – and art can tell us a lot about it. What artists choose to portray, and how, can tell us quite a bit about society and its changes. One good example is the explosion of artistic creativity and innovation in the first years of the Russian Revolution. Another is the upsurge in African American poetry, painting, sculpture, music, dance – and politics – known as the Harlem Renaissance, which made household names of poets and painters such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston and Jacob Lawrence. Rooted in resistance to “Jim Crow,” America’s system of violent racial segregation, it drew power and inspiration from the restless and rebellious black population undergoing big changes in the early 20th century.

Roots of Rebellion in Jim Crow America

Up until then the African American population was concentrated in the rural South; the Harlem Renaissance was fueled by the “Great Migration” northward. Depicted in Lawrence’s stunning *Migration Series*, this was the movement of millions of black people out of the South, seeking escape from desperate poverty, the sharecropping system, Ku Klux Klan terror and pervasive segregation. With World War One, in which the U.S. seized its place as the dominant imperialist power, labor shortages in the North drew large numbers to jobs there. Just between the years 1915 and 1918, an estimated 500,000 African Americans moved north and one of their main destinations was New York.

Here, in Harlem, the stories, speech, music and dance of black working people became the “motive forces of the cultural awakening” expressed in the Harlem Renaissance.¹

During World War I, 380,000 black men served in the segregated U.S. Army WWI – but the “land of the free” only permitted one in ten any combat role. When they came home from a war promoted as one to supposedly “make the world safe for democracy,” they faced a wave of racist backlash “up North” as well as down South. Many were among the newly urbanized African Americans that were becoming increasingly politicized, and in many cases radicalized, particularly after the 1917 October Revolution in Russia led by the Bolsheviks, who appealed to oppressed and subjugated peoples – including African Americans – to join forces in the worldwide revolutionary struggle.

Exactly when the Harlem Renaissance began is debated by historians, with some citing a key musical revue in 1921, a poetry anthology edited by James Weldon Johnson the following year or Jean Toomer’s novel *Cane* (1923). Alain Locke’s crucial anthology *The New Negro* came out in 1925. So did a special issue of *Survey Graphic* magazine – displayed at the Met exhibit – titled “Harlem, Mecca of the New Negro,” with portraits by Winold Reiss, poems by Hughes, Countee Cullen and Claude McKay, and many intriguing arti-

¹ Eric Arnesen, *Black Protest and the Great Migration* (2003); Cheryl Wall, *The Harlem Renaissance* (2016).



Revolution photo

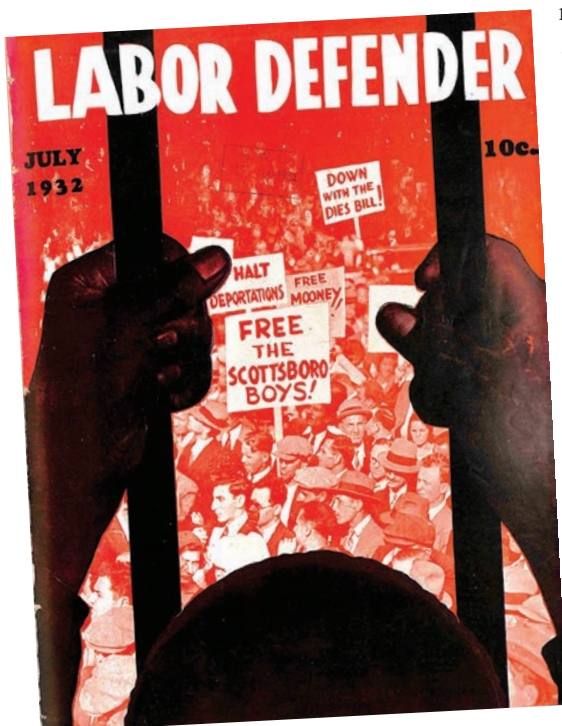
Viewing portrait of Langston Hughes (1925), a giant of the Harlem Renaissance, by German immigrant artist Winold Reiss.

cles.² Also shown at the Met exhibition was the literary magazine that Cullen, Hughes, Hurston, Gwendolyn Bennett, Bruce Nugent, Wallace Thurman and others started in 1926, called *Fire!!* With a cover by Aaron Douglas, only one issue came out, but it had a big impact, and *Fire!!* is considered a milestone.

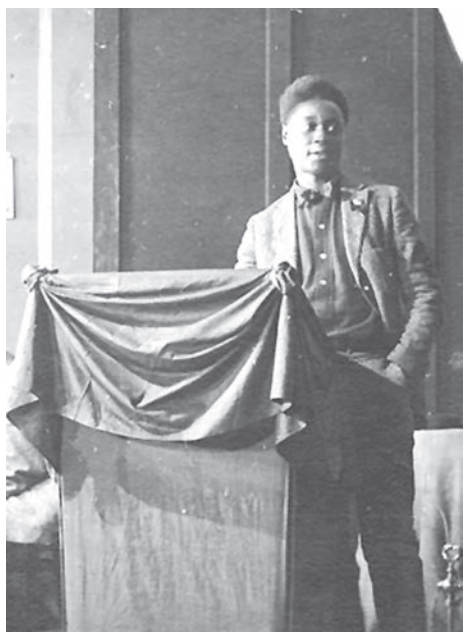
“If We Must Die” and Black Liberation

Before all of these vital developments, however, came 1919, the year many historians point to as the seminal year for the Renaissance. It was then that the movement’s most famous poem came out: McKay’s “If We Must Die” (see box on facing page).

² The wide-ranging issue included James Weldon Johnson’s “The Making of Harlem”; “Black Workers and the City” by Charles S. Johnson; “The Tropics in New York” by W.A. Domingo; “The Double Task: The Struggle of Negro Women for Sex and Race Emancipation” by Elise Johnson McDougald; Arthur Schomburg on the growing interest in black history; items by then-leaders of the NAACP W.E.B. Du Bois and Walter White, and others.



Magazine of CP’s legal defense arm, the International Labor Defense (founded in 1925 under the leadership of James P. Cannon), building campaign to free the nine African American youth condemned to death in Scottsboro frame-up.



Claude McKay speaking at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, Moscow, November 1922.

Advocating black self-defense against the violent white mobs that attacked many black neighborhoods across the country that summer, the poem had an electrifying effect.

Claude McKay would, like Langston Hughes, become one of the black, red – and gay – icons of the Harlem Renaissance whose work speaks powerfully to us today. He would later travel to Soviet Russia, headquarters of the Communist International (Comintern), which was also founded in 1919 in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution. There, he would meet with Lenin, Trotsky, Clara Zetkin and other leaders of the new international and give a crucial report on the fight for black liberation at the Comintern's Fourth Congress in 1922.³

The Met exhibit's lushly illustrated 332-page catalogue book, *The Harlem Renaissance and Transatlantic Modernism*, does include valuable material. Despite the academic lingo, an essay on "gay sociability" in Harlem during that period discusses the cosmopolitan connections and broad influence of Alain Locke (who called himself the "midwife" to the movement), Bruce Nugent, Richmond Barthé and other gay Harlem Renaissance protagonists. Another, titled "A Political Pageant: The Harlem Renaissance on Parade," manages to say nothing at all about leftist radicalism.

Nor is communism mentioned in the rest of the book, with the exception of two short paragraphs in the essay "Harlem and the Dutch Caribbean" mentioning Harlem activists Otto Huiswood, who went to the 1922 Comintern congress with McKay, and Cyril Briggs. Huiswood and Briggs had been part of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) of Marcus Garvey. McKay and Garvey were originally from Jamaica, Briggs was born on the Caribbean island of Nevis and Huiswood was from Dutch Guiana (now Surinam) – an indication of the major role of immigrant activists in political/cultural life.

Garveyism's promotion of black pride had gained it a mass following in those years. Yet it did not challenge the racist capitalist system nor seek allies in struggle from other oppressed and exploited sectors of society, instead promoting the fantasy of going "back to Africa." Garvey even met with the top leader of the KKK in 1922 on the basis that the hooded night-riders were also supporters of racial separation. Forming a left opposition to Garveyism,

³ See *The Communist International and Black Liberation*, Internationalist pamphlet, 2005.

Two Poems of the Harlem Renaissance

First published in July 1919 in the left-wing socialist magazine *The Liberator*, Claude McKay's "If We Must Die" raised the call for black self-defense against the wave of attacks by white racist mobs after World War One. Langston Hughes' "White Man," was first published in the *New Masses*, a magazine that was closely associated with the Communist Party, in December 1936. (The previous year, as referred to in the poem, Italy had invaded and occupied Ethiopia.).

"If We Must Die," by Claude McKay (1919)

If we must die – let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry
dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die – oh, let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be
shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though
dead!
O kinsmen! we must meet the common
foe;
Though far outnumbered, let us still be
brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one
death-blow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous,
cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, – but fighting
back!

"White Man," by Langston Hughes (1936)

Sure I know you!
You're a White Man.
I'm a Negro.
You take all the best jobs
And leave us the garbage cans to empty
and
The halls to clean.
You have a good time in a big house at
Palm Beach
And rent us the back alleys
And the dirty slums.
You enjoy Rome –
And take Ethiopia.
White Man! White Man!
Let Louis Armstrong play it –
And you copyright it
And make the money.
You're the smart guy, White Man!
You got everything!
But now,
I hear your name ain't really White
Man.
I hear it's something
Marx wrote down
Fifty years ago –
That rich people don't like to read.
Is that true, White Man?
Is your name in a book
Called the Communist Manifesto?
Is your name spelled
C-A-P-I-T-A-L-I-S-T?
Are you always a White Man?
Huh?



This was one of the favorite paintings Internationalist Club comrades saw during our visit to the Met exhibit: *The Janitor Who Paints* (circa 1937, repainted after 1940) by Palmer Hayden. In a 1969 interview, Hayden explained that the artist he had depicted was an older African American man, Cloyd Benkin, who supported himself as a janitor.

both Briggs and Huiswood (together with Jamaican immigrant W.A. Domingo and others) were founders of the African Blood Brotherhood, which, in its militant advocacy of black self-defense, echoed McKay's "If We Must Die."

Lenin and Trotsky's insistence on the centrality of black liberation to revolutionary struggle was a crucial part of bringing

the lessons of the Russian Revolution to U.S. socialists who, heeding the call of the Comintern, sought to break decisively from social-democratic reformism.⁴ Rejecting separatism and embracing a class-struggle standpoint in the fight for black

⁴ See James P. Cannon's "The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement" (1959), available as an Internationalist pamphlet.



Langston Hughes speaking in Paris, January 1938, after spending four months in Spain during the Civil War.

freedom, Briggs, Huiswood and several of their co-thinkers became some of the crucial early black cadre of the Communist Party in the U.S., which was founded in 1919. The CP became a major force in antiracist struggles during the Great Depression, even after the rise of Stalinism, with its anti-Marxist dogma of "socialism in one country," blunted and then buried its revolutionary program.

Haunted By the Spectre of Communism

This history too is a part of our radical heritage, intertwined with the story of the Harlem Renaissance. The relation between its volcanic artistic creativity and the revolutionary aspirations of so many of its protagonists, between the fight for black liberation and socialist revolution – between black and red – all this is crucial to understanding its meaning.

Visiting the exhibit, it felt like the famous "spectre of communism" was haunting the Met but kept eerily invisible and unmentioned by its curators. The work of Aaron Douglas was showcased there in large breathtaking paintings like *Aspiration*, *Judgment Day*, *Let My People Go* and *Aspects of Negro Life: From Slavery to Reconstruction*, as well as portraits like *Scottsboro Boys*. The exhibit included a glorious oil painting by Elizabeth Catlett and Winold Reiss' portraits of Hughes, W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson and other towering figures. Yet the exhibit noted nothing about their relation to leftist radicalism, and amidst thousands of words posted on the walls, the word *communist* wasn't present at all – even in the section titled "The Artist as Activist."

To get a sense of how much red got bleached out of the picture, consider the people mentioned in the previous paragraph: Aaron Douglas, whose work is filled with allusions to radical themes, joined the Communist Party in the early '30s. Elizabeth Catlett lived for many years in Mexico (see box) but was prevented from moving back to the U.S. – because of her closeness to the CP. Winold Reiss, the German immigrant often described as Douglas' mentor, was a radical anti-racist clearly influenced by the Communist movement. Langston Hughes, the Renaissance's foremost literary figure, wrote innumerable poems proudly advocating Communist views, such as "Bal-

lads of Lenin,” “Goodbye Christ,” “Good Morning Revolution” and “White Man” (see box on page 17).⁵ *W.E.B. Du Bois*, NAACP founder, author of *Black Reconstruction*, *The Souls of Black Folk* and other historic works, joined the CP at the age of 93. *Paul Robeson*, the incomparable singer, actor, director, athlete and activist – Renaissance man of the Harlem Renaissance – was a key figure of 20th-century radicalism, closely associated with the CP throughout his life.

That there wasn’t a whisper of this at the Met frankly made us kind of mad – especially since anti-communists tried to silence almost all of them and so many others because of their politics. When the witch hunts escalated after WWII, virtually any opposition to the racist status quo was stigmatized as “red.” It’s a badge of honor that almost all the leftist trailblazers of the Harlem Renaissance wound up being targeted by the notorious HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee). The fact – rarely referred to today – is that HUAC and other red-baiting outfits destroyed the careers, and sometimes the lives, of innumerable black artists, writers, actors, musicians and scholars.⁶

Former *Fire!!* co-editor Gwendolyn Bennett – a poet who studied art with Aaron Douglas and also worked as a teacher with Elizabeth Catlett – was one of them. “Investigated” for 18 years by the FBI, in the ’40s she was targeted by HUAC, leading to her suspension as director of the Harlem Community Arts Center and, in 1947, the closing down of Harlem’s George Carver Community School, an adult education center she helped establish. Most of Bennett’s artwork was destroyed in a fire; her contributions were largely forgotten. The exhibit’s own “forgetting” reminds that to unearth our history does have “subversive” implications.

In its own way, the issue of communism and anti-communism is also posed by *Miss Zora Neale Hurston* (1926), another portrait by Aaron Douglas shown at the exhibit. Today, Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a staple of literature courses. In 1937, when the novel came out, a famous controversy erupted between Hurston and Richard Wright, then one of the foremost CP-aligned literary figures. In his review of the book in *New Masses* (5 October 1937), Wright accused it of pandering to white readers with “chauvinistic tastes.” Hurston hit back with an attack on Wright’s *Uncle Tom’s Children* (1938), saying his book featured “lavish killing ... perhaps enough to satisfy all male black readers,” while presenting “the picture of the South that the communists have been passing around.” Wright, she added, advocated “the solution of the PARTY – state responsibility for everything and individual responsibility for nothing” (capitalization in original). During McCarthyism, Hurston went on to escalate her red-baiting of “commies,” in the magazine of the American Legion.

⁵ Less known is his poem “October 16: The Raid” (1931), which begins: “Perhaps you will remember John Brown, who took his gun, took twenty-one companions, white and black...” and evokes the “immortal raiders” whose 1859 attack on the Harpers Ferry armory foreshadowed the Civil War. Among the raiders who died there was African American leatherworker Lewis Sheridan Leary. Leary’s widow Mary married Ohio abolitionist Charles Langston – their daughter Caroline was the mother of Langston Hughes.

⁶ “In the McCarthy Era, to Be Black Was to Be Red,” *JSTOR Daily*, 13 November 2019. This is the subject of the powerful documentary “Scandalize My Name: Stories from the Blacklist” (1998).

Elizabeth Catlett (1915–2012)



My role has been important in the struggle to organize the unorganized. Catlett 1947

© Mora-Catlett Family

By Alyssa

In the Met’s “Harlem Renaissance and Transatlantic Modernism” exhibit, graphic artist and sculptor Elizabeth Catlett was represented by an oil painting from the early 1940s, “Head of a Woman.” All her life, Catlett was a radical artist, committed to black liberation and the cause of the laboring classes in the U.S., Mexico (where she lived for many years) and around the world. Reprinted here is a linocut by her that the Hunter Internationalist Club incorporated into our flier for the great International Women’s Day forum featured in the last issue of *Revolution* (No. 20, September 2023).

Like Paul Robeson and other Harlem Renaissance personalities, Elizabeth Catlett was the grandchild of slaves. Born in Washington, D.C., she was admitted to the Carnegie Institute of Technology but refused entry when the administration found out she was black. After getting her bachelor’s degree at Howard University, she earned an MFA at the University of Iowa and then moved to Chicago. There, she intersected a dynamic African American arts scene in which many artists supported the Communist Party. Subsequently moving to New York City, she became a friend of Langston Hughes, W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson and Jacob Lawrence.

All the while, Catlett created paintings, engravings, sculptures in stone and wood, almost all of them advancing social themes – in particular the struggles of African American women, famously portraying Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth and Phyllis Wheatley. As noted in the article beginning on page 16, Catlett was among those targeted by the FBI and House Un-American Activities Committee, as a result of which she lost her important positions as an educator in NYC. In 1949 she moved to Mexico, where she met leading painters, including Miguel Covarrubias, who had illus-

trated Langston Hughes’ first book of verse, *The Weary Blues* (1926). Catlett joined the widely influential art collective to which Covarrubias belonged, the Taller Gráfica Popular (People’s Graphic Workshop), and also worked and apprenticed with muralist Diego Rivera. “We were concerned not only with problems in Mexico; the problems of whatever oppressed people, colonial or semicolonial, were of concern to us,” Catlett later recalled (Melanie Herzog, *Elizabeth Catlett, An American Artist in Mexico* [2005]).

Like her Taller colleagues, many of whom were Communists, Catlett joined in the struggles of the Mexican workers and was even arrested for participating in the historic railway workers strike of 1958. Teaching sculpture at Mexico’s National University (UNAM), the great African American artist became a Mexican citizen in 1962. With the U.S. embassy in Mexico classifying her an “undesirable alien,” she found herself barred from re-entry to the land of her birth. When fellow artists in Mexico awarded a prize to her linoleum block print “Malcolm X Speaks for Us,” she observed: “I am inspired by black people and Mexican people, my two peoples” (“My Art Speaks for Both My Peoples,” *Ebony*, January 1970). Elizabeth Catlett lived on, working and teaching almost to her death in 2012, at the age of 96. For young revolutionaries, her artwork speaks to us and her radical life is an inspiration.

Editors’ note: Work on this article was underway when we learned the exciting news that Brooklyn Museum will be presenting an exhibit titled “Elizabeth Catlett: A Black Revolutionary Artist and All That It Implies” 13 September 2024 – 19 January 2025. CUNY Internationalist Clubs supporters and friends are invited to go see it with us (write cunyinternationalists@gmail.com)!

Fighting the Racist “Justice” System

In 1932, Langston Hughes, along with twenty-two other African American artists and activists, visited the Soviet Union to assist in the creation of a Soviet film, *Black and White*, intended to depict and expose American racism.⁷ The film was never

⁷ “When the Harlem Renaissance Went to Communist Moscow,” *New York Times*, 21 August 2017.

made but Hughes toured the Soviet Union and wrote about what he saw in his pamphlet *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia* (1934). In the U.S. during that same period, the CP took up the case of nine black youths known as the “Scottsboro Boys.” Framed up on false charges of raping two white women on a freight train in Alabama, they faced both lynching threats and “legal lynching” through the racist death penalty.

Mass support for the Scottsboro 9 was organized by the CP’s legal defense arm, the International Labor Defense. (Under the leadership of James P. Cannon – who subsequently founded the U.S. Trotskyist movement – the ILD had organized the Sacco and Vanzetti campaign in defense of immigrant anarchists executed on frame-up charges in 1927.) Through the ILD’s tireless, racially integrated activism, the Scottsboro 9 became a *cause célèbre* in the U.S. and internationally. Among the many Harlem Renaissance figures who contributed their talents to the cause was Langston Hughes, who in 1932 came out with a volume titled *Scottsboro Limited*, containing a play in verse and four of his poems. The first reads: “That Justice is a blind goddess / Is a thing to which we black are wise / Her bandage hides two festering sores / That once perhaps were eyes.”

The defense campaign helped save the lives of the Scottsboro defendants – though the racist authorities kept them in prison for many years. Many black activists, workers and intellectuals joined the party through the campaign. Aaron Douglas’ pastel on paper drawing “Scottsboro Boys” (1935), a striking portrait of defendants Clarence Norris and Haywood Patterson, is included in the Met’s Harlem Renaissance exhibit (though again, no mention is made of communists’ involvement).

Cultural expressions like art and literature, which help us experience and understand the world, have also been important ways in which revolutionaries have communicated and immortalized social conditions, attitudes, political ideas as well as leaders and activists in the struggle for liberation.

Lastly, in light of the red and black history of the Harlem Renaissance, what might its radical founders have made of the claims being sold to us today? For example, that faced with a government of war abroad and police terror at home, we should “pray for peace” and vote “VP Top Cop” for “Prosecutor-In-Chief,” that is, for president?

Here, too, we will turn to Langston Hughes. His 1949 poem “Who But the Lord?” goes like this:

“I looked and I saw
That man they call the Law.
He was coming
Down the street at me!

“I had visions in my head
Of being laid out cold and dead,
Or else murdered
By the third degree.

“I said, O, Lord, if you can,
Save me from that man!
Don’t let him make a pulp out of me!

“But that Lord he was not quick.
The Law raised up his stick
And beat the living hell
Out of me!

“Now, I do not understand
Why God don’t protect a man
From police brutality.
Being poor and black,
I’ve no weapon to strike back
So who but the Lord
Can protect me?

“We’ll see.”

Or as we’ve been saying: only revolution can bring justice. ■

Cosplay Communism?

From Bernie Boosters to “Revolutionary Communists of America”

By Joe H. and Sasha

“A specter is haunting” social media, a small leftist group proclaimed last September. “The success and ubiquity” of the group’s “Are You a Communist?” sticker campaign was causing online reactionaries to “reel,” announced its website. On the site you can buy “10 stickers for just 70 cents” (or “get half price for bundles of 100+”), featuring that question and an image of Karl Marx patterned after the U.S. Army’s “Uncle Sam Wants You” recruitment posters from WWI. The campaign consisted of putting lots of these stickers on lampposts in metropolitan areas. The ad includes a QR code directing people to a “join form” for the group.

Then this March a video, “Communist Agitators Take to the Subway,” was posted to YouTube, in which some people with hammer-and-sickle shirts and a red flag announce: “We’re here in Brooklyn. We’re going to go down into the subway right here to find communists...” The camera follows the intrepid searchers into subway cars where, competing with service announcements, they exhort random passengers to “Get organized!” “You can help us,” they declare. Soon, the screen fills with a slogan in all-caps italics: “AUDACITY, AUDACITY AND YET MORE AUDACITY! ON THAT BASIS WE WILL WIN!” The same day, an article on the group’s website (marxist.com, 4 March) “reports” that “Hundreds of millions watch launch of the Revolutionary Communists of America!”

No, it wasn’t a parody – or wasn’t intended to be one. Nor was the group performing for the camera drawn from the somewhat better-known “Revolutionary Communist Party” (aka revcom) of Bob Avakian, the Mao Zedong wannabe whose theatrical acolytes used to imitate the Red Guards of Mao’s “Cultural Revolution.” As for the claim about “hundreds of millions” of video viewers, it turns out that 19,000 views had actually been garnered by a video announcing plans to found a new “party” called Revolutionary Communists of America (RCA).

With stirring music in the background,

a subsequent item in the multi-level PR campaign blared: “248 years ago, in this revolutionary city of Philadelphia, the American Revolution declared independence from Britain,” and invited all and sundry to come to Philly in late July to “Attend the Founding Congress of the RCA!” And “if you like what you’re hearing, we ask only one thing: Join the communists!” a chorus of voices declaim. No sweat, apparently. “One comrade, One week, Five new recruits,” begins a piece titled “I Built a New Communist Cell Over My Spring Break” (12 April). Oh yeah? Well, “I Met Another Communist on the Street and 30 Minutes Later, He Was an RCA Member,” boasts another (9 July). On the site, an “RCA At Large Cell Starter Pack” may be had for just \$30.

At the end of said Philadelphia congress, on July 28, attendees marched through the streets, as displayed in a further video, on X. (Elon Musk shared it with an exclamation point.)

Thus, in a torrent of hype was born the “new party,” U.S. affiliate of an equally “new international” – the Revolutionary Communist International (RCI). Yes, the level of self-aggrandizement is frankly embarrassing. But what’s the spectacle all about, where do these “new” groups come from, and how new are they, actually? (Not new.) Crucially: what do they stand for politically and what is their record? As for “revolutionary,” *is it true, as we have pointed out, that they’re known for supporting police and prison guards’ “strikes” and “unions”?* *Yes it is*, as those familiar with the group know and we document again in this issue.

Gimmicks Galore – But What Are the Politics?

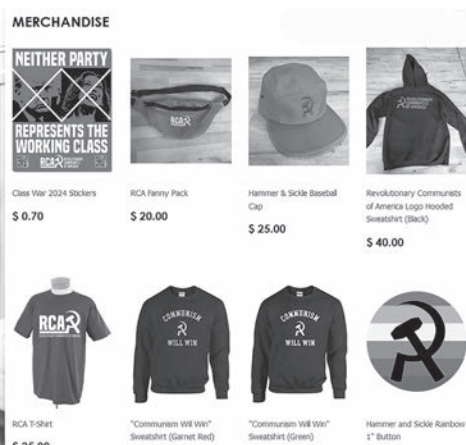
First let’s address the question of where the RCI and its U.S. group, the RCA, are coming from, both politically and organizationally. Normally when a left group gets founded, refounded, or changes its name, it explains its origins and something of its own history. But neither the RCI manifesto (11 March) nor that of the RCA (9 May) nor the “Join us” sections on their sites say

anything about where they emerged from – nor even that a group called the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) ever existed. Yet the RCI is the new name of what until now was known as the IMT, whose U.S. section is now called RCA. Under one or another name it’s been around for well over six decades, though if we start with its origins in Britain it goes back



RCA AT-LARGE CELL STARTER PACK
\$ 30.00

RCA Uncle Sam/Marx poster, fund appeal, playing with social patriotism. “Starter pack” comes with 100 stickers, 50 posters, 6 newspapers.



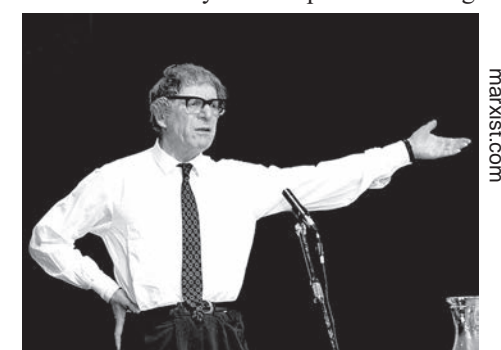
Subway shenanigans, stickers and swag. This parody of communism and Marxism is building its new international with gimmicks and stunts, the antithesis of a Bolshevik-Leninist party.



“Hundreds of millions” watched RCA launch? Really? Recruit a new member in 30 minutes, build a communist cell over spring break? Get-rich-quick schemes aren’t how to build a genuinely revolutionary communist party.

even longer. Known as the “Grantites” because the group was first headed up by a prolific writer named Ted Grant (1913-2006), it made the claim of being Trotskyist but gained a well-earned reputation for outsized opportunism.

The grab bag of get-rich-quick gimmicks they’ve been using to “launch” a fake mass party gives an idea of that opportunism – but the roots of it are political. The already ill-named International Marxist Tendency’s adoption of the even less accurate moniker of “Revolutionary Communists” is the rebranding project of a tendency whose actual politics are fundamentally *social-democratic*. For over 40 years their leading section was part of the British Labour Party (which today is once again running British imperialism’s government). IMT/RCI old-timers still boast of how, in the 1980s, their British group administered the city of Liverpool. Pandering



Ted Grant

You
May
Have
Missed
It...



The International Marxist Tendency (now rebaptised Revolutionary Communist International) has for years issued bombastic pronouncements of the revolution just around the corner, in order to excuse its opportunist “tactical” maneuvers.

to and absorbing the outlook of Labourism, the Grantites claimed that socialism could be peacefully introduced by an “enabling bill” that would be enacted by the British Parliament. Thus through the bourgeois state itself, capitalism could, supposedly, reform itself away.

In a range of other countries, the IMT’s national sections were long part of outright bourgeois parties that head the capitalist state – such Mexico’s governing party, MORENA. In 2018 they hailed the presidential election of its leader “AMLO” (Andrés Manuel López Obrador) as an “insurrection at the ballot box” (*Izquierda Socialista*, 15 July 2018)! In office, AMLO ramped up Mexico’s militarization, acting as a border guard for U.S. imperialism under both Trump and Biden.

Where a group stands regarding the armed first of the bourgeois state is fundamental to its politics in the real world. What the IMT-now-RCI is most notorious for among those familiar with the radical left is its *long-standing support to “strikes” by and “unions” of police and prison guards*, and its long record of calling the professionals of repression “workers in uniform” who should be drawn further into the labor movement. (See accompanying article on page 21.)

Despite the recent changes in packaging, the methodology of the IMT/RCI and its U.S. section, the RCA, remains the same: pander to your hoped-for audience and try to get rich quick. Rather than forthrightly addressing prevalent illusions in order to win over those receptive to a genuinely revolutionary alternative, it seeks to ingratiate itself with politically inexperienced youth while evading crucial issues of political principle.

While yesterday that meant the IMT enthusing over Bernie Sanders as well as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and other DSA (Democratic Socialists of America) Democrats in Congress, today it means pretending that never happened. Why? Because lots of Gen Z youth got fed up with the Sanders/AOC cheering squad for “Genocide Joe” Biden. These days, the IMT’s U.S. section, now called RCA, pursues a new gambit, styling themselves representatives of what they call “America’s communist generation.” (The hyperbole is characteristic of the group, which under Grant’s successor Alan Woods specializes in announcing revolutions breaking out tomorrow in one country after another.)

That Was Then?

Laying claim to leadership of the working class in a struggle for revolution is serious business, with criteria far different than a shifting series of marketing campaigns. A group’s track record speaks to its political methods, outlook and nature. Given the claims of today’s RCI and RCA to represent “revolutionary communism,” let’s take a look at what they were pitching just a few years ago, when tailing after

“democratic socialists” was the name of the game.

In November 2019 (for example), participants at an IMT educational asked whether members should identify as “communists.” The editor of their paper, John Peterson, answered that given the bad connotations of the “C-word,” he tried to avoid it. The event, a public “Marxist School” held in New York, was co-sponsored by the Queens DSA’s political education working group. It was part of the IMT’s all-out pursuit of “mass” influence through adapting politically to the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America.

To this, members of the IMT-now-RCA might respond, “Well, that was then” – but that’s actually the point. Opportunist left groups seek to go with the flow, echoing the illusions of the moment in pursuit of popularity. But building a party that is revolutionary in deeds as well as words requires that we “speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter,” as Trotsky put it in the “Transitional Program” of the Fourth International (1938), including when this requires “swimming against the stream.” And leftist-minded youth who learned to see through the fakery of AOC, Sanders and the pseudo-socialist DSA don’t want to be hoodwinked again.

Today, with the widespread discrediting among would-be leftists of Biden’s bro Bernie and the DSA Democrats, the RCI and RCA manifestos state that Sanders has played a “pernicious role” and describe the DSA as “doomed to irrelevance.” But back when many disaffected workers and youth entertained hopes that fake-socialist Democratic politicians represented “change,” the IMT-now-RCA was among the most assiduous boosters of Bernie, AOC and the Democratic pressure group launched to stardom by Sanders’ campaign. Professing to know better than to support Democratic candidates, but salivating over the numbers that Sanders’ campaign events garnered, the IMT echoed liberal praises and beseeched Sanders: “Bernie: Build a Mass Socialist Party of the Working Class!” (10 June 2016). In other words, in pursuit of popularity, it was selling illusions in a capitalist politician.

In contrast, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs exposed these illusions and Sanders’ role in corraling workers and youth into the Democratic Party, and his record as an imperialist politician – including backing for Israeli terror against the Palestinians. As we insisted at the time:

“The political function of Bernie Sanders’ campaign is not to sharpen the struggle against capitalist reaction but to blur consciousness and lead those increasingly fed up with the status quo back into supporting the Democratic Party of war, racism and police terror.
– “No, Bernie Sanders is *Not* a Socialist,” *Revolution* No. 12, March 2016¹

¹ Reprinted in the 2018 Internationalist pamphlet *DSA: Fronting for the Democrats*.

“Just a Tactic”?

When pressed on these topics, IMTers argued that their calls for Sanders to form a “mass socialist party” were all just a tactic calculated to counter illusions, but in a gentler way. (According to this mindset, anything can be justified if you label it a tactic.) While sold to the IMT membership as an ingenious application of dialectical wizardry, the “tactic” could only politically disarm would-be Marxists, promoting the fantasy that Bernie might actually launch some kind of leftist party at the final hour. IMT guru Woods pontificated: “what were assumed to be the laws of politics in the USA were in fact only customs and traditions that ... are in fact being broken. It cannot therefore be excluded that this could lead to Sanders breaking with the Democratic Party and moving in the direction of setting up a new party to the left of the Democrats” (“The Sanders phenomenon,” 12 February 2016). Yeah, right.

Sanders’ role was “pernicious,” they now declare. True. But what about theirs, when building illusions in this imperialist politician was all in a day’s work for the leaders of what is now the RCA? As the 2016 race heated up, Peterson pronounced:

“Sanders will have to make a decision that will determine his political legacy and potentially change the course of US history. Will he follow through on his word to support Clinton if she is the nominee? ... Or will he help lay the foundations for something new and necessary in American politics? Will he call on the unions to break with the Democrats and build an independent socialist labor party?”
– John Peterson, “USA: Revolution on the Horizon” (*sic*), 4 March 2016

A year later, the Editorial Board of the IMT’s U.S. paper exulted that “the explosive growth of the Democratic Socialists of America is an exciting development,” so that “it appears socialists are finally swimming *with the stream*.” It went on:

“At its height, the Sanders campaign mobilized millions and rallied broad layers of society, particularly the youth, around the banner of democratic socialism. For a moment, the potential for the emergence of a new party – a mass socialist party – became a concrete prospect. No longer was this a hard-to-imagine abstraction – *if only Bernie would break with the Democrats!*”
– “The Growth of the DSA and the Fight for Socialism,” 16 July 2017 [emphasis in original]

But he didn’t, they lamented.

The spurious claims of opportunists of this ilk had long since been answered by revolutionary Trotskyists: “If donkeys could fly, pressure would transform the likes of Bernie Sanders into the opposite of what is: a capitalist Democratic politician. So these fake-leftists whip up enthusiasm for ‘Bernie’ supposedly to pressure him to the left....”²

Still the beat went on, ramping up again with the election in 2018 of AOC, a former intern for Democratic senator Ted Kennedy’s office who joined the DSA after it endorsed her campaign for Congress. In “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to the Rescue of the Democratic Party” (August 2018), we cited the “reformist fantasy scenario ... promoted by the International Marxist Tendency, which writes (*Socialist Revolution*, 1 July [2018]): ‘If Ocasio-Cortez operated in Congress as an independent socialist, she could call for the Fortune 500 companies to be placed under workers’ control in order to provide the resources for full employment and a genuine living wage, healthcare, education, and housing for all,’ and so forth and so on.”

As our article noted, this was yet another of the IMT’s “ridiculous appeals for capitalist politicians to please introduce ‘socialism’ through the bourgeois state.”

From “Build the DSA” to “Join the RCA!”

Time flies when you’re ... well, we don’t know if the IMT was having fun, but it seems only yesterday that they were oh so “excited to continue building and strengthening DSA” (“Why I Joined the IMT,” 9 February 2018), “extremely happy to see the growth of the DSA” and “want to help build the DSA,” as the “membership, resources, and visibility of DSA give it the potential to contribute immensely” to the socialist cause (“Building a Mass Socialist Party,” 5 April 2021); believed the “DSA could become a genuine point of reference”² “If Donkeys Could Fly: Bernie Sanders and the Pressure Politics of the Opportunist Left,” *The Internationalist* No. 40, June 2015.

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NYC May Day 2023. RIY is the youth organization of the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International, which tells the truth: U.S./NATO imperialist war drive against Russia and China paves way for WWII. For international socialist revolution!

for the working class as a fighting force that offers a way forward” (“What Kind of Party Are We Fighting For? A Reply to Comrades in DSA,” 15 June 2021), etcetera *ad nauseam*.

Today, under their new name of RCA, they hark back in sorrow to fantasize once again: “Sanders had an opportunity to take on the Democrats by breaking with them and forming a mass socialist party.” Yet “Sanders, AOC, and the rest of DSA’s congressional representatives have not used their position to organize against the capitalist system” (“Biden abandons the race: can switching horses in midstream stop Trump?” 23 July). This is a revelation? As the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth has consistently emphasized with no ifs and or buts: Sanders, AOC et al. are *capitalist politicians* whose job it is to defend the capitalist system through one of the oldest capitalist parties in the world: the strike-breaking, mass-incarcerating Democratic Party of Hiroshima, the Vietnam War and genocide in Gaza. The DSA is and always has been an appendage of that party.

So when the former IMT now launches article after sticker after video after X-post calling to “Join the Revolutionary Communists of America today!” curious minds want to know: And what will you be calling for tomorrow?

If there is a tomorrow, that is. The U.S. imperialist ruling class is leading humanity toward a thermonuclear Third World War – unless the international working class stops it through a socialist revolution. Telling the truth about this is an urgent responsibility for revolutionaries, which our press seeks to do through serious explanation and documentation, connecting this to the fight for international workers action against the U.S./NATO war machine.³

For a group that projects itself as “the Communists” who will lead a revolution “in our lifetime,” the newly fledged Revolutionary Communist International and its U.S. section are strikingly oblivious to how capitalism in decay is escalating the threat to human existence posed by U.S. imperialism’s drive – from the Middle East to Ukraine to

³ See, for example, “Only Socialist Revolution Can Defeat U.S. Imperialism’s Drive to WWII” and additional items in *Revolution* Nos. 19 (September 2022) and 20 (September 2023); “Revolutionary Trotskyism on the Imperialist War Drive Against Russia and China,” *The Internationalist* No. 71 (June-October 2023) and other materials.

the South China Sea – toward WWII. The Manifesto of the RCI blithely asserts that “a world war is ruled out under present conditions” (our emphasis) – despite the fact U.S. imperialism’s political and military leaders have repeatedly made clear that the current U.S./NATO war against Russia is a way station toward war with China.

Reformist Complacency, Radical Garb

Under the gimmicks, revolutionary rhetoric and radical garb, the “new” RCI and RCA maintain the reformist complacency that causes political blindness. Parallel to its “ruling out” of the danger of WWII, the RCI manifesto blandly maintains that “the working class, in most countries, has not suffered serious defeats in decades” and pooh-poohs “the alleged danger

of ‘fascism,’” recycling the Granite adage that “the ruling class burned its fingers badly when it threw its weight behind the fascists in the past.”

Yes, liberals tell people to vote Democrat in order to “stop Trump fascism” (though history has repeatedly shown that to fight far-rightist threats, the working class must unchain its power from all wings of the ruling class). It is also true that Trump does not lead an actual mass fascist movement like those of Hitler or Mussolini. But it is false and dangerous to claim that fascist threats are just “alleged.” Trump’s raging bigotry emboldens fascist terror groups, as exemplified by 2017’s deadly white-supremacist rally in Charlottesville, while in Europe Italy’s government is headed by an outright fascist party and the fascist National

Rally has surged in France. In Britain in early August, the fascist English Defence League took to the streets in a violent anti-immigrant rampage.

Against the very real threats of racist, fascist and other ultra-rightist attacks, the League for the Fourth International (LFI) raises the call, from Trotsky’s *Transitional Program*, to build workers defense guards. The LFI’s U.S. section, the Internationalist Group, and its supporters in the union movement have organized mobilizations of labor’s power such as Portland Labor Against the Fascists in June 2017, which brought out hundreds of workers from 14 area unions to stop a white-supremacist provocation staged days after a local Nazi carried out a double murder.⁴

At the same time, revolutionary Marxists underline the crucial fact that the most powerful threats to the workers and oppressed are those from the *capitalist state* itself. In the U.S., the repressive apparatus of capitalist class rule has been systematically strengthened by one Democratic administration after another, even as Trump’s authoritarian ravings give the Democrats another chance to falsely claim they “defend democratic freedoms.”

And when it comes to the armed fist of the bourgeois state, all the “revolutionary communist” rhetoric and rebranding of the RCI and RCA cannot hide the reformist reality underneath. Our article on their long-standing line on the cops, printed above, makes that clear as day.

Lastly, on their posters saying “Are You a Communist? Get Organized.” *Get serious. Revolution is serious business.* ■

⁴ See “Portland Labor Mobilizes to Stop Fascist Provocation,” 10 June 2017, at csw-pdx.org and internationalist.org.

New Members Not Supposed to Know About It RCI/IMT’s Long Record of Supporting Cop “Unions”

By Jacob and Ray

A reputation for supporting cop and prison guard “strikes” and “unions” is not a great selling point if you’re a left group with a checkered past trying to rebrand as shiny new “Revolutionary Communists of America” (RCA). (See accompanying article.) To their trademark “Are You a Communist?” stickers, those in the know might respond: *Is the “RCA” communist? Are you serious – how can they claim to be with that line on the cops?* This is also a good example of why, as those new to the left often ask, the different groups can’t “all just get together.”

This issue of *Revolution* features items about last spring’s Gaza solidarity encampments and protests against the onslaught of police repression against them. At one in New York after hundreds, among them our comrades, were arrested at City College and Columbia, RCAers tried to shout down an Internationalist activist when she mentioned their organization’s long-standing stance on the cops, yelling that it isn’t true. And though it’s rather widely known on the left, new RCA members tend to voice angry denial, or sheer disbelief, when they

hear about it.

So clearly the quick-change artists running the RCA, U.S. affiliate of the group previously known as International Marxist Tendency (IMT), hope the topic just won’t come up. That’s unsurprising, given what most radical youth think about capitalism’s blue-uniformed enforcers – particularly since 2020’s mass upsurge against racist police terror. While these days it prefers silence on the subject, the RCA’s attempts to hide or deny its amply documented record speak volumes about what kind of organization they’re building: not revolutionary or communist, but rankly opportunist.

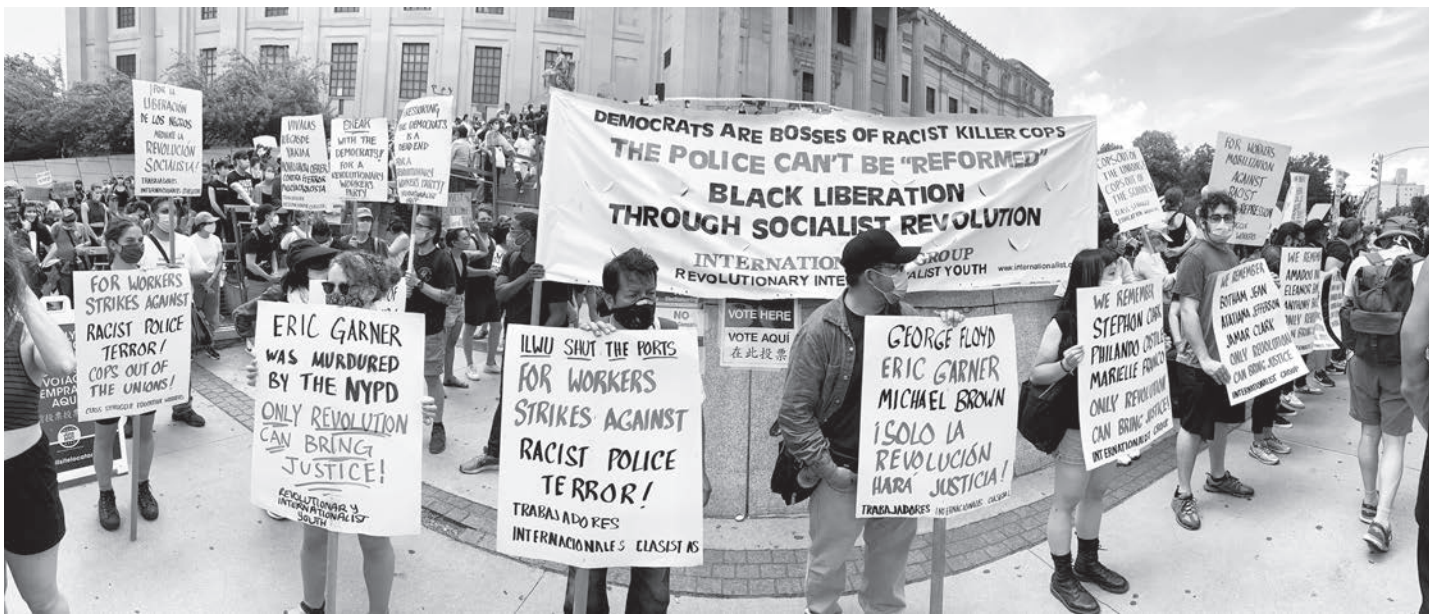
The RCA’s parent body, the IMT, proclaimed itself the “Revolutionary Communist International” (RCI) in June, as part of the new posture as red-hot communists adopted by the group, previously known as one the most staid and stodgy of the ostensibly Marxist left. The new look could fade fast if hoped-for recruits question how supposed revolutionaries could hail “strikes” to boost the pay, job security and “working conditions” (more powerful weaponry, even more protection from legal consequences...) of the professionals of

racist repression and incarceration.

It’s not some random blip. The IMT-now-RCI’s *social-democratic* line on the cops is emblematic of its nature and history. As our comrades of the League for the Fourth International’s Brazilian section emphasized in their historic 1996 campaign to oust police from the municipal workers union in Brazil’s “Steel City,”¹ *the cops are the armed fist of the bourgeois state*. And as Rosa Luxemburg stressed in *Reform or Revolution*, and V.I. Lenin in *State and Revolution*: the question of the state is the central dividing line between revolutionary and reformist politics.

Not True? See for Yourselves

So for genuine revolutionary communists, few topics are more central than this, and it’s important to address it squarely. But for the RCA’s leaders, the key whenever facing revolutionary criticism is to fall back on the three D’s: divert, distract and deny. Fortunately, those who want to find out the truth can check for themselves. One good place to start is with materials that, ¹ See *Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil: Cops, Courts Out of the Unions*, Internationalist pamphlet, 1997.



Internationalist contingent in 19 June 2020 march in Brooklyn. The revolutionary Marxist position on the cops: “The Police Can’t Be ‘Reformed,’” “For Workers Strikes Against Racist Police Terror,” “Cops Out of the Unions!”

with a little digging, can be found still on the RCA/RCI’s own website, marxist.com.

There you’ll find what might seem like an oddity, for a group that dismisses all organizations to its left as “irrelevant sects”: a polemic of almost 20,000 words – about 30 pages – by the IMT’s U.S. section against the Internationalist Group (of which the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth is the youth section).² After many pages of generalities about “dialectics” and everything under the sun, this 2019 item finally gets down to brass tacks: “the IMT’s position on police and prison guard unions and strikes.” The article denounces our call for “Cops out of the labor movement!” It advocates that striking workers appeal to police “as fellow union members.” And it states:

“While *we support police unions linking up with the rest of the labor movement* insofar as this can, in certain instances, weaken the bourgeois state [!], we do not support making any reactionary concessions to the police unions in order for them to remain within the broader umbrella of organized labor.” (our emphasis)

Police and prison guards are key to the “special bodies of armed men,” in Friedrich Engels’ classic phrase, that are the nucleus of the bourgeois state. Calling to “link up” with “police unions” is in itself a reactionary – and dangerous – concession

² “Marxism vs. sectarianism” (18 October 2019). In the tradition of IMT founder Ted Grant, the RCI brands adherence to Marxist principles as “ultraleft sectarianism.”

to that state. The presence of these professional strike-breakers’ associations (which are *not* “unions”) in the labor movement – or of cops, prison or security guards in some actual workers unions such as AF-SCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) and the Teamsters. – is a deadly threat.³ And when did the IMT publish its 30-page lawyers’ brief for labor bureaucrats “uniting” the union movement to the armed enforcers of boss class repression? Just months before the murder of George Floyd touched off mass protests by *millions* voicing outrage against racist police terror.

The polemic against us by the group now called RCA posed the question of why “most individual cops join the police,” answering that this is “because they have no other job prospects or have honest illusions that by becoming a police officer they will be ‘helping their community’ or even ‘combating racism’!” No qualms, apparently, when it came to making up such grotesque claims about why most cops became cops – that’s how intent they were on defending “the IMT’s position on police and prison guard unions and strikes.” RCA/RCI spokespeople really ought to quit claiming that it just ain’t so.

And if it sounds ridiculous and shameful to *Revolution* readers, that’s because it is. As huge numbers who have marched against unending police murder, or in this year’s protests against genocide in – or simply oppose racist cop terror! – know, the police serve the oppressors and are no friends of the oppressed, working-class and poor population.

The background to the 2019 IMT polemic was that a young member of the IMT in Minneapolis had written several documents criticizing its positions on the police and other topics. Given the organization’s claims to stand on the politics of Leon Trotsky, the documents’ author cited such basic statements by the Bolshe-

³ See “Why Cops and Their ‘Unions’ Have No Place in the Labor Movement,” *Class Struggle Workers* Portland, June 2020.

vik leader as: “The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker” (*What Next?* [1932]). Another example was Trotsky’s description in his *History of the Russian Revolution* (1930) of how the insurgent workers sought to fraternize with and win over soldiers, whereas “the police are fierce, implacable, hated and hating foes. To win them over is out of the question.”

The U.S. IMT/now-RCA leadership sought to deny or obfuscate the organization’s line on the cops (despite it’s being known on the left for decades) – but innumerable articles from their press – many of which, as noted above, can still be found on the website of their new “Revolutionary Communist International” (marxist.com) – exemplify their pro-cop line. Here we only have room for a sampling.⁴

• The IMT-now-RCI’s British section, which has played a leading role in the international organization since its inception, in its widely-cited 28 January 2008 article “Bolshevik Bobbies” (an endearing local term for police officers), jubilantly announced that its newspaper “got a phone call from the ‘Police Review’ [a weekly magazine for cops] asking for permission to republish an article from our website on the police strikes of 1918-19.” This was “a sign that we are heading for explosive times,” they wrote.⁵

• A few years later they were proclaiming that “the consciousness of rank and file police officers has begun to change, leading to demonstrations by the Police Federation” in the UK, in an article based on a lengthy interview with a police constable. Denouncing “left-activists [who] feel that police officers can never be anything but enemies of the working class,” the article concludes: “Above all, bringing rank and file police into the labour movement undermines the ability of the capitalist state to repress the working class, and thus is a[n] important pursuit in the class struggle” (“Changing consciousness within the police: a Marxist view,” 14 August 2013).

• Following violent cop repression of Occupy Wall Street protests, the IMT’s U.S. section wrote: “The police are union-

⁴ We urge readers (especially those in or around the RCA!) to check out additional examples cited in documents reproduced in the section on the IMT of the Internationalist pamphlet *Left Reformists in Existential Crisis* (2019).

⁵ See “Her Majesty’s Social Democrats in Bed with the Police,” *The Internationalist* No. 29, Summer 2009.

ized.... Although their job involves protecting the capitalist state, a significant layer also has an interest in defending itself through defending labor.” Labor, it said, should further the struggle by “calling on the police unions to defend the rights of working class Americans” (!) (“Occupy Wall Street & the Police,” 10 January 2012).

• When prison guards in Canada walked out in 2013 over “working conditions” in their brutal job of incarceration, the IMT hailed their “inspiring militant strike.” Calling the jailers “workers in uniform” and gushing that “the prison guards showed tremendous class instincts,” it compared the “services” they provide to prisoners with the relation of teachers to their students and nurses to their patients. “The prison guards have shown the way,” it exulted (“Alberta prison guards’ wildcat – a lesson for the entire labour movement,” 3 May 2013).

In November 2018, at a “Marxist school” held by the IMT in New York City, members of the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth spoke during the discussion, putting forward the genuine communist position that cops, prison and security guards have no place in the labor movement. In response, the editor of the IMT’s U.S. publication at the time (*Socialist Revolution*) doubled down on the organization’s position, stating that far from opposing police “unions” being a part of the AFL-CIO or central labor councils, they favor “unity” between the police and the working class. To exemplify this he talked about the PBA (the notoriously racist cop protection racket called Patrolmen’s [now Police] Benevolent Association) being the only “union” that opposed healthcare concessions during pattern bargaining in New York City.

Their 2019 “Marxism vs. Sectarianism” diatribe against the Internationalists was meant to be the mega-magnum opus that would inoculate IMT members against questioning of their line on the cops. But not a year later, the enormous, almost daily protests against racist police terror swept the country. We Internationalists intervened continuously to highlight that the police can’t be reformed, “only revolution can bring justice”; that Democrats are the bosses of the racist police in urban centers throughout the U.S.; and that the fight to unchain workers *power* in the struggle against terror highlights the need to forge a revolutionary workers party.

What’s at Stake Here

With millions in the streets and the fact that cop terror is embedded in the systemic racism of U.S. society being discussed by large numbers of radicalizing youth, the IMT found itself in a real dilemma. Even if it wanted to repudiate the age-old Granite line on the cops (which it didn’t), to do so would bring attention to this disgraceful history. So as opportunists adapting to mass sentiment while evading any reckoning with such inconvenient truths, they tried to have things both ways (at least until things blew over).

So they issued a statement titled “USA: how can the working class end police terror?” (12 June 2020) that argued – on the one hand – that the “inclusion” of police “unions” in the labor movement could have “represented a potential point of pressure by the broader working

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To Uproot Racist Oppression: Socialist Revolution Black Liberation – Struggle and Strategy

By Max and Rosario

Much of what characterizes the life of working-class youth in capitalist society today is uncertainty. Amidst this day-to-day reality, the fact that racist violence from the police is a never-ending danger was brought home to us unbearably yet again, on July 6, with the wanton murder of Sonya Massey, shot in the face by a deputy sheriff near Springfield, Illinois after she called 911, believing a would-be intruder was near her home.

Four years after the mass protests of 2020, racist police terror continues unabated. In 2023, according to figures compiled by the website mappingpoliceviolence.us, police killed at least 1,247 people, more than in 2020 – or any other year in more than a decade. Now in 2024, the site states, police are killing people at an even higher rate (721 as of early August) – and black people are three times as likely as white people to be killed by the cops.

While liberals pretended that the election of Barack Obama heralded the United States becoming a “post-racial society,” revolutionary Marxists underline that racial oppression is woven into the structure and everyday workings of capitalism in the U.S. The struggle for black liberation is integral to waging successful class struggle and key to the fight for socialist revolution. The following article is based on a presentation at a recent CUNY Internationalist Clubs meeting on the topic of “revolutionary integrationism,” the Trotskyist program for black liberation.

For many of us who have gotten involved in revolutionary politics in recent years, the protests of 2020 were a deeply politicizing experience that altered the course of our lives. As was clear at the time, the horrible murder of George Floyd at the hands of the cold-blooded killer cop Derek Chauvin was only the tip of the iceberg. We live in a racist country where African Americans are killed for “walking while black,” driving or just being in your car while black, or being in your home while black. It never stops.

In the early weeks of the COVID pandemic, we saw videos of police beating black people for not wearing masks on the street, while white picnic-goers were handed masks



Demonstrators in Washington, D.C. on 3 June 2020 protesting racist police murder confront National Guard troops brought in from around the U.S.

by police officers. Fresh in our minds still was how multiple cops pointed their guns into a crowded New York subway car, aiming at Adrian Napier, a black teen they were going after for supposedly jumping the turnstile. Today, New York’s Democratic mayor Eric Adams, a former NYPD captain, and Governor Kathy Hochul have deployed the state police, National Guard and an additional 800 city cops to fight a phantom “crime-wave” in the subways, in an effort to return to the “stop-and-frisk” days of the Michael Bloomberg mayoral administration.

The protests in 2020, expressing mass outrage over the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and so many others, were the largest sustained protests in U.S. history. It is estimated that more than 20 million people participated. Yet the protests did not yield the revolutionary change many hoped for, as the gut-level desire so many people had to end racism was channeled into supporting Joe “Shoot ‘Em in the Leg” Biden in the 2020 election. And let’s not forget the role of Bernie Sanders plus AOC and other Democratic Party “socialists” in pushing support for Biden in 2020 (and 2024).

Under Biden’s presidency, the racist cop killings have continued. This was exemplified by the brutal murder of Tyre Nichols in January 2023 by Memphis police. At Hunter College, we organized a speak-out against the murder of Tyre and of Tortuguita (Manuel Esteban Paez Terán), an activist against Atlanta’s “Cop City.” At that protest we heard a direct report from Memphis by a former member of the Black Panther and Young Lords parties and also spoke about the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, the former Panther and renowned radical black journalist who has been in Pennsylvania prisons on frame-up charges for over four decades.¹

¹ See articles on racist police terror, “Cop City” and the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal in *Revolution* No. 20, September 2023 and *The Internationalist* No. 69-70, January-May 2023.

What about the calls to “defund the police” that were raised by a wide range of self-described leftists, the Democratic Socialists of America and various Democratic politicians amidst the protests of 2020? These were an illusion and a deception, as we systematically explained at the time. The cops were going to keep doing their job of repression for the ruling class and “whether or not billy clubs are cheaper, they’ll still crack your head.” And in fact the eventual outcome is *more* funding for police departments around the country. Today, the many young people who still want to do something about racism and racial oppression are left wondering what is to be done about the society we live in – one that brings pain, despair, worry and death to millions here and around the world.

Capitalism and Racism

As Malcolm X famously said, “You can’t have capitalism without racism.” To put it another way: it’s a feature, not a bug, in this society founded on chattel slavery, in which exploitation and inequality are fundamental to the whole profit system.² For us communists, who are committed to the struggle for a proletarian socialist revolution, we understand that this cannot

² See “Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America,” in Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (2012), which emphasizes that to understand “race,” one must understand its functions as an ideology arising historically (and in present-day society) from material conditions.

be advanced without answering the question of how to achieve the liberation of black people.

For some people, the struggle is about having “black faces in high places” or “a seat at the [ruling-class] table.” At best, that reflects a misunderstanding of the roots of racism. For would-be CEOs and bourgeois politicians, it expresses the willingness to climb over the masses of black working people and be able to say “I’ve got mine.” Of course, revolutionaries stand against any kind of discrimination that would prevent African Americans, women or any other group from holding any kind of office or position, even those in the upper hierarchy of the ruling class. After the mass upheavals of the 1960s, the overwhelmingly white ruling class decided to let some black faces reach high places. Today we see many black mayors and police chiefs among the Democratic bosses of the killer cops. And we see the record of California’s former “top cop” Kamala Harris, who became the VP of Joe Biden, whose



March in New York City, 31 May 2020, protesting racist cop murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

sponsorship of the 1994 “anti-crime” bill is infamous for fueling mass incarceration.

The 2008 election of the first black president, while a social change, was not a political change, and in some ways black people’s situation today is worse than half a century ago. Black liberation is so far from being achieved that many ex-radicals have given up on it. While today a lot of youth have come to the conclusion that capitalism needs to be done away with, a lot are far from clear on how that will answer the question of black liberation. The predominance of liberal/reformist identity-politics conceptions means that many think that black people gaining their full rights would actually come at the expense of average white people. This is not just false but deadly, as it is central to claims by racist ideologues. Racists say that black oppression is beneficial, not to the capitalist ruling class, but to



Sonya Massey, 36, murdered by police in her home on July 6 after calling 911 about possible intruder. It never stops.

Courtesy of Ben Crump

Internationalist photo



“Black faces in high places does not freedom make,” wrote Mumia Abu-Jamal. Above: Democratic president Barack Obama meeting National Association of Police Organizations “top cops” at the White House, May 2012.

your average white person, who supposedly stands to *lose* from any advance for African Americans. That is a deadly dangerous falsehood and a serious obstacle to the fight for black freedom.

It is striking that privilege theory, in its acceptance of capitalist ideology, agrees that it’s all a zero-sum game in which the white population has to live worse for the black population to live better. Again, that’s a damned lie, which can only help the enemies of black liberation. Marxists explain that African Americans are *doubly oppressed* in capitalist America, systematically excluded from basic rights deemed the norm for the majority. We fight every day against racial oppression, and all forms of oppression, and for any real advances that can be gained within this society. At the same time, we explain that the struggle for equality requires fighting for a society capable of uprooting and overcoming the whole legacy of oppression. That cannot be a society based on profit, it must be one based on fulfilling human needs – a socialist society.

Capitalism *can* be done away with. But this requires more than the desire for it to happen, or simply “critiquing” the way things are. It requires a program based on power. The potential power is in the hands of the multiracial working class that makes everything run and can bring capitalist production, transport and all the rest of it to a halt. This is fundamental for successful struggle against racist oppression. We have gotten a taste of this with workers’ mobilizations and other actions against racist police terror and provocations by white-supremacist and fascist groups in Portland, Oregon and elsewhere.³ To deepen and spread this requires revolutionary leadership. The other side of this same coin is that fighting for black liberation through socialist revolution is key to forging class-struggle leadership of the working class as a whole.

What Is Revolutionary Integrationism?

Forging that leadership is a serious task that requires a materialist, scientific analysis of society. Marxists reject the acceptance of today’s social conditions, of the blatant racism that we see and experience today, as something innate to “human nature,” the

³ See “Portland Labor Mobilizes to Stop Fascist Provocation,” *The Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017.

product of a free-floating and ahistorical “white supremacy” or expression of “whiteness,” and other fashionable liberal and/or conservative bourgeois notions.

All this reflects what Marxists call idealism, the belief that it is ideas that drive material reality. Instead, Marxists are materialists, understanding that material reality, and class interests, give rise to ideas (and underlie ideology, including that of race, and racism). Racism is rooted in the material reality of racial oppression, which arose from the profit-making mechanisms of slavery and the slave trade, as well as colonialism. It survives and is continuously reproduced today on the basis of the massive inequalities of capitalist society.

Revolutionaries put forward a program for intervening in social reality to change it. A crucial part of doing this in the U.S. involves understanding the origins and present-day workings of racial oppression – and how racist ideology arises from and serves to justify that oppression. In August 2020, amidst the nationwide mass upsurge against racist cop terror, the headline of our paper (*Revolution* No. 17) was: “Only Revolution Can Bring Justice.” This is an expression of our Marxist program of *revolutionary integrationism*, based on a materialist understanding of the nature of black oppression in the United States. Let’s start to break down what that means.

Revolutionary meaning, among other things, that we oppose all forms of liberal accommodationism to the status quo, the parties and politicians of racist U.S. capitalism. Revolutionary meaning that we are not content with reforms: while Marxists support any genuine reform, we expose the illusion that oppression can be reformed away, with the domination of the capitalist class and its state apparatus left intact. Revolutionaries’ aim is for the working class to take power, establishing a workers state opening the way for a society whose resources and technology are used to free, not subjugate, the majority. That is, a classless, stateless socialist society here and around the world.

Integrationist meaning, in part, that we look to unite the working class across the color line – the biggest obstacle to the overthrow of the capitalist system – and bring its power into the fight for black liberation. And integrationist meaning that black liberation won’t be achieved by black people somehow separating from U.S. society. There is no common territory of the African American

population (approximately 14% of the overall population, concentrated in different parts of the U.S.) that would separate off and form a separate country; and “self-determination” of impoverished segregated neighborhoods is a cruel joke and illusion.

A strategy based on separation (such as black nationalism in its various incarnations) is illusory. This illusion – which arises in times of defeat and despair – cuts against the actual struggle for black freedom. Marxists, in contrast, understand that the struggle can draw immense power from African Americans’ concentration in strategic sectors of production and transport as a key (and often leading) part of the multiracial working class. Liberation requires not nationalistic fantasy scenarios but the revolutionary seizure of the whole thing, the fruits of our collective labor: the wealth and resources of this society as a whole. It is this and only this that will enable full and genuine integration, into an egalitarian socialist society.

Historical Context

Where did the program of revolutionary integrationism come from? A comrade named Richard Fraser, who was an organizer, activist and self-taught scholar in the Trotskyist movement going back to the 1930s, put it forward and coined the term amidst the rise of the civil rights movement in the 1950s.

After World War Two, U.S. imperialism’s anti-Soviet Cold War plunged society into repressive political and cultural conformity. Both liberals and conservatives pushed the stifling anticommunist “Cold War consensus.” It was the civil rights movement arising in the 1950s that started breaking this up. In part this reflected sharply increased urbanization of the black population, while sectors of the ruling class saw Jim Crow – the South’s *de jure* (written down in laws) form of racist segregation – as a liability for U.S. claims to represent the “free world.”

In the U.S., a small but vital Trotskyist movement had been founded under the leadership of James P. Cannon, a founder of the Communist Party who, together with other cadres of the CP, opposed its degeneration under the sway of Joseph Stalin’s conservative nationalist bureaucracy in the USSR. Like Trotsky, the then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party led by Cannon and others saw the fight for black freedom as central to revolution in the U.S. However, Dick Fraser had grown increasingly dissatisfied with the SWP’s lack of clear definition regarding the material nature of black oppression in this country. Was the oppression of African Americans similar in kind to that of subject nations in the old tsarist empire of Russia or the situation of British and French colonies, many of which gained independence in the ’50s?

A deep study of the dynamics of black freedom struggles throughout U.S. history, and of the workings of modern-day U.S. society, led Fraser to argue that no, black oppression in the U.S. is not a national question but a different, specific form of racial oppression. This was connected to his determination to help forge a program to reach both black and white workers and unite them in common struggle against exploitation and oppression under the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party. Without an accurate analysis, such a program could not emerge.

Richard Fraser’s contribution was codified first in two pioneering lectures he

gave in 1953, titled “The Negro Struggle and the Proletarian Revolution,” followed in 1955 by his document “For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Struggle.”⁴ (“Negro” was then the generally accepted term used by African Americans.) In a short discussion, we can only touch on some aspects, but a striking one is Fraser’s discussion of “the origin of the race concept.” This was decades before the education system began teaching the scientific fact that race is a biological fiction. As a Marxist, back in 1953 Fraser highlighted that fact and answered the question: Where does race ideology come from? It emerged from the formation of a class, which came to be marked off by skin color, that was essential to massive plantation agriculture. The labor of that class, the chattel slaves, was key to the rise of U.S. capitalism. Bourgeois liberals think the idea – racism – caused the material reality of racial oppression. In reality, the material reality created the ideology.

After the Civil War defeated the Southern slave owners, Reconstruction was sold out by the Northern bourgeoisie.⁵ The ideology of race continued to serve to justify the bitter *social* reality of ongoing inequality and oppression. As time went on, conscious purveyors of racist vileness obviously did their part. But a central point is that the ongoing material reality of *racial oppression* continually generates *racist ideology*. For this to end, as Fraser stressed, we have to transform that material reality. Program is a guide to action in that struggle.

Worn down by the effects of the McCarthyite witch hunt, the SWP was increasingly pessimistic about its ability



Fraser family

Richard Fraser

to provide revolutionary leadership and actually change society. It evaded – as so many left groups do today – the responsibility to provide a clear materialist analysis of the nature of black oppression. Instead, the SWP took refuge in vague hypotheses about how a black nation might supposedly emerge at some time.⁶ This

⁴ Published in the SWP’s *Discussion Bulletin* in August 1954 and August 1955, respectively.

⁵ See “The Emancipation Proclamation: Promise and Betrayal,” *The Internationalist* No. 34, March-April 2013.

⁶ Cannon indicated his disquiet with this in his important 1959 talk “The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement” (reprinted as an Internationalist Group pamphlet).



Mumia Abu-Jamal was minister of information of the Philadelphia Black Panther Party in 1968-69.

was convenient for tailing liberal civil rights leaders and the black nationalist mood that arose in the '60s in reaction to the civil rights movement's defeats when it came up against the *de facto* segregation prevalent in the North.

Within the SWP, a left opposition called the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) challenged the party's opportunist course. Expelled in 1963-64, it established the Spartacist tendency, which upheld the Trotskyist program for the following three decades. The RT's embrace of Fraser's revolutionary integrationism is an important part of the heritage of the Internationalist Group and its youth section, the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth. As our comrades wrote after Obama's election, when most of the left helped push illusions that "black faces in high places" really did mean "hope and change":

"As opposed to conservative accom-

modation and liberal integrationism, we Trotskyists fight for a program of *revolutionary integrationism*. We stress that the fight for black freedom and equality in capitalist America can only succeed by overturning the economic foundations of black oppression. We recognize the radical impulse of many black nationalists who were breaking from the liberal preachers, but emphasize that the oppressed black poor and working people can only achieve power through common struggle together with their class sisters and brothers of all races. We stand for *black liberation through socialist revolution*."⁷

"We're Going to Fight Racism with Solidarity"

When young radicals today learn about the growth of black radicalism in the 1960s, our attention is often drawn to those who, seeking a revolutionary road, courageously upheld the right of armed self-defense and denounced "official" civil rights leaders' support to the Democratic Party. Among the most heroic were brothers and sisters in the Black Panther Party (BPP), which faced the murderous rage of the ruling class which used the FBI's COINTELPRO program to kill or jail large numbers of Panthers.

Assata Shakur and Mumia Abu-Jamal are two former Panthers who survived, though Assata had to take refuge in Cuba, where she still lives, and Mumia has been imprisoned since his 1982 frame-up trial. (Mumia wrote about his experiences in the BPP in his book *We Want Freedom: A Life in the Black Panther Party* [1982].) Two

⁷ "Barack Obama vs. Black Liberation," *The Internationalist* No. 28, March-April 2009. Debates in the Trotskyist movement that led to Fraser's analysis are discussed in a useful article, "In Defense of Revolutionary Integrationism," published in *Spartacist* (Winter 1993-94) when it still upheld the Trotskyist program.

of the many Panthers who did not survive the deadly COINTELPRO onslaught were young Chicago Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, assassinated by the Chicago PD in an FBI-organized pre-dawn hit job in December 1969.

Fred Hampton was 21 years old. The most famous quotation from him comes from a speech several months prior to his murder:

"You've got to stop identifying people with being your brothers because they've got the same color skin you have ... and you've got to stop getting hung up in a whole race question because this is a class struggle. It's a class struggle whether we want to face it or not. The Black Panther Party hears a lot of people saying, 'Let's go ahead and fight fire with fire.' But we say 'No!' We may be in the minority, but this minority is going to keep shouting loud and clear, 'We're not going to fight fire with fire, we're going to fight fire with water. We're not going to fight racism with racism, we're going to fight racism with solidarity. We're not going to fight capitalism with black capitalism, we're going to fight capitalism with socialism.'"

This was intended as a critique of what he viewed as "narrow" (or "porkchop") nationalism. Hampton sought to challenge the go-it-alone separatist outlook as well as those buying into "black capitalism" schemes, which then-president Richard Nixon was actually promoting. His revolutionary potential cut short by police bullets, the talented young Chicago Panther leader had not arrived at a thorough-going break with the sectoralist outlook embedded in the BPP's program, with each oppressed group fighting for its own liberation ("Black Power for black people, Puerto Rican power for Puerto Rican people," etc.). He envisaged a kind of loose federation among the various sectors rather than a multiracial proletarian vanguard party.

Today, revolutionary integrationism is a program that we in the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth and CUNY Internationalist Clubs are determined to help put into practice. Together with Internationalist supporters in the labor movement, we call for building workers defense guards based on union power, to stop fascist and white-supremacist attacks. We educate revolutionary-minded students about the potential of labor's power indicated by the shutdowns of West Coast ports for Mumia's freedom and in protest against the murder of George Floyd. Revolutionaries tie this to our call to break with the Democrats, Republicans and all capitalist parties and politicians – more crucial than ever as the election season ramps up demands that workers and youth line up as voting cattle for the imperialist war criminals.

Our program has a very different class orientation than that of those pushing one or another phony facelift for this racist society. The counterposed approaches are directed to opposite social classes. Liberals and reformists look to convince and pressure the capitalist ruling class, while Marxist revolutionaries work to awaken and mobilize the multiracial working class to realize and utilize its own power to sweep away the capitalist system and open the way to a society without oppression. Revolutionary integrationism is an essential part of the program for workers revolution. ■

PSL...

continued from page 15

into the struggle, opposing it forthrightly to the bourgeois ideology of the ruling class, as V.I. Lenin insisted on in *What Is to Be Done?* (1902), nor to provide a "bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution," as Leon Trotsky, Lenin's co-leader of the Russian Revolution, called for in the "Transitional Program" (1938). Instead, for the PSL, like similar groups, "meeting people where they're at" is the pretext for adapting to and echoing existing illusions – and tailing after "the movement," even when it's moving in a cycle of class collaboration.

Coalitions of Coalitions to Build Coalitions

"I hear what you're saying about some of this stuff, but aren't you kind of overstating things?" a thoughtful PSL supporter might say. We're not. Let's take a look at the PSL's activity over the past weeks. In the build-up to the DNC protests, the PSL and the ANSWER Coalition that it leads were official "coalition members" of the "Coalition to March on the DNC," which called on all and sundry to join them in "bringing our demands to the Democratic National Convention" in order to "bring the people's agenda to within sight and sound of the Democratic Party leadership."

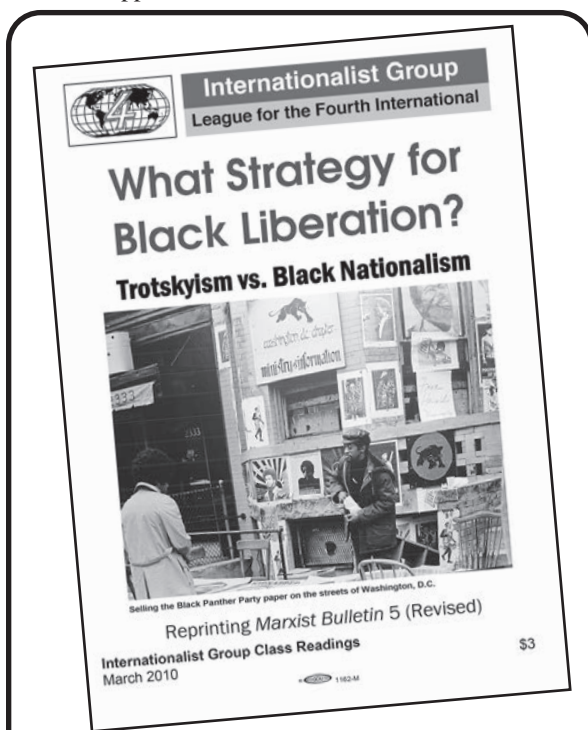
Prior to the Coalition to March on the DNC's August 19 protest, the PSL's Claudia de la Cruz joined fellow presidential candidates Jill Stein of the bourgeois Green Party and maverick left-liberal Cornel West as speakers at something called the "Abandon Biden Convention," held at Chicago's Alhambra Palace on August 18-19. This convention was the second held by the "Abandon Biden" campaign, a hodgepodge grouping seeking to pressure the Democratic Party (and maybe even the Republicans) to "listen" by "punishing Biden at the ballot box" (AbandonBiden24.com).

Also held on August 18 was the "Chicago People's Assembly," held at the headquarters of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition – the organization still headed up by its founder, longtime Democratic politician Jesse Jackson Sr., who ran for president in 1984 and 1988, and briefly attended this year's DNC. At the People's Assembly launch rally, heavily promoted by the PSL, candidate Claudia de la Cruz and Jill Stein stood side by side as featured speakers.

In a brief conversation with De la Cruz at a subsequent event later that day, a *Revolution* reporter said that she was "wondering if you're going to be endorsing Jill Stein, since you had a joint conference together today." The PSL candidate replied "No," explaining "I don't think we should just put down the work we've already done to pick up someone else's." "But," she quickly added, "I support her and she supports me and we support each other." The Marxist term for "support" to and from candidates of a bourgeois party is class collaboration.

The PSL and the "Uncommitted Movement"

The examples we've mentioned are not random slipups, but rather expressions of the PSL's overall political orientation. Seeking big-time political influence as popular-frontist coalition-builders for each new movement is at the core of its politics.



Internationalist Readings, includes Richard Fraser's "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Question," and much more. Reprinting *Marxist Bulletin No. 5 (Revised)* of the then-revolutionary Spartacist League.

To order a copy, on the Internet go to www.internationalist.org/orderhere.html, or send a check/money order for \$5 (includes postage) to Mundial Publications, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, USA



Instagram tile of PSL in Washington State calling to vote "uncommitted" in March Democratic primary election.

So when, within the Democratic Party itself, the "Uncommitted Movement" arose this year, the PSL jumped on board. The PSL's paper *Liberation* (15 April) hailed "the massive movement to vote 'uncommitted' in the Democratic primaries" as one of the factors that "have piled tremendous pressure on Biden" with regard to the war on Gaza. An official Claudia/Karina 2024 Statement declared:

"Our campaign and the PSL call on those who are voting in the Democratic primary to not vote for Biden: vote uncommitted, 'none of the above,' or, where that is not possible, leave the top of the ticket blank."

– "Democrats Voting 'Uncommitted' and Abandoning Biden Are Sending a Powerful Message," votesocialist2024.com, 5 March

We all know what actually happened: when the top of the Democratic ticket was left blank on July 21, with the withdrawal of Genocide Joe from the race, his VP Kamala Harris filled it in, vowing to continue his "ironclad" commitment to the so-called "defense" of Israel, armed to the teeth by U.S. imperialism.

In late May, the PSL, ANSWER Coalition and others built a "People's Conference for Palestine" in Detroit, which featured as a "special guest" Democratic Party Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib. It's one thing to point out that Tlaib has faced an ugly backlash and was censured in Congress over her criticisms of Israel – and Marxists would be for physically defending her against Zionist or Islamophobic attempts to silence or attack her. But politically allying with Democratic politicians is quite a different matter. It should also be noted that in April, Tlaib, like the other Democrats in Congress, voted for \$61 billion more in military funding to Ukraine in the

U.S./NATO imperialist war on Russia.

The PSL's orientation toward sectors of the Democratic Party, and its pressure-politics "tactics," were also exemplified at the Detroit conference's "Uncommitted Votes" plenary session. This was addressed by PSL leader Brian Becker, Reema Ahmad of the Movement Voter Project and Layla Elabed, regional organizer for the We the People-Michigan voter mobilization group and Co-Chair of the Uncommitted National Movement, in which capacity she would meet with Vice President Harris in early August. In her May 26 speech to the conference co-organized by ANSWER and backed by the PSL, Elabed said:

"What do we do to hold 'Genocide Joe' accountable? ... We cannot afford to not leverage our political power that we've built, especially now. So when the idea of using Michigan's presidential primary and the vehicle of the uncommitted option on our Democratic ballot, it was such a strong, very strategic strategy ... We spoke the language of electeds and we took our protest vote to the ballot box.... Let me tell you right now, electeds are public servants, they work for us. Joe Biden needs to work for us. And that is what Uncommitted has sent, that message, resoundingly....

"We are taking our anti-war, pro-peace, pro-Palestinian, pro-ceasefire agenda all the way to the DNC to say this is another pressure point that we are going to continue telling this administration that in order to save our democracy, fight fascism, that you need to be held accountable, you need to listen to your core constituency."

In his remarks at the same session, PSL leader Becker made sure to be on the record with some valid points against the two-party system, but the key was this: "I want to shout out the Listen to Michigan campaign and the Uncommitted Campaign because given the available options, which are so limited in this tortured form of democracy," the campaign organizers "have used the electoral arena to register something that Biden couldn't ignore." In reality, of course, Biden did.

Regarding the Listen to Michigan and Uncommitted campaigns, it's worth recalling what one of their central organizers, former Democratic Congressman Andy Levin, told the *New York Times* (14 February): "I am working with some people who feel like they will never vote for Joe Biden, but there are many, many, many I feel will vote for Joe Biden on Nov. 5 if he changes course.... This is the best way I can help Joe Biden."

Suggestions for "Socialist" Sanders

Back in 2015, as referred to above, the PSL expressed the wish that bourgeois politician Bernie Sanders would run as an "independent," sounding much like social-democratic groups such as Socialist Alternative, the now-defunct International Socialist Organization and the International Marxist Tendency. All promoted similar fantasies and illusions obscuring the real role of Sanders' Democratic "socialism." Following standard operating procedure for erasing the class line, the label of "tactics" was stuck on the whole package like that made it all OK.

"Does it really make sense tactically for more radical socialists, at this moment and under these circumstances, to emphasize that Sanders 'isn't really a socialist'? Does it make any tactical sense, if you want to truly popularize socialism with the millions of new Sanders supporters who are supporting him precisely because they want change and see a 'socialist' candidate as the vehicle for change, that they are just really wasting their time or worse?"

"No, it does not make sense.... We should argue that Bernie Sanders' program for guaranteed health care, college education and other major reforms is what's important and if Sanders is truly serious about winning these reforms, he should run as an independent.... If Sanders ran as an independent candidate for president, as a 'democratic socialist,' he would receive the votes of millions of people. That would be something really significant in creating a new political dynamic in the United States."

– "Socialist tactics and the Bernie Sanders campaign" (*Liberation*, 19 October 2015)

The following year, a statement titled "Why Registered Democrats Should Vote Sanders in the N.Y. Primary," declared: "The Party for Socialism and Liberation and the ... PSL Presidential Campaign are joining together with other left-wing forces and labor unionists who are encouraging already registered Democrats to cast a ballot for Bernie Sanders...." It noted that since PSLers were not registered as Democrats, they couldn't vote in New York State's closed primaries. "But those who are registered as Democratic Party voters can play a decisive role" in the race "by voting for Sanders on Tuesday" (*Liberation*, 18 April 2016).

And then in 2020, the PSL declared: "Although we are not Democrats, we encourage those voting in the upcoming Democratic Party primaries to vote for Bernie Sanders...."



Sam Marcy

This is consistent with our Party's orientation to the 2016 election" (*Liberation*, 4 February 2020). (As we noted at the time: "That's a little like saying: for all those drinking the Kool-Aid, though of course we don't, we recommend the Sanders Blast flavor.") The same *Liberation* article, after calling his campaign "the vessel for a progressive, vaguely socialist insurgency within the confines of the Democratic Party," went on to promise: "If Bernie Sanders wins the Democratic nomination ... the PSL will not run candidates in battleground swing states."

It was yet another "tactical" way to have their cake and eat it too: claiming in words to be some kind of revolutionary alternative to the Democrats, while continuing to tail Berniemania, they could say they weren't really supporting Sanders while backhandedly doing so in practice.

What It Means to Follow the "Marcyite Tradition"

So where does all this come from? Let's trace it back a bit more. In 2004, the "Founding Statement of the Party for Socialism and Liberation" declared: "As former leaders and members of Workers World Party, we defend that group's historical tradition and mission, particularly that of its founder Sam Marcy." It was an accurate affirmation. The PSL ran its first presidential election campaign in 2008, when the Democrats were running Barack Obama. While criticizing Obama, they hastened to declare: "Our campaign has absolutely no quarrel" with those campaigning for "a Black candidate – regardless of his politics" (*Liberation*, 10 June 2008). As the Internationalist Group emphasized at the time, Obama's election in November of that year represented a "social change in this country founded on chattel slavery," but "has not changed the system of imperialist capitalism one iota."³

Far from some kind of fluke, the examples we've cited (out of the many on record) are faithful expressions of the "Marcyite tradition." Interestingly, this is highlighted by the background to the locale of the August 18 "People's Assembly" built by the PSL. It is the HQ of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow PUSH Coalition, formed by the merger of Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity), which Jackson founded in 1971, and his "Rainbow Coalition," the theme of his campaign speech at the 1984 Democratic National Convention and the name of the alliance formed to back that campaign.

In the run-up to the '84 DNC, Sam Marcy came out for support to Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign, and *Workers World* (8 December 1983) ran a long piece titled "Why we support the Jackson campaign: Statement

³ "Obama Presidency: U.S. Imperialism Tries a Makeover," *The Internationalist* No. 28, March-April 2009; also see the in-depth analysis "Barack Obama vs. Black Liberation" in the same issue.



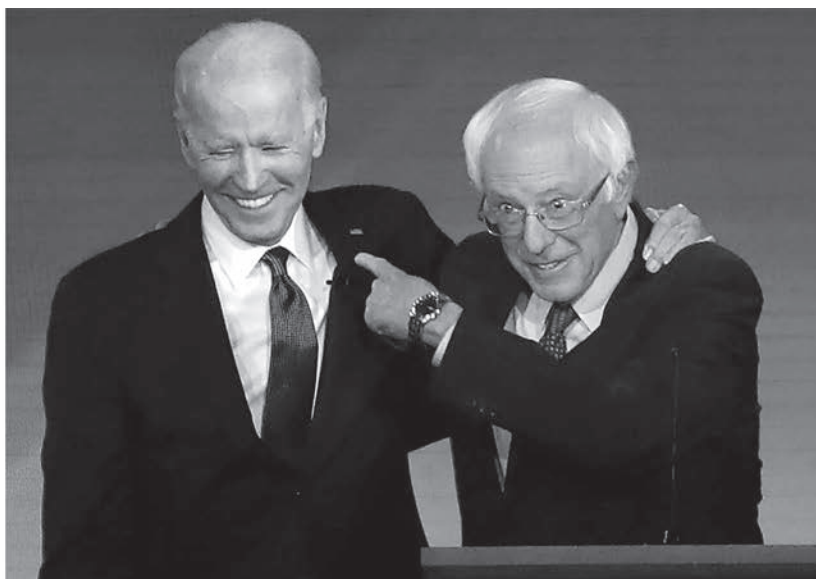
The Bernie Sanders campaign and building the movement for socialism in the US

campaign and determine how to intervene in the current political struggle.

Sanders' insurgency against the Democratic establishment

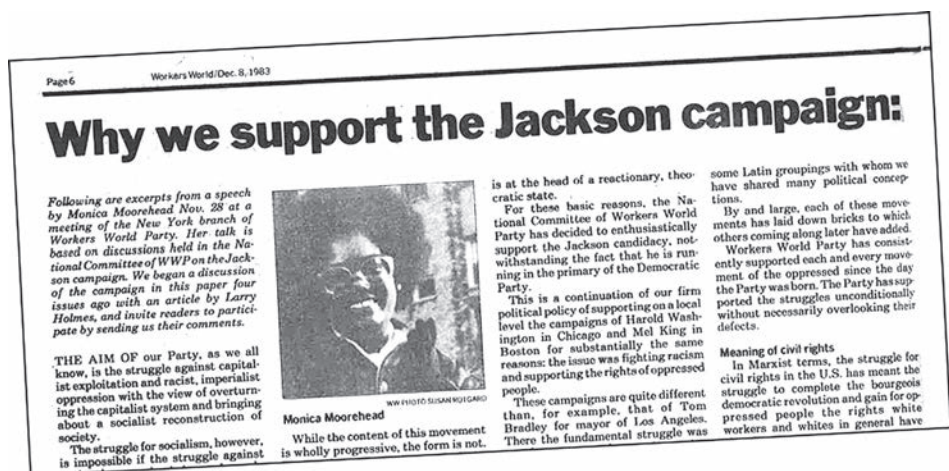
Sanders is running against Trump but his main foes come from within the Democratic Party elites, and thus his campaign presents itself as an insurgency against the Democratic Party itself.

Liberation, 4 February 2020



Elise Amendola / AP

In 2020, the PSL again called on people voting in the Democratic presidential primary elections to vote for Bernie Sanders, as it did in 2016. Even though Sanders was running in the Democrats' primaries and then endorsed Biden, his campaign was really an "insurgency against the Democratic Party itself," don't you see? Actually, no.



The Marcyites supported Jesse Jackson's campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1983.

of WWP." "Of course," it stated, "participation in the capitalist primaries ... keeps the masses tied to one of the major bourgeois parties." So the Marcyites found a "theoretical" pretext to jump on the bandwagon, calling the campaign within racist U.S. imperialism's Democratic Party "but a new form of the movement of the Black people," which should not be "obscured" by "[t]he fact that this is a struggle in the bourgeois parliamentary arena, in the primaries" of this partner party of the capitalist state.

The 1983 statement continued the standard Marcyite "dialectics" of opportunism, insisting that Jackson's campaign "is as genuine a movement of struggle as its predecessors, despite its bourgeois electoral form. The content of this movement is wholly progressive, the form is not." Etcetera. Of course, soon enough Jackson dutifully saluted the flag and backed Democratic nominee Walter Mondale, a "machine Democrat" who had fulsomely supported the genocidal war on Vietnam under Democrat LBJ (president 1963-1969). And a quarter century after backing Jackson, following the same tradition, *Workers World* (27 November 2008) proclaimed that Barack Obama's election "is a triumph for the Black masses and all the oppressed."

We can justly say that at least the Marcyites are consistent. After all, one of Marcy's original big differences with Trotskyism, prefiguring the formation of the WWP (and later the PSL), was his advocacy of "critical support" on "tactical" grounds, of course, to the 1948 Progressive Party candidacy of Henry Wallace, who had been vice president in the Democratic administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. At the time Marcy was still a member of the then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party, led by James P.



James P. Cannon, founder of American Trotskyism.

September 2024

is at the head of a reactionary, theocratic state. For these basic reasons, the National Committee of Workers World Party has decided to enthusiastically support the Jackson candidacy, notwithstanding the fact that he is running in the primary of the Democratic Party.

This is a continuation of our firm political policy of supporting on a local level the campaigns of Harold Washington in Chicago and Mel King in Boston for substantially the same reasons: the issue was fighting racism and supporting the rights of oppressed people.

These campaigns are quite different than, for example, that of Tom Bradley for mayor of Los Angeles. There the fundamental struggle was

some Latin groupings with whom we have shared many political conceptions.

By and large, each of these movements has laid down bricks to which others coming along later have added. Workers World Party has consistently supported each and every movement of the oppressed since the day the Party was born. The Party has supported the struggles unconditionally without necessarily overlooking their defects.

Meaning of civil rights In Marxist terms, the struggle for civil rights in the U.S. has meant the struggle to complete the bourgeois democratic revolution and gain for oppressed people the rights white workers and whites in general have

Cannon, a founder of the Communist movement in the U.S., who insisted that support to the latest in the long line of "people's" "third-party" gambits would mean crossing the class line in order to "maneuver within the parties of the bourgeoisie."⁴

In a key document of the Marcyite tradition, Sam Marcy observed that in the dispute over the Wallace presidential campaign, he had come out strongly against "Comrade Cannon's position ... that it would be 'crossing class lines' to give critical support to Wallace." Instead, he insisted, it would have meant "reaching out our hand" to sectors "we could not reach in any other way except through critical support of Wallace. (This, as everybody on the NC knows, was my position, and it flowed from the international orientation I also elaborated...)"⁵

From 1948 to the present, the method of Marcyism is to tail bourgeois forces, the leaderships that serve them and the illusions they rely on. Instead of a revolutionary Marxist alternative to capitalist politics, it means erasing the basic Marxist conception of the class line and revolutionary political independence of the working class. As our comrades have pointed out:

"For those whose guiding light is 'relating to people where they're at' rather than telling the unvarnished truth to the masses, the very idea of a class line in politics is sneeringly derided as sectarian. Yet so long as working people are tied to the parties of the bourgeoisie, whether red, blue or green, they will be chained to the capitalist system of war, poverty and racism."

– "Bernie Sanders and Pressure Politics of the Opportunist Left," June 2015, reprinted in *Left Reformists in Existential Crisis* (2019)

Tailing the Tailists

The PSL is a dead end for those seeking to commit themselves to the cause of workers revolution. While much more could be added regarding its line on a range of issues we haven't had space for, we will conclude here with just a few words about two other groups. Having mentioned the presidential campaign of Cornel West, we would do an injustice to leftist opportunism if we failed to mention some of its most devoted practitioners: Socialist Alternative (SAlt for short), which could win a gold medal if opportunism was an Olympic sport.

During the boom in Bernie boosterism, SAlt went all-out creating both "so-

⁴ See material on debates over the 1948 Wallace campaign as well as on Marcyism, the PSL, etc. in *Left Reformists in Existential Crisis*, Internationalist pamphlet, 2019.

⁵ Sam Marcy, "The Global Class War and the Destiny of American Labor," Socialist Workers Party *Internal Bulletin*, May 1953.

Police...

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class on the capitalist state apparatus" (!). But – on the other hand – in light of the massive ongoing protests, it asserted not that its position had been wrong, but that a "tipping point" (*sic*) had now been reached, and so "labor leaders should take action and unceremoniously show these entities the way out the door."

End of story? Not at all. Since then, the tide of opinion among left liberals has shifted. Already by late 2020 Democrats were moving to walk back slogans like "defund the police" (which, while promoting the illusion that shifting some funds would end endemic police violence, was jumped on by Republicans to charge them with not "backing the blue.").

An item from late 2021 on the IMT/RCI's site hails the "hefty wage raise" accorded the "unionized police" of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police ("RCMP union wins large pay raise: Every union must demand the same or better," 7 October 2021). "Cops in the labour movement?" asks a subhead.

So did they now answer "No"? Not at all. True, the "RCMP is a violent tool of the wealthy elite," observes the article by the IMT/RCA's section on the scene. But "unionization" of Canada's notorious Mounties "opens up the possibility ... of bringing rank-and-file police closer to the working class so they cannot be used when the capitalists really need them" (!). Therefore, state these incurable reformists, seeking yet again to have it both ways, "we take the approach of opposing the actions of police unions that are at the expense of the wider working class, but *supporting those actions that benefit workers and bring rank-and-file police closer to the labour movement*" (our emphasis).

Now in 2024, rebaptizing itself Revolutionary Communists of America, the IMT/RCI's U.S. section has issued a

cialist" excuses and front groups for backing his bourgeois campaign, as they, plus the now-defunct International Socialist Organization and other social-democratic currents had done before that for Green candidate Ralph Nader.⁶ SAlt has recycled such material with articles on "The Enormous Potential of Cornel West's Independent Campaign for President" (socialistalternative.org, 16 June 2023), "Students for Cornel West: Fighting Back Against the Billionaires & the Right Wing" (23 August 2023), etc. Then on July 3 of this year, SAlt's executive committee issued a statement broadening the class-collaborationist options, calling to "Vote For Jill Stein Or Cornel West And Build Movements To Stop The Right Wing."

Last and least, there is the very ex-Trotskyist Spartacist League, which in its frenetic search for get-rich-quick gimmicks calls to "Vote Working Class – Vote PSL!" In bold italics back in April, the SL's *Work-*
⁶ See "Capitalist Nader's 'Socialist' Foot Soldiers," *Revolution* No. 2, October 2004.

RCMP union wins large pay raise: Every union must demand the same or better!



"Mounties," "Bobbies" are all cops, professional enforcers for the bourgeois state.

founding "Manifesto for America's Communist Generation" (9 May) that does not even mention the fight for black liberation, key to socialist revolution in this country founded on slavery. Their color-blind "socialism" is no communism at all. Nor, of course, does the RCA's manifesto raise anything remotely akin to the call – whose importance was underlined yet again amidst the mass upheaval sparked by the police murder of George Floyd – for *cops out of the unions* and out of the schools. Its "fighting program" lacks any reference at all to the question of the cops, which sparked the biggest sustained protests in this country's history. This evasion is yet another symptom that under the radical RCA/RCI wrapping, the IMT's social-democratic outlook and standpoint remain.

What's at stake here is no esoteric or academic dispute. The struggle against racist police terror demands seriousness and honesty – which, frankly, is the least one should expect from those actually aspiring to revolutionize the world. The Revolutionary Internationalist Youth means what it says about fighting for the actual program of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky – in a word, genuine communist politics. If that's what you're interested in, let's talk. ■

ers Vanguard delusionally enthused: "The more successful the PSL campaign, the better will be the position of black people, workers and all the oppressed to fight back against the new administration, whether it's Biden or Trump." On August 21, their Chicago branch held a forum publicized with a flier featuring photos of the PSL candidates, their campaign symbol and the title: "WHY YOU SHOULD VOTE PSL." Various of their members now run around in Claudia & Karina shirts and/or hats.

And so it goes, since tailing the tailists is now their vocation. It would be tempting to echo the SL's oft-repeated clichés about "the syphilitic chain" of opportunists who are "all in this together." Instead, let's just note that by breathlessly running after an interlocking series of popular-frontist blocs with bourgeois politicians, the SL's call to vote PSL is a very far cry from the Trotskyist program it upheld so long ago. Yet the program of revolutionary class independence is more vital than ever, and that's what we're fighting for today. ■

Fight for Socialist Revolution!

On Joining the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth

The Revolutionary Internationalist Youth (RIY), youth section of the Internationalist Group, was founded in 2017 by young activists radicalized by the clash between illusions of “hope and change” under liberal Democrat Barack Obama and the harsh reality of unending racist oppression exemplified by the murders, during his eight-year presidency, of Trayvon Martin (2012), Michael Brown and Eric Garner (2014), Sandra Brown and Freddie Gray (2015), Philando Castile (2016) and so many others – a list that continues today under his former vice president Joe Biden.

A key source of RIY’s growth over the years – reflected in the pages of Revolution – has been its consistent struggle against illusions that opportunist “leftists” pushed in capitalist politicians from Obama and his then-VP Joe Biden to Democratic (Party) Socialists of America idols Bernie Sanders and “AOC.” Based on the internationalist, proletarian and revolutionary program of Trotskyism, the genuine Marxism of our time, RIY works to win a new generation to the fight for international socialist revolution.¹ Recruitment of a new layer of young members over the past school year is reflected in materials, edited for publication and printed below, in which several of them describe why they joined RIY. These underscore the potential for further expansion as those determined to fight effectively against capitalist oppression face the challenges of the coming period. (To find out more about RIY, write to: revinternationalistyouth@gmail.com)

Anna

I grew up in a Christian household in Mississippi. My father was a staunch conservative with traditionalist beliefs about a woman’s place in the home. From a young age, I was taught not to question this so-called “natural order” of the world. I was not to pay attention to the inequality and poverty that surrounded us, it was all according to god’s plan and who was I to question his divine wisdom or wonder if things could be different? But as I got older, I couldn’t help but give in to the mortal sin of critical thinking.

As I watched the lives of family members be destroyed by opioid addiction, I began to silently question why god would plan such devastation. (Much later I learned that this was actually a result of the pharmaceutical industry’s efforts to gain billions, a prime example of the capitalist class valuing profit over human life.)

My senior year of high school, I received a scholarship to a private university in New York City. I was ecstatic. In my mind, the city was a haven of liberal acceptance, where there would be none of the racism, misogyny or homophobia so prevalent in my home state. The university was made up largely of white East Coast liberals. To my surprise, many of them had the same biases as the conservatives I grew

¹ See “Revolutionary Internationalist Youth Founded,” *Revolution* No. 14, January 2018.

up with, beneath a cloak of faux-progressivism. Sure, their parents had voted for Obama, but it didn’t stop them from making racist statements behind closed doors. When I called them out on it, they were appalled, with one saying, “I can’t be racist, I’m a liberal.” They cared about misogyny and homophobia, but primarily the kinds that directly affected them and those of similar backgrounds.

This became apparent when telling people where I grew up. I bought into their belief that my upbringing was something less than theirs. But over time their attitudes were more and more grating, and I came to realize that the structural oppression so blatant in the Deep South exists throughout the country in many different forms, some more subtle and underhanded than others, whether Republicans or Democrats are in power.

I was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the Democratic Party, but my break really came after *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. The court decision meant that many of the women I grew up with would be left without access to legal abortion. I went to a march in Union Square, trying to find some solace, desperate to do anything I could to help. But it was filled with people holding signs with pictures of Ruth Bader Ginsburg and shouting “This is why we vote blue!” I was appalled. Why were they using this devastating news as an excuse to side with the Democratic Party despite this happening under a Democratic president? What was the point of protesting if they didn’t seem to care about the lives of the women who were most vulnerable, who deserve this right regardless of where they live?

I became interested in socialism. [Having transferred to CUNY,] I attended a club fair where I was thrilled to come across a socialist group that was putting forward a program for revolution and actively participating in workers’ struggles: the Internationalist Club. I was given the opportunity to learn and to take part in the organizing.

Not long after that, I was asked to give a speech at a protest against the repression of pro-Palestinian voices.² Since then, I’ve attended demonstrations and union rallies, and participated in struggles that the CUNY Internationalist Clubs have waged, like the struggle against the attempted ban of the showing at Hunter College of *Israelism*, a film critical of Israel.³ Gathering over a thousand signatures, we helped lead the campaign that made the administration back down, a present-day precedent for resisting McCarthyite censorship on the campuses.

Doing this work has given my life a sense of purpose. Viewing the world through a dialectical materialist lens is a gratifying antithesis to the absolutist religious thinking that troubled me as a child. For the longest time, I felt so sinful for

² See “Hunter College Speak-Out Defies Intimidation Campaign,” 12 November 2023, at igclasstruggleblogspot.com.

³ See article on page 5.

questioning “god, the father” and the way the world is structured. RIY has given me the opportunity to work towards a better world, free from the chains of capitalism and the forms of oppression it produces.

Dante

Prior to encountering RIY I had always been staunchly apolitical. I intentionally avoided educating myself in any way on political matters out of disdain for bourgeois American politics, and the misbelief that Marxism was for wealthy college students who just wanted to stimulate their intellects.

I viewed this as a form of protest, believing that, as a worker, I would live and die in vain under the boot of capitalism. For me, there was no other way about it. I felt that capitalism, in its festering decay, only stood to benefit a small few while the rest, myself included, would simply accept the fate dealt to them. This was the life I had come to know, as I both witnessed and experienced this firsthand. My father, having worked as a colorist in film for decades, had his employment made obsolete by the industry’s digitization, with his specialized skill-set rendered useless by the profit system. In the years following, his life became plagued by illness and alcoholism, the march of “progress” had trampled him.

At 18, I started working in ornamental plaster with toxic materials at a wage of \$15 an hour. Four years later I was making \$3.50 more, poisoning myself at a rate which didn’t even match inflation. Though, without a Marxist lens or knowing what Marxism truly meant, these were merely the bleak facts of life. As a result, I was left hopeless and disillusioned by what I believed to be a society on a fixed course toward total collapse.

This outlook was changed when I intersected members of RIY and the Internationalist Clubs. I attended a handful of meetings on and off at first, and was surprised by members’ level of political knowledge. Over the course of the following summer, I became more consistently involved in activities, meetings and demonstrations. In this process I was able to contextualize the program I had been learning about through the education programs they organized.

Seeing the importance of the RIY’s program and its discipline, I was eager to deepen my understanding, which occurred through my participation in the club and particularly in preparations for the debate with the ICL.⁴ In this, I was able to see the stark contrast between a genuine Trotskyist organization and a formerly revolutionary group in its decline. Attending

⁴ This refers to the 13 January debate between the League for the Fourth International (of which the Internationalist Group is the U.S. section) and the International Communist League, the ex-Trotskyist organization represented in the U.S. by the Spartacist League. (See article on page 7 and “In Defense of the Trotskyist Program,” *The Internationalist* No. 72, January-May 2024.

the debate was a pivotal moment for me. Meeting experienced comrades from other locals and sections made me immensely proud to be part of our international tendency, the League for the Fourth International, and solidified my desire to fight for a socialist revolution.

Lucy

My first window into politics was through the Women’s Empowerment Club at my high school. It began as a place for students to vent about their experiences of sexism and misogyny. This quickly became an exercise in identity politics. We were told the problem was that white individuals did not “check their privilege,” or sacrifice enough of it, or educate themselves enough about it. But this framework seemed like we could never achieve lasting trust among those interested in ending oppression for good. Gloomily waiting to vote, I had trouble believing any candidate could alleviate the issues my classmates talked about.

I felt driven to go to as many events put on by different organizations as I could, desperate to find a group that would connect the many issues of oppression I saw in the world into one coherent struggle. My senior year history teacher offered me my first glimpse at what’s behind this by teaching about capitalism. I came to identify myself as anti-capitalist, but continued on the same path of organizing when I entered college a year later.

I thought I found an answer in the United Panther Movement, which later became the Panther Solidarity Organization, a Maoist group that carried out “serve the people” programs during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Together with the food and PPE (personal protective equipment) supplies, we handed out our “ten-point program,” taking inspiration from the Black Panthers’ program of the sixties. Yet despite us being alleged communists, the program mentioned nothing of socialism, concealing its aims to appear like anyone among the “masses” interested in things like free healthcare and ending homelessness.

In an attempt to resist falling into charity work alone, we decided to conduct “social investigation” in a housing project in Harlem, with our group focusing on the “lumpenproletariat” as the revolutionary base it would organize. We asked people what they thought about the recent explosive protest movement against the racist police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, to learn what programs we could develop to engage those most activated. Yet after months, our group hadn’t built much power I could notice. Each “campaign” of food distribution or social investigation fizzled out. I still felt confused about how we could eradicate these horrific conditions for good.

After college, I returned to New York to find that my partner had joined the Internationalist Club. He invited me to protests and introduced me to club members

who stood out to me in their knowledge of communist history and convictions about their group's positions and tactics. They were proud socialists, not afraid to explain what that meant or what it would take to get there. The February 2023 "Mumia's Freedom Is Labor's Cause" teach-in won me over in a lasting way.⁵ Seeing workers organizations from the Bay Area and Portland, Oregon to South Africa and Brazil take part in actions to demand the release of the foremost class-war prisoner in the U.S. helped me understand how the workers struggle is integrally connected to the fight for black liberation. Workers' unique power to halt capitalist production and transport became clear to me as key to the proletariat's revolutionary position. Everything in my political heart said "Yes!" to this, which piqued my interest in RIY.

Through closer study, I found out more about the Internationalist Group/Revolutionary Internationalist Youth's history of class struggle and program to unite the workers of all nations under one fight to do away with racism, the nuclear family's oppression and the endless imperialist wars bred by capitalism. In joining RIY, I believe that I will become the best communist I can be, through serious political study and action.

Max

My life was thrown on a collision course in 2020. Before that tumultuous year, I had recognized flaws in U.S. society but assumed they could be resolved through voting and calling "my" representatives. The events of that year exposed these hopes as illusions, that reform could not bring us to a just society, that only socialist revolution can do that.

When the U.S. became the nation with the highest death toll in the entire global pandemic, I saw "my" representatives refuse to consider reform to make healthcare accessible while millions suffered from COVID and my family plunged into medical debt due to issues worsened by the pandemic. When the mass upheaval against racist police terror spread across the country, I saw the so-called "progressive" Democrats like New York City mayor Bill de Blasio mobilize the police to violently crush protests. When the racist, immigrant-bashing, foul-mouthed Donald Trump was replaced with Joe Biden, I saw how he went on to maintain Trump's xenophobic policies, ban a railroad strike and turn the stripping away of the right to abortion into a campaign drive for the Democrats.

All of these developments left me upset, confused and searching for answers. I found those answers with the remarkable political clarity expressed by the CUNY Internationalist Clubs and RIY. My first interaction with the club was seeing the demand for "Free Abortion on Demand," as a new student at a protest outside Hunter College.

It was the clear calls for the defeat of U.S. imperialism in the U.S./NATO proxy war in Ukraine and the U.S./Israel war on the Palestinians that solidified my interest in joining RIY. In February 2022 I was shocked to see the widespread support to

and lack of questioning of the U.S. war drive against Russia in Ukraine. The Internationalists were the only group at CUNY talking about key background, including the U.S.-backed coup of 2014 in Ukraine that served as a precursor to repression of the Russian-speaking communities of Eastern Ukraine.

As the genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza continues, we see calls for a ceasefire channeled into support for the Democrats as the oldest capitalist-imperialist party claims to be "seeking caution" while supplying the bombs that murder children daily. The vision for the creation of a binational Arab-Hebrew Palestinian workers state within a socialist federation of the Near East is characteristic of the Internationalist program: it is well-researched and links up to class struggle around the world. I am drawn to RIY because of the opportunity to develop a far-reaching understanding of history and Marxist theory while consistently fighting the class struggle.

Roser

Growing up in Mexico City, it was impossible not to notice the rampant inequality everywhere around me. My first attempt at doing something about it came in the form of volunteering. I cooked food at a soup kitchen. I helped raise money for breast cancer screenings. I built houses. I helped organize clothes drives and food drives and toy drives, and the more I did the more I felt like all my efforts were for nothing, at best putting a Band-Aid over a deep bleeding wound. I realized that even if I spent my entire life doing this people would still be hungry and sick and homeless because one would never get to the root cause of all these issues.

I come from a family that was once radical, so I read some Marx when I was younger and I always viewed communism in a positive light, even though I didn't fully understand what it was. But I was taught that it was utopian and useless to fight for and that the best I could do was settle for seeking small changes under capitalism. In middle school I became interested in feminism and gay rights. I went to protests for the first time, I put up fliers all over my school and got into arguments with the principal over censorship and tried to start an LGBTQ club. I also started calling myself a democratic socialist (Bernie was running for president in the U.S. at that time, so democratic socialism was all the rage).

When I was 17, I moved to a Scandinavian country, one of those often idealized as a model for how society should run. Instead of the almost perfect haven that had been sold to me, I found myself in a country that legally classified the neighborhoods of "non-Western" immigrants as ghettos and made children in them get an education in Scandinavian values while stripping refugees of residency permits and forcing them into deportation centers. A country where my friends and I were often called slurs and attacked for being gay and for being immigrants. Whenever we tried to defend ourselves against these attacks, we were told we were making a "big deal" out of nothing and should just be thankful to live there. I became increasingly disgusted with the country's racism and nationalism and, because I had been taught that this was the closest we would ever get to socialism, I became disillusioned with socialism as a whole.

By the time I moved to New York, I thought I wanted nothing to do with politics. The anger I felt at the oppression I had seen and faced had made me deeply nihilistic. I had come to the conclusion that the problems plaguing society were simply too large to ever be solved and that trying to do anything was a waste of time and energy. Then, at the beginning of my first semester, I met the Internationalist Clubs at a speak-out after the murder of Tyre Nichols. I had run into other left groups before, but had never met one that talked so openly about the need for revolution and so proudly about its politics. The speeches I heard and conversations I had that day made me feel hopeful about the future for the first time in a long time. I had never met genuine revolutionaries before, so I spent the first couple of club meetings waiting to be disappointed once again, waiting to be told you had to settle for crumbs. Instead, I saw how serious and determined everyone around me was.

Since then I have developed a deeper understanding about politics and history, why socialism has never been realized and why revolutions so often fail, not because it is utopian or unrealistic, but because of a lack of real revolutionary leadership. At rallies, pickets and marches I have seen this crisis of leadership firsthand. At the UPS "practice pickets" over the summer of 2023, I saw the potential power of the working class. Their strike would have dealt huge blows to the company and to the bourgeoisie as a whole, but then I saw the union leadership call the strike off just days before it was scheduled to start.

I now understand why my previous efforts at fighting oppression failed and have been armed with a program of international socialist revolution. I have also learned about the political heritage and history of the Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International, its fight for all the oppressed, its unwavering opposition to imperialism, its refusal to ever abandon the class struggle, and I am convinced that it will be the vanguard that leads the working class to victory. In joining the RIY I hope to one day become part of that vanguard. ■

UC Strike...

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striking the whole UC system, the UAW leadership called on select campuses to be shut down while keeping large parts of the membership at work. It took Local 4811 leaders an entire week to call out UCLA, and then only because of militants' demands, when it should have been struck on the first day. This "strategy" of "stand-up strikes," only striking piecemeal, was brainstormed by UAW president Shawn Fain, who used it the 2023 auto strike against the "Big Three" auto companies. In doing so, he undercut the strike and ingratiated himself to war-criminal-in-chief "Genocide Joe," who Fain endorsed in the presidential election.

The Local 4811 strike all but formally came to an end on June 7 when the notoriously conservative Orange County Superior Court issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) against the UAW. With the union leadership having fixed a June 30 deadline for the end of the strike in advance, the 20-day court injunction declared illegal all further strike activity. The 4811 tops obliged, and declared the first and only

strike action nationally in defense of the pro-Palestinian encampments suspended. Of course, resisting the TRO would have required serious mobilization to actually shut down the whole UC system. In contrast to the bureaucrats who kept thousands of their members working, and then ended the struggle at the first opportunity, revolutionary Marxists say: **Shut it down – one out, all out!**

Taking strike action against the repression of the pro-Palestinian encampments was a novel move. But in an effective strike, **all sections of the workforce would stop work** and put all facilities out of operation. This should be **enforced by militant picket lines that no one dares to cross**. In contrast to the labor bureaucracy, which constrains the struggle by subservience to the ruling class, the fight against the fascistic violence and police repression requires **bringing out the power of the multiracial working class**. Class-struggle militants **call on labor to defend the student protesters**, and to use their power to **stop the shipment of arms to the Zionist war machine**.

The capitulation of the UAW leadership, which from the outset sought to restrain union militancy, and which in the end allowed the strike to be broken by decree, points to the need for uncompromising **class-struggle leadership** prepared to go all-out in defense of the oppressed. That means taking on the capitalist state, its cops, its courts, and the politicians who administer it, Democrat or Republican. But this is very far indeed from the outlook of the reformist leaders of Local 4811, and even less so of the UAW officialdom.

Grad Students Strike to Defend Free Speech

Following the cop raid on the UCLA encampment, police repression quickly spread across the UC system. Just three days after the ULP was submitted, the UC San Diego encampment was dispersed by a 200-strong police force. Of the 65 people arrested, 40 were students, all of whom were put on interim suspension pending disciplinary hearings. On May 8, the UC Irvine administration announced suspension of participants in the encampment there, which was cleared by police a few days later. Under pressure from the ranks, Local 4811 resolved to take action in defense of the democratic right to speak out against this genocidal war and stand in solidarity with the Palestinians. The union opened a vote for strike authorization on May 13. Two days later it announced that strike authorization had passed resoundingly, with 79% in favor.

The UC administration responded by contesting the legality of the impending walkout. It invoked the "no-strike" clause embedded in the contracts of academic workers, and most other union contracts nationwide. It also claimed that Local 4811's grievances were "non-labor issues" of a political nature. So violating the constitutional right to free speech is not a "labor issue"? Opposing disciplinary action against strikers, including suspension, withholding pay (wage theft) and firing academic workers – all of which have now occurred at UC Santa Cruz and will no doubt soon spread systemwide – is a "non-labor issue"?! Those are all key points in Local 4811's ULP. The UC tops of course went along with the star chamber proceedings by the

⁵ See "NYC Teach-In: 'Mumia's Freedom Is Labor's Cause'," *The Internationalist* No. 69-70. January-May 2023, on this event in solidarity with Bay Area dock workers' port shut-down demanding the freeing of former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal, who has spent over four decades in Pennsylvania prisons on frame-up charges.

witch-hunters in Congress. Meanwhile, the *Los Angeles Times* (18 July) revealed, “The University of California shelled out more than \$29 million to handle this spring’s protests,” almost all (90%) for police, private security guards and the like.

Defending students, faculty and academic workers who demonstrated in solidarity with Gaza against the genocide being carried out is defending the most basic rights of the working class and the oppressed. The police repression took place at the behest of an employer, at the workplace, and was instigated by Democratic president Biden’s slander of pro-Palestinian student demonstrators as “antisemitic.” This comes after months of witch-hunting by the federal Department of Education, which in December launched “investigations” of UCLA and UC San Diego in its nationwide probe of universities and public schools on the bogus charge of antisemitism. When UCLA then-chancellor Block (who has since stepped down) testified in Congress on May 23, he said he regretted not repressing pro-Palestinian demonstrators sooner.

Upon the launch of the strike, the UC administration sought to have the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB), an administrative agency of the bosses’ state which “arbitrates” public sector labor disputes, issue an injunction to halt the strike. Under pressure by the widespread disgust with the attacks on the pro-Palestinian protesters, even this tool of the ruling class twice denied the UC administration’s request for a strikebreaking injunction and conceded that the union’s premise for the strike was “legitimate.” While defending the union and the strike in every venue, as class-struggle unionists rightly emphasize, in a hard fight it’s important to understand that the organs of the capitalist state are not on the workers’ side. And in fact, the PERB responded by advancing its own complaint against the UAW for supposedly not giving the UC administration “adequate advance notice” before striking to protest the police repression and fascist attacks.

While some liberal commentators have questioned the legality of the UC strike, Marxists reject all anti-worker laws which seek to criminalize the basic right to withhold labor and protest injustice, be it economic, political or otherwise. Marxists oppose all no-strike clauses and union-busting laws like the 1948 Taft-Hartley Act that was used to purge the labor movement of the “reds” who built it, and to outlaw powerful labor tactics like secondary strikes. The fingerprints of union lawyers are all over the many instructions and FAQs issued during the strike, as they are intent on playing by the bosses’ rules. Instead, class-struggle activists in the unions look to bring out the power of the workers movement independent of, and against, the capitalist state.

UAW Bureaucracy’s Stand-Up “Strategy”

The strike of graduate student workers at the University of California began on May 20. But the union bureaucrats endeavored to severely limit the struggle before it had even started. At the outset, the authorization vote called by the leadership of Local 4811 predetermined that the strike would end no later than June 30. Such a limitation is an invitation to the bosses to wait it out. Then, once strike authorization was passed, the 4811 leadership limited the strike to only one campus, UC Santa Cruz, telling UAW members elsewhere to continue working

even as the administration carried out reprisals against students and faculty. Speaking at the UCSC encampment on the first day of the strike, Will, a RIY supporter was part of the successful union organizing drive at Amazon in NYC, pointed to the need to spread – and militantly enforce – the strike, across the UC system:

“All UC campuses need to be shut down now! This is a basic working-class principle. *On strike means shut it down.* Militant picket lines should be organized to do that. That means no tests, no grades, no research, no classes, and especially no Zoom classes! Many students at the encampments want to shut the campuses down. Many union members want to shut the campuses down. But what’s holding them back is the conservative union bureaucracy. They couldn’t hold back the desire of the members to strike against the egregious repression at UCLA and San Diego, but the bureaucrats are doing what they can to put a leash on this strike.”

Refusing to shut down the UC system, the Local 4811 leaders instead announced that they were adopting the “stand-up strike” model of UAW president Fain against the “Big Three” Detroit auto companies in 2023, where they started out with only a handful of struck facilities and then added a few more bit by bit. Fain tried to portray this as a continuation of Depression-era labor militancy, invoking the sit-down strikes of the 1930s when striking workers shut down production and occupied the factories. Helping him to peddle this ploy were various self-described socialist commentators at *Jacobin*, *Labor Notes* and *The Nation* who have been hailing Fain as the latest, greatest union “troublemaker.” But the militant sit-down strikes of the ‘30s were very far from the “stand-up” partial walkouts, as the very names suggest.

In 2023, the stated goal of the UAW strike was to get rid of the “tiers” system, introduced in the 2007-09 financial crisis when the Democratic administration of Barack Obama bailed out the bankrupt Chrysler company (now Stellantis) and demanded concessions from the union. By 2023 this meant that some veteran workers were making double the pay of new hires. An Internationalist Group leaflet on the first day of the auto strike warned:

“Instead of mobilizing the membership for a knock-down, drag-out battle with the bosses, the union tops are using pin-pricks to needle them. *This ‘strategy’ can never win.* We’ve said it many times, and it’s still true: *if you play by the bosses’ rules, you’re sure to lose – labor’s gotta play hardball to win.*”
–“For an All-Out Auto Strike to Shut Down the Big 3,” *The Internationalist* No. 71, June-October 2023

Rejecting such a program of all-out struggle meant that while the union made some gains, they left the tier system intact and just speeded up the transition from lower to higher rungs.

The leadership of Local 4811 replicated this same losing “strategy.” the UC strike’s peak just six of the eleven campuses (counting the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory) were shut down, and only 31,500 of Local 4811’s total 48,000 members stopped work. It was more than a week since the strike began at UC Santa Cruz before it was extended (on May 28) to UCLA, the flashpoint of the police repression and fascist attacks, and to UC



Ethan Swope / AP

On May 1, Zionist and fascist thugs violently attacked the UCLA encampment. On May 2, Los Angeles Police and the California Highway Patrol cleared it.

Davis. After nearly another week UC San Diego and UC Santa Barbara were called on to “stand up” (June 3). Finally, UC Irvine walked out (June 5). This bit-by-bit approach tells UC administrators that the union leaders weren’t serious about shutting down the system. It was a halfway measure, at a time when the constellation of political forces nationally made it clear that the university would not back down of its own volition. It would take a full-on struggle, which was possible, as the ranks were itching to fight.

Speaking at Santa Cruz on May 24, veteran Bay Area longshore union activist and supporter of the Internationalist Group Jack Heyman stressed the urgent need for the struggle at UC to be extended across the university system and beyond. He highlighted the importance of the resolution of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 to boycott arms to Israel and of defeating the U.S./Israel genocidal war,¹ and compared the UC strike to the years-long efforts blocking Israeli cargo at West Coast ports during Israel’s endless war on the Palestinian people.

“This strike should be all of the campus-

¹ For more see “Bay Area Local ILWU Local 10 Calls for Labor Boycott of Arms to Israel,” *The Internationalist*, May 2024.

es out at once. I know that from experience. When we took action against [the Israeli] ZIM line, we blocked the boat year after year after year. They don’t come into Oakland anymore! But they go into other ports. *Your power is when you all go out together.*”

4811 Ranks Push Struggle Forward

It was the militancy of rank-and-file members of Local 4811 that goaded the leadership to act, even as it bowed to the slew of anti-labor laws intended to hamstring militant union struggles. Two years ago, academic workers at the University of California waged the largest higher education strike in U.S. history. And it’s no coincidence that the first campus to be called on to stop work was Santa Cruz, the site of the 2020 wildcat strike where graduate student workers took action to demand a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in defiance of the union bureaucracy, which had refused to authorize strike action.

This year, soon after the strike began, members of 4811 began demanding that the struggle be extended to the flashpoint of the repression, UCLA. Speaking at a rally there called by the union on May 22, Joe Wagner, an L.A. transit worker from

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ATU Local 1277 and supporter of the Internationalist Group, backed the rank-and-file demand for an immediate strike at the campus, called for the dropping of charges against protesters, and for workers action against repression of the encampments. He emphasized that, “Los Angeles labor needs to be mobilized to defend the Palestinians, to defend free speech on campus.”

The spirit of struggle in Local 4811’s ranks ultimately could not be contained. On the morning of May 23 while graduate student workers at UC Santa Cruz continued to strike, and simultaneous with UCLA chancellor Block’s groveling testimony to the Congressional witch-hunters, protesters at UCLA moved to erect a second Gaza solidarity encampment. A contingent of Local 4811 members with signs reading “UAW Rank and File Workers for Palestine” picketed in defense of the student demonstrators as LAPD police showed up to disperse the encampment. A few hours later, the UAW leadership announced that the strike would be expanded to UCLA and UC Davis.

The threat of continued police repression did not stop the extension of the struggle. The strike at UCLA began as scheduled on May 28, with academic workers moving to stop deliveries and block traffic to campus parking structures. The next morning at 4 a.m., strikers established pickets to halt early deliveries. The strike was given official sanction by both the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and Teamsters Joint Council 42. In subsequent days when truck drivers attempting to enter the campus were presented with printouts of these statements, most readily turned away from the UAW picket lines, honoring the strike.

Capitalist Court Decrees End of Strike, Union Tops Don’t Fight

At the same time as the Local 4811 bureaucrats gradually and reluctantly ceded to the demands of the membership to broaden the struggle to other campuses, all the while keeping the strike within the bourgeois legal restraints, the UC authorities continued to maneuver to have the strike quashed in the courts. After having two requests for an injunction against striking UC academic workers turned down by the PERB, the Board of Regents turned instead to the Superior Court of Orange County, notorious as a historic bastion of conservatism, to sue the UAW over breach of contract for defying “no-strike” clauses.

On June 7, Judge Randall J. Sherman rubber-stamped the administration’s “prayer” for “injunctive relief,” issuing a temporary restraining order (TRO) against the UAW to end all strike activity pending a hearing later that month. Defy the strike-breaking injunction? The union leadership was utterly unprepared to do so. Two days later it decided to comply with the TRO and that all strikers would return to work that Monday. This effectively brought an end to the strike, particularly as the 4811 tops went along with the extension of the TRO to June 30, when the strike was scheduled to end anyway. The hearing on the suit against the union how now been put off until November, with the UC administration calling on the court to provide “clarity that our no-strike clauses are enforceable and that we can rely on our contracts to provide labor peace through the term of our agreements.”

Then in mid-August, a federal judge issued a preliminary injunction barring pro-Palestinian protesters at UCLA from

defending their encampment against Zionist attackers and infiltrators. To justify this, the judge grotesquely claimed that “Jewish students were excluded from portions of the U.C.L.A. campus because they refused to denounce their faith.” Nonsense. And many of the pro-Palestinian protesters in the encampment were Jewish. The injunction in fact gave judicial approval to the violent thug attack on the anti-genocide protesters. The UC administration promptly issued an order banning encampments, blocking walkways and masking. And currently making its way through the California legislature is a bill that would require students to agree not to engage in conduct that “creates a hostile environment on campus,” which could mean just about anything. (The bill was already passed by the state in a near-unanimous vote.) Students who refused to sign the pledge would not be admitted, and any deemed to have violated it would be expelled. There are also a number of draconian bills in Congress to force universities to repress student protesters.

Meanwhile negotiations for UC academic workers’ next contract are approaching. Fearing that UAW Local 4811 will again mobilize, as the membership demands more militant action, the administration is retaliating by going after the basic right of the union to strike. With legalistic arguments that the Orange County Superior Court “usurped” the authority of the Public Employment Relations Board, the union’s leaders are hoping to resolve their outstanding ULP through the PERB, which as noted above issued its own complaint against Local 4811. A July 17 rally outside a Board of Regents meeting at UC San Francisco was focused entirely on the ULP, with nothing about the November hearing on the no-strike clause, or about the criminal charges against student protesters.

And it’s clear that the unionists can’t count on winning at the PERB either. The courts are not neutral; they are an integral part of the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state. Their job isn’t to “arbitrate,” it’s to keep the working class in check, by threat of force if necessary. Neither moral appeals nor procedural maneuvers will end the onslaught against democratic rights being waged by the ruling class as part of the U.S./Israel war on the Palestinian people. To fight back against the “war censorship drive” and tear up these anti-union injunctions would require moving beyond the academy to mobilize the working class. Playing by the rules of the capitalist state is a sure way to lose. The whole game is rigged.

Now the University of California administration has issued notices of “intent to fire” four graduate workers at UC Santa Cruz and has garnished the wages of hundreds of workers systemwide. As of late August, the UAW leaders have not raised any protest, much less a call for action. Local 4811 at UCSC has issued a “Request for Solidarity” from other unions, which should be energetically pursued. It should be supplemented with the call for criminal charges against more 120 Santa Cruz students, faculty, staff and community members arrested at the Gaza solidarity encampment to be dropped. The same goes for the hundreds of arrested pro-Palestinian protesters elsewhere in California. But although the arrests were cited in UAW strike materials, and their prosecution depends on requests by UC campus administrations, this call was not in the formal



First day on strike at UCLA, May 30. Ranks chafed as the Local 4811 leadership, with its “stand-up strike” strategy, refused to call them out for ten days.

strike demands of the strike, nor did the union leaders demand cops off campus or seek to mobilize labor to demand “Drop all charges now!”

Class-Struggle Program Key

Striking in defense of freedom to protest and against repression is something unheard of in decades, going back to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) “free speech” fights against World War I. But with its “stand-up strike” strategy, the leadership of UAW Local 4811 guaranteed that the walkout would not achieve its demands, or anything close to that. If you set a high goal, taking on the universal demand of capitalist financiers, bourgeois politicians, university administrations and the “mainstream” media that the encampments be ended forthwith, you can’t win that fight with half-measures. And by failing to go all out, the union bureaucracy may end up with the “no-strike” strictures reinforced, with a possible court ruling that only specified issues can be the basis for an Unfair Labor Practice action.

The alternative was to wage a militant class battle bringing in other sectors of labor and the oppressed. It meant facing the prospect of mass jailings, as the IWW “Wobblies” experienced in WWI – and Gaza solidarity encampment participants faced this spring. Pressure from below forced the union bureaucracy to reluctantly undertake this struggle in solidarity with student demonstrators and the besieged people of Gaza. A Rank and File for a Democratic Union caucus at UCLA pushed for more strike militancy, but did not seek to cohere a class-struggle leadership prepared to fight it out until victory. That would have required shutting

down the entire UC system – *one out, all out* – to defend the democratic and union rights of all, in conjunction with the call for mass workers action to stop the shipment of arms and other war materiel to U.S. imperialism’s Zionist ally and client regime in order to defeat the U.S./Israel genocidal war on the Palestinians.

This is indeed a political fight, against the UC bosses and the rest of the ruling class. Yet in California and nationwide, the UAW leaders are bound hand and foot to the Democratic Party of genocide and racist repression. To win it’s crucial to break with the Democrats, Republicans and all capitalist parties and build a class-struggle workers party to lead the struggles of all the exploited and the oppressed. ■

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As Mass Arrests Hit Gaza Solidarity Encampments Across U.S.

Flash Point UCLA: Student Workers Strike Against Repression of Pro-Palestinian Protesters

By Amalia and Jacob

LOS ANGELES – On the night of April 30/May 1, the Gaza solidarity encampment at the University of California, Los Angeles was subject to a vicious attack by Zionist and fascist thugs. Videos of the violent assault have been widely viewed on social media. Campus security guards coolly looked on as the gang of violent right-wingers and racists assaulted pro-Palestinian demonstrators with poles and other blunt objects, launched dangerous fireworks into the encampment, filled the air with pepper spray and bear mace, tried to drag protesters out of the barricaded enclosure and beat them bloody with martial arts kicks and punches.

Reactionary provocateurs had menaced the student protesters since the occupation began five days earlier. At first, they tried to infiltrate the encampment while trying to provoke incidents on the perimeter. The rightists were permitted to erect a jumbotron and PA system – paid for with tens of thousands of dollars raised on GoFundMe – to torment protesters, blaring loud music and video at all hours. Across the country, there were pro-Zionist counterdemonstrations at several encampments, mostly relatively small and mainly engaged in verbal provocations (and feeding the media claims that they felt threatened by the peaceful protest). But this was different.

What happened at UCLA was an organized goon squad attack by dozens of trained ultra-Zionist fighters, and some fascists in Proud Boys attire. And it was carried in tandem with the university authori-



Getty Images

In early morning hours of May 2, Los Angeles Police and California Highway Patrol face off with pro-Palestinian protesters at UCLA, then drive them out and raze Gaza solidarity encampment, arresting 210.

ties. The rampage against the encampment came hours after UCLA chancellor Gene Block gave the green light, with a statement repeating the lie that the pro-Palestinian protesters had made people feel “bullied, threatened and afraid,” and put “Jewish students in a state of anxiety and fear.” Then came a statement from the statewide UC president saying that the chancellor’s statement had declared the encampment “unlawful” (which, actually, it didn’t).

The assault on the UCLA protest also began just hours after high-profile police

raids of encampments of Columbia University and the City College of New York on the East Coast. Protesters at UCLA had courageously defended the encampment against the onslaught of the fascist goons for several hours when Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) arrived at around 1:45 a.m. on May 1, greeted by the rightists’ chants of “U.S.A.! U.S.A.!” The LAPD cops stood by watching the assault for a full hour before intervening, and shortly afterwards the assaulters began to disperse. Organizers reported that 25 demonstrators were hospitalized for injuries inflicted by the fascist attacks.

The following evening, the LAPD declared the encampment an unlawful assembly and issued a citywide “tactical alert.” Cops decked out in riot gear returned to campus, presenting demonstrators with a final dispersal order at 12:30 a.m., May 2. Officers from the LAPD as well as the Special Operations Unit of the California Highway Patrol (CHP) converged on the student demonstrators, attacking them with batons, tear gas, “flashbang” stun grenades and rubber bullets. Video footage of the raid show CHP cops taking aim at the demonstrators’ heads and firing their grenade guns’ 40mm “less-lethal” munitions at close range. The police raid to clear the encampment lasted for several hours. In all, 210 protesters were arrested.

The union of graduate student workers at the University of California, United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 4811, responded to the outrage of the rightist attack by announcing on May 1 that it would prepare to hold a strike authorization vote. Following the brutal dispersal of the encampment by the police, Local 4811 filed an unfair labor practice (ULP) complaint on May 3 charging that the UC Board of Regents had violated the rights of its employees to free speech and protest in defense of the Palestinian people. Ultimately the union, representing 48,000 members across the UC system, took its grievances to the picket line. At that point, all campuses of the University of California should have been shut down, then and there, by strike action.

Against the assault on Gaza solidarity encampments by police – and in L.A. organized rightist squads – the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth (RIY) and the Internationalist Group called for *workers action in defense of students protesting genocide*. University administrators, police and their bosses and capitalist politicians of both major parties intensified repression nationwide. This was the “home front” of this U.S./Israel war on the Palestinians, waged by the Democratic administration of “Genocide Joe” Biden. Last spring over 3,100 people were arrested by the police at university encampments across the country. We demand: *Drop all charges and disciplinary measures against pro-Palestinian demonstrators! Cops and security guards, off campus! Mobilize the power of labor to combat this “war censorship drive.”*

Tens of thousands of academic workers at the University of California took strike action to defend democratic rights and to show their solidarity with the besieged Palestinian people. But instead of *continued on page 29*



Justin Sullivan / Getty Images

UAW Local 4811 on first day of strike against repression of pro-Palestinian protesters, University of California Santa Cruz, May 20. For over a week UCSC strikers stood alone as union leadership resisted calls to shut down the whole UC system.



KPIX / CBS News

Revolutionary Internationalist Youth at UC Santa Cruz strike lines, May 26.