

CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

Coin Toss Between Obama, McCain Yields:

WAR, WAR, WAR

Barack Obama's recent Mideast-Europe saber-rattling road show exposes his earlier opportunistic masquerade as a "peace" candidate. Obama won the nomination by selling masses of mainly working-class voters the lie that he would withdraw from Iraq. Now, jetsetting from Baghdad to Berlin on his own version of Air Force One, Obama is trying to show his capitalist masters his fitness to command their ever-deadlier war machine. Wherever he goes, he lays the groundwork for the broader wars U.S. rulers need to maintain their precarious worldwide dominance.

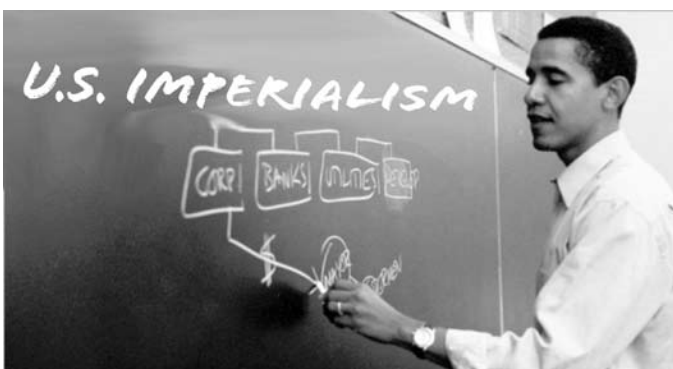
In Iraq, Obama showed that "withdrawal" actually means permanent occupation by "residual" forces to be determined by generals like the butcher Petraeus, who he consulted. Obama advocated more troops in Afghanistan, which, along with parts of Pakistan, he would make the near-term focus of the anti-Islamic U.S. "war against terror." Now McCain is adopting this phony "withdrawal" scheme. Obama reassured Israel's fascist rulers that he "will take no options off the table in dealing with this potential Iranian threat." In Berlin, he demanded that Europe supply more combat soldiers for U.S.-led military efforts in Afghanistan and beyond.

OBAMA DENOUNCES COMMUNISTS, GIVES NAZIS A FREE PASS

Obama's July 24 speech at Berlin's Victory Column (a favorite of Hitler's) showed his stark allegiance to the capitalist class. "Friend-of-the-Workers" Obama said not a single word in Germany's capital about Nazis, who killed tens of millions. Instead he attacked the very force that defeated the Nazis in World War II, the working-class Soviet Red Army, by condemning communism by name three times.

Obama couldn't and wouldn't criticize Nazi Germany because its brutal program of territorial reconquest, expansion, and confrontation of major rivals closely resembles today's U.S. rulers' own agenda. They are hell-bent on retaking the Mid-East and its oil, making U.S. protectorates of former Soviet vassals in Eastern Europe, and militarily besting potential super-powers like China, Russia, India, and the European Union.

On July 24, the Obama campaign's top think-tank, the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), led by Clintonites like Madeleine Albright, published a report — "Strategic Leadership: Framework for a 21st Century National Security Strategy" — that mimics Hitler's racist "Mein Kampf." It says "America must have the will and the capabilities not only to ensure U.S. security but also to enhance the security of allies and friends. The American military must have the appropriate structure and technological capacity, weaponry, troop strength and morale, information and intelligence capacity, and other support to meet 21st-century threats. It must remain the strongest fighting force on earth." Pretty "peaceful..."



Obama's liberal CNAS backers criticize Bush's Iraq fiasco but bless imperialist war in general: "Although Iraq was the wrong war, some wars will nevertheless have to be fought. Force should never be used as a first choice, but in some cases it may need to be used sooner rather than later . . . [S]trategic leadership requires being prepared to act swiftly and surely whenever required."

The CNAS paper pinpoints a coming clash with China: "Mutual misunderstandings and flashpoints like Taiwan could, in the worst-case scenario, actually lead to military conflict, with potentially devastating consequences." In such a case, Obama's call for 92,000 new soldiers and Marines would prove a drop in the bucket. "Peace candidate"-turned-president Obama would restore the draft just as fast as Nazi goose-stepping militarist McCain would.

On the home front, Obama favors a police state. He just cast a Senate vote to protect the Feds' wiretapping operations. Obama also seeks to revive Clinton's community policing initiative, which put over 100,000 racist cops on the street. And in his home base of Chicago, vote-hungry Obama has sold himself lock, stock, and barrel to the Rockefeller-influenced Democratic Party machine of Mayor Richard Daley, which endorsed his election to the Illinois State and U.S. Senates. One of his biggest backers is William Daley, the Mayor's brother and Clinton cabinet member, who is Midwest chairman of J.P. Morgan Chase. As Chicago mayors over decades, Daley's father and brother have run a police department that has systematically tortured and murdered thousands of black and Latino workers.

CHALLENGE has often said that voting for either Obama or McCain would be equally bad. They both represent the same capitalist system, as do all presidents. Obama, however, with his phony anti-racist appeal, holds the danger of luring greater numbers to the rulers' war agenda. But he inadvertently highlights the solution as he rails at communism. The wars Obama supports will end only when the working class holds state power in the wake of communist revolution. This is our Party's long-term goal.☺

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CHALLENGE'S Ideas Make Summer Project A Winner at LA Factories

The start of the LA Summer Project has been very productive. We've had CHALLENGE sales at factories, a demonstration against racist police murders, and schools to study the capitalist system in today's world, which destroys the lives of workers throughout the world. We've talked about the key role of industrial workers and soldiers in building a communist movement to destroy capitalism and imperialism, as well as planning CHALLENGE networks, building a worker-student alliance, and about the coming election in the shadow of imperialist war. Volunteers are tirelessly bringing CHALLENGE and PLP leaflets to industrial workers, as well as to the residents of Inglewood and Lennox where the racist cops killed two workers (see articles p. 3).

The response to our CHALLENGE sales at the factories has been great. In one subcontractor factory in Southern California, after we sold CHALLENGE outside the factory, the papers were on work tables for 2 days. Both the morning and the evening shift were reading and talking about them. One worker said communists and fascists were the same. But another worker, a CHALLENGE reader, told him, "Don't you know that it was the communists who beat Hitler? If it weren't for the communists, you might not be alive because the Nazi's wanted to kill people like us and control the world."

Other workers in one department were especially interested in the Boeing article, since they also make parts for Boeing. One worker asked, "Why doesn't this paper have names on the articles like other papers?" Another regular CHALLENGE

reader answered that this was the workers' paper, and that the articles aren't signed because they are written by workers collectively and not to build up or promote individuals. Another worker thought that under communism he would lose what he has, but his friend, a regular CHALLENGE reader, told him, "You don't have anything. The bank owns your house and we're facing rising prices for everything, but our wages aren't rising. We really have nothing to lose and we have a world to win." Another worker asked, "But do you think workers are open to communism?" "Yes, it's the only solution we workers have," said the second CHALLENGE reader.

A worker from a different area who reads CHALLENGE said, "I was very happy to see the CHALLENGE sellers in front of the factory. It shows me this is a serious project. Keep it up!" Some of these workers had recently written a letter of support to the Boeing workers in their coming battle. (See box below)

Workers in other factories are discussing the terror tactics used in the subcontractor factories to make workers use every minute to produce parts. In most of these factories, workers have to document and account for every minute of work, and every part that they make. If they don't meet exact goals hour by hour, they are written up and threatened with firing. Going to the bathroom "too many" times (like 3 or 4) during a shift can be cause for a write-up. Many machines in the factories don't have safety guards, causing many serious injuries. At the same time, the companies tell the workers they are producing parts for the company and the "nation;" that they should be proud and motivated by their great duty to work diligently, and that if there are any problems with the parts, the workers will be held responsible and punished. Many workers aren't buying it. The Migra immigration raids and the rain of racist police killings outside the factories are part of the same bosses' terror campaign.

Capitalism, based on exploitation and competition for maximum profit, is cheapening the lives of workers everywhere — from India to China to the U.S., as U.S. imperialists prepare for wider war to defend their declining position, on the backs of the working class. The U.S. bosses may have given up producing washing machines (leaving that to their Chinese competitors) but they are producing more and more weapons to seize a key imperialist resource: oil. Communists have to be in the factories so we can bring this world view to our class and turn these attacks into the growth of CHALLENGE and PLP — to fight for communist revolution and workers' power.

Our experiences organizing workers here makes it clear that we can expand our CHALLENGE networks. So far, it's been a great project thanks to the commitment of all those involved!✪

'The workers are all talking about striking...'

"When my team and I distributed CHALLENGE and leaflets about exploitation in garment shops in a busy area in front of a factory, less than half an hour later a boss stormed out demanding, 'Why are you guys here? What are you doing? They're [the workers] inside, talking about your paper, talking about striking.' Hopefully we were influencing the workers to take action." Two weeks before, the workers in this shop had organized a strike; no wonder the bosses were scared.

(Outside a subcontractor factory) "The workers' reactions were very positive. It was surprising how many took the leaflet and the paper, even though they were in their cars. They tended to take the paper into the factory with them."

"Among hundreds of young workers entering a garment factory, almost every one took CHALLENGE. One worker came out, handed us a dollar and told us how important it was that we were there with CHALLENGE. He described the abuses in the factory."

"Garment workers were joyful as they passed and read CHALLENGE. When two read some of the articles, they asked for a handful of CHALLENGES so they could spread the word and the paper to their co-workers."

Another volunteer wrote that we want, "the workers to use the strike to build communist ideas...The warm reception to these ideas is not only helping the LA workers extend their CHALLENGE networks, but is strengthening new comrades of all ages to see how eager oppressed workers are to fight back and read the paper."

OUR FIGHT

- ★ **Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to smash capitalism — wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world.**
- ★ **Capitalism returned to the Soviet Union and China because socialism failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system, like wages and division of labor.**
- ★ **Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism — the dictatorship of the proletariat. This fight requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.**
- ★ **Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. Everyone will share in society's benefits and burdens.**
- ★ **Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.**
- ★ **Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women — sexism — and traditional gender roles created by class society.**
- ★ **Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One International working class, one world, one Party.**
- ★ **Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!**

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Support Boeing Workers

To our fellow workers at Boeing,

We send you warm and militant greetings. We're a group of workers in a subcontractor factory in Los Angeles. We make some parts for Boeing. At the same time, when the bosses can't finish an order on time here, they send the work to other subcontractors who pay less than here and who have no benefits. You all will decide whether or not to strike to get a new "less bad" contract. The strike is an important political weapon for a united group of workers acting as a bloc to confront the bosses and their state.

Forward friends! Prepare for a militant strike

and we and other workers will be with you. The attacks you face and the attacks we face come from the same source: the racist bosses' thirst for profits.

Some workers from Los Angeles



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Serving The Working Class

SEATTLE, WA, July 16th—Summer Project volunteers, joined by local Party members, distributed 2,500 four-page communist flyers and 350 CHALLENGEs to Boeing workers attending the strike sanction vote for the upcoming Sept. 3rd contract. They caught the union, who had no literature of their own, off guard and provided the Boeing workers with a communist analysis to counter the anger most felt after listening to union hacks drone on about how “It’s Our Time.” In opposition to this narrow trade unionism, our leaflets proclaimed, “We Must Fight For Our Class, The Working Class.”

Prior to the strike sanction vote, participants in the Summer Project sold CHALLENGE to Boeing workers in the early morning and afternoon, catching the first and second shifts. They negotiated finicky traffic lights and dodged cars to get the paper out to as many as possible. Veteran sellers joined new Party members who had never sold the paper publicly before. Both young and old derived strength from one another, each saying at different times, “Well if they can do it so can I!”

Before our first trip to the plants, many expressed anxiety about the reception they would receive. They were afraid of the anti-communism they might encounter while distributing CHALLENGE. There were a few anti-communist remarks, but they were by far the exception, not the rule. More than once, co-workers of those expressing “hostility” apologized to our comrades — encouraging our members to continue. Most workers were interested; many asked for extra copies to give to friends and family, and to co-workers inside the plants Boeing workers were talking with each other about CHALLENGE and communism. The consensus throughout the Summer Project was that most workers were receptive to our communist politics.

Volunteers also visited Ft. Lewis twice, distributing 100 CHALLENGEs and 200 GI Notes to soldiers going out for lunch and later at their homes (see letter Page 6). The sales at the army base provided Party members with a chance to talk with the sol-

diers, something they had missed out on while running through traffic earlier in the week. They found that soldiers were ready and eager to discuss not only the need to end imperialist war, but also the need to build worker-soldier-student alliances and fight for communism. A number took extra literature to take back to their friends still on base after giving us information so we could stay in contact with them.

Paving The Way To Revolution One Visit At A Time

Seattle PLP’ers and volunteers also visited over 20 Boeing workers at their homes (some more than once) for a few moments to several hours. The most successful were prearranged dinners and lunches at homes, pubs and restaurants. These visits provided an opportunity for the participants to learn about the work at Boeing and most workers’ negative sentiments toward the union.

The project was also a positive experience for the workers who were excited to see so many young people who understood the value and importance of industrial work. Word of these visits spread as those Boeing workers who had been visited told dozens of their coworkers and spread the excitement in the plant.

For many Party members these visits and sales at the Boeing plants and army base were concrete examples of workers’ ability and willingness to discuss and embrace communism. One of the most important aspects of the Summer Project was the elimination of some of the anti-working class notions that hinder our political work.

The public presence created by the Summer Project was a big boost for our work, inspiring and reinvigorating workers friendly to us and Party members alike. We learned that public sales did not have to be in contradiction with base building, but could be used to create a public presence that would help in creating and consolidating friends of the Party.



The Project also inspired teachers and students to build their lives around serving the working class. Building a base in the industrial working class and military can only aid our communist work in the schools. It will give our base everywhere the confidence that our Party is pursuing a realistic long-range path to revolution.

Through sales, visits, and study groups participants learned that this meant involving themselves in the lives of their co-workers and struggling to make building Party-led groups on the job primary. Participants and local Party members alike came to understand that building our lives around the working class is not a tactic, but a political strategy necessary to the success of PLP and communism.

In a week and a half, Seattle hosted over 20 Party members from around the country. We distributed 5,000 leaflets, 2,000 CHALLENGEs, and 200 GI Notes. We visited 22 workers and hosted three barbeques for locals and volunteers. More than fifty Boeing workers signed our open letter in solidarity with industrial workers victimized by racist super-exploitation, calling for international working-class unity. Those of us remaining in Seattle will be seeing the positive repercussions of this Project for months to follow, and it is now our duty to see that the work done in the past weeks is continued and the struggle intensified.☸

LA Summer Project Volunteers Oppose Racist Terror!

LOS ANGELES, July 26 — “I’m really glad you guys are here! We have to do something about these cops — they are gangbangers in uniform!” So declared a resident of the Inglewood area to members of the PLP Worker/Student Alliance Project when they hit the streets yesterday with signs, banners and a bull-horn protesting the cops’ murder of a 38-year-old black postal worker, Kevin Wicks. We took over the four corners in the neighborhood where the murder occurred. Our banner read: “End Police Terror with Communist Revolution!”

The rally was called as an immediate response to a series of cop murders here. Two months ago, Michael Byoune, a 19-year-old black youth was shot at a neighborhood burger restaurant by the same cop who killed Kevin Wicks. Last week, the LAPD once again gunned down another unarmed Latino man, Christian Portillo, in his own driveway. The Summer Project volunteers responded to these racist murders in a big way, rallying in the Inglewood community, and heading for the shops and factories to denounce these murders.

The militant Inglewood rally attracted hundreds of people in the area, including many getting off buses or driving in cars. Area residents were really angry.

After a series of speeches, many by youth, calling for revolution as the only solution to the murders of unarmed workers — most of whom are black and Latin — we asked workers driving by to honk their horns in solidarity with us.

The response was deafening!

We also took to the street, leafleting on buses and to passing cars. We concluded with a picket line that was well-received by the community. Over 400 CHALLENGEs were sold and hundreds of leaflets were distributed. Many people told us, “I’m so glad to see you guys here!”

The Summer Project is linking the racist super-exploitation of workers to racist police terror. Black, Latino, Asian and white workers are the backbone of Southern California’s industrial workforce. Thousands of factories employ millions of these workers in subcontracting, non-unionized and labor intensive, low-wage workplaces engaged in war production. Workers there are subjected to brutal conditions and intimidation. We can clearly see these same terror tactics by the racist police and immigration cops (ICE) who get away scot-free.

Our PLP leaflet exposed the politicians’ and LA Times’ call for a civilian review board in Inglewood (a small city near LA). Cities like New York which have civilian review boards run by the bosses’ politicians see rising racist murder rates by the cops similar to Inglewood and LA.

The Inglewood community’s welcome with open arms to the PLP Summer Project volunteers shows the potential our Party has to grow and the willingness of workers to accept communist ideas! ☸

LOS ANGELES, July 25 — Two days ago, Christian Portillo was murdered by the fascist LA Sheriffs. PLP Summer Project volunteers responded to this racist killing by leafleting and selling CHALLENGE door-to-door in the neighborhood where this fascist attack took place. It is no coincidence that this same area houses workers who produce the machines and weapons for the bosses’ war. Many work in industrial factories as low-wage, subcontracted, super-exploited labor.

This murder was just one incident, but there have been two other racist police killings in the area within the last week, including the murder of Kevin Wicks in Inglewood. Add that to the amount of murders in the country, around the world, and we could see the quantitative development of the fascist regimes that capitalism breeds.

The leaflet we wrote called for the working class to unite and fight back against ever-increasing police terror, connecting it to the imperialist oil wars and exposing it as a systemic problem. Liberals and phoney “leftists” in Los Angeles are organizing around police reforms and civilian control boards. This is not the solution. These boards will only rubber stamp, not stop, police terror. Only by organizing students, workers, and soldiers around communist politics will the real enemy be exposed: capitalism.

Some of the volunteers met young people who had organized walkouts two years ago. They acknowledged that these attacks affect all workers. We collected the youths’ contact information and agreed to meet up to discuss and organize future events. We also talked to families in the local park who expressed their anger over the system that keeps them unemployed through the use of sexism and racism. In contrast, two comrades approached a family that had anti-communist ideas and forced the comrades off their property. It is important to recognize that the working class is fed on a daily basis with anti-communist ideas and it is up to us to struggle against these anti-communist ideas within our base and within ourselves.

We are taking this struggle against racist police into the industrial factories to show workers the power they have to end this racist oppression and crush the capitalist system by shutting it down at the point of production and organizing a revolution. The solution comes by arming the working class with communist politics with an emphasis on industrial workers. Workers who are at the point of production are key in smashing the capitalist system and building for communist revolution. ☸

Learning, Teaching Red Ideas at NEA Convention

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 3 — At a hotel near the convention center where the National Education Association (NEA) annual meeting was taking place, a young working-class student struggled with questions of reform and revolution. She was sharing her dream of one day operating a hotel where unemployed workers would have a place to stay while seeking work. Before going to her own job later that morning, she had come with her teacher and a classmate to bring the message of revolution to the NEA delegates. These students, their teacher and two other PL comrades were passing out a PLP flyer and selling CHALLENGE outside a caucus meeting of about 1,000 delegates.

Respecting this young worker’s understandable desire to assist her class brothers and sisters, PL members explained how capitalism must exploit workers in order to maximize the bosses’ profits, not to help them to find jobs, shelter or food. Yet while struggling with the common illusion that the capitalist system can be reformed to improve workers’ lives, this future comrade was doing exactly what is necessary to bring the message of revolution for communism to the NEA teachers. With PLP leadership, a communist society would be organized to meet the needs of workers, such as work, shelter, food and education, not to exploit workers.

Like this young worker, most teachers want to

help the young workers in their classrooms to survive this system. They attend these conventions to consider how to reform this system. Their leaders tell them to vote for the right politician. The leaflet distributed at this year’s convention explains how neither John McCain nor Barack Obama provide any hope for teachers, students or their parents but that what is needed is a revolutionary alliance of

‘Unions are reform organizations which never question the capitalist system itself.’

teachers and workers to fight for communism.

Obama addressed the convention, bringing his message of false hope. He makes his home in one of the most segregated cities on the planet, but does not make that an issue. He’s a product of a racist, Democratic Party machine which has ruled Chicago for generations (see editorial, front page). With

his approval of increasing U.S. troop strength and keeping all military options on the table, Obama is as much of a warmonger as McCain.

With help from comrades and friends in the D.C. area, more than 300 CHALLENGES and 1,300 flyers were distributed to convention delegates. The flyer pointed out that NEA leaders have no real solution to the problems in education. Unions are reform organizations which never question the capitalist system itself. They condone the racist cuts in education and the increasing control that corporations exert over public schools through No Child Left Behind. (See parts 1 and 2 in previous CHALLENGE Issues.)

In addition to passing out flyers and selling CHALLENGE, comrades participated in an NEA reform caucus, discussing the Iraq war and other issues. Everyone in the caucus received a flyer. When giving CHALLENGE to one reform activist, they discovered that he was already buying it regularly at a mass sale in his city. While reserving certain criticisms, he praised the writing in the paper and said he drew a lot of good ideas from reading it. He agreed to receive a subscription.

These examples of revolutionary work in a mass organization like the NEA can help build the Party and its base and advance the cause of communism.✱

BBQ Serves Up Communist Food for Thought

LOS ANGELES, CA—“Look friend, we’ve known each other for a long time, you’ve been reading CHALLENGE for a long time, you’re a respected militant worker, you’ve participated in our May Day dinners, and you know that the working class needs communist leadership. We in the party want to invite you to become a member of the Party so you can help us bring communist ideas to the workers.”

“This question takes me by surprise, and even though you all know that I’m with you, to say that I’m a member, ‘I want you to let me think about it, because I understand that it means commitment and danger, but independent of my answer, I want to keep participating and to help a little more.’” This discussion took place during a Bar-B-Q organized by PLP with 20 friends from work and also to sharpen the political struggle.

These workers are CHALLENGE readers in the same company and same union, among them black, white, Latino, Iranian and Russian workers. Next year the contract for these workers expires and PLP is already preparing to take advantage of this reform struggle to inject communist ideas and expose the system of exploitation, imperialist wars, and the role that the union leaders play at this time of increasing attacks on workers. In the past the PLP has played a key role in these struggles and hundreds respect and know our Party and CHALLENGE.

The mood was upbeat politically. We discussed the billions of dollars that the government is spending on the war, the high cost of living, the upcoming contract battle and how workers are always the ones who have to pay.

The Bar-B-Q ended with three small speeches: the first about the need to organize the working class and maintain an attitude of class struggle against the bosses; the second about multiracial unity and workers’ internationalism, emphasizing that the attack on immigrant workers is an attack on the whole working class; the third was about the unity of workers from different industries. It concluded that the fight for communism is the only one that will guarantee the real liberation of the international working class.

Everyone was happy with the Bar-B-Q since the food was very tasty and the speeches were enthusiastic and clear. This is one more step in the consolidation of a base to recruit to the Party, and this gave us the impetus PLP needs so that in the coming period we’ll be visiting these and other workers and asking them to help distribute CHALLENGE, help participate and lead class struggle and join the Party. ✱

Students, Teachers Pass the Real Test: Fighting for Our Class Interests

(In parts 1 and 2, teachers and students rebelled against a new pilot test being used in their high school. After a teacher found out that the test could be used to track students and rank teachers for merit pay, he began speaking to CHALLENGE readers in the school about what to do. PL students in several classes refused to take the test or disrupted its administration. Although some teachers were upset about this, others allowed resistance in their classrooms.)

After leading this struggle, the backlash against PLP students and teachers was minor. The teacher in the room where the students protested the test was angry at the PLP. She accused us of encouraging “disciples” to disrupt the test with “conspiracy theories.” There were some other members of the English department that were upset with what had happened and placed the blame on communist politics. It was difficult dealing with workers who had always been friendly now showing animosity toward PLP.

However, the overall climate of the school and the fact that so many staff and students opposed the test limited the principal’s ability to attack those who had directly opposed the test. Neither the principal, nor the department assistant principal confronted the PL teacher. The strong friendships and political alliances we have been building in this school over several years helped protect us from the administration this time.

A week and a half after the struggle, the teacher, two student members and a friend were having lunch in a diner near the school. The young PL’er who had disrupted the test reported that she had been talking to her classmates, and that many of them had refused to take the test as well. They had taken her communist leadership and had silently refused taking a test that they recognized as being against their own interest.

These tests are produced, graded, and determined by the education bosses.

Many teachers in the school continually voiced the idea that the test disregarded them, making their assessment of the students’ needs and progress irrelevant since all meaningful decisions about students are made by administrators based on test scores. This intensification of alienation (which is when workers have no power over their work and cannot find it meaningful) is a major component of rising fascism. As the tests take away the planning and assessment of learning from the teachers, the State is in more direct control of the students through the curriculum that is forced on the teachers.

One victory from this struggle is the increased multi-racial unity that developed among students as they challenged the test. The school has a student body that comes from the Americas, Africa, Eurasia, and Pacifica. The communist leadership provided during this struggle helped the students to work more collectively. They learned that they are many and that they are stronger when they unite.

To consolidate the Party’s gains in this struggle, more CHALLENGES were distributed, and those who hadn’t read the paper in a while began receiving it again. Several students want to write for CHALLENGE, joined study groups and deepened their commitment to the Party. With many battles looming for next year, the students have already cut their teeth on a mass struggle led by the communist PLP. ✱



Shipyard and Tire Strikers Battle Cops in Greece and Iran

ATHENS, Greece, July 28 — Cops violently attacked workers protesting the death of eight co-workers after an explosion at a ship being repaired at the nearby state-owned Perama shipyard. The explosion was caused by a lack of safety measures in the use of blowtorches.

The workers were demonstrating in front of the Ministry of the Merchant Navy, demanding safer working conditions. The workers also declared a 3-day strike. In July 2007, two other workers died in a similar explosion.

There's no secret behind these murders of workers. It's called maximum profits. Because of low wages paid to shipyard workers and merchant marine sailors, Greece has the world's largest merchant fleet. Local companies control one-fifth of the world's merchant transport.

IRAN — While the Iranian ruling class is involved in a dogfight with the U.S. and its local lackeys over control of Middle-East oil profits, it's also doing the same thing all bosses do: attacking militant workers.

A strike by 1,200 workers at Kian Tire in Chahardangeh, near Tehran, is in its third week. The workers are demanding three months' back pay. When a special police unit used bulldozers to break through plant walls and arrested 1,000 workers, strikers set tires on fire. The cops ordered firefighters to put out the fire and shoot

boiling water at the strikers. Six firefighters refused to attack their fellow workers and were arrested. The 1,000 strikers have almost all been released after being forced to sign a "no-protest" agreement.

Capitalists, whether holy rollers like Iran's Islamic rulers or "good Christians" like Dubya, Obama or McCain, have one thing in common: exploit and repress workers.☸



Students Back Striking Teachers in Honduras

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras, July 28 — The 60,000 teachers members of the Federation of Teachers Organization have been on strike for over two weeks demanding six months back pay owed to 3,000 teachers, public transport financial aid for poor students, and other demands. The teachers are also demanding the creation of thousands of new teaching jobs.

The strike, supported by thousands of students, have extended to the 18 provinces of the country. Last week, thousands of students held a militant protest through the streets of this city demanding a raise in the government bus fare aid for 150,000 of the poorer students here.

Marlon Brevé, the minister of Education, has said the strike is unjustified because only 1.2 to 2% of the teachers are owed back day. Teachers earn an average of \$350 a month, in a country where the cost of food and everything else keeps on going up and up just as in the rest of the world. Teachers here have a history of fighting back, with many strikes in recent years for their just demands. The working class of Honduras, like the rest of the region, is sick and tired of having to pay more and more for the economic turmoil of capitalism while a few bosses, imperialist companies, politicians and military officers in cahoots with drug gangs, make out like bandits. We in PLP support these militant teachers and students. We have to bring them our revolutionary politics so they can join with us in building an international red-led movement and turn their struggles into schools for communism. ☸

Can't Stop PL Youth from 'Reddening' Mexico's May Day

"Come on! There's no one in the building"....It was night when we brought the copier downstairs covered with a cloth to keep the neighbors from discovering it. We were three young comrades who were moving the machine from one house to another, with four days to make 15,000 fliers (two-sided, really 30,000 copies) and 250 international CHALLENGES for a mass May Day march in Mexico City.

Earlier, a comrade had made 3,500 copies but the machine heated up quickly; after making 100 leaflets the machine began messing up. He was unable to finish the 15,000 leaflets and couldn't convince his parents to keep the copier in his house any longer.

To continue making copies in each other's homes, we raised the volume of the music so the neighbors couldn't hear the loud machine, risking their anger since we were working late at night, but they were very tolerant.

After 2,000 copies, the ink ran out. With only a few days left, we had to do something else. Two comrades sought copy centers in a nearby city. The budget tripled and again we had to rely on all the comrades in our area to cover the cost of 5,000 more copies.

There was only one day left before May Day. One comrade's friend works in a photocopy store near us and allowed us to make 3,000 leaflets and 200 CHALLENGES on overtime at his job. Comrades continued making leaflets and newspapers at home. Though tired and sick, one comrade prepared food for us and helped us collate and staple the CHALLENGES.

The next morning, May Day, 25 pairs of arms took charge of spreading communist ideas among hundreds of thousands of people who marched in the center of the world's biggest metropolis. The leaflet exposed and denounced the inter-imperialist rivalry for oil worldwide, and specifically in Mexico, and advocated the need to build an international communist movement, the PLP, to fight for communism. We also commemorated International Workers' Day and the struggles of workers worldwide. Job completed, comrades of the world.

Young Comrades

Brazil: Lula, Bosses, Ethanol: Killing Workers for Profits

Brazil is becoming one of the four strongest emerging capitalist countries (known as BRIC: Brazil, Russia, India and China). Under the government of former "socialist" union leader President Lula, the Brazilian ruling class has become a growing imperialist power. Petrobras, the state oil giant which has surpassed Microsoft as the third largest corporation in the Americas, is now as hated by the working masses of South America as Exxon-Mobil, Shell or any other big oil giant. Equally hated in Haiti is the Brazilian army which leads the UN occupation force there. And domestically, the Brazilian bosses are as racist and as brutal as they are overseas.

Brazil has become the world's leading producer of ethanol, using sugar cane instead of the corn used in the U.S. "It is work unfit for humans," said 38-year-old Caio Ribeiro. At his age he is considered a "survivor" among the sugar-cane cutters in Sertaozinho, one of the many cities in the Ribeirao Preto region, Sao Paulo's biggest sugar producer. Three years ago, Caio fainted while cutting sugar cane because of back and circulatory problems, and had to quit. "Machines should be used to cut the cane," declared Caio, "otherwise many more people will die."

According to local union activists, 20 sugar cane cutters have died since 2004 because of the sped-up drive to supply more and more ethanol. They charge that working conditions are subhuman, bordering on slavery. Hundreds of workers were rescued

from slave labor in the last year from plantations in Sao Paulo and in northern Brazil.

According to a study by the Methodist University of Piracicaba, Sao Paulo, each sugar-cane cutter works as hard in a day as it takes to run a 26-mile marathon, overburdening his/her cardio-respiratory system. Young workers, particularly from the poorer northern area of Brazil — whose population is mostly black — labor as migrant workers during the sugar harvest season. They live under generally unhealthy conditions in some of the 37 towns that surround the sugar region of Ribeirao Preto.

The bosses say that in several years they expect to mechanize the whole operation of cutting sugar cane, but will still need workers to process the sugar cane into ethanol, so the exploitation won't end.

Whatever capitalism produces turns into death and super-exploitation for workers, whether it be ethanol or plain old crude oil. Many workers thought Lula — who had a reputation as a militant metalworker union leader in the auto-steel belt of Sao Paulo — would be good for the workers. But he turned out to be a blessing for the Brazilian bosses, creating illusions in many workers about "having their man in the presidency," thus derailing their struggles. Instead of voting for some hacks or any other politician who claims to be a "friend of the workers," we must organize to build a revolutionary communist movement to fight all the bosses. That's the goal of PLP. Join us!☸

LETTERS



GI's, Families Bare Capitalism's Horrors

On July 14, we went door-to-door at a local military base and realized that the housing situation here is worse, by far, than in any other part of the city. Soldiers and veterans are not being taken care of and their families are suffering from the consequences of imperialist wars both emotionally and financially.

We spoke with a daughter of a vet and a struggling mother who is recovering from a stroke. The mother emigrated to the U.S.A. in 1978 and only reads at a fourth-grade level. She is on Section Eight housing and trying to get food stamps and social security. As a worker living in poverty and barely able to make ends meet, she clearly sees how the system is corrupt and said that it "took away people's dignity" — capitalism degrades as it exploits.

We also talked to a Gulf War vet who became motivated to learn more about communism after talking with us. He retired after 21 years in the Army and, though he believes that a soldier cannot question his orders, he also believes that resistance can exist within the military if there is mass unity among the ranks. He is living in and struggling with the atmosphere of sexism, racism, and aggressive behavior promoted by the military that resulted in the woman he is living with being raped and trying to commit suicide with his weapon last month. We asked him to join us in a struggle for a world where oppressive situations such as these would not develop and where workers would be treated as important members of society. He said we "got him thinking" and that he would read CHALLENGE "front to back."

The youngest person we talked to is the sister of a soldier who died in Iraq while serving his third tour of duty. Her brother's widow, who had four children when she lost her husband, was told she would receive free housing, but didn't realize it would only be for three months. She was kicked out of her home and ended up living with her mother-in-law because she couldn't afford to live on her own with the four kids while the government wouldn't help her. Because of these experiences, the sister we talked to was strongly against the war and was very interested in the paper and learning more about PLP.

By visiting these places, we saw the conditions that we must fight against and the people who see clearly the problems of this system. As more and more working-class soldiers, students, and workers experience day in and day out just how degrading and heartbreaking capitalist policies have made their lives, they will join with PLP in mobilizing fight-backs against our oppression. If we are there to bring communist politics to them, they can realize that it is through the unity of our class and the fight for communism that the horrors of capitalism will be destroyed — and they can play a leading role in that struggle.

A Few Summer Project Volunteers

Myth of Elections Can't Hide U.S. Fascism

The ACLU recently revealed that a Homeland Security directive signed by President Bush in December 2003 established the Terrorist Screening Center which contains a so-called Terrorist Screening Database of over one million names — citizens of the U.S. and other countries. The list has been used to detain thousands of people during airport security checks or to bar them from flying. Local law enforcement agencies have also accessed the database during routine traffic stops. The Nazi Gestapo had nothing on these fascists.

Actually, the Nazis learned a lot from U.S. rulers. The rally protesting the lynching of a young black man in a Prince Georges County jail cell (CHALLENGE 7/30) is a case in point. Portuguese writer Miguel Urbano Rodrigues reported that the Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh, as a young merchant marine, witnessed a lynching in the southern U.S. He was so shocked by this brutal racist act tolerated by the local authorities that he wrote a 1924 article in

the French version of the "Comintern" (Communist International) that the KKK had assumed all "the brutality and rites of fascism." (http://www.lahaine.org/skins/basic/lhart_imp.php?p=31752)

The Nazis' racist Nuremberg laws justifying the Aryan "master race" were based on the U.S. Eugenics movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Nazi ideologue Rosenberg called the U.S. "a splendid country of the future" which had the merit of formulating "the new idea of a racial state."

The Third Reich portrayed the genocide against the Native population of North America as "a civilizing epic." The Nazis saw their plans to "Aryanize" Eastern Europe (slaying most of the population but leaving 50 million Slavs alive as slaves of the "master race") as a follow-up to what the U.S. army and rulers did in the Far West. In 1939, just prior to World War II, Hitler hailed the "incredible inner strength of the U.S. model of civilization."

Henry Ford was hailed by the Führer himself for spreading worldwide anti-Semitism with his mass publication of the forgery Protocols of Zion. The racist book "The Menace of the Under Man" by Lothrop Stoddard, a U.S. writer, was so well-received in Nazi Germany that Stoddard was invited to Berlin to be seen by Hitler himself. Two U.S. Presidents, Harding and Hoover, also hailed this racist trash.

The Italian Marxist philosopher, Domenico Losurdo, wrote in 2003 how President Theodore Roosevelt favored the "master races."

Ford, GM, IBM and other U.S. companies continued to operate in Nazi Germany during the war. IBM machines were used to keep count of the prisoners in Nazi concentration camps, and Ford and GM built trucks for the Wehrmacht. Bush's grandfather Prescott Bush made millions doing banking business with the Nazis.

The Patriot Act, the racist immigration pogroms, the mass jailing of black and Latin workers, the mass cutbacks on social programs to sustain the war budget, are all aspects of growing U.S. fascism. Some people are fooled because this fascism is covered with the myth of elections (Obama and McCain are for more and more wars but simply differ on the tactics of how to carry them out); and "freedom of speech" (a few U.S. monopolies own the mass media).

The fact remains that fascism is a product of capitalism. The U.S. has a long history of pro-fascist activities. As the decline of the U.S. bosses continues and major wars loom ahead (leading to another world war), fascism will be covered with the Red-White-and-Blue instead of the Swastika.

An Anti-Fascist Red

'Stalin was a great leader...'

Recently my wife and I were in New York City on vacation. We visited Brighton Beach, a large area of Brooklyn which has thousands of immigrants from Russia.

We went into a small store which was selling souvenirs from Russia. I began looking through some World War II posters inspiring workers and soldiers to fight. I found one with Stalin looking at a map of Europe.

I asked the storeowner, a man from the Ukraine, way up in his eighties, about the poster.

He said, "World War II was a terrible war! When you fight the Nazis, you win or become slaves. We had to win! Stalin was a great leader."

California comrade

Summer Project Visits Pay Dividends on the Job

During the recent Seattle summer project, participants broke up into groups of three to four to visit workers. On the last visitation day I took a group of young Party members to meet some of my co-workers. One co-worker, an ex-Marine, discussed life in the military and the prospects of reaching soldiers. This worker has received several issues of CHALLENGE, but seemed hesitant to have Party members over. By the end of the conversation, however, he said that he was glad to have us over and that if the project participants were stay-

ing longer they should come back. Party members left feeling confident in our ability to bring communist politics to those in the military, but most importantly we put a human face on the Party for this worker that has already drawn him closer to our communist ideas.

We visited another co-worker who had experienced union sell-outs first hand while working in a factory for several years and has been trying to get by in the increasingly volatile non-union construction field. He told Party members how his union negotiator fell asleep during their open contract negotiations and then later drew up a contract with company reps behind closed doors. The contract was loaded with concessions for the company, but managed to get shoved through thanks to a \$2,000 signing bribe. Party members were shocked to see the amount of union dues and fees that were taken out of every paycheck, and even more shocked to hear how every time the dues went up the services workers received went down.

Regarding his work in the non-union construction field we had a long discussion about how racism, particularly toward Latin workers, is used to isolate workers in order to attack them in the form of wage cuts and increased disregard for safety on the job. The conversation involved a lot of back and forth between my co-worker and Party members. Afterwards we gave him his first CHALLENGE. The next day on the job he told me how much he enjoyed having the Party members over and we got into a discussion regarding the editorial on the front page of the paper. He talked about how he liked what the Party had to say and now we have another CHALLENGE reader/base member.

These visits helped to remind us of what Lenin said: workers will accept the Party if we are honest about our line and our intentions to serve the working class. If we bring our communist ideas to workers we will not just be "blaming Bush" or breeding cynicism, but offering a solution to the hell that is capitalism. As Party members we left this project with renewed faith in our ability to win workers to communism. Our base members came away with a renewed faith in the Party's ability to provide leadership in the struggle against capitalism. Now it is on to LA in the fight to build communism!

Summer Project Participants

U.S. on TV Masks U.S. in Real Life

At the airport where I work, many immigrant airport workers read CHALLENGE regularly because our Party's newspaper makes the most sense out of an otherwise confusing capitalist world. PLP is working to help these workers understand that communist revolution is the only way out of the bosses' racist imperialist hell.

A young co-worker from Ethiopia asked: "Why are there so many problems in America? Many Ethiopian immigrants come here and see the U.S. is nothing like it's portrayed on television!"

I explained to my friend that, "Yes, the U.S. has many economic and political problems — high food and gas prices and home foreclosures. There's a chance the national economy could collapse if the bosses' two biggest mortgage outfits, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, go under. This is all part of the bosses international capitalist crisis, with the U.S. getting the worst of it because it has the most to lose.

"Yes, U.S. society is nothing like on TV because the media bosses like CNN or Fox paint such a distorted picture of places like Africa. That's why it's so important for CHALLENGE and its message of communism to spread globally!"

My friend exclaimed, "We need a revolution now! So when would this happen?"

I said it could happen during a bosses' world war if PLP grows worldwide. Understanding the ideas in CHALLENGE is a step in the right direction for working-class liberation!

Airport Red

Garment Workers Need More Than Patches, Will Fight for the Whole Coat

"We need a bit more than patches
We need the whole coat itself.
We need a bit more than slices
We need the whole loaf itself.
We don't just need a mere job to do
We now need the whole factory.
And the coalmines and the ore
And power in the state."

— Bertolt Brecht, *The Mother*

At a recent party where we raised over \$600 to send volunteers to the Los Angeles Summer Project, we watched the documentary *Made in L.A.*, which is about the struggle of L.A. garment workers. Through the film we come to know three remarkable women: Maria, who grew up on a ranch in Mexico, works 10 to 12 hours a day making clothes for a contractor, and then goes home to take care of her three children; Lupe, a young garment worker who is articulate and decides to become a full-time organizer; and Maura, who was forced by poverty to leave her three children in El Salvador and come to L.A. to work in the garment district.

The three women describe conditions in the factories for over 100,000 garment workers (mostly Latino and Asian women): low wages — the average annual income is \$14,000; forced overtime with no overtime pay — two out of three garment factories violate minimum wage and overtime laws, according to the Department of Labor; and dangerous and unhealthy work conditions — three out of four factories violate federal health and safety regulations.

In L.A. thousands of small factory owners compete to see who can produce clothes most cheaply for the big retailers, and to do that each owner fights to get as much production out of each employee as he can, paying as little as he can. There exists a pyramid of profit, in which the many work-

ers at the bottom produce all the profit, some of which goes to the contractor, but much of which is taken by the big retailers like Gap, Wal-Mart, J. Crew, Abercrombie and Fitch, and so on.

Unfortunately, the film never explains how profit (surplus value) is collectively produced by workers, starting with those who pick the cotton and including those who work the sewing machines, and how that surplus value is stolen by a collective class of owners. This failure to explain exploitation is the result of the film being made on behalf of the reformist Garment Worker Center (GWC), a non-profit organization founded in 2001 that waged a three-year boycott and lawsuit against the big clothing chain Forever 21, for which many of the workers produce clothes. Maria, Lupe and Maura take part in this campaign: we see them picketing stores, demonstrating in other cities, and speaking on college campuses to win support for the boycott. As time progresses, we see these three workers develop as public speakers and become more self-assured.

As the lawsuit is lost in district court and as the boycott drags on without success, frustration develops and some of the workers become disillusioned and drop out of the campaign. This isn't surprising. Communists believe that boycotts and lawsuits are, at best, secondary tactics, and that on-the-job struggles (work actions, strikes) should be primary. Yet the film completely avoids struggles on the job. At the end of the film, we learn that the wealthy CEO of Forever 21 signs an agreement with the 19 workers who sued, pledging that its contractors will abide by "lawful conditions." Though presented as a big victory, this pledge is virtually meaningless. The exploitation of workers is legal under capitalism, and even when the owners violate the few wage and safety regulations that exist, there is little enforcement.

One of the positive features of the film is how it shows sexism damaging the lives of women workers and weakening their struggle. Maria's husband spends his wages on alcohol, has her do all the housework and complains about her going to meet-



ings with other workers. Eventually, Maria finds the confidence to stand up for herself and separates from her abusive husband. The struggle against the sexist practices of the owners, as well as sexist attitudes and behavior within the working class, is an important battle that needs to be fought and won.

There is a powerful scene in the film where the workers travel to NYC and visit Ellis Island. They look at pictures of Jewish immigrants who came to the U.S. more than a hundred years ago and worked in the garment factories in NYC. One of the pictures shows workers standing behind a banner that reads "Unity Is Strength, Organize." Lupe stares at the photo and realizes that her struggle against the garment bosses is part of a century-old struggle against exploitation. But the reformists are keeping Lupe, Maria, Maura and hundreds of thousands of others from realizing that the owners will never be nice, will never pay us what we deserve, will never give us job security, health care and adequate pensions, and will never end the hated national borders that keeps Maura from seeing her children in El Salvador. Workers need not just a few reforms (the patches, in Brecht's song) but the whole coat (control of the factories and the government and the end of bosses).☺



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



US in Iraq: Winning = staying

The elected leader of Iraq, Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki, is demanding a timetable for the eventual withdrawal of U.S. troops from his country....

So why is the White House balking at a chance to leave Iraq and claim victory?

Well, one of the administration's primary goals in invading Iraq — in fact, probably its single most important objective — was to establish Iraq as a friendly, long-term host of American military bases. From those bases in the heart of the Arab world, they hoped to dominate the oil-rich Middle East for decades to come. And if that was your goal from the beginning, the calculus of victory gets pretty simple:

Winning means staying; leaving means losing. (NYT, 7/17)

Tobacco biz aims to hook young

A new Harvard study claims that the tobacco industry in recent years has manipulated menthol levels in cigarettes to hook youngsters....

Young people, the study said, tolerate menthol cigarettes better than harsher nonmenthol cigarettes. In low-level menthols cigarettes, the menthol primarily masks harshness, making it easier to begin smoking. (NYT, 7/17)

'It was always about the oil'

That's what the U.S. invasion of Iraq accomplished — for the first time in more than three decades after Iraq joined a worldwide trend of formerly colonized nations gaining control of their own resources, Big Oil is getting its black gold back. It was always about the oil — that's why "we" invaded Iraq — only "we" aren't getting any, at least not at a reasonable price. The oil companies are....

We the people and they the oil companies are not one and the same. (Creators Syndicate, 7/3)

Religious bosses are just as bad

....An undercover informant...saw "a rabbi who was calling employees derogatory names and throwing meat at employees." Jewish managers oversee the slaughtering and processing of meat at Agriprocessors to ensure kosher standards....

Out of work and facing deportation proceedings, many of the immigrants say they now have nothing to lose in speaking up about the conditions in the plant. They have told investigators that they were routinely put to work without safety training and were forced to work long shifts without overtime or rest time. Under-age workers said their

bosses knew how young they were. (NYT, 7/27)

Guantanamo cases full of holes

"After reviewing 517 of the Guantanamo detainees' cases in depth," [Ms. Meyer] said, "they concluded that only 8 percent were alleged to have associated with Al Qaeda. Fifty-five percent were not alleged to have engaged in any hostile act against the United States at all, and the remainder were charged with dubious wrongdoing, including having tried to flee U.S. bombs. The overwhelming majority — all but 5 percent — had been captured by non-U.S. players, many of whom were bounty hunters." (NYT, 7/22)

Capitalism not always rational

The Fed....kept cutting interest rates, but nobody wanted to borrow....The Onion, as usual, hit the nail on the head with its recent headline: "Recession-plagued nation demands new bubble to invest in." (NYT, 7/18)

The Cosby-Obama Show: Racism Is the Victims' Fault

Part II:

Under slavery and Jim Crow, there were always African-Americans willing to advance themselves at the expense of the masses of black workers. This elite group put themselves at the service of their masters, allowing themselves to be used as object lessons for other members of the oppressed group. They helped to justify racism and the class nature of capitalism, claiming that progress only came through “hard work” and “following the rules.” Their willingness to sell themselves was only matched by their contempt for those who couldn’t or wouldn’t emulate them.

Today, capitalism still needs these sellouts. In Ivy League colleges, one of the key purposes of minority student programs is to turn out black and Latino businessmen and administrators for capitalism. The bosses can then say, “See, there is no more racism. If you can’t make it, it’s your own fault.” They also need politicians and stars who can promote ideas that white orators would not be allowed to get away with. Enter comedian and multi-millionaire TV star Bill Cosby. Cosby gave a now-infamous speech at the 2004 NAACP awards ceremony in which he attacked activists who charged the criminal justice system with racism. He disparaged “lower-economic and lower-middle-economic people” for “not holding their end in this deal” and attacked young black people for their dress, the names they carry, and because “all of them are in jail” (‘This Is How We Lost to the White Man’, Ta-Nehisi Coates TheAtlantic.Com).

Cosby’s line was initially ignored by the liberal media and rejected by the hacks who pose as “leaders” of the black community. Since then, he has co-written, with Harvard Medical School professor Alvin Poussaint, “Come on People: On the Path from Victims to Victors.” This book promotes the idea that black workers who continue to question the existence of worse conditions in their com-

munities have only to look at their own failings for answers. It also promotes a new separatism: “(F)or all the woes of segregation there were some good things to come out of it” (Coates). No, not mass multi-racial struggle against racism and for working-class unity; like the Nation of Islam, Cosby and Poussaint laud separate black businesses serving black people. Cosby regularly preaches a doctrine of “personal responsibility” and “self-reliance” to black, mostly male audiences at churches and colleges in major urban areas.

Cosby’s rhetoric dovetails with Barack Obama’s attempt to downplay the endemic nature of racism by pushing hard work, patriotism and national service. But Obama’s politics are just a cover for sharper attacks on the working class, in particular black, Latino, and immigrant workers. The rulers have to repackage “blame-the-victim” ideology in order to justify these rotten conditions. So when Obama recently spoke at one of Chicago’s largest black churches, he resurrected Moynihan’s culture-of-poverty theories when he assailed black fathers for sitting “in the house watching Sports Center” and claimed that they “have abandoned their responsibilities, acting like boys instead of men” (NY Times 6/16/08).

One may wonder why a candidate who claims to want to “bring people together” did not mention in his speech that marriage rates among all young males, as well as young black males “are strongly correlated with the annual earnings of these young men” (Bob Herbert, NY Times 6/21/08 quoting from Andrew Sum, Center for Labor Market Studies). Or the fact that “mean annual earnings of young men without four-year college degrees have plummeted substantially over the past 30 years” (Herbert, quoting Sum).

Or finally that in 2006, 50.4% of *all* births to women under 30 were “out of wedlock,” reflect-



ing both cultural and economic changes (were all of these women part of the “underclass,” too?) (Herbert)

Both Obama and Cosby ignore extensive research done in the 1970s and 1980s highlighting the development of “resilient kinship ties” in black families as a historical response to “persistent racial oppression” (“The Black Family” and US Social Policy: Moynihan’s Unintended Legacy?” Dean E. Robinson, 2003). Anti-racist sociologists also attacked Moynihan’s idea that black family structure was “in crisis” by studying the history of that structure over a century, and proving that differences between black and white families developed over long periods, and didn’t affect the family unit’s fundamental strength (Hill 1972; Stack 1974; Gutman 1976; Jones 1985).

Despite its proclaimed demise, the racist beast always reappears in new forms. That is because the rulers cannot rule without it. With communist leadership, workers will see through these tricks. Racism cannot be reformed away under capitalism. The only way to stomp it to death is to violently overthrow the tiny group of exploiters who profit from it. Communism’s principle “from each according to commitment, to each according to need” will abolish the material basis for the bosses’ wage slavery and racism, which will lead to the elimination of this plague on humanity.☺

Dark Knight Becomes a Nazi Crusader?



The movie, ‘The Dark Knight,’ set a record of \$155 million in its first weekend. In times of recession, the box office booms: providing workers a temporary escape from the problems created by capitalism. As one commentator wrote, “If you’re worried about mortgage payments and gas prices, when you’re sitting in The Dark Knight for two and a half hours, you’re not thinking about any of that stuff.”

However, The Dark Knight, instead of pushing a clear message of “hope” in believing individuals with special powers can save society like many superhero films, attempts to win workers to passively accept a bleak future of fascism.

In this latest Batman flick, Batman fights the Joker who threatens to terrorize Gotham unless Batman reveals his true identity. To prove he is serious, the Joker sets out on a rampage of bombings and assassinations. He is clearly a symbol of the “terrorist threat” the bosses use to justify the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the racist attacks on immigrants and Arabs.

In the face of the Joker’s violent rampage, Batman must resort to fascist surveillance by tapping all cell phones in Gotham. Further, he pushes himself to the limit interrogating the Joker in a torture scene right out of Abu Graib. The message is clear: the bosses’ government must be allowed to do whatever is necessary in order to fight “terrorism.”

Batman, however, realizes that Gotham’s real future of fighting terrorism is not in him but in May-

oral hopeful Harvey Dent. In one of his speeches addressing the chaos that has descended upon Gotham, Dent states: “The night is darkest just before the dawn. And I promise you, the dawn is coming!” His slogan echoes the campaign slogan of the Barack Obama campaign, “Change we can believe in.”

In the Batman stories, Bruce Wayne is the hero who disguises himself to rid the world of bad guys but he’s also the boss of a large corporation. Men like Bruce Wayne become rich by exploiting men and women to protect their profits (sometimes killing them). These stories try to win workers to the idea that there are some good bosses.

The film also embraces the anti-Chinese racism pushed by the U.S. ruling class in their efforts to win workers to fight this rival imperialist. Following suit with Obama’s recent endorsement of anti-China trade legislation, Dent proclaims, “I suggest you buy American” when it comes to an item “made in China.”

Despite the fact that Dent becomes a killer, Batman says that Dent must be cleared of his crimes

and his image preserved as that of an honorable politician. Batman takes the rap for the murders, arguing that people need a Harvey Dent (aka Obama) to believe in. In the end, the film pushes the idea that while the fascist tactics of Batman are necessary to bring order to a chaotic system, men like Dent are necessary to provide a “democratic” façade to the fascism.

“The Dark Knight” leaves the audience with no real hope and no belief in their own power to change things. Workers are told to accept the fact of a bleak future with the necessity of fascism to make sure that the terrorists do not win.

While going to the movies may provide workers with a temporary escape from their worries about soaring energy prices and foreclosures, we should be organizing to fight back against the bleak future of fascism that the film promotes as inevitable. It is true that we are living in a “Dark Night,” but by organizing against the bosses’ fascist attacks with PLP’s communist politics, we can have a bright future to look forward to.☺

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