

CHALLENGE



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Hit Democratic Governor's War on Workers

Hundreds Blast Hospital Closing

BROOKLYN, NY, March 8 — Hundreds of workers left Downstate Hospital, on our lunch hour, eager to blast the Democratic Governor Cuomo's closing of this vital, viable hospital along with nearby Kingsboro Psychiatric Center, the only adult state psychiatric facility in Brooklyn. The three unions, CSEA, PEF and UUP, finally rallied against the attack.

For several months, workers have been demanding union leadership to halt the proposed closings. This week, on very short notice, we spread the word and workers were excited to be there. The rank and file organized the only chants. Union "leaders" called for more emails. Politicians shouted they wouldn't vote for the restructuring, but it's the Governor's prerogative — no Legislature voting is involved.

No real change has ever come from e-mails or phone calls to politicians or bosses. The civil rights and labor movements made advances only with strikes, rebellions and masses of people in the streets. To stop these attacks masses from the community, the churches, and many other union members from Kings County Hospital across the street must be involved.

The community is still unaware of the pending closing. When rank-and-file union members have leafleted the community informing residents of Cuomo's plan, people are shocked and ask what they can do. Unfortunately the union flier only calls on people to phone their opposition to an AFL-CIO recording that will forward their message to Cuomo, the very politician the union chiefs helped elect.

Workers at the rally were skeptical of the politicians' promises. When a union leader said CSEA represents 300,000 state workers, one worker commented, "With that number of informed, unified members, something surely could be done to stop this!" One worker remarked that mental health care has already deteriorated so much that there are more psychiatric cases in Rikers Island prison than in all state facilities!

A Racist Attack

A serious campaign is needed and this is a ripe opportunity. The avalanche of attacks against the working class here by the big capitalist players in New York State are kicking us workers when we are down and showing NO mercy. This is a racist attack. In this borough of 2.5 million, the majority of them black and Latino workers who experience 20 percent poverty with 40 percent uninsured, there is half the number of acute-care hospital beds per capita as across the river in Manhattan.

Cuomo, in the face of Brooklyn's health crisis, decided to cut state funds for Downstate in half. He and



his appointed policy-maker, Stephen Berger, the CEO of a multi-million-dollar slash-and-burn firm, want to close hospitals, tear up our pension plans and bust the unions. There is a heist going on by Cuomo, his Department of Health, and local corporate forces represented by Berger and Brezenoff. The latter is CEO of Continuum, which bankrupted Long Island College Hospital, forcing the state to pick up the bankruptcy note in a non-disclosed partnership.

These times are both similar and different to the Great Depression. Unemployment was also high then, but now U.S. rulers are seriously trying to slash workers' living standards to compete with other world capitalists. They're also allotting 60 percent of taxes for their war machine to protect their empire. The rich get richer and workers get poorer.

This capitalist system will always prize profits and world domination over workers' needs. Become a regular CHALLENGE reader and join with PLP to learn how to break the control of the capitalists and destroy their system with communist revolution. ☸

U.S. Imperialism's Racism Nurtured Afghan Slaughter

Account of an Iraq War veteran:

On March 11, at least one U.S. Army Staff Sergeant walked off his base, entered three separate homes and killed 16 unarmed Afghan civilians in cold blood before returning to his base and turning himself in. Some witnesses report they heard multiple troops. However, the U.S. military insists it was only one soldier. Until now, the U.S. military has not released any details about the intent behind the killings. But from my experience in the U.S. military, I'm sure that racist indoctrination by U.S. imperialism is at the heart of it.

When I deployed to Iraq in 2004, the instructors taught my unit to call the local workers "Hajji." The word is actually a religious title for Muslims who completed their pilgrimage to Mecca. But, the military used it as a racist slur to breed hostility between coalition troops and civilians. It is comparable to the racist term "gook" the U.S. military used during the Vietnam War.

Our trainers told us it was okay to run over children on the roads or to shoot someone throwing an object, even if it was a rock. These Iraqis, my instructors explained, would use kids strapped with bombs to attack convoys. Since "you never know what hajji may do," you should use lethal force if you feel threatened.

An Army friend of mine, James, was on a Small Kill Team (SKT) that followed orders to shoot and kill anyone outside after the U.S.-imposed curfew. Many people in his unit believed that the SKT would help the Iraqis "remember" not to plant anti-U.S. roadside bombs.

Small Kill Team ordered to shoot and kill anyone outside after the U.S.-imposed curfew.

Most troops in James' unit had lost buddies to insurgent attacks. Almost every anti-U.S. attack fed the rage-filled racist lie that all of the Iraqis were responsible because they knew who the anti-U.S. forces are. But James understood racist lies because he knew lots of people in PLP and actively fought against putting the racist blame on the working class in Iraq.

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Syria: Russian, U.S. Imperialists' Battle Leading to Wider War?

U.S. rulers are hypocritically decrying the slaughter raging across Syria while they seek to intervene there in the guise of "humanitarianism." But Syria's regime has a history of savagery that stretches back decades, and it never seemed to bother Washington before. Now that their Russian rivals are backing Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, U.S. rulers suddenly care. Why? They see an opportunity to strike a blow against their Russian adversaries in this oil-rich region.

There's a general consensus among U.S. imperialists that ousting the Syrian ruler would deal a heavy blow to his allies in the Iranian ruling class and their regional ambitions. This would help safeguard both Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the crown jewels of U.S. bosses' energy-based empire.

But U.S. ruling-class politicians, think tanks and media disagree on how best to profit from Assad's bloodshed. Their options include "diplomacy" (which, after it failed, could justify an invasion),



OUR FIGHT

★ **Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.**

★ **Only the dictatorship of the working class — communism — can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.**

★ **Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.**

★ **While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.**

★ **Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. 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." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit black, Latino, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.**

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

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

★ **Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.**

★ **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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arming the opposition, or direct, Libya-like military action (another "humanitarian" invasion).

While we can't predict exactly what Obama will do, any of these scenarios will prove deadly for workers. Thousands of our class brothers and sisters in that region will be killed, not to mention U.S. GI's. U.S. workers will be attacked with more cutbacks to pay for yet another war. Muslim workers in the U.S. will inevitably be targeted with racist attacks.

An attack on Syria also has strong potential to widen U.S. oil wars to global dimensions, given the sharpening conflict with Russia as a Syrian ally.

U.S.- and Saudi-led war-making interests recently sent former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan on a deliberately doomed UN-Arab League mission to Syria. Royal Military College professor Houchang Hassan-Yari said, "I'm not really sure if Annan is going to be successful.... [T]he UN Security Council is paralyzed with Russia and China using their vetoes to block a resolution condemning the regime. If new attempts to reach a resolution fail and the Syrian government continues its violent crackdown, there may be no other avenue to go down except military" (Canadian CTV, 3/10/12).

How Far to Go for Regime Change?

A "hit now" faction in Congress is already looking down this avenue. On March 6, Senators John McCain, Joe Lieberman and Lindsey Graham urged: "The United States should help organize an international effort to protect civilian population centers in Syria through airstrikes on Assad's forces.... This will first require the United States and our partners to suppress the Syrian regime's air defenses in at least part of the country."

But Stratfor, an influential global intelligence group, counsels waiting: "The situation in Syria — whether through the loss of territory, massive defections from the regime or the loss of Russian support — will have to change before Washington implements any of the plans it has prepared." Stratfor's analysts gained increased credibility of late when a cyber-hacking attack revealed that Exxon Mobil and the Pentagon are among the firm's major clients.

A more urgent recommendation for U.S.-driven regime change comes from the Rockefeller-led Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). Jonathan Tepperman, managing editor of CFR's Foreign Affairs magazine, wrote in the New York Times (3/8), "The only sure way to quickly stop the killing and replace the Assad regime with something better would be to do what few have been willing to advocate so far: start a serious military operation to topple the government."

Syrian Invasion No Piece of Cake

Tepperman leaves unsaid the vast anti-Russian mobilization that would be required by a

"serious" operation. The Kremlin supplies sophisticated fighter planes and anti-aircraft batteries to Syria. It maintains a naval base at Tartus on its Mediterranean shore, facing Israel. Invaders also would have to contend with a Syrian army of 330,000.

Vladimir Putin, Russia's newly re-elected strongman, bluntly promises retaliation if U.S.-led Syrian initiatives run counter to his plans to restore the Russian empire. "No one," says Putin, "should be allowed to employ the Libyan scenario in Syria... I hope very much that the United States and other countries will...not pursue the use of power in Syria without UN Security Council sanctions."

Putin refers specifically to U.S. economic grabs in the global imperialists' sharpening rivalry: "It appears that with the Arab Spring countries, as with Iraq, Russian companies are losing their decades-long positions in local commercial markets and are being deprived of large commercial contracts. The niches thus vacated are being filled by the economic operatives of the states that had a hand in the change of the ruling regime" (RIA Novosti, 2/27/12).

Back in the U.S., war hawk Paul Wolfowitz — a primary architect of Bush, Jr.'s attempt to run the Iraq slaughter on the cheap — claimed that arming Assad's opponents could work: "Strengthening the Syrian opposition is not an obstacle to a peaceful end to this conflict. To the contrary, it may be the only way to achieve one" (Wall Street Journal, 3/6/12).

Another Blowback?

But Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had reservations: "We really don't know who it is that would be armed. Are we supporting Al Qaeda in Syria? Hamas is now supporting the opposition. Are we supporting Hamas in Syria?" (CBS News, 2/26/2012). She pointed out that both Al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri and the leaders of the Islamic resistance movement in Palestine expressed their support for the Syrian rebels. Clinton and other U.S. ruling class operatives remember that arming anti-Soviet "insurgents" in Afghanistan led to the emergence of Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda and resulted in a Taliban takeover.

But regardless of their differences, all U.S. presidential candidates (with the exception of the unelectable Ron Paul) are backing one form or another of anti-Syrian war-making. All of them are ready and willing to escalate tensions with Iran and Russia en route to a broader war. Our class cannot support any of these capitalist factions. We must strive in all of our mass organizations to expose all the bosses, both liberal and right-wingers, whose wars kill millions of workers. We must link the class struggle in all areas to the need to eliminate the entire capitalist class.

Only communist revolution can end imperialist war, mass unemployment, racism, sexism and the horrors that the profit system visits on our class. That is what PLP fights for. Join our Party! ☺

CUNY Profs Slam Racist, Sexist 'Pathway to Ignorance'

NEW YORK CITY, March 8 — Today, International Women's Day, more than 350 City University of New York (CUNY) faculty and staff, at a mass meeting called by the PSC (Professional Staff Congress)-CUNY union, denounced "Pathways," a scheme for faster graduation imposed by the CUNY Administration. It would standardize and gut the academic quality of basic required courses. Many speakers — a majority women — pointed out that this is a sexist move against the 2/3 of students who are women, a racist attack on the 3/4 students who are black and Latino, and a nationalist attack on the large percentage of immigrant and undocumented students.

Even conservative business profs showed outrage at this insult to their working-class students, calling out "the subtle racism of low expectations." Other speakers expressed solidarity with K-12 teachers who have already been hit hard by standardized, dumbed-down curriculums, pushed nationally by the think-tanks and government agencies of the capitalist class. The mood was angry and ready for action; we all felt the need to stand up for our students and defend our efforts to teach them well; there was power in our common outrage.

The union is organizing an online petition (2,500 signers in the first two days, 500 in the first hour), two

major lawsuits defending both faculty control of curriculum and students' right to a quality education, and grassroots faculty action to organized non-compliance. Student speakers said they would stand by us in this fight to repeal Pathways — "a pathway to ignorance," the Queens College student newspaper called it. We need to reach many more students, because the opportunist bosses are appealing to their desire to graduate sooner, downplaying their loss of science labs and languages.

The CUNY Board of Trustees meeting April 30 is the deadline for killing Pathways, and there will be an action at the Trustees' meeting. It was pointed out that Benno Schmidt, the ruling-class figure who heads the Board, is also a chief investor in a new private school, Avenues, which boasts of graduating students fluent in two or three languages — while Pathways cuts required language study to a single semester.

A PLP flyer, "Pathway to Ignorance or Road to Revolution?" supported organizing a militant fight, and showed how Pathways, like



CUNY students protest against tuition hike and the Board of Trustees

the tightening of control over K-12 teachers, was "another step on the road to fascist control of all workers as the ruling class prepares for war with other imperialists...The decline we see at CUNY simply reflects this decline of the [U.S.] empire."

While fighting the CUNY bosses we have to fight too for the egalitarian communist society for which workers have dreamed of and fought for cen-

turies. Academic freedom fights in the 20th-century U.S. were often led by communists like the Anti-Fascist Committee at City College in 1938. But there will be no lasting freedom for any workers without communist revolution. The many young profs without tenure who spoke out courageously for their students tonight have a proud communist tradition to carry forward. ☺

Fighting HIV's Racist Stigma

WASHINGTON, DC, March 8 — Capitalism has always created ways to weaken the unity and militancy of workers. Its ruling class primarily uses racism to stereotype and demean black, Latino, and Asian workers and divide the entire working class. These stereotypes portray black workers, in particular, as lazy and criminal. Politicians then use these lies to explain high rates of unemployment and incarceration among black workers and to justify policies to cut services and benefits even more.

These negative stereotypes or prejudices are called stigmas. In ancient times, Greeks branded criminals and slaves with a physical mark called a stigma and treated them as outsiders, people to be scorned, avoided, mistreated and exploited.

ed, mentally ill, or HIV positive. It also contributes to high rates of HIV and AIDS, since people who are blamed for their conditions are less likely to take care of themselves and their partners or to seek health care.

Need Class Analysis of Stigma

The Health Disparities Committee of the Metropolitan Washington Public Health Association (MWPCHA) has been holding workshops to reduce the stigma associated with HIV. Where some committee members focused on individual biases, which they attempt to counter with facts, Progressive Labor Party members and committee leaders argued for a class analysis of stigma. We linked the stigma placed on people living

In January, MWPCHA held a community workshop in a public housing neighborhood. More than 80 people, including health and prison activists, students, and public health workers ventured out on an icy morning to discuss how stigma affects our health and how we can fight back. A number of students said they had never visited a public housing community and that this workshop had led them to see the residents as neighbors, friends, and allies. While the residents liked students and public health workers visiting them for a change, some warned that they didn't want to be used as research subjects for academic projects, an important point for students to hear.

In the short run, there are many ways we can unify to fight stigma and oppression, from hosting more workshops to joining struggles to demand housing, jobs, and treatment of people with HIV. But to eliminate stigma, we need to end the conditions that require stigma and exploitation. We need to abolish the system that profits by dividing workers: capitalism.

Communism creates a society where the working class makes the rules. A true communist system requires the cooperation and unity of all workers in order to contribute to a world that is safe and healthy for everyone. Join the Progressive Labor Party! ☺

with HIV to the need for the ruling class to shame and distance workers from one another, leaving the working class weak and divided. This analysis directs us to involve people targeted by stigma in the fight against capitalism and racism.

Mexico: Reds Vow to Destroy Capitalism

In early December a group of 30 members and friends of PLP gathered to learn about political economy, and specifically to discuss who produces all wealth and what causes crises. We also discussed the alternatives presented by the Party in Road to Revolution IV.

The majority of participants were youth; nine of them participated in the discussion for the first time. Several workers, members of the Party, presented the topics well, combining the experience of the old with the enthusiasm of the young.

We discussed that our only alternative to this racist, criminal system is to organize ourselves as a working class, as a Party to destroy it. We heard examples of how we workers generate wealth. We also learned that the future capitalism offers is imperialist war for markets and cheap labor.

We saw a movie that illustrated the concepts of our discussion. The movie showed how the bosses use nationalism and religion as ideological tools to divide workers. Currently, liberal capitalist leaders promote and support large upheavals, like the Occupy Movement and the Arab Spring, to try to resolve their global financial problems and control workers' anger against their own oppression.

One of the comrades gave examples of the capitalist crisis and described the growing unemployment, the merging of corporations and banks, as moves towards a larger inter imperialist confrontation, which may eventually lead to World War III.

We all recommitted to continue organizing at the grassroots level for a communist revolution.

Mexico Red

To eliminate stigma, we must end the conditions that require stigma and exploitation: abolish capitalism.

Today, the ruling class and its media brand people whom they want to be considered immoral, dangerous, abnormal, inferior or simply different in some way. Stigma pushes shame onto people who are poor, women, gay or transgender, incarcerat-

World Capitalist Crisis Spurs Workers' Fight-back

The international working class is fighting back, from North Africa to the Mid-East, to Europe to the U.S., against the effects of capitalism's world economic and political crisis. It has sparked social movements that have captured the imagination, with many comparing 2011 to 1968. Wherever PLP is present it is playing a political role in these movements.

Four billion working-class families are trying to exist on \$1 to \$2 a day under the weight of the International Monetary Fund-induced austerity. This global economic crisis was fed by capitalism's drive for maximum profits, centered on Wall Street, setting the stage for the 2011 upsurge.

'68 General Strike Rocked France

"The French 1968 upheaval took the French ruling class by surprise," said Alan Woods, the English Marxist historian. Students in France responded both to U.S. imperialism's Vietnam War genocide) and to French bosses' university repression. When linked up with the working class — suffering as the lowest-paid industrial workers in Europe — it resulted in a general strike which rocked the very foundations of French capitalism. This qualitative change stemmed from quantitative internal contradictions in French capitalism.

The General Strike paralyzed France. The French National Police could barely contain the insurrection. French bosses feared that an Army call-up might induce many working-class soldiers to side with the strikers and mutiny, so they called up reservists but restricted them to military bases and away from television and radio. DeGaulle almost lost his grip on state power and called on the German military to be ready with tank warfare to put down the revolt.

Ultimately the insurrection failed because, without a viable communist party to lead the working class to revolution, the French "Communist" Party made a deal with DeGaulle and took the electoral road, relying on "lesser evil" bosses.

Woods mentions that DeGaulle so feared revolution that he planned to imprison 20,000 left-wing ac-

Four billion working-class families are trying to exist on \$1 to \$2 a day under the weight of the IMF austerity.

tivists in the Winter Stadium where they would have met a similar fate that Chilean workers and students would face five years later."

Also in '68, left-wing students in Mexico used the approaching Olympics to champion needed social reforms: freedom for political prisoners, dismissal of the fascist Mexico City Police Chief, and use of tax money for Mexico's working class instead of for the Olympics.

Their fight-back began in Mexico City, trying to free an imprisoned railway union leader. The fascist

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Capitalism's Solution for Greece: Fascism

PARIS, March 2 — A military dictatorship is the only way to force the Greek people to pay the nation's debt to international finance capital, according to Michel Rocard, a French Socialist Party (SP) leader. Rocard was prime minister from 1988 to 1991.

"Forced shrinking of the economy leads to civil war," Rocard told the daily paper *Libération*. "It's untenable and it poses a big question for Greece, which is subject to forced shrinking of the economy. In this context, how can you maintain elections? It's not possible to govern these people while telling them that they're going to lose 25% of their income over the next ten years in order to pay off all the debt. Nobody says it out loud, but the solution for Greece is a military government."

War on the Horizon

While Rocard was spilling the beans on the bosses' vision of a fascist Greece, he also indicated that world war is close:

Nobody [in France] is paying attention to the greater Middle East. We have an Anglo-American strategy, which the other allies, and notably France, have accepted. The strategy is to scuttle any possibility of serious discussion with the Iranians. And even to provoke them a little from time to time. It's as if it was...preparing a situation of tolerance that would make an Israeli strike possible. In this case, the war will become a Syrian-Iranian war, backed up by China and Russia,...a war broadly against the West and its client states.... This is an affair of millions of deaths, the hypothesis being that it will begin as a nuclear war.

Workers Lose, Banks Collect

The austerity plan imposed on Greece by the International Monetary Fund, the European Union and the European Central Bank has slashed wages and pensions. The Greek public debt is \$395 billion. Seventy percent of it is owed to foreign institutions, mainly banks.

Andreas Makris, a porter at the Athens public hospital has had his wages cut 40 percent from four years ago when he netted 15,000 euros (USD \$19,800) a year on a 37½-hour work-week. Now he nets 9,628 euros (USD \$12,712) annually for a 40-hour week.

Dimitris Papadikolao, an Athens steelworker, was laid off in December. He used to make 1,200 euros a month net (USD \$1584). Now he survives on 359 euros a month (USD \$474) in unemployment benefits. Stelios Sandalakis is retired but cannot make ends meet on his 600-euro-a-month pension (USD \$792) and must eat in soup kitchens.

Many Greeks are turning to charities like Doctors of the World for health care because they cannot afford the charges Greek hospitals now make patients pay for medicines. Meanwhile, military spending is up as Greece buys arms from Germany and France.

War and fascism are high on the agenda of the world's ruling classes. Rocard's words should be an eye-opener to any worker in France who thinks that François Hollande, the SP's presidential candidate in the April 22 election, is a lesser evil. War and fascism are the inevitable products of capitalism. The only way to eliminate them is through communist revolution.☺

U.S. Racism and Afghan Slaughter

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Like myself, James avoided using the term "hajji." Instead we spoke to our fellow troops about how imperialist rivalry is to blame for all the bloodshed on all sides. In one instance James, a medic, actively worked on an Iraqi National Guard soldier that his fellow medics refused to work on because he was an Iraqi. Keens, one of James non-medic friends pitched in to try to save the Iraqi soldier's life even though Keens generally followed the Army's racist script.

The Iraqi soldier died of his injuries. But what shook Keens the most was the racist behavior of the other medics. James' anti-racist actions showed Keens there was a better way to respond to the Army's racism and Keens apologized profusely for days to the troops in the Iraqi National Guard unit attached to the U.S. unit. It's action around communist ideas like these that can one day transform a racist imperialist army into an anti-racist communist one.

It may turn out that the Army Staff Sergeant who committed this latest racist rampage was a long-time Nazi and has had mental problems. Early reports indicate that his current deployment in Afghanistan was his fourth, following three in Iraq. The Staff Sergeant suffered from traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, revealing that imperialism injures working-class military occupiers as well as the civilian occupied.

One soldier's individual rampage is just a symptom of the larger rampage of imperialist rivalry. The generals, politicians, corporate bosses, mullahs, imams, emirs and sheiks ON ALL SIDES push workers — including lower-ranked enlisted coalition troops and the

rank-and-file insurgents — to kill and die for the rulers' profit. Each boss uses racism to blanket each and every one of the opposing forces' populations as the enemy, including fellow workers.

The imperialists' fight to dominate energy-rich areas has launched "small wars" that have killed millions of workers over the past several decades. Workers only hope for justice in war is to organize class war for communism, especially among working-class troops. It will take troops with communist ideas like anti-racism to win working-class troops, insurgents and civilians in the front lines to unite as a class against the bosses.

James' anti-racist actions showed Keens there was a better way to respond to the Army's racism.

The Staff Sergeant responsible for these racist deaths hurt U.S. imperialism's goal of cutting a deal to keep a large U.S. presence in Afghanistan past 2014. More and more Afghans now want the U.S. out. U.S. imperialism's racist ideas helped nurture the attacks in the first place. Inter-imperialist rivalry for energy resources in the region means the occupation will continue.

Drone strikes have killed uncounted thousands in Afghanistan,

mostly civilians. But instead of prosecutions against drone commanders and ending the use of inaccurate technology like aerial strikes, U.S. bosses chalk up civilian deaths to "collateral damage." Last month the U.S. Army admitted to burning Korans in Afghanistan, a symbol of U.S.'s racism to many workers in Afghanistan.

Obama simply responded with an apology, not action to rid the U.S. military of racist anti-Muslim ideas. The architects of racist mass murders like the 2004 U.S. military attacks on Falluhja, Iraq, where thousands of civilians were systematically murdered, are celebrated as military leaders. But when these same imperialists face unauthorized slayings of dozens by mini-racists they put on show trials to save face.

The U.S. Army is likely to push for a harsh punishment against this soldier to limit Afghan protests to a minimum and to strike a U.S.-friendly deal with the Afghan government to maintain a long-term military presence. However one low-ranking Marine was the only troop convicted for the largest U.S. military atrocity against civilians to go to court, the killing of 24 civilians in the city of Haditha, Iraq in 2005. The convicted Marine's punishment was a demotion and a pay cut! In the prison torture scandal of Abu Gharib, not one officer was convicted of any criminal wrongdoing.

While the perpetrator of this most recent atrocity will face some punishment, only workers' revolution against capitalism can smash the imperialist masters that make these relatively small atrocities possible.☺

Open Fight for Communism Needed

Senegal Election: Whoever Wins, Capitalism Still Rules

SENEGAL, February 26 — Today, masses of Senegalese voted for the presidency. Simultaneously over 40 Senegalese in the Washington, D.C. area protested at the Senegalese embassy and marched to the White House to expose the election's fraud and deception. A month ago, there were huge demonstrations in Dakar and other cities protesting the "Constitutional" Court's unconstitutional January 27 decision that allowed 85-year-old Abdoulaye Wade to run for a third six-year term.

As protests erupted nation-wide, police attacked with tear gas and clubs, killing 10, maiming more and arresting many others. They included friends of PLP who were part of the Summit organized by the League of Revolutionary Pan Africanists in June 2011 in which PLP participated (see CHALLENGE 7/20/11). Last month's demonstrations were similar to uprisings last summer when Wade announced plans to run again and tried to jam through a new law allowing him to install his son as vice-president and heir-apparent.

In Wade's neighborhood, hundreds of his neighbors directly confronted him as he voted for himself. They demanded he step down. Workers throughout Senegal have vowed to take drastic steps should he declare himself the winner. Can this anger lead to a communist future?

Background: Mass Outrage

The masses are furious with Wade and his neocolonial party that took power in 2000, ousting the sellout "Socialist" Party President Abdou Diouf who'd been a corrupt, loyal lackey of French imperialists. But Wade's regime has trod the same path.

Wade stole over 1.6 trillion CFA francs (about \$3.4 billion) from the government treasury. He spent \$400 million for a private jet with a state-of-the-art hospital staffed with doctors and nurses from France. He built an African Renaissance Statue costing \$40 million which the Senegalese masses opposed as an egotistical monument to himself. This outrageous amount could have helped improve workers' living conditions.

But this is just the tip of the iceberg. Jobs are few. Those that exist have no workers' rights. The government backs private bosses 100%.

Y'en a Marre mobilizes youth against unemployment regardless of the elections.

During Wade's 12-year reign, Senegal has suffered from neglect while the parasites in power feed off the masses. Dakar, the capital, is a "mobile market" where, to feed a family, almost everyone is desperately trying to sell something, from Kleenex to soccer balls to phone cards. Child beggars abound. Workers' wages have not kept pace with the rising cost of living.

Many industries still pay the same



wages paid prior to Wade's election. Senegal's place on the United Nations Human Development Index, that measures living standards, life expectancy, literacy and education, is virtually equal to Haiti's (.459 versus .454; the U.S. score is .910 by comparison). Communist revolution is the only solution to such desperate poverty, corruption and exploitation.

The Opposition to Wade

Fourteen candidates ran in the first round of today's election. The main opposition parties were split between self-described socialist and democratic parties, plus self-described communist, pan-Africanist and revolutionary parties. The Benno ("to form as one") coalition tried to unify the opposition but then split. Both programs stressed "public resources for the people," vague platforms which fell flat with the energetic youth demanding greater change.

Four ex-members of Wade's cabinet also ran. They had exposed Wade's government by revealing closely held secrets such as the murder of officials who opposed Wade on issues and the theft of treasury funds. These candidates all claimed they wanted to limit Senegalese dependence on the imperialist nations and have called themselves "true pan-Africanists," unlike Wade. Such opportunists couldn't be taken seriously, given their longstanding complicity in Wade's regime.

Youssou N'Dour, Senegal's most popular singer, also announced his candidacy, promising "food for all, better health and education and electricity...by scrapping the expensive government's lifestyle and spending" and use of his "huge contact book to sign new international deals that will bring aid and investments to Senegal." These are vague improvements for the masses and continued capitalism and foreign exploitation. Once quite close to Wade until a falling out, his candidacy was voided by the same Court that allowed Wade to run for a third term.

Youth Movement

Meanwhile, a mass hip-hop youth movement, Y'en a Marre (We're fed up!), continues to mobilize youth against unemployment regardless of the elections, and has maintained powerful street demonstrations with its slogan, "Enough is Enough." Wade was so worried about them that he distributed hundreds of Y'en a Marre t-shirts attempting to co-opt them. But they rejected this ploy, declaring that no member of their movement should ever wear such a t-shirt!

Several organizations whose members participated in the Youth Summit initially joined the Benno coalition. None has advanced a public call for communist revolution, limiting their programs to opposition to neoliberalism, neocolonialism and imperialism, sticking with elections, uniting around "Wade Must Go!"

'Staged' Revolution a Losing Strategy

This approach is part of an incorrect, multi-stage analysis of the path towards true liberation through communism. This losing strategy argues to first fight for national independence from imperialism, often through elections, while never publicly advancing the long-term goals of communism. This stage, theoretically, then follows with gradual steps towards socialism

with the government nationalizing industries while maintaining the wage system and inequalities. Much later, society can move to communism, abolition of the wage system and an egalitarian society.

Such a strategy has always failed; capitalist elements always take advantage of the limited ideological development in the mass movements led by such a strategy, and they return to market capitalism. It underestimates the masses' potential to learn, struggle and live on the basis of communist principles, and instead hides these ideas "for later." Later never comes.

As the illegitimate Wade claims victory, the struggle may sharpen with expanded Occupy-style movements, broad protests and possible civil war. But without a clear roadmap to communist revolution, such actions will fall short of true emancipation of the Senegalese masses.

Hopefully, as our friends in Senegal learn from their experience, deepen their involvement in the growing mass movement, strengthen their relations with PLP, and learn from the masses' increasing militancy, a PLP organization will emerge. This can provide a vision of a communist future for Senegal and with it true liberation of the masses!✪

UPDATE, February 28 — Preliminary election results show Macky Sall, founder of the political party L'Alliance pour la république (APR), following closely behind Wade with 25.11% of votes against Wade's 26.46%. Sall, too, was a former prime minister in Wade's cabinet (resigning in 2008) and was long involved with the country's corrupt ruling class.

In a second round of voting, will those on the left make the same mistake they made 12 years ago when they uncritically backed Wade and enabled his victory over then-President Abdou Diouf? Will they likely, and blindly coalesce behind Sall, having the same neo-liberal agenda as Wade, simply to oust the incumbent president?

Moustapha Niasse, third in the first round of voting, supported by many organizations that attended the Youth Summit, has already declared for Sall and against Wade. He says "Stopping Wade is an imperative, it is a necessity, this is a must." Nonsense. What is a "must" is the building of revolutionary communist consciousness, an orientation towards revolution not elections, and building a PLP branch in Senegal to help chart the path towards emancipation of the working class.✪

LETTERS



We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

Communist School Inspires Many to Build PLP

On the weekend of February 24-26, more than 50 high school and college teachers and students came together for a Progressive Labor Party communist school in the New York City area. From veteran comrades to new friends of the Party, they discussed questions of communism and racism, sexism, religion, and nationalism, and what the Party's tasks should be in a period of rising fascism. The school's collectivity strengthened ties among those attending and also served as a model for the kind of communist society we are struggling to achieve.

This winter retreat has been nice. I think that I am identifying more with PLP. There are aspects of it that I yet don't know exactly how I feel. For the most part, however, I think I can consider myself a communist. I still have questions about how the law would work on those who may disagree with decisions of the collective, once we achieve communism or are in the process of achieving it. Religion is another issue that bugs me. I am spiritual and don't see spirituality (a belief that a greater energy surrounds us and also lives inside of us) as the enemy. My conclusion is that (I think) I am now a PLP member. Therefore, from today on I will see myself as a communist.

This was my first time participating in a communist school. The most inspiring part of it was everyone working together to work, clean, play, and mingle in the political and the personal. Having a communist retreat made me more confident in actually building for communism.

One thing I struggled with is realizing that building for communism isn't just about being part of class struggle. While that is important, it also means building long-term relationships with our coworkers.

For May Day, I plan to show CHALLENGE to more of my classmates and to try to have an active presence on campus.

GO!!!! COMMUNISM!!!!

Throughout the winter retreat of 2012, I can say I have learned much more about the values of the PLP, which are admirable in my opinion, despite my not being a member.

The meetings held over the weekend were all fruitful for us highlighting some of the fundamental flaws within capitalism and the current regime within the U.S. And how we can struggle against the imposition of racism and sexism and all forms of oppression through constantly engaging others and organizing to spread the word of Revolution.

There have been some good discussions in the groups, with many good points made. There were agreements and disagreements. There were two discussions that really caught my attention. One was about the question: Why is communism anti-religion? It was said that the bosses (capitalists) take advantage and use religion against us. They use it as a tool to separate the working class. And communists are anti-religion because we're pro-unity. If the situation has anything to do with separation of the working class, then we disagree 100 percent. The other question was: What can we do individually before May Day? The main answer was to tell people about communism and how it's not a bad thing. It's not what others make it out to be. And tell them what we fight for. And if they agree, we invite them to May Day. The discussions in the groups were very interesting.

I attended my first PLP communist School this weekend, and as someone who isn't very well-informed I found it to be a great way for me to get comfortable enough to ask questions and learn things. I had a difficult time understanding how communism could actually work because I feel

that a lot of people would not agree with eliminating wages. After spending time with the rest of the people, I felt comfortable enough to raise my concern. While explaining myself, I came to the realization that I actually do think that it is possible to eliminate wages. I think that it's necessary for time to be spent together to discuss and make newcomers comfortable enough to voice their opinions and ask questions.

A lot of issues were discussed over this weekend, including youth unemployment. I knew that youth unemployment was "bad" before the statistics were given, but when they were, they really put it in perspective. I learned that black youth unemployment is 50 percent in the United States. This demonstrates the blatant racism that takes place here. Unemployment is a particular interest of mine as I am currently unemployed. The only option I had when I couldn't find a job was to go back to school and try to "weather" the economic recession. Many workers are not as lucky as I am to be able to go to school. Their only option was another topic that was discussed: the economic draft into the military. Capitalism needs the unemployed. There aren't enough jobs for everyone. We need to work with all workers to form a communist society where all people will work.

In the school I was able to actually envision a communist future. In my group setting we learned about the pros and cons of communism and how we can make our movement stronger. This cadre school has made me a better debater, and most importantly a better student, one who can work collectively with others. It was an extremely positive experience, where we were able to remove ourselves from the capitalistic mindset and live communistically for a weekend. We worked together to get jobs done and struggled together in discussion groups to sharpen our line.

1. What we did for this weekend was great. But I think we should have more activities. We did nothing or almost nothing other than cooking together and cleaning, playing at night and having discussions. I think we should have more activities in a sense to make us feel connected and for enjoyment, too.

2. I disagree with this concept of "We must fight religion." This is the biggest problem that I have with PLP. Communism in itself is about equality in essence, Christ was for equality and I don't think any of those religions say that a group should take a larger piece of the pie and let others suffer over the last slice.

Religion is about belief and they don't oppress anyone who doesn't want to join them.

We should fight oppression and inequality, but not differences in belief or diversity among people.

3. I really like what PLP fights for, and I encourage them to continue in this way. I would like to support them from the bottom of my heart, but I don't feel ready yet to join it. I love what you're doing. All my blessings.

I am new to the Northeast. I am of U.S. citizenship and of Mexican descent. Within two months in the area, I have found myself in the midst of a group of people who know the right way to change this planet, improve people's lives, and evolve humanity into the next plateau of existence. A group of people that fights for unity, coexistence, collectivity, singularity and progression. A group of people that fights for communism.

Somewhere along my life, the spark of communism was lit within me. It would have been my family's role in the world, my observations of modern society, capitalism and its byproducts or maybe my relationship with the universe/infinity/god. Regardless, my ideals and thoughts on this future are the same as the Party's. I am glad my faith in the progression of sentient life has brought me to this

CAPITALISM BREEDS SEXISM RACISM & IMPERIALISM!



FIGHT FOR A COMMUNIST WORLD BUILD THE INTERNATIONAL PLP! PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

Fight for Communism with PLP on May Day, April 28.

time and place, and I am given the chance to fight for a better tomorrow, be it for us, our children or our descendants.

I only have one suggestion that might actually be impractical. Through discussion with the Party, I have reached a better understanding of its stands on specific topics under our ideal state of communism. However, in CHALLENGE, I feel that more specific statements should be made by the Party on topics such as individual rights, responsibilities and freedoms.

Thank you for showing me that the path I dream of is being worked by others like me. I look forward to our comradeship.

I continue to struggle with the idea that violence must come with the goal of communism. Also, the idea of fighting for something that I might not see in my lifetime. However, I appreciate talking with a large group of people who want to fight for a better world.

International Crisis Spurs Fight-back

continued from page 4

Mexican President Gustavo Ordaz refused to meet with the students' Strike Council but instead ordered the police and the Army to shoot to kill. Hundreds died or were wounded. October 2nd became known as "The Night of Sorrows."

The students had three political weaknesses: (1) No revolutionary communist party; (2) No link-up with workers in a general strike; and (3) no ties to working-class Army troops which might have prevented the massacre.

IMF Austerity Takes Its Toll

Now in 2011, the Arab Spring in North Africa and the Mid-East erupted — as with France 1968 — because of capitalism's insoluble contradictions. Tunisia, like many North African nations, suffered from the 2008 global capitalist crisis. The IMF austerity was taking its toll on the working class. The self-immolation of Mohammed in Sidi Bouazizi, frustrated and poverty-stricken, was the final straw. The section of the Tunisian bosses represented by President Ben Ali was overthrown. Insurgencies soon spread to Egypt, Syria, Libya and Bahrain.

This was a positive development; Arab workers were fighting back, but again, there was no communist party to lead to the overthrow of ALL bosses. One capitalist group was simply replaced by another in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. The Arab Spring is a bourgeois revolution. Anything short of communist revolution is a defeat for the international working class, unless in the course of that class struggle workers and youth are won to building a communist party that aims to overthrow capitalism.

In the U.S., the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement began in September, 2011, responding to the increasing economic inequality and mass unemployment precipitated by the capitalist crisis. Globally over 200 million workers lost their jobs because of the instability of capitalism. Wall Street was the flashpoint for the crisis, hence the name OWS, but it soon spread to hundreds of cities and towns across the U.S. and then around the world.

Rulers Trying to Co-opt OWS

While many OWS rank-and-filers have political disagreements with capitalism, the OWS leadership is reformist. Ruling-class influences (George Soros, Obama, the Democrats) are trying to co-opt the movement, to keep it within capitalist bounds, away from becoming radicalized and posing a danger to capitalism itself. The pro-capitalist leadership of unions like the SEIU pulls OWS toward reformist tactics, preventing it from openly challenging the capitalist system.

Rank-and-file Occupiers include workers — employed and unemployed — students, union activists and soldiers, black, white and Latino, women and men.

Many PL'ers trying to move the rank-and-file toward a communist class analysis, explaining why capitalist reforms cannot work, given the system's internal contradictions centered on racism, sexism and imperialism. Thousands of CHALLENGES distributed to OWS workers and students across the U.S. play a vital role in that effort.

Election Circus vs. Smash Capitalism

PLP'ers in OWS go beyond the language of the "99%," terms Democrats cynically use to steer OWS class struggle toward re-electing Obama. PLP's message is clear: Capitalism is a crisis-ridden system which only serves the interests of the billionaires. Because of its racist and sexist nature, it can never be reformed, never help billions of workers. It must be smashed with communist revolution led by the international PLP to create a communist society with the Party as its leading force. This goes beyond OWS bourgeois reforms.

The 2011-12 class struggles of OWS, the trade union fights in Wisconsin and Ohio and the Arab Spring are important because they demonstrate that workers will fight back against all odds. But workers from OWS to Cairo's Tahir Square need a winning Marxist class analysis and revolutionary strategy that only PLP can offer.

There are some historical similarities between current global class struggles and the social explosions of 1968. There are also important political lessons:

- The international working class needs a revolutionary communist party, the PLP, to win state power. The absence of such leadership in 1968 France doomed a valiant insurrection to failure. Workers can have the material conditions necessary for a revolutionary situation, but without communist leadership the capitalist bosses will live to continue their oppression.

- PLP must be prepared to lead the masses of workers to revolution. At some point a social explosion in North America — the heart of capitalist imperialism — on the scale of 1968 France could offer the opportunity to violently overthrow U.S. bosses. As Mao said, "One spark can start a prairie fire," but it requires a mass base for communist ideas.

- In order for a communist revolution to succeed, all sections of the working class must be united — workers, students, men and women, black, white, Latino and Asian.

- The PLP must win working-class members in the military away from defending the bosses, which contradicts their class interests. This did not happen in France and Mexico.

With hard work, PLP can and will win our class to be on the right side of history. We, the international working class, have a world to win! Dare to struggle! Dare to win! ☺

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RED EYE ON THE NEWS

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

Today's U.S. invasions echo past

NYT, 2/19 — What is striking about "Honor in the Dust," Greg Jones's fascinating new book about the Philippine-American War, is not how much war has changed in more than a century but how little....American troops are greeted on foreign soil as "saviors" and then quickly disposed as occupiers. The United States triumphantly declares a victorious end to the war, even as bitter fighting continues. Allegations of torture fill the newspapers, horrifying and transfixing the country....

To force information from a Filipino mayor believed to have been covertly helping insurgents, American soldiers resort to what they call the "water cure...." When his stomach is full to bursting, the soldiers begin pounding on it with their fists.... Then they turn on the spigot again. The technique was perfected during the Spanish Inquisition....

President...McKinley....argued...that "territory sometimes comes to us when we go to war in a holy cause...."

Theodore Roosevelt...nurtured a deep and unshakeable contempt for what he called the "unintelligent cowardly chatter for "peace at any price...." Roosevelt wrote..."this country needs a war...."

"Honor in the Dust" is less about freedom of the Philippines than the soul of the United States."

Asian women faint in GAP factories

GW, 2/10 — Workers in Cambodia [suffer].... low pay and long working hours, which workers said were partly responsible for a series of mass faintings involving hundreds of workers at factories supplying H&M, Gap and sports brands. Up to 300

workers were to give evidence about the fainting incidents and about living conditions resulting from low wages....

[In] at least 11 garment factories, more than 1,500 workers fainted or collapsed last year.

In August, nearly 300 workers passed out in one week at a Cambodian factory supplying H&M....More than 100 people were reported to have been taken to hospitals after the incidents....

Clothing and footwear is [sic] a vital part of Cambodia's economy, employing more than 300,000 people, mostly women. Last year the industry was responsible for 85% of the country's exports and earned \$4.5 billion.

Greeks rebel against wage cuts, layoffs

NYT, 2/13 — ATHENS — After violent protests left dozens of buildings aflame in Athens, the Greek Parliament voted early on Monday to approve a package of harsh austerity measures demanded by the country's foreign lenders....

Measures include, among others, a 22 percent cut in the benchmark minimum wage and 150,000 government layoffs by 2013 — a bitter prospect in a country ravaged by five years of recession and with unemployment at 21 percent and rising....

Angry protesters in the capital threw rocks at the police, who fired back with tear gas. After nightfall, demonstrators threw Molotov cocktails, setting fire to more than 40 buildings.

Charter schools fail but get funds

NYT, 2/21 — The charter school movement has expanded over the last 20 years largely on this promise: If exempted from some state regulations, charters could outperform traditional public schools because they have the flexibility and would be more readily tailored to the needs of students. Another selling point is that these schools are supposed to be periodically reviewed when they



renew their operating permits — and easily shut down if they fail.

It has not worked out that way. Despite a growing number of studies showing that charter schools, financed with public money and operating in 40 states, are often worse than traditional schools, the state and local organizations that issue charters and oversee the schools are too hesitant to shut them down....

When weak charters stay open, students are deprived....

Vast youth unemployment in Europe

NYT, 2/16 — Perhaps the most debilitating consequence of the euro zone's economic downturn and its debt-driven austerity crusade had been the soaring rate of youth unemployment. Spain's jobless rate for people ages 16 to 24 is approaching 50 percent. Greece's is 48 percent and Portugal's and Italy's 30 percent....

The lack of opportunity is feeding a mounting alienation and anger among young people across Europe....

Experts say that the majority of those who took to the streets in London last summer were young people who were unemployed....

Classified by statisticians as NEETS (not in education, employment or training), they number about 1.3 million, or one of every five 16-to-24-year-olds in...Britain.

The Hunger Games

Rebellion Against Injustice Inevitable



Mockingjay, the symbol of resistance.

This is the first of a three-part review of the young adult sci-fi trilogy by Suzanne Collins that made the NY Times best seller list. It is widely being used by high school reading and English teachers and has now been made into a much-anticipated motion picture.

Hunger Games, the first book and also the name of the series, begins at some indeterminate future time after natural disasters, droughts, storms, fires and finally a brutal period of wars have devastated North America. While there are futuristic, sci-fi gimmicks throughout the story, the main characters are very down-to-earth, mostly young adults, from working-class families. The society described is an openly fascist one with many parallels to the current day U.S.

Following the natural disasters, a nation "Panem" was created with a luxurious "Capitol" city of the rich rulers and their allies (somewhere in the Rocky Mountains), surrounded by thirteen districts whose workers and resources are exploited for the profit of the rulers. The districts rebelled but were defeated. District Thirteen was apparently leveled into dust and left abandoned as an example of how futile any acts of revolution would be against the Capitol rulers.

'Games' Extreme Version of Capitalist Culture

The rulers also tried to discourage workers' rebellion by creating a yearly "Hunger Games" in which each district was forced to send a boy and a girl (chosen by lot) between the ages of 12 and 18 to a televised battle to the death where only one child can survive. The Games represent an extreme version of the current capitalist culture's obsession with "reality" shows where there can be only one winner in survival, love or creative pursuits, or where the lives of working-class young people are exploited for entertainment.

The story begins in District 12 (Appalachia) and is narrated by the 16-year-old heroine, Katniss, who hunts and forages for food to help feed her mother and younger sister. A fiercely independent daughter of a worker who lost his life in a coal mining explosion (coal is what "12" supplies to the capital), Katniss is rebellious but in a very individualistic way. She sees the horror and injustice of the society around her, but is too cynical, for the most part, to unite in struggle with any others but her one friend, Gale, and her family.

When the lottery for the current year's Hunger Games is held, Katniss's younger sister "wins" the lottery, but Katniss courageously volunteers to replace her in the Games. Katniss and a boy, Peeta, who once befriended her, are whisked to the Capitol as two of the Games' 12 gladiators. Mass media manipulation then builds a frenzy of competition (and wagering by the wealthy viewers) to see who will be the one survivor.

Make Alliances to Challenge Rulers

Some contestants are bloodthirsty and vicious, mimicking the ideas and actions of the rulers, but Katniss is smart and resourceful and learns to make alliances with a few others who challenge the rulers' game ideology of everyone only for themselves. Peeta, both from social conscience and love, shows he is willing to sacrifice himself so

that Katniss can survive. Another young woman, Rue, forms an alliance with Katniss, even though as a 12-year-old with no fighting skills she has little chance of survival.

When Rue is killed, Katniss avenges her death by killing her attacker and surrounds her body in flowers as a protest against the rulers' games. When the survivors are down to six, Katniss joins forces with Peeta, and the rulers try to take advantage of their "love" alliance (although to Katniss it is a political alliance) by changing the rules and saying that this year two will be allowed to survive. When only Katniss and Peeta have survived, the rules are changed back to only one survivor allowed. Katniss and Peeta refuse to fight each other so that there will be no winner (Katniss estimates that the rulers need to parade a winner to maintain their image in the districts).

Katniss is a strong anti-sexist character. She is thoughtful (whether we agree with her conclusions or not) and willing to take action, including necessary violence, to fight for what she believes in. Katniss is an honest working-class woman whose ideas develop positively as her experiences expand. There is no passivity or pacifism in her, or really, in the story.

Early in the book, Katniss puts down thinking about history and social conditions because that "doesn't put food on the table." Later in the Games, she changes direction and tries to expose the rulers' manipulations, actions that gain her support from the workers in Rue's District and which also lead Thresh (the other representative of that District) to save her life.

There's no sugarcoating of the oppression in Panem. Starvation is used as a weapon to weaken the working class (hence the irony of the Hunger Games). Fascist violence and death are used to crush rebellions.

Using Privileges to Maintain Power

In the beginning, Katniss's friend Gale argues that allowing some workers a little more privilege than others is just a tool for the rulers to set workers against each other. He echoes how today's capitalist rulers use racism, nationalism and wage differentials to maintain their power.

The districts can be seen as oppressed by the rulers' Capitol much as the working class and resources of lesser-developed countries around the world are exploited by the U.S. and other major imperialist powers. While the local rulers installed in some districts (like 12) are on the surface less oppressive than others, the story makes clear — as do the actions of smooth-talking liberals like Obama — that this has little effect on the wars and exploitation that workers face.

Terms such as *capitalism*, *the ruling class* or *the working class* never appear, but it is not hard to show many similarities between Panem and the U.S. today. The ideas in the book are often left vague and there's no hint of a communist alternative, but this book is a lot more than a Harry Potter fantasy world.

These books, unlike much of the romantic and senselessly violent trash that our youth are given to read, support the idea that rebellion against injustice is necessary and inevitable. There are real working people and real social conditions in this story, and we in PLP need to engage students, teachers and others to bring forth the ideas of communist revolution as the only alternative that would liberate the workers of Panem.☺

'Kony 2012' Builds Mass Support for U.S. Rulers' Wars

As the United States ruling class digs in for an indefinite occupation of the Middle East, weighs its options for war against Iran, and expands its presence in East Asia, it faces a major obstacle: the lack of enthusiasm for this future of expanding war among working-class youth. The bosses' dilemma is the context for the viral spread of the "Kony 2012" video, an attack on a murderous warlord in Central Africa that collected more than 70 million hits on YouTube within days of its release.

Invisible Children, the organization that created the video, was founded by three former film students at the University of Southern California. They have gained a reputation for profiteering (they're charging \$35 for a Kony 2012 "action kit") and for on-line "slacktivism," where social change is supposedly just a mouse click away. They also promote the neocolonialist myth that U.S. do-gooders represent the best hope to cure Central Africa's ills.

Despite these evident weaknesses, the "Stop Kony" campaign has grown into a dangerous mass phenomenon. Endorsed by celebrities like George Clooney, Rihanna, and Sean "Diddy" Combs, and dovetailing with the needs of U.S. capitalism, it may have the potential to break through cyberspace and spill over into action in the real world — a phenomenon that one blogger called "crowd-sourced intervention."

An Excuse To Expand Troops in Uganda

In reality, the "Stop Kony" campaign is a carefully crafted call to mobilize young people to support U.S. imperialism in Central Africa. By building public pressure for a stepped-up fight against Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army, and in particular for the U.S. to expand its current ranks of military advisers in Uganda, the video is misleading millions of well-meaning viewers. By siding against such an easy target, the vicious and brutal Joseph Kony, Invisible Children prompts people to side with the U.S. capitalist class, its politicians and its armed forces.

But when it comes to brutality, nobody beats U.S. capitalism. This system was built on the most extensive genocide, slavery, and racism the world has ever seen. It inspired and then armed fascists from Germany to South Africa to Nicaragua, and in 1945 unleashed a nuclear holocaust on Japan. Today, U.S. capitalism rests on a global system of violence that condemns billions to grinding poverty and premature death. Workers cannot side with this murderous system.

On April 19, Invisible Children will be organizing an overnight effort to plaster public spaces across the U.S. with "Stop Kony" posters. By showing a profile of the warlord with bin Laden and Hitler in the background, the poster implies that the movement to stop Kony warrants a U.S. invasion. Youth in and around the Progressive Labor Party will work inside this campaign to expose its warmongering essence. We will lead the friends we make there to join us on April 28 for May Day, and to enlist in the only organization that can stop capitalist brutality from Uganda to Brooklyn, the revolutionary communist PLP.☺

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