

# CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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## Chicago Teachers

# BATTLE RACIST EDUCATION



**CHICAGO, September 18** — The strike of 26,000 rank-and-file teachers who broke the bosses' law in fighting to defend their students was suspended today after a vote of 800 delegates in the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), pending a membership-wide vote over the next several

weeks.

This was a strike for the students and their parents. The teachers' fight is one which opposes the school bosses racist oppression of the students. The teachers are fighting for better learning conditions for students and better working conditions

for themselves. Many were open to Progressive Labor Party's ideas and leadership. Over 2,000 CHALLENGES and tens of thousands of fliers were distributed, and several teachers' agreed to work more closely with and learn about the Progressive Labor Party.

The strike demonstrated that workers, united can defy the bosses' laws. When teachers strike they openly defy the state's plan to indoctrinate the next generation of workers in the classroom.

The teachers struck against racism. More than 80 percent of Chicago students are black and Latino and the school bosses run a system founded on racist discrimination that drives students into low-wage jobs, mass unemployment or the military, to kill our sister and brother workers in imperialist wars.

During the strike, the rank and file picketed the system's 585 schools. Daily rallies of tens of thousands of people, including parents, students, and workers from other unions, backed the strikers. Members who had formerly been inactive learned what it means to fight back against the boss. Others stepped forward into leadership roles. A strike changes people!

### Smash the Bosses' Dictatorship

This is only one battle in a long class war of workers against bosses that can be won only when the rulers' state apparatus is smashed by a communist revolution led by PLP.

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## PICKETS GREET COMMUNIST IDEAS

I continue to participate in my first strike as a worker and as a teacher. I have gone to show solidarity to other workers' struggles in the past, but now I am in the midst of my own. The first day there was a sense of the unknown felt by others at my school. People were posted in different locations around the building in five different groups. Some were well acquainted while others had only seen each other in passing.

As we spend more time on the picket line, we as a staff have grown closer. With the staff being split into two buildings, the time to bond is extremely limited, especially with the extended day. We have begun to exchange our feelings about everything on the line. Veteran teachers have shared some of their experiences from being in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) with new teachers.

The first day CHALLENGE was distributed, teachers showed interest. They liked the leaflet that ac-

companied it as well. Little by little, we have begun to have conversations about what CPS schools are like for children from working-class neighborhoods. We have spoken about how capitalism and racism affects what children bring into the classroom that impact not only their academic performance but their life altogether.

We all agreed that we needed more nurses, social workers, psychologists, and overall support to assist our students in being successful in the world that surrounds them. It was also mentioned time and time again how these school closings were aimed at the children of the working-class. This angers me in particular because I take it as the Board of Education seeing our students as disposable objects that shouldn't be taken into consideration.

This reveals how the Board is trying to separate teachers from the environment in which he/she teaches

and how it directly affects a student's performance. There is no mention of this when the talk is raised of teacher's evaluations, which are based on students' test scores.

Comrades from Chicago and New York City have come out to show support at my school. They are participating in these conversations as well as explaining that the only way to change all of this is to fight for communism.

Many of my school's staff were really open to these discussions. I thought that perhaps they would hear the word communism and dismiss everything. But it has been the opposite. People have been reading the leaflets brought by comrades and discussing how it is time for a change. It was easier to point out the false hopes the Democratic Party gives to workers when Romney showed support for what Mayor Rahm Emmanuel was doing.

I remember asking one colleague if she still was going to vote for Obama. She said yes. I asked her what was the difference between the Democrats and Republicans if Rahm Emmanuel was behaving like a Republican. She stood quiet and said, "That's a really good point..."

Ever since Romney's support for Rahm came out, the line between a Democrat and Republican has been blurred. I see this as a great opportunity to continue these conversations about what is wrong with the public school system that only a communist revolution can change.

This is only the beginning of our struggle. That is why it's critical for those in the Chicago area to make the effort to win teachers to PLP. The potential is too great for us not to act on it. This strike has set a foundation for the workers of the world to unite.

*Red Teacher*

## Amid Anti-U.S. Protests

# Bosses Debate Iran War Plan

Protests and attacks across the Muslim world are undermining the gains made by U.S. imperialism from its bloody role in the Arab Spring. U.S. rulers were behind some of those reform movements, especially in Egypt (see CHALLENGE 2/16/11 and 3/2/11). Their goal was to channel mass grievances into U.S.-style “democracies” and sustain the reign of capitalism. But the Arab Spring didn’t begin to alleviate the exploitation of the working class. It did nothing to lift the region’s poverty-level wages or to reduce its huge numbers of unemployed.

So now U.S. bosses are reaping the unintended consequences of the Arab Spring. For the region’s workers and youth, the most recent flash point is a racist film made in the U.S. that defames Islam. But the underlying cause of the ongoing unrest is the chronic poverty that is integral to the profit system — and which the working class thought its new rulers would ameliorate. These workers have

lived all their lives under horrific conditions imposed by fascist, U.S.-backed regimes responsible for numerous racist abuse and genocide from Abu Ghraib to drones. It’s only logical that the U.S. rulers, represented by their local embassies and consulates, become a leading target for the anger now erupting in more than 20 countries.

Obama’s NATO invasion killed at least 30,000 workers in Libya, along with dictator Muammar Qaddafi. It rid the land of Chinese and Russian energy companies. But on September 11, al Qaeda and Salafist fundamentalists — among the forces armed by the Pentagon against Qaddafi — killed the U.S. ambassador to Libya. They linked their action to the anti-Islam film: more unintended consequences.

But an even larger problem faces U.S. bosses in the Middle Eastern heart of their oil-based global empire: the nuclear ambitions of regional power Iran, an ally of China and Russia. Iran’s potential control of vast energy supplies is fueling a debate at the highest levels of U.S. war planning (see map on page 7).

### Team Romney: Iran War Now

The proposals under discussion by policy-makers for President Barack Obama and Republican challenger Mitt Romney boil down to: (a) bombing Iran’s nuclear plants; (b) having Israel bomb them; (c) bombing them together; (d) building over time toward a full-scale invasion and; (e) allowing Iran to become the planet’s weakest nuclear power, well behind the U.S., Britain, France, China, India and Pakistan — not to mention Israel itself, which reportedly possesses about 250 nuclear bombs.

All of these options would ravage the world’s working class. They would kill tens of thousands of workers and possibly trigger a larger — even worldwide — war. In that event, millions of working-class soldiers would be forced into mortal combat on behalf of the imperialists’ quest for oil and mineral resources.

Romney seems to like the first three options. The \$100 million showered on his campaign by pro-Israel fanatic Sheldon Adelson stands to promote Israeli rulers’ aims. Team Romney gurus include Dan Senor and Dov Zakheim, both of whom champion the air raids on Iran that are favored by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. They are neo-conservatives of the type that led George W. Bush to invade Iraq “on the cheap”: that is, by deploying existing forces in a “shock-and-awe” grab at relatively easy targets. This failed strategy, which was also pushed by Donald Rumsfeld, Bush’s Defense Secretary, backfired into a war now into its ninth year and counting.

### ‘Peaceful’ Sanctions = All-Out War

Obama, meanwhile, is backed by U.S. capitalists who see a need for long-term military mobilization against their formidable imperialist rivals. As a result, the incumbent president is weighing a more gradual run-up to an all-out land war in Iran. On September 14, in an editorial headlined “No Rush to War,” the New York Times urged Obama to ignore Netanyahu’s pressure to set a “red line” in the sand, a stage of nuclear development in Iran that would trigger a U.S. air strike.

The Times cited a report by the Iran Project, a group that includes mainstream ruling-class front men Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski, two ex-national security advisers. The report estimated that a U.S. attack “could set back Iran’s nuclear program four years at most.” The

Times’ conclusion: “The best strategy is for Israel to work with the United States and other major powers to tighten sanctions while pursuing negotiations.”

### Mass Iran Invasion vs. World War III

But the Iran Project is hardly a pacifist organization. Bankrolled by the imperialist Rockefeller Brothers Fund, an organ of finance capital, its report assessed the troop strength needed to take out Iran once and for all. In light of U.S. rulers’ need to counter the growing might of China’s bosses, it cautioned against spreading U.S. forces too thin:

*Even in order to fulfill the stated objective of ensuring that Iran never acquires a nuclear bomb, the U.S. would need to conduct a significantly expanded air and sea war over a prolonged period of time, likely several years. If the U.S. decided to seek a more ambitious objective, such as regime change in Iran or undermining Iran’s influence in the region, then an even greater commitment of force would be required to occupy all or part of the country. Given Iran’s large size and population, and the strength of Iranian nationalism, we estimate that the occupation of Iran would require a commitment of resources and personnel greater than what the U.S. has expended over the past 10 years in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars combined.*

Alternatively, some top advisors to U.S. rulers are suggesting that they sit back and let Iran make a bomb or two. Iran’s oil barons, the ruling ayatollahs, could then become sitting ducks for thousands of Pentagon warheads. The U.S. would be better able to orchestrate world opinion into backing a war against “aggressor” and in Iran organizing an anti-China alliance.

John Mearsheimer, representing the Council on Foreign Relations think tank, proposed that “a nuclear-armed Iran ... would have hardly any offensive capability at all.” At the same time, he added, the United States could “extend its nuclear umbrella” to protect Saudi Arabia, which contains the world’s largest oil reserves (PBS, 7/9/12).

Mearsheimer looks beyond today’s arms standoff to the prospect of marshaling millions for global conflict under the U.S. and allied flags:

*The United States and China are likely to engage in an intense security competition with considerable potential for war. Most of China’s neighbors — including India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Russia, and Vietnam — will join with the United States to contain China’s power (Current History, April 2006).*

### Evil, Yes! Lesser, No!

The international working class has no stake in this dogfight among the world’s imperialists. Communists in the Progressive Labor Party can give leadership to workers by exposing the bosses’ murderous schemes and advancing class war against the capitalists. Given the election circus in the U.S., much the same as in any other country, workers must avoid the trap of supporting one boss’s servant or another, Democrat or Republican. Capitalist elections are used by the ruling class to suck workers into believing the “lesser-evil” lie that Obama can represent our interests better than Romney.

A vote for either one of these bosses’ agents is a vote for continued mass unemployment, poverty, racism, and sexism, along with the slaughter of workers in imperialist wars. These are the necessary byproducts of the profit system, to which all politicians are wedded. It is up to PLP’ers and those we influence to win thousands and then millions in the international working class to the goal of destroying this hellish system and replacing it with communism. Only then will the world’s workers reap all the value that our labor — and only our labor — produces.☺

## 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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### Why Articles Are Not Signed

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

# Mexico Summer Project: Lesson in Collective Class Action



**MEXICO CITY** — Amid an intense period of economic and political transition here, 40 comrades from all over Mexico and the U.S. participated in PLP's two-week Summer Project. It was spread out over multiple regions, with work around industrial factories, community organizations and more.

In one location, 12 PL'ers and friends, more than half of whom were younger than 21, discussed the world situation and our role as communists in our day-to-day struggles. Many were struggling to understand and apply a dialectical (scientific) analysis to the recent Mexican presidential election.

Many here were well aware of the rampant electoral fraud. One worker shared how PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) and Peña Nieto — its "conservative" candidate, and eventual victor — bought votes through "gift cards" for a chain of grocery stores.

When the "liberal" candidate Lopez Obrador and his PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) found out and tried to expose it, entire grocery stores were completely bought out by the next day!

## Democracy for Imperialists

This sort of blatant cheating is typical of politicians and their ruling-class backers; this is more than just business as usual. We explained the relationship between elections and imperialism. The U.S. imperialists want to control the flow of oil to China, which has interests in Latin America's oil resources.

Elections in Mexico are important for the U.S. imperialists, not for workers. China's foot in Latin America is a threat to the U.S. The PRI has a long history of alliance with the U.S. ruling class, while the PRD might have made new alliances with the likes of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, who has connections to Chinese imperialists.

The rivalry between the PRI and the PRD is not a fight of who can best represent workers, but whether profits are made either by different international profit interests, or by national ones like the world's richest capitalist, Mexico's Carlos Slim.

Out of a desire to fight against this electoral sham, a student movement against Peña Nieto called "I am 132" — the number of students who published a video of their protest before it went viral — was born. Comparable to PLP's work within the Occupy movements in the U.S., it is a mass reform movement where people genuinely want change.

Even though these movements shed light on corrupt electoral politics, they will not achieve fundamen-

tal change until they fight to destroy capitalism. We should work with these militant youths who are willing to fight for the change they envision. That is how we build for communist revolution — by building a mass international workers' party, PLP, through class struggle.

## Growing Fascist Conditions

There is fascistic militarization here that workers face every day. Why? The imperialists are preparing for war. In an industrialized area, the community felt no one cared about them. We heard stories about their hardship in getting representation and making their community habitable. For an area that builds bricks, the workers had houses made of the cheapest materials.

Police occupy the streets with huge rifles on their backs at all times. The workers are being conditioned to live under constant fear.

Still, many were enthusiastic about communism and had important political questions. We visited a carpenter and discussed sexism; role of religion; the building of relationships to organize the community; elections and the world situation. We raised the need for PLP to organize our class and prepare for revolution. He came to a PLP study group that night.

We also had a good discussion with a union organizer whose father felt sold out by the leaders of past communist movements in Mexico. The organizer defended the PLP's analysis of past movements, directly confronting his father's pessimism, by arguing that we must learn from both the errors and the gains.

He then offered his home for the night, rather than brave the monstrous puddles that plagued the roads that the government refuses to keep up.

All in all, this week was full of inspiring work and great potential. We learned a great deal from workers. In our evaluation, we discussed how we can't think of ourselves as having all the answers, and that we can learn so much from the workers we visit.

## Oaxaca

As part of the Summer Project here, we focused on exposing the union as ruling-class collaborators and on fighting against sexist policies in the union. Through our work with teachers, we saw the importance of building within movements in order to fight for communism.

One workshop was "The History of Unions." Local and international PL'ers discussed with teachers the connections between unions and capitalism. Unions are unable to solve the problems of the working class. Union leadership represents the capitalists and their interests.

## Union Leaders Divide Workers

Teachers expressed anger and frustration over union leaders' betrayal. If one questions the union leaders, the union no longer supports them. One teacher stated, "The un-

## Anti-Racist Fight vs. Murderous NYC Cops



**BROOKLYN, September 15** — At the three-month mark of the murder of young Shantel Davis by kkkop Philip Atkins, the family and anti-racist supporters held a procession of twelve continuously-honking vehicles around Flatbush, a mainly black working-class neighborhood.

Young people stood in car sunroofs, hung out of car windows chanting, raising fists, and waving

signs against police murder and brutality.

The community raised their fists in solidarity; drivers honked and some even joined our protest. We stopped in front of the murderous 67th Precinct, blocking traffic and honking.

There is great potential in transforming these militant demonstrations and participants into fighters for a communist future.☺

ion should be supportive in regards to workers' rights, yet we're fighting against them and the government."

Teachers noted that following the 2006 teacher strike and uprisings, unions created divisions between substitute and permanent teachers. This helped to push cynicism among those who feel "they have more to lose" and pessimism among the super-exploited non-tenured teachers.

Many non-tenured teachers want the permanent teachers to join the fight, since employment and benefits are never guaranteed in the face of austerity measures and under capitalism.

## Sexist Unions Require Pregnancy Tests

The union is good — at attacking women workers! Female teachers must provide proof of their pregnancy status. If found pregnant, they will be denied employment. Unions form divisions between men and women workers.

This issue led PL'ers to hold a study group on sexism. Forty participated, including some female teachers from the convention. Questions were raised on defining sexism, its effect on workers, how capitalism breeds, and profits from, gender roles.

We all acknowledged the importance of women as leaders in the movement and the importance of working together equally in everything that we do. We will organize a campaign against the sexist preg-

nancy tests!

Like all PLP struggles, the fight-backs in Oaxaca are for the long haul. The solidarity we have as workers worldwide will allow us to destroy capitalism and build a world in the interests of workers. Hundreds of teachers in Oaxaca sent their support to striking teachers in Chicago and communities fighting police brutality in New York City.

In this Summer Project, we witnessed how capitalism doesn't work anywhere, and it demonstrated the importance of building one international party.

As one friend of PLP put it, "Since working with PLP I discovered I am not alone in the working-class struggle. This Summer Project gave me the empowerment to envision a better world. I witnessed how we as a class can work collectively. I now envision building for a communist revolution, enabling our class to destroy capitalism to build a world in the working class's interests."

We must transform working-class anger here into a fight for communism — a way of life allowing workers to receive according to need and contribute the labor necessary to produce it.

Little by little, these small gains like our Summer Projects can turn into the communist revolution that is long overdue here and worldwide.☺

# Solidarity Rallies Back Chicago Teachers



**BALTIMORE, MD, September 11** — “Stop Bill Gates and the billionaire Gestapo! Support the strike by teachers in Chicago!” This was one of the many chants that rang out as teachers and students rallied outside a public high school here.

Rally participants were constantly re-energized by the enthusiastic honking of drivers in many of the trucks and cars that passed by, showing solidarity with striking educators in Chicago.

Some participants at the rally liked it so much that they wanted to organize another one at their own school, or have one every day in the same location, or plan a similar strike-support rally outside the Bal-

timore school headquarters. Working-class solidarity became truly infectious!

PL’ers here have plans to attend these rallies and to present participants communist ideas and how educational genocide — embodied in Race-to-the-Bottom — is rooted in capitalism, a system that needs to be defeated by revolution and replaced with communism.

Then education will truly be run by and for the working class, not serve the parasitic needs of billionaires like Bill Gates who think the current nine percent of the gross national product that’s spent on education is too much.☺

**NEW YORK CITY, September 10** — “Chicago Teachers Got It Right, Strike, Strike, Strike!”

“New York City, Chicago, Wisconsin, We Will Fight and We Will Win!”

“Listen Up, CTU, New York City Stands With You!”

These chants echoed loudly when more than 400 teachers and labor supporters rallied in Union Square in support of the Chicago Teachers Union strike. Speakers

promised to build support in their schools and workplaces. Led by a banner (see picture) saying “Solidarity With Chicago Teachers Union Local 1,” we then marched to the NYC offices of Democrats for Education Reform, a group that was created and led by billionaire hedge fund managers. It has attacked Chicago teachers and their union for daring to resist their corporate reform program.☺

## CHICAGO STRIKE

*continued from front page*

The bosses are pushing their agenda to indoctrinate working-class students and blame teachers for capitalist failures. The leaders of the national unions are helping them. While the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) president Randi Weingarten reluctantly came out in support of the strike, the fact is the trade unions as a whole, including the AFT and the National Education Association are partners with the bosses in opening the door to “reforms.” This will break seniority by re-writing tenure and start the process to make teacher evaluation dependent on phony test scores.

The strike has already inspired millions of workers and youth and set an example of what kind of fight-back is possible. The experience of defying the bosses’ laws must be extended to a strike against their closing of even one school.

With the national elections just weeks away, the actions of Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel reminds us that we live under a class dictatorship and that the state apparatus (the government) serves the ruling class of billionaires, bankers and school reformers no matter which party is in the White House. The bosses and their politicians may disa-



Students in Chicago support their teachers.

gree on how to save the U.S. empire but they are united on keeping their class in power and terrorizing workers and youth into accepting a future of racist terror, poverty and war. Part of the bosses’ purpose in cutting back school budgets is to use these resources to fight their continuing imperialist oil wars.

The legal system that attacked this strike is the same court system and ruling-class government that has:

- Enacted laws in Illinois, backed by both parties and signed by a Democratic Party governor forcing teachers to have a super majority (75 percent) to call a strike but the rank and file teachers smashed that barrier with a 90 percent vote;

- Passed another law that if a teachers’ strike “presents a clear and present danger,” the Mayor and school bosses can use the courts to

force them back to work;

- Created the world’s largest prison population, over 2.4 million, 70% black and Latino;

- Deported over 400,000 immigrants last year alone, with tens of thousands more sitting in immigration jails, separated from family and friends;

- Foreclosed the homes of millions of workers and their families since the economic crash of 2008.

This ruling-class dictatorship must be smashed and replaced by a dictatorship of the workers, in which millions of workers and youth will serve the needs of the international working class.

The strike helped expose the Democratic Party and its revolving door between the White House and Chicago’s City Hall. This includes Emanuel, Obama’s former Chief-of

Staff (who was replaced by William Daley) and now head of Obama’s political fund-raising committee; Arne Duncan, national education Czar and former Chicago school boss; and Obama himself, former Illinois Senator.

Part of this bosses’ dictatorship is the use of their election circus in which both political parties are used to divert workers from looking to revolt against the ruling class that exploits us. By continuing the fight, the teachers will continue to get the support of parents, students and workers from all industries, in Chicago and beyond. PLP can expose the bosses’ class dictatorship, point workers in another direction, off the treadmill of endless reform and onto the road to revolution, a vital lesson that educators can learn on and off the picket lines!☺

# Bangladesh: Women Textile Workers Battle Bosses

There's no better reason why the working class needs an international party than the current struggle in Bangladesh where textile workers — 80 percent women — are waging a militant fight against the full force of the Bangladeshi government, local factory owners and international clothing retailers.

The workers make \$35 a month, working 12- to 16-hour days, six days a week — barely a dollar a day. European and U.S. companies like Wal-Mart, H&M, Marks & Spencer, Carrefour, Tommy Hilfiger and American Eagle have flocked to Bangladesh to take advantage of the world's lowest-paid and poorest workers.

Even Pakistani bosses, who pay workers \$50/month, are relocating their factories there. "Labor costs in Bangladesh are cheaper and the workers tend to be more efficient," said a former textile minister. Electricity costs are lower and, unlike Pakistan, fewer work-days are lost to electricity outages, increasing profits as much as 30 percent. Although China remains number one in global apparel exports (with Bangladesh now second), a recent BBC program reported Chinese manufacturers increasingly moving to Bangladesh. One Chinese textile boss declared that "her" workers, at \$500/month, were costing too much; Bangladesh would swell her profits.

## Class War

But these bosses and global brands, forever pursuing cheap labor, are discovering that workers will not take all this lying down. They are fighting back.

Bangladeshi textile workers are demanding wage increases and better, safer working conditions, sparking militant strikes and street protests. In July, a half-million Bangladeshi workers shut down all 350 factories in an industrial zone in Dhaka, the capital. The uprising, sparked by the torture and assassination of Aminul Islam, a well-known union organizer, badly hurt business owners and their international retail clients

Karl-Johan Persson, CEO of H&M, Sweden's vast clothing retailer — needing to stabilize the situation and fearful of even more violent upheavals — urged Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to increase the minimum wage. He offered to pay more for his garments, 25 percent of which come from Bangladesh.

Hasina's government,

clearly siding with the country's 5,000 garment bosses who are major political donors, has resisted raising the minimum wage and addressing labor-rights issues. The powerful president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, Shafiul Islam Mohiuddin, said it was "factory owners who were being victimized in some conspiracy," and "there was no logic for increasing the wages of the workers."

Two-thirds of Parliament members belong to the country's three biggest business associations. Thirty factory bosses hold 10% of Parliamentary seats. They're buying newspapers and TV stations whose news often emphasizes the disruptions caused by protests, not the appalling conditions for workers.

## Rulers' All-out Armed Attacks

The government has used the full power of the state against the militancy of women workers in Bangladesh to intimidate them and crack down on protests. The battle lines are clearly drawn and the government is pulling no punches.

Ranking officers from the military, the police and intelligence agencies command specially created agencies to monitor garment workers and collect intelligence on activists. The Riot Police charge into demonstrators, beating them with clubs. They fire rubber bullets, turn on powerful water cannons and use tear gas to disperse protestors.

The Rapid Action Battalion, a new paramilitary force, carries out vigilante attacks known as "crossfire" killings, and intimidates workers while patrolling factory floors. Before Aminul Islam was found tortured and murdered in April, he reported being threatened by the Rapid Action Battalion.

His assassination, which is still "under investigation," has spawned an international campaign by labor activists demanding justice in his case and a process in which workers, government and local and international textile bosses can negotiate wages and working conditions.

Even Hillary Clinton, visiting Dhaka in May — the first visit by a U.S. Secretary of State in nine years — has called for a "fair wage." The Obama administration's concern over labor rebellion underscores Bangladesh's geo-political importance as a regional ally

in southern Asia and a U.S. foreign policy "pivot" to the Asia Pacific. Clinton's visit is expected to lead to joint military exercises and exchanges involving counterterrorism and security.

U.S. companies like energy giants Chevron and ConocoPhillips, have huge investments in Bangladesh. Chevron supplies half the country's natural gas, while ConocoPhillips has recently signed agreements to explore for gas and oil reserves in the Bay of Bengal.

## 'Fair Wage' Impossible Under Capitalism

Given that U.S. and British banks and international lending agencies hold the purse strings, the Bangladeshi government, under pressure to stabilize the country, may well offer what they would call a "fair wage" to the textile workers.

What would that mean? Would these bosses be prepared to pay enough so the women — many of whom are their families' sole breadwinners — rise out of abject poverty, work 8-hour days, get holiday pay, health care and schooling for their children? Expecting bosses to give up their profits and negotiate even this kind of increase is fanciful. Presenting it as a solution, as the labor activists are doing, is misleading these workers about capitalism's true nature. Under this system, production is solely for the bosses' profit, not to benefit workers, whose exploitation is the source of those profits.

Any loss capitalists may take paying more to one set of workers will be passed on to other workers. H&M will pay its workers in Europe and the U.S. less, and raise the price of its goods — or surf the world for a cheaper labor force as the Pakistani bosses have done. Sixty thousand workers in Pakistan have lost their jobs since textile manufacturers moved to Bangladesh and neither they nor the Pakistani government plan to compensate workers for job losses.

PLP declares that for workers to be free in one place workers need to be free everywhere. And that means fighting for a communist society where production is based on the needs of the working class. Workers in Bangladesh need to turn their fight for an illusory "fair" wage into a fight for communism, joining PLP to build an international working-class party: one class, one party, one fight. ☺

# Miners Gain; Thousands Spread Strike



**MARIKANA, SOUTH AFRICA, September 19** — Strikes by thousands of miners have spread across the northern mining areas. They're reacting to the August 16 police massacre at the Lonmin platinum mine and supporting the 3,000 miners who wildcatted on August 8. The striking rock drillers have now won an increase from \$500/month to \$1385/month.

However, the walkout still includes 15,000 gold miners, six other Anglo-American platinum mines, the world's top producer, and chrome miners. There have also been protests at Eskon Holdings, producers of 90 percent of the country's energy.

On September 12, 3,000 miners marched to the original mine at Marikana. Their strike has cost the bosses a half billion dollars in lost output (Chicago Tribune, 9/17).

The sellout National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) signed an agreement with Lonmin, which was meaningless since the strikers rejected the paltry 16 percent "increase" and were holding out for their original demand: a doubling and tripling of wages to \$1,500 a month (Reuters, 9/17). The NUM is allied with the governing African National Congress (ANC) which the striking miners quit to join the militant Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union.

Cops raided a striking miners' hostel, seizing spears, machetes and other weapons and arrested 38. The cops later dispersed protesters with rubber bullets and tear gas. When the cops dragged off a pro-miner speaker expelled by the ANC, miners pelted them with stones.

The Wall Street Journal reported (9/13) that the military was put on alert because they feared soldiers who had struck in 2009 for higher wages may support the miners. The Journal also reported (9/17) that 800 miners had suffered deaths last year.

This massive miners' rebellion has exposed the fact that racist apartheid still rules South Africa, under a capitalism enforced by a tiny black elite allied with the white-owned corporations. The law the ANC government used to indict the strikers was passed under the old apartheid system. And the massacre mirrored all the brutalities of the past Nazi regime.

The miners have set a striking example for the international working class, of the need to take up arms to fight the capitalist ruling classes' state apparatus arrayed against them. What is needed is communist leadership to turn this class war into a war for communist revolution. This is what the Progressive Labor Party is fighting for around the world. ☺

# LETTERS

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

## Chicago Teachers Strike: Education on the Picket Line

Walking the picket line with striking teachers in Chicago, one learns quickly that progressive leadership from the Left, PLP, can quickly embolden teachers in need of communist led leadership.

Teachers appreciated the support from PLP members as we led teachers marching near the South Side of Chicago. Strikers led by PLP members, chanted "Asian, Latin, Black, and White, teachers of the world unite."

CHALLENGE was received openly. It was crucial to have a previous rally covered on the front page of the paper as we talked to strikers.

As the strike continues in the third largest city in the U.S., communists must sharpen the contradictions of Chicago teachers against the local governments and the union. A contract with the bosses will not eliminate the inequality, segregation, or poverty the students in Chicago and around the world face every day. A system that allows a few rulers to control the lives of millions must be abolished.

Capitalist education calls for competition, segregated schools, and individual success leading to divisions among working-class students. As the teachers continue their struggle, we must continue our struggle for communism; we must advance and sharpen the working class in how they think about the capitalist system.

*Strike Supporter*

Recently a few retired teachers from NYC went to Chicago to support the teachers' strike as well as to bring the ideas of workers' power and communism to this struggle. In the few days that we were there, we were very well received. At the picket lines we gave speeches about international solidarity, the need for unity between parents, students, teachers and education workers and fighting racism.

In the afternoon rallies downtown, people were literally grabbing our leaflets, which spoke of the link between imperialist war and the attacks on the union. People were very interested in PLP literature and many

were happy to see a new leaflet every day. CHALLENGE went like hot cakes!

It seemed clear to us that teachers had done a good job of building ties with parents and communities. Everywhere we went, there was honking or cheering for the teachers in red t-shirts. I think this is because the strike was directly addressing the injustices that students face, such as overcrowding and lack of air conditioning. Morale seemed high and many of the picket lines boasted 100% attendance from the staff. We also saw a real unity between school support staff and teachers.

Participating in this strike was very inspiring; it reminds us that the working class can rise up and will fight back. We pledged to continue strike support work in NY and to encourage our friends to keep organizing in their unions and keep raising PLP's ideas in those struggles.

*NYC Retired Teachers*

I joined the picket lines of the striking Chicago teachers at two schools, and participated in three

huge demonstrations downtown. Thousands of red-shirted teachers and supporters marched around city hall and the school board headquarters on the first two days of the strike. On day three, there were three separate large rallies that took place simultaneously. I've never seen so many workers organized to fight for better schools, demonstrating against the mayor and his chosen school board who are in the process of privatizing the schools.

The teachers' strike has received support from students and many parents. At the schools I visited, parents with their children greeted the teachers and joined the picket lines. You could tell that the parents and teachers have a lot of respect for each other. Most of the teachers readily took CHALLENGE and leaflets. They agreed that the bosses are not interested in educating young people, especially black, Latino and white working-class children, and since there are no jobs, teaching positions are expendable.

All the bosses need, in addition to a compliant working class, is an army willing to fight for their in-

vestments in all parts of the world. Teachers complained that many schools have no libraries, not enough aides, counselors, nurses and social workers. Many schools have no air conditioning, and large class sizes, unlike the private schools the mayor and Obama send their kids to.

The School Board is waiting until the end of the strike to close over 100 schools. Students will be forced into larger classes and more teachers will join the ranks of the unemployed.

The Progressive Labor Party is organizing the teachers, students and parents to fight for communist revolution. The capitalists will be giving the union a few percentage points of a raise, but will take away much more by busting the union and building non-union charter schools. The strike represents the beginning of the struggle — we have to turn it into a struggle for communist revolution. In order to have better schools, capitalism must be smashed and power must be in the hands of the working class led by communist ideas.

*Unemployed Worker*



**BRONX, NY, September 13** — Protesters rally outside courthouse against racist cop who murdered Ramarley Graham.

### Don't Get Psyched Out By Adapting to Capitalism

In early August, I attended the second Marxism and Psychology Conference at the Universidad Michoacana in Morelia, western Mexico. Five hundred people came, mostly students from Mexico, as well as scholars from 23 countries throughout North and South America, Europe, Africa and Asia. The conference was intense and inspiring. Its participants debated the role of psychology in transforming the world.

The first Conference took place in Canada in 2010, but this second one was far more explicitly political. Recent events were discussed related to the "Capitalist crises," the European debt crisis, neoliberal politics, the Occupy movement, the Arab Spring and global student movements.

This might not seem remarkable to non-psychologists, but psychol-

ogy as a discipline rarely addresses societal structures or social movements. Many of the topics could not have been discussed two years ago.

Some presenters advocated our need to expose the psychological damage caused by capitalism's inequalities, insecurities and competition. Others argued that psychology needs to move beyond helping individuals "adapt" to a damaging and unjust society and rather help build movements to change it.

The conference location helped move it to the left politically. Morelia has highly visible evidence of both colonialism and the huge gap between rich and poor; the region is embroiled in struggle. There were students from the Mexican political movement "yo soy 132," which opposes the money corruption of elections, often called the "Mexican Spring."

Representatives were also pre-

sent from Cherán, a nearby town where indigenous people have struggled successfully against corrupt government officials and the logging companies illegally devastating the communal forests. Students at the conference took notes and often asked questions that cut through the academic jargon to get to the heart of the matter.

The problem of language — in two senses — challenged the conference organizers. First, almost every talk was translated between English and Spanish in order to allow the diverse group to communicate. While important, the translations — done mostly by students without translation training — took time and limited the amount of discussion.

A second "language" problem was the specialized academic jargon that keeps professors from different disciplines and sub-disciplines from fully understanding each other. These

different "languages" serve the capitalists in making it difficult for us to build unified collective movements.

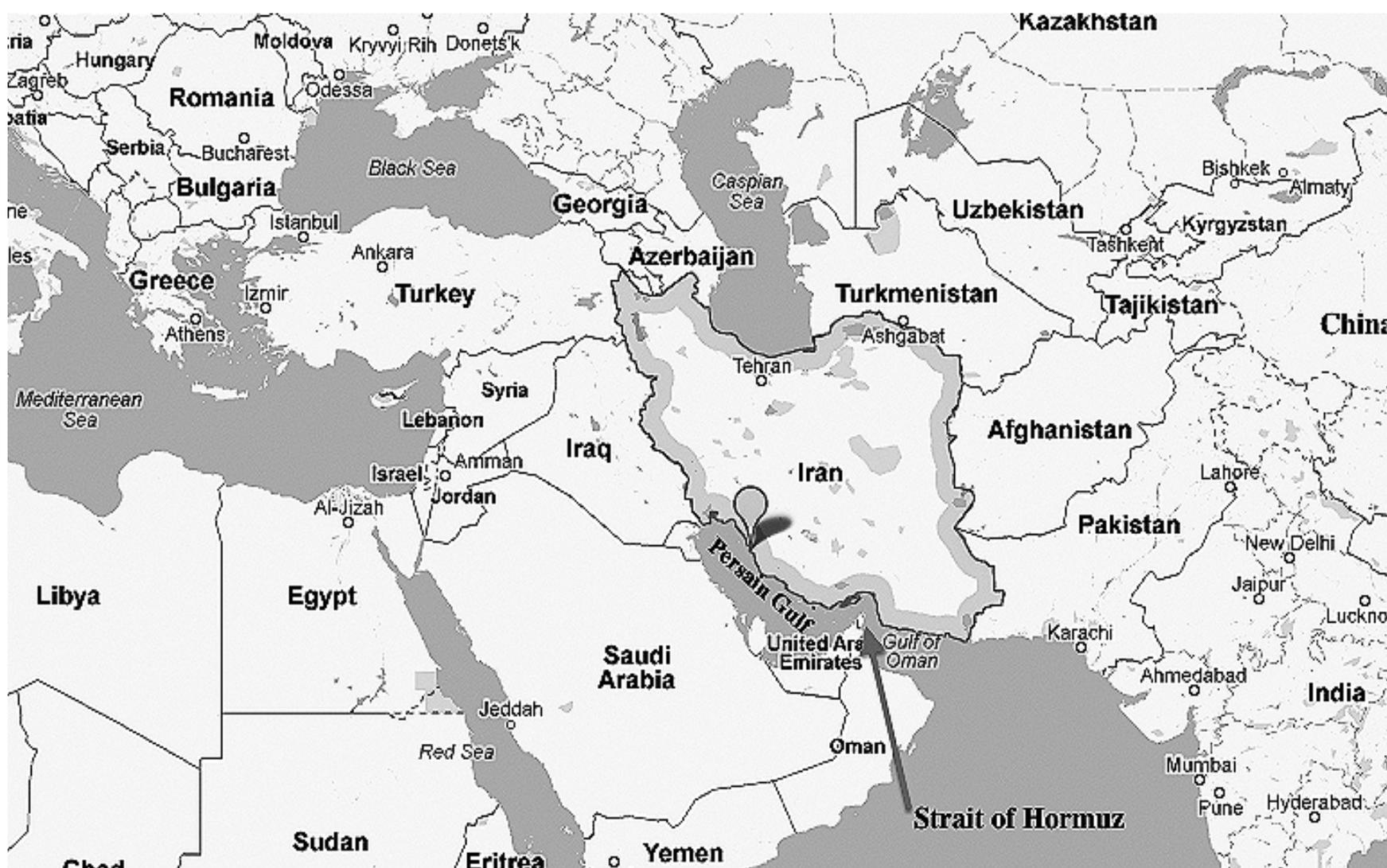
The most important outcome of the conference was the recognition that we must work from every direction to bring about communism. There's a need for new ways to help transform the world; yet it's only in transforming the world that these new ways can fully emerge.

Scholars of psychology and Marxism can begin some important conversations and offer important insights, but the very nature of our work often confines us to the "ivory tower."

Instead of concentrating on individualistic adaption to a capitalist world, we need to break out of the walls of academia and join with workers in struggle.

*A Marxist Psychologist*

# Iran's Strategic Geographic Position



Iran straddles virtually all of the Greater Middle East's oil and natural gas, shipping lanes and pipelines radiating from the

Persian Gulf and the Caspian region to the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, China and the Indian Ocean. The Persian Gulf pos-

sesses, by some accounts, 55 percent of the world's crude oil reserves.

See editorial on page 2.

## 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

### U.S. retailers love Asia low wages

**NYT, 8/24** — Dozens of people were bloodied and hospitalized. The officers were cracking down on protests at two garment factories...in western Bangladesh....They were...protecting two ingredients of a manufacturing formula that has quietly made Bangladesh a leading apparel exporter to the United States and Europe: cheap labor and foreign investment....

...Workers earning as little as \$50 a month... were furious over a cut in wages....

"If any foreigner got injured or killed, it would damage the country's image around the globe," said a police supervisor...who participated in the crackdown. "We all know the importance of these factories and this industry for Bangladesh."

.... Factories churn out clothing for brands like Tommy Hilfiger, Gap, Calvin Klein and...retailers like Target and Walmart....

But with "Made in Bangladesh" labels now commonplace in American stores, Bangladesh's manufacturing formula depends on its having the lowest labor costs in the world....

### Hospital profits are really robbery

**NYT, 8/25** — To the Editor:

"A Giant Hospital Chain is Blazing a Profit Trail" (front page, Aug. 15), describing the business practices of HCA, focuses on one for-profit health care company but does not mention the larger problem all such companies present: they are designed to move money, that should be used to provide health care to sick people, into the pockets of wealthy institutions and individuals.

The billions of dollars in profits that such companies earn is money not spent on health care but that is actually removed from the health care system. No one should be pleased that any of the taxes [one] pays to finance Medicare and Medicaid or the huge premiums... for health insurance is spent on the mansions and yachts of investors....

The winners: the chief executives and investors. The losers: the rest of us.

### New jobs: around \$10 per hour

**NYT, 8/31** — While a majority of jobs lost during the downturn were in the middle range of wages, a majority of those added during the recovery have been low-paying, according to a new report from the National Employment Law Project.

The disappearance of mid-wage, mid-skill jobs is part of a longer-term trend that some refer to as a hollowing out of the workforce....

The overarching message here is we don't have a jobs deficit, we have a good jobs deficit....

The occupation with the fastest growth were retail sales (at a median wage of \$10.97 an hour) and food preparation workers (\$9.04 an hour)....

### Older workers being wiped out

**NYT, 8/25** —To the Editor:

On way or another, the older long-term unemployed become invisible. They stop looking for work and disappear from unemployment statistics....They eat poorly and irregularly, they can't afford health care....

A generation is disappearing, along with a decent...standard of living....



### Workers or super-robots?

**NYT, 8/19** — At the Philips Electronics factory on the coast of China, hundreds of workers use their hands and specialized tools to assemble electric shavers. That is the old way.

At a sister factory here in the Dutch countryside [Drachten, the Netherlands], 128 robot arms do the same work....And they do it without a coffee break — three shifts a day, 365 days a year....

This is the future. A new wave of robots, far more adept than those now commonly used by automakers and other heavy manufacturers, are now replacing workers around the world...."With these machines, we can make any consumer device in the world...."

Foxconn has not disclosed how many workers will be displaced or when. But its chairman, Terry Gou, has publicly endorsed a growing use of robots. Speaking of his more than one million employees worldwide, he said in January, according to the official Xinhua news agency, "As human beings are also animals, to manage one million animals gives me a headache."

MORE ITEMS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PLP.ORG

# Bosses Racist Theory Attacks Youth

Once again, a study claims to have discovered a genetic basis for a complex social outcome — in this case, why students succeed or fail in school. Published in the July issue of *Developmental Psychology*, the journal of the American Psychological Association, this “gene discovery” by lead author Kevin Beaver, a criminology professor at Florida State University, follows a long and racist tradition of attributing genetic causes to alcoholism, intelligence, unemployment, criminality, and even the fear of snakes.

Throughout the history of class society, the ruling class has used religion or pseudo-science to cast exploitation, oppression and injustice as inevitable. The field of genetics, in particular, has been repeatedly hijacked by slave-owners, captains of industry, and Germany’s Third Reich. It’s not surprising that this despicable ideology has emerged once again, this time by capitalists who promote education reform.

True social scientists know that both human behavior and social organization are driven by infinitely complex factors. Beaver, however, claims to have discovered genes (the molecular units of DNA) related to “impulsivity” and “violent tendencies” and thereby “influence” whether an individual will graduate from high school and go on to college.

To create the illusion of legitimacy for their findings, the study gives the genes technical-sounding names: DAT1, DRD2, and DRD4. (By avoiding the more obviously outrageous claim that genes “determine” an outcome, researchers leave themselves an escape route if and when future critics show there is no correlation between such genes and the designated outcomes.)

### Racism: Bosses’ Tool

The bosses’ use of prestigious journals and big-name academics to legitimize Nazi ideology is nothing new. In 1969, Berkeley Professor Arthur Jensen was invited to submit an article to the *Harvard Educational Review* to prove that black children fail in schools because of their genes. In the early 1970s, William Shockley, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist, claimed that the color of people’s skin could tell you how smart they were.

In 1994, Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray followed suit with *The Bell Curve*, a best-selling package of racist propaganda, distortions, and lies. Wherever these racist pseudo-scientists showed up to speak, the Progressive Labor Party led thousands of students and faculty to shout them down and prevent them from spreading their poison.

Although racists tend to hide after being attacked in mass struggles, their falsehoods remain alive today. Chief among them is the concept that genes define individual abilities and tendencies. This bogus claim hides the real cause of inequality under capitalism: racist and sexist discrimination. If peo-

## The Rulers’ Bind

The capitalist ruling class has a contradiction on its hands. On the one hand, it needs to slash spending on schools and other services even more to free up funds for its widening imperialist wars. On the other, the schools are so bad that the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) is complaining that high school graduates are ill-equipped to serve as the bosses’ cannon fodder. In a March 2012 report for the CFR by Joel Klein (former head of New York City’s public schools) and Condoleezza Rice (former Secretary of State under George W. Bush), they warn that the horror that passes for schooling in the U.S. is robbing the ruling class of its needed military might. They don’t care that millions of our children suffer from miseducation. Their sole concern is that the U.S. imperialists’ control of critical resources is in jeopardy.

ple’s genes stop them from becoming aeronautical engineers or pediatricians, rotten public schools get a free pass. Using genes to blame the victims is a doubly racist assault on black and Latino children, since it justifies spending less on segregated schools while painting the children as innately unintelligent.

The fundamental illusion may be that genes determine any traits at all. *What Genes Can’t Do* (2003), by the cell biologist turned philosophy professor, Lenny Moss, shows that the concept of a “gene” is used to mean different things, and that there is no one-to-one correspondence between genes and traits. Indeed, geneticists like Richard Lewontin (*The Triple Helix*, 2000) have demonstrated that even the concept of a “trait” is ambiguous.

Thus “genes” for “traits” is a double house of cards, though most biologists cling to these illusory fictions. Their field rewards them for doing so. Top academic publications favor conclusions that hide the fact that the profit system decides who is allowed to succeed or fail.

### Bosses Attack Students and Teachers

The implications of this academic



Chicago Teacher Strike. See pages 1,4,6.

bias are lethal. Like ancient rulers who used the Bible to trap slaves into accepting their subjugation as part of a larger plan, today’s capitalists use pseudo-science to veil the racist neglect that pervades education. Failed students are portrayed as hopelessly handicapped and beyond help. It is a small step from there to consign such “flawed” segments of the population to joblessness, poverty, and ultimately elimination.

Teachers, often with leadership by members of PLP, have joined with parents and their students in fighting against further cutbacks in school funding and for smaller class sizes. They are also confronting ruling-class schemes to blame teachers for the failures of the bosses’ schools.

These fights must be sharpened to defend black and Latino students

from the hopeless feeling that they are doomed to unemployment and prison. While any victories in reform struggles are limited and temporary under capitalism, an unrelenting fight against racism and sexism will help create the working-class unity we need to build toward communist revolution.

Only when the world’s workers — under the leadership of the communist PLP — seize power from the capitalists through revolution, will we rid ourselves of false science, miseducation, racism, sexism, and imperialist war. We need to become millions and millions. Join us.✊

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