

CHALLENGE



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Parents, Students Unite With Workers Bus Strikers on the March!



NEW YORK CITY, February 10 — Today, thousands of angry striking workers, members of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), took over the Brooklyn Bridge, insisting that the city and billionaire Mayor Bloomberg listen to their demands. The large and spirited march showed what CHALLENGE has been reporting from the beginning, that the school bus drivers and matrons are fiercely determined to make their stand in what they see as a life-and-death struggle for survival and dignity.

They have been facing freezing weather, constant attacks from the media and the latest indignation, threatened denial of food stamps to those who need them. Yet despite all this, and the remnants of the recent blizzard, thousands marched today.

The mis-leadership in this strike is becoming increasingly apparent. Union officials provided no sound system to speak of, although groups of workers did their best to fire up the crowd and lead chants. The spirit was amazing as everyone helped each other navigate the ice and slush from Brooklyn.

When workers finally reached the Manhattan side, they had to endure speeches by politicians, preachers and union hacks. Even worse, one key speaker proclaimed, "We think Mayor Bloomberg has a heart." Well, we think not, and nor do the strikers. Not with schools and hospitals closing and billionaire Bloomberg trying to bust the union in order to drive down wages even more. One of the picketline chants is "What's disgusting? Union busting? Who's disgusting? Bloomberg's disgusting!" At the picket lines, one will see rank-and-file leadership, but rarely one of the local misleaders.

Why is this happening now?

Throughout the U.S., workers are facing sharp attacks on their living standards. As CHALLENGE has often said, this is due to U.S. capitalists; (1) seeking to maintain their profits in a world of increasing international capitalist competition; (2) needing to prepare a war chest; and (3) constantly driving for maximum profits.

For school bus workers this explains why Bloomberg and the bus owners want to scrap the EPP contract provision that protects job security and pay scales for drivers and matrons (attendants). Both groups of workers have an eight-year wage progression from starting to top pay — \$14/hr. to \$29/hr. for drivers and \$9/hr. to \$15/hr for matrons.

Loss of EPP would mean that a company bidding for bus routes could hire new workers at starting pay to replace senior workers. This would drive down wages,

end the long-term employment of school bus workers and end any long-standing relationship between them and the families who count on them to safely transport their children, many of whom are handicapped and have strong ties with these workers.

Solidarity with Parents and Students

One striker explained how he notifies parents along his route if he was delayed. He said he doesn't want them to have to wait in bad weather until the bus arrived. We suggested that he also call parents to explain the reasons for the strike and ask for their support. Strikers reaching out to the parents, not only picketing the bus depots, can help build solidarity and win the strike.

Scabs? 'We really do need to break some heads...'

Today, I joined with well over 10,000 workers and youth in a march across the Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall in support of 9,000 striking school bus drivers and matrons. The international, multiracial march of women and men was a sight for sore eyes. The workers and their supporters were militant and chanting, laughing and festive all at the same time.

As we began to circle City Hall, a guy in my union and I were marching with a few strikers. We passed a group of about 15-20 cops blocking a rear staircase into City Hall. Each cop had at least 20 plastic handcuffs. We talked about them. As we approached I yelled out, "OK, we rush them on '31'" Everyone laughed but the cops.

Then one of the strikers said, "We need to go back to the old days. Break some heads! You can't negotiate with these people. They live in their mansions." We talked about class war and mass violence. He said in his 18 years on the job he's barely ever called in sick, his back and body aches, "and this is the thanks I get." He said, "If they try to run these lines with scabs and strikebreakers, we really do need to break some heads."

I gave him my contact info and told him, "If push comes to shove, call me. And I won't come alone." I sure hope he calls.

ATU Marcher

Haiti Student Solidarity With Bus Drivers

The following letter was read to strikers on the picket line. They appreciated the words, especially the lines about "making the bosses tremble" workers seizing power." The strikers said these students represent the future of our class and thanked them for the encouragement.

Dear bus workers in struggle,

We are with you!

This sentence makes the bosses tremble when the struggle gets hot. We should have written this to you three weeks ago.

We know how the bosses treat you with disdain and contempt. We also believe in our power to finish with the dictatorship of these bosses in the not too distant future. It's enough to organize ourselves under one flag, the red flag of an international workers' party. We workers must seize power.

You're doing something the bosses can't do. They're selfish individualists. You are collectively resisting their cold harsh treatment to defend the interests of millions of workers throughout the world.

Here in Haiti we have many problems. Not more or less than you, the same as you; those caused by the system of the greedy, inhuman bosses — capitalism. In different degrees, maybe, but we all suffer from the exploitation of the capitalists. We support you in your struggle in the hope that we will put an end one day to the bosses' power.

School and college students, workers, blacks, whites, women and men from everywhere must unite to fight together under the red flag to finish with this class system. Against inequalities — racism, sexism, etc. Keep it up: we are with you!

*Friends from the State University of Haiti:
for victory!*

The support of high school students has also been important. PLers have been bringing various student organizations to the picket line every week, which has been invaluable. Students are learning more about the class struggle. Some workers told us they feel much more hopeful when they see the next generation coming out to the lines instead of playing video games or hanging out. We're getting a taste of building unity between parents, teachers, students and the strikers.

Union Leaders Selling Out the Rank and File

From the beginning, strikers have welcomed us to their picket lines. They understand that support from other unions, students, parents and community groups is important to their struggle. They even added a chant, "Thank you...for your support," which also goes out to the many passing trucks, cars and NYC transit busses which "honk" their solidarity.

The ATU leadership has done little to marshal this kind of support. On Groundhog Day at the Staten Island Zoo, they called for a rally but had no plan to leaflet the many parents who came that day. Highly-paid union functionaries don't want to challenge the capitalist system that allows them to live more like bosses than

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Rulers Debate Obama's Killer Drones

But They All Make War on Workers

President Barack Obama is facing a liberal backlash over his hardline national security policy, which critics say is more extreme and conservative than that pursued by George W. Bush (London Observer, 2/9/13).

Obama was supposed to be the people's savior but now is outdoing Bush. Why? Because the profit-driven U.S. ruling class needs to maintain its dominance over the world's resources, especially oil and gas. Wider war is essential to their goal, "by any means necessary." Enter drones and assassinations.

Obama is stirring public opposition by openly claiming the right to assassinate some White House enemies and to imprison others indefinitely, anywhere in the world, based on secret information. Many were alarmed by the recently leaked InJustice Department memo that approved drone strikes on U.S. citizens linked to al Qaeda. Equally frightening was Obama's choice of John Brennan to head the CIA. As homeland



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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security advisor, Brennan has handed his boss a weekly drone "kill list." There is also a growing movement against Obama's 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which allows indefinite detention of suspects.

But the liberal backlash led by Democratic politicians, imperialist think tanks and media millionaires won't help our class or end Obama's reign of terror. In reality, the uproar is aimed at improving the effectiveness of the murderous U.S. war machine. It also seeks to steer mass opinion down the dead end of following the bosses' laws, as judged by the bosses' courts.

Legitimizing Mass Murder

The liberals' "solution" is for Congress to "create a special court to handle this sort of sensitive discussion" [on drones] (New York Times editorial, 2/6/13). To legitimize assassinations, the liberal Times demands a kangaroo court similar to the one that rubberstamps government wiretaps. That tribunal has yet to deny a single request by the FBI, the Pentagon or the CIA.

Obama's critics include the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), a foreign policy think tank bankrolled by the likes of Exxon Mobil, JP Morgan Chase and the Rockefellers. Drones, as currently deployed, could actually harm this faction's effort to stabilize a tottering global empire based on control of oil. Last month the CFR published a report, "Reforming U.S. Drone Strike Policies." It warned:

Drone strikes may be indirectly increasing the number of militants. [K]illing suspected militants or civilians leads to the marked radicalization of local populations....In Yemen, for example, in 2010 the Obama administration described al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) as encompassing 'several hundred al-Qaeda members'.... By 2012, AQAP had 'a few thousand members.'

The CFR couldn't care less about the 1,128 civilians incinerated so far by U.S. drones (Bureau of Investigative Journalism, London). But bad press may curtail the use of a "central component of U.S. counterterrorism operations for at least another decade." As the organization noted:

U.S. drone strikes are also widely opposed by the citizens of important allies, emerging powers, and the local populations in states where strikes occur. States polled reveal overwhelming opposition to U.S. drone strikes: Greece (90 percent), Egypt (89 percent), Turkey (81 percent), Spain (76 percent), Brazil (76 percent), Japan (75 percent), and Pakistan (83 percent).

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.

Drones' Rain of Terror

In addition to the outright murder of civilians, the drones rain down terror with their 24-hour-a-day reconnaissance flights. Inhabitants who see and hear these killers overhead live in constant dread of the next wave of "collateral" deaths. Adults fear to leave their houses. Children are scared to go to school. Families are too frightened to attend weddings or funerals.

....the United States cannot conduct drone strikes in the most critical corners of the world by itself. Drone strikes require the tacit or overt support of host states or neighbors (CFR).

Needing allies for the bigger wars to come, Rockefeller, Exxon Mobil & Co. urge Obama to shoot straighter and embrace "humanitarian" transparency for the inevitable "collateral damage."

The president of the United States should limit targeted killings to the leadership of al-Qaeda and affiliated forces and...provide information to the public, Congress, and UN special rapporteurs...on what procedures exist to prevent harm to civilians (CFR).

By the time the Justice Department's "okay-to-assassinate-citizens" memo broke, Democratic politicians had already digested the CFR's prescriptions. "It has to be in the agenda of this Congress to reconsider the scope of action of drones and use of deadly force by the United States around the world," said Delaware senator Chris Coons (Associated Press, 2/6/13).

To mislead well-meaning people opposed to Obama's throw-away-the-key detention policy, the imperialists' liberal front people propose futile lawsuits. On February 6, filmmaker Michael Moore, Daniel Ellsberg of Pentagon Papers fame and former NYT foreign correspondent Chris Hedges held a well-publicized forum in New York. It focused on building support for Hedges' lawsuit against Obama's NDAA 2012.

The Government Accountability Project (GAP) was a main organizer of the gathering. GAP cashes checks from both the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the next-generation Rockefeller Family Fund. The latter's website says it supports GAP "because their mission fits perfectly with our understanding of the connections between transparency, accountability, and a well-functioning democracy." This family and its allies reap trillions from U.S. Middle East oil wars, which have murdered millions. They hope to channel mass anger at the slaughter into a lawsuit.

Liberal Rulers Still Main Danger

Despite the backlash against Obama from the liberal ruling class who back him, these forces remain more dangerous than the more openly fascist conservatives or neo-con rulers. Liberal bosses hide behind a "democratic" mask and use it to develop a more populist appeal. They don't oppose drones; they want to govern their use to make them more palatable to the working class. Meanwhile, they're re-tooling their war machine to confront their imperialist rivals in China and Russia. Capitalist-run courts to supervise assassinations won't slow U.S. war-making any more than lawsuits against rulers in the legal system they control.

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Class War Needed vs. Racist Bosses' Hospital Closings

BROOKLYN, NY, February 8 — "Healthcare, Not Profit Care!" rang out in downtown Brooklyn as around 100 nurses and other hospital workers picketed demanding that Long Island College Hospital (LICH) and Interfaith Hospitals remain open. The day before, hundreds of nurses, patients, doctors and community people had angrily confronted the State University of New York (SUNY) Board of Trustees to fight the closing of LICH. At the end of the demonstration word came down that the Trustees had just voted to close LICH. Hearing this, picketers chanted even louder.

Those who read CHALLENGE regularly may know that about a year and a half ago, SUNY Downstate, a state hospital in Brooklyn, took over the failing LICH, setting up a private corporation called Stafco to employ workers there so they could not get state benefits. Six months later, sometime-hedge fund mogul, Stephen Berger, heading up New York Governor Cuomo's Medicaid Redesign Team, suggested that Downstate campus close and be consolidated into LICH. Workers have been fighting since then to save Downstate, which sees 400,000 patients a year, including 40,000 Emergency Room (ER) visits.

In the last month, Downstate president John Williams, backed by Berger and State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, suddenly announced plans to close LICH instead, whose ER sees 50,000 patients per year. Most of its inpatients are black and Latino with hardly any medical insurance. Overall, the closure could start by closing the ER within days.

Some workers at Downstate mistakenly think the

closing of LICH is a victory in our fight to keep Downstate open. Some workers at LICH mistakenly argue that Downstate should be the one to close. A large Manhattan health enterprise called Continuum bled LICH dry for 15 years and then was ready to close it. They should be fighting together — against the bosses — for more and better healthcare and jobs, not less and worse.

But since Downstate seemed to be doing alright until it took over LICH and its debts, it appears that shedding LICH is the solution. This is so especially since Continuum continues to profit by keeping a stranglehold on LICH's billing and laboratories.

Increasingly hospitals are being squeezed by changes in reimbursement and loss of government support for care of workers without health insurance or the means to pay. These cuts stem directly from the massive investment the U. S. bosses make in war in the Middle East. The Affordable Care Act may make things even worse. That is why Mount Sinai has opened an outpatient facility in affluent Brooklyn Heights (near LICH) siphoning off patients (stealing market share). Inner-city hospitals in particular, because they rely on Medicaid and Medicare payments are faring the worst. The bosses have basically decided to let these hospitals sink or swim. When they sink because of racism, black and Latino workers who already have the worst health will suffer disproportionately.

We hospital workers and patients should not accept the Berger/Williams/Cuomo capitalist "reality." All of us should unite to fight the closing of LICH, Interfaith,



Downstate and any other safety-net hospital. The Cuomo plan for Brooklyn will mean that people having asthma attacks, heart attacks and strokes in Red Hook and other LICH-served areas will have to be taken much further for emergency care — life or death!

Cuomo/Berger/Williams are declaring war on the health of the Brooklyn working class. We should be on a war footing in our struggle against them. Business-as-usual that our union leaders offer is not enough. We are fighting to have strikes, sit-downs, occupations, led by workers and patients as part of our fight-back plan. The struggles continues.✱

Strikers' Job Insecurity Built into Profits



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the workers they are supposed to represent. In fact, New York's Central Labor Council called for a "cooling off" period which would have ended the strike without resolving the job security/pay scale issues.

Racism: Bosses' Tool to Divide and Conquer

A large percentage of the drivers and matrons are black and Latino. Many are immigrants from the English- and Creole-speaking Caribbean as well as from Europe. We see real multiracial unity on the picket lines. Many strikers act like a family, taking care and helping each other through the bad weather and the long hours of picket duty.

It's important to point out the racist nature of the bosses' union-busting attack. The unity of this multiracial group of strikers is setting an example to all workers citywide. They are very clear about the fact

that eventually all the workers in the city will be facing a similar attack. The city bosses don't want other unions and workers to come out to see this example of militancy and show their support.

What Is Winning?

Other workers throughout the city have been truly inspired by this relatively small group of workers who have drawn the line in the sand and have refused to back down. But as long as the bosses who own the corporations and run the government, courts, and cops and have the union misleaders in their back pockets, they have the power to take away any gains that we workers may win. However, by taking a stand and fighting back in sharp class struggle, and building unity of the entire working class, with communist ideas this strike can become a "school for communism." It can provide a glimpse into what a world run by and for the workers would be like!✱

Workers, Students Unite vs. Racist Columbia U.

NEW YORK CITY, February 9 — Today, despite freezing temperatures and snow, at least 75 Columbia University (CU) students rallied in defense of underpaid Faculty House workers. They were joined by about 25 workers, members of other unions and seven members of St. Mary's Church in Harlem. It was a loud and militant procession, a unity which has not been seen in decades.

The Student-Worker Solidarity (SWS) group was formed last fall, composed largely of freshmen, many of whom had had ties with Occupy Wall St. Their first action supported Barnard's (CU women's school) clerical workers who were threatening to strike over pay and benefit cuts. Students leafleted several alumni events and demonstrated on campus, becoming an important factor enabling Barnard workers to win.

For the last two months, they've been supporting the Columbia workers at Faculty House, who haven't had a raise in three contracts. The workers are also laid off in summer and other breaks during which they receive \$65/wk. CU adds a 22 percent gratuity to every diner's bill but gives the workers not one penny of it. Now CU wants to cut their health benefits and offer nothing in return. The wages are so low that many work 60-80 hours a week to meet expenses.

Students attempting to attend negotiations have been thrown out, but have demonstrated outside. They're petitioning, approaching faculty, organizing teach-ins and leafleting. Every week their meetings grow.

Columbia is an elite ruling-class institution, run by a Board made up almost entirely of bankers and aims to train the next generation of rulers. The student body is predominantly white and well-to-do, and divorced from the neighboring poor and largely black working-class Harlem community. In the '60s, amid the tumultuous student movement sparked by opposition to the U.S. invasion of

Vietnam, thousands of CU students demonstrated and occupied buildings to protest the campus of an exclusive CU gym in Harlem. They won.

Now, however, Columbia is taking over 17 acres of Harlem, causing the loss of low-income housing, small neighborhood businesses and jobs. Although there has been a community opposition movement for years, only a small number of students have been involved. Last year about 15 did participate in a 5-day occupation of 125th Street in Harlem, but nearly all of them have graduated.

This new vigorous student group is on the right track, building fight-back, united with campus workers. For the last few meetings, community residents from St. Mary's Church have also joined them, an important step forward. This may enable an expansion and continuation of the fight to force Columbia to hire more local residents.

CU promised 7,000 new community jobs as part of its expansion agreement, but so far has hired no one. Columbia's racism is apparent in the way they treat their largely black, Latino and immigrant workers and their Harlem neighbors.

Students are horrified by the unfairness and inequality they see at a university that pretends to be a bastion of progressive values. But, in fact, Columbia espouses capitalist values. It pretends that equality and fairness are possible under capitalism. This system depends on competition for the highest profits and on racism to divide and weaken workers.

As U.S. rulers compete with their imperialist rivals for the world's resources, capitalism cannot maintain a pretty mask. Thus, students must recognize that they, too, are future workers and that unity with lower-paid workers is imperative to building a movement strong enough to overthrow capitalism, creating a whole new society, a communist society, based on equality and distribution of goods and services according to need.✱

Battle Privatizing SF City College

Bosses Seek Profits from Education Industry

SAN FRANCISCO, February 6 — Four hundred students, teachers, school workers and community members streamed into today's meeting at San Francisco City College (CCSF) to protest the cuts and reorganization plans ordered by the State government-imposed Special Trustee. She already forced an additional 8.8 percent teacher wage-cut after teachers unfortunately agreed to a 2.5 percent wage-cut last year. This trustee also ordered the layoffs of 49 classified workers, 25 part-time instructors and 18 part-time counselors.

CCSF serves 85,000 mainly working-class, Latino, Asian, black, and immigrant students. The government accreditation commission (ACCJC) is threatening to close our college in the future, which has scared some into accepting cutbacks. The commission claims to be "independent" and composed of educators and others representing the "public interest." In reality, it is part of what communists call "the state apparatus." The "public interest" is actually the needs of the capitalist ruling class to stifle, stratify, and divide the working class. At the same time, the education "state apparatus" promotes a mass blame-the-victim mentality, as more younger people can't find a stable job (See "Why It is Hard to make it in America," Foreign Affairs, Nov/Dec 2012).

PLers distributed CHALLENGE as friends and people entered the room. We fight against the destruction of public education while at the same time present a communist alternative of what education should be: an apparatus to develop everyone to their fullest potential to participate in, and have the power to make real decisions, in a society based on the concept, "from each according to commitment and ability to each according to need." The mass movement here is moving beyond just voting for change.

According to ACCJC: What are CCSF's Crimes?

Is it education? Is it related to funding? No, not according to ACCJC. The "crime" seems to be too much

money spent directly on students and educational workers, including benefits and pay for part-time instructors. Instead, the Special Trustee will put the money in the reserve fund and in retiree benefits: areas from which capitalist "investors" can make money. We must fight against the following attacks, which are racist and anti-working class in nature.

The "crime" seems to be:

- Not enough "professional" administrators who side with the cutbacks.
- Too much democracy: Department Chair people are elected by their peers and have an important role in managing the School.
- Too many campuses around the City, which give easier access to SF's population.
- Too many free classes where many people learn English and prepare for Citizenship tests.

Whose interest do the ACCJC and the Special Trustees Serve?

These changes are part of the campaign of the Lumina Foundation and American Legislative Exchange Council, which represent the needs of billionaires (like Bill Gates and the Koch brothers), to privatize education. The Gates Foundation and Lumina gave \$3 million to oversee our college. Big capitalists and corporations are sitting on \$2 trillion in cash with no profitable place to invest it. Now, they have discovered the \$650-billion education industry. Corporations need to control the ideological content of education to create a submissive workforce. They invest in and promote:

- Loan indebtedness for college-age students (banks and even the federal Department of Education make profits);
- Charter schools (some for profit, others to destroy existing public schools); "private" tutoring for younger students (for profit);
- Testing at all levels (a for-profit \$1.3 billion industry)
- Privatized colleges and online classes.

*Under Capitalism,
all education —
public, private,
for-profit, or
otherwise —
serves the needs of
the ruling class.*

Communism Serves the Working Class

Under capitalism, all education — public, private, for-profit, or otherwise — serves the needs of the ruling class. The communist world PLP is fighting for means that all education is free. In fact, there would be no money, no wages or production for profit. Education would be everywhere and international: schools, work sites, neighborhood collectives, and childcare centers. Those who do "the work" would do the planning and implementation because communism eliminates divisions between "mental and "manual" labor.

The purpose of education would be to empower the working class worldwide, to encourage and develop collectivity and cooperation, to show how we depend upon each other and that all value comes from the labor of workers. International working-class unity would smash the national borders. Education would not only be free, but it would be in the interest of the working class. In order for that to materialize, we must destroy these Boards of Trustees in our colleges and this capitalist state.☺

DC Transit Workers Indict Bosses' New Jim Crow

WASHINGTON, DC, February 5

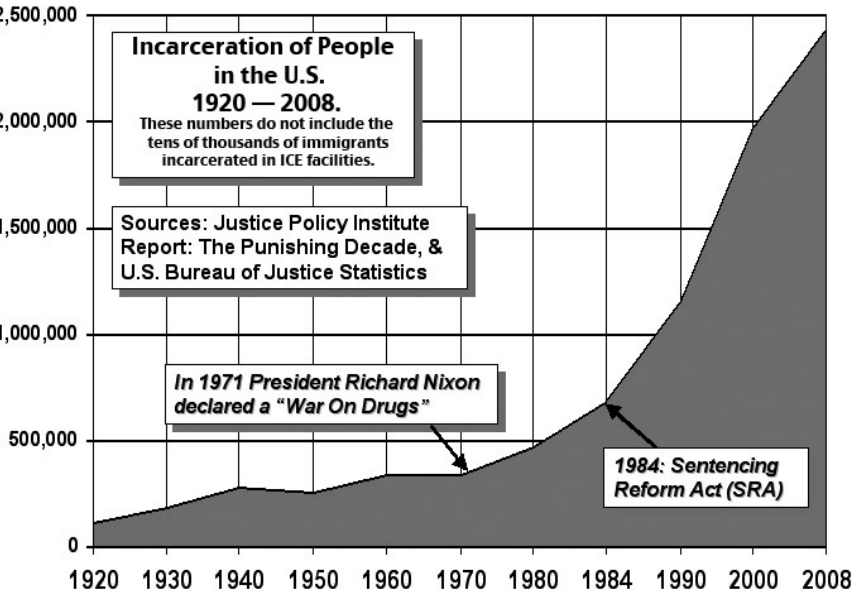
— Today transit workers in Local 689, Amalgamated Transit Union, took a big step against the racist Metro system by opposing the bosses' rule against hiring former prisoners. Thousands of workers are returning to the District of Columbia from incarceration every year, desperately needing jobs. Metro, like other bosses in the city, are blocking them. "I paid my debt to society," one worker declared, "and now I need to work. I don't want to be going back to prison anytime soon." But background checks and former criminal convictions are keeping them jobless.

Recently, the city council refused the demands of masses of workers to pass a bill making it easier for such returnees to apply for and obtain employment. Initially the politicians acted like they were supporting them in their quest for jobs, but when the DC Chamber of Commerce launched a lobbying campaign against the bill, the councilors quickly remembered who they worked for and vetoed the bill.

The denial of job opportunities to these former prisoners is blatant racism. First, the bosses' cops stop and frisk young black and Latino workers and send them to prison on weak and/or manufactured evidence. (See first item in Red Eye, page 7.) Then the bosses deny them jobs when they return. This creates a low-wage workforce, easily exploited by the bosses. A good exposé of this modern slavery is Michelle Alexander's recent book, "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness."

For three decades, the Metro transit system here hired workers who reported their former jail time on their applications. Last year the Metro Board changed its policy and the traitorous transit union leadership fell into line, supporting the new policy of background checks to weed out applicants with records. Metro has even begun background checks on existing employees, firing them if an offense is found.

But this week workers at the union meeting overturned the union mis-leadership's slavish support of Metro policy. Workers understood this policy is racist and were angry that their family



members and friends were no longer eligible to work at the best-paying blue-collar job in the District. Many long-time workers told of encounters with racist police in an area where racial profiling was so prevalent that Amnesty International exposed it in their report entitled, "Driving While Black"

This show of class solidarity against a racist system energized workers at Metro. It could lead to further pressure on transit bosses and the city to "Ban the Box" (on the job application where incarcerations have to be declared) and hire returnees so they can live independently and rebuild their lives.

Now is the time for the PLP club at Metro and the thousands of rank-and-file workers to fight the bosses' onslaught of racism towards their workers and the community in general. For example, Metro has raised fares and cut bus service in predominantly African American areas, including Southeast DC/Anacostia.

By distributing CHALLENGES at this week's union meeting, the Party was able to link the struggle here with that of New York City's striking school bus workers. Solidarity with other transit workers and these returnees (who are brother and sister workers as well) must move front and center as the bosses' crisis spurs increasing racist attacks on the working class.☺

Django Unchained Liberation? No, Just Racism, Sexism Re-packaged

Thousands of multiracial moviegoers across the U.S. lined up for hours to see Quentin Tarantino's Christmas blockbuster Django Unchained. Django is a slave-narrative revenge flick done in a style that combines spaghetti westerns and 1970s Blaxploitation. With so few Hollywood films about slavery and fighting back, how this story is told matters to the working class.

Some have called Django a "liberation" narrative. But to what extent is the capitalist Hollywood industry able to tell a story of true anti-racist liberation? Hollywood has historically been the main manufacturer of racist and sexist ideas. Films that are truly anti-racist or anti-sexist rarely make it to the silver screen. So is Django an exception to the rule? And what are the consequences to the working class of Tarantino's take on racism and slavery?

The reviews for the film have been overwhelmingly positive, and in the film there is much to root for. In the opening scene a white, German bounty hunter, Dr. Shultz kills the slavers who own Django and offers Django and his wife freedom in exchange for helping him hunt slave masters. They set off, leaving dozens of dead slave masters in their wake! This multi-racial duo echoes the legacy of John Brown, the white preacher who fought slavery with violence.

In one of the most memorable scenes of the film, the head slave master, Calvin

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Mexico: PLP Leads Fight against Flooding of Workers' Homes

MEXICO, February 12 —Workers living in the Lakes Xico-Tlahuac area, southeast of Mexico City, who are already threatened by flooding, now must fight the bosses' plans for a grand-scale hydro project that will increase the danger. There are 120,000 families living in 12 residential colonies in the state of Mexico and the Federal District that could be affected.

Faced with the threat of flooding and later eviction from our homes, members and friends of the communist Progressive Labor Party (PLP) have begun to organize meetings with our neighbors to denounce these actions of bosses and politicians against workers. Over two years ago, we began discussing the problem of flooding that results from unrestrained over-extraction of underground water that is sinking the area.

Now the bosses want to start building their project, called Sierra Nevada, which they have already approved. They claim it will bring "Water for Everyone Forever," by building a series of ponds to collect fresh water, mainly from the ice melting off the volcanoes Popocatepetl and Iztacihuatl, as well as from rain sources. According to the plan, this water could supply the western zone of the Federal District.

With this project, the bosses are trying to placate the anger of residents who are almost permanently living without water — but it will be at the expense of other workers' lives. But they are also planning an "eco-tourism" zone around the project showing that the true beneficiaries will be those bosses who own the land and resorts.

University Bosses Complicit

The National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) directed researchers to plan a project that in fact cannot guarantee workers' safety. They failed to incorporate a back up plan to protect residents in case of flooding. And the threat is always present, as the researchers themselves have admitted, in case of strong rains or a malfunction of the system of drainage channels, given the decrepit and inadequate municipal infrastructure.

Through the use of CHALLENGE, we warned residents about the dangers and the need to organize ourselves to fight. We have distributed more than 6,000 flyers and newspapers in the two years of this struggle. These actions have given workers confidence in us, and the confidence that if the workers are organized, we could accomplish much.

The local government tried to derail the movement, arguing that it was a false alarm, but during the rainy season they chose to sacrifice the lives of workers of several other districts, such as Reyes, La Paz, Nezahualcoyotl y Ecatepec, flooding their homes with residual waters from the general drain.

Join the revolutionary Progressive Labor Party. Come to the meetings and to the political education circles.✪

Tunisia: Capitalism Still Rules the Arab 'Revolution'

Tunis, Tunisia, the springboard of the Arab Spring in January, 2011, recently witnessed the eruption of mass demonstrations and a general strike to protest the assassination of a leader of the opposition party challenging the Islamist government. However, two of the key factors that led to the 2011 uprising, mass unemployment and poverty, are as prevalent as ever, essentially because their cause, capitalism, still rules. These conditions have sparked violent protests, which is why the government's state of emergency remains in force.

All this exposes the hollowness of liberals in the U.S. and elsewhere labeling the Arab Spring a "revolution." Revolutions occur when an oppressed class overthrows the oppressor class.

The General Union of Tunisian

Workers called a one-day general strike on February 8, although the country's universities were shut down until the 11th. However, the ruling class was taking no chances. Soldiers were deployed outside the main government buildings in Zarsis, Gafsa and Sidi Bouzid where masses of workers and youth marched, chanting "Assassins," accusing the Islamist governing party of being behind the assassination.

Following the funeral at which tens of thousands assembled, taking "on the air of a demonstration against" the government (El Wonton newspaper, 2/9), army helicopters began overflying Tunis and military trucks were deployed on the city's main avenue. But all of this did not prevent young demonstrators from occupying the street, clashing with police using riot clubs and tear gas.

CHALLENGE pointed out in 2011 when uprisings spread across the Middle East that they were limited to challenging the region's dictatorships by calling for "free elections." They weren't aimed at overthrowing capitalism so the system's exploitation of the working class would continue. No elections will change this, as workers and youth are discovering in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and elsewhere.

Capitalism's ruling classes still hold state power and use it to clamp down on mass rebellions in Tunisia. Only the leadership of communist ideas aimed at completely destroying the profit system and its bosses can free the working class of the hell wrought by that system.✪

Racist Capitalism Killed Ramarley Graham

BRONX, NY, February 2 — Three hundred people gathered outside the house of Ramarley Graham, the 18-year-old black youth who was murdered by the NYPD when they broke into his house one year ago. The cops had no warrant and Ramarley had no gun.

Various politicians including city comptroller John Liu who is running for mayor spoke at the memorial rally. They all tried to steer the masses into believing that electing better politicians and legislating more laws was the answer to the harassment that black and Latino youth face on a daily basis.

However, as we left the house and marched towards the police precinct chants such as, "We don't need those police, those racist police" rang out. It is not just a few bad apples but the entire system that has to go. CHALLENGE were sold and a PL flyer was distributed which explained that the role of the police is to protect the capitalist class's profits stolen from the poverty and racist unemployment of black and Latino youth. Justice for Ramarley Graham and all of the other victims of capitalism will only be achieved when we join together and revolt against

capitalism and establish communism.

Because PLP has been active in building and sustaining the Ramarley's Call movement during the last year, a comrade was invited to speak at the last stage of the day's memorial inside the local church. He related the struggles of workers around the world against unemployment and war and explained how PL believes that capitalism was built on racism and used racism to maintain itself by dividing the working class. He recounted how striking school bus workers had eagerly received leaflets about the Ramarley Graham struggle

and understood that Bloomberg and the police were the common enemy.

The Ramarley's Call movement has made important steps in uniting several families who lost love ones due to police brutality. PL members must step up their efforts to convince these militant anti-racists to ally with communists, not politicians and capitalists. Together, we can challenge the entire system to build a better world devoid of racism and oppression.✪



LETTERS

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

Capitalism is Hell for Mentally-ill People

As a worker diagnosed with a mental illness, I can tell you, my dear readers, that little has changed since the Dark Ages with regard to attitudes toward mentally ill people. We are horribly stigmatized and find it very difficult to find a job or enroll in a university. Capitalist society treats us in a hypocritical way.

On one hand they don't give us jobs because of our health problems and on the other hand the bosses say that we don't deserve disability benefits because we are not physically disabled and thus "are able to work". Capitalist society treats us as disabled or as healthy people when it better fits their interests.

The mental health system, in Israel-Palestine (where I live) and elsewhere in the bosses' world, is horribly underfunded and understaffed and the bosses love to cut back its budget. Psychiatric medication is expensive and it is almost impossible to get any other form of psychotherapy in the "public" (read: mostly privatized) system. Private therapy is prohibitively expensive.

Occupational rehabilitation for all disabled people has been privatized to NGOs (non-profits) who exploit disabled people. The NGO officials earn high salaries while the disabled "clients" get almost nothing, sometimes 25 cents an hour. Because disabled people — be their disability physical or mental, find it hard to get a job, they are often forced to go through this "rehabilitation" and earn next to nothing.

Psychiatric wards are still terrible places, and patients are humiliated and abused. They still restrain patients to their beds, even now in the 21st century! A person in restraints, usually left in them for long hours, cannot go to the bathroom and has to lie in his or her own excrement. The same goes for the now-privatized "hostels."

A person who attempts suicide — often due to unemployment or the other horrors of the class system — is forcibly hospitalized. Officially this is to keep her from killing herself, but the system does nothing to give her a reason to live. Many doctors do not tell their patients in advance about the side effects of the medications they prescribe and do not prescribe medications against these side effects. The drug companies are in constant touch with psychiatrists and make deals with them at the patients' expense, all for money.

In many cases, mental illness is caused by conscription into the military and post-traumatic stress, all due to wars created by capitalism. The stress of capitalist competition causes many mental illnesses in the first place. If we lived in a more egalitarian and less repressive society, with less poverty and jobs for everyone, there would be much less mental illness.

A comrade

Koch: Here's Egg in Your Racist Face

As the gaggle of ruling-class politicians and media fell all over themselves praising New York City's former Mayor Ed Koch upon his death, I couldn't help remembering the racist and anti-working class actions of this bosses' flunky. I lived through all 12 years of his reign and recall his role in the 1980 transit strike which he tried to break.

Taking the bosses' side, he would stand on the Brooklyn Bridge urging commuters to keep walking to work in the hope that this would outlast the workers' efforts to win a decent contract, after they shut the transit system tighter than a drum.

The year before, he championed the closing of city hospitals — often the only ones workers could afford — which included Harlem's Sydenham Hospital, the lone institution serving that black community. But Progressive Labor Party didn't let him get off so easy in that one.

When he addressed the American Public Health Association at the New York Hilton, members and friends of PLP and the International Committee Against Racism led protestors in chanting, "Racist Koch, you can't hide! We charge you with genocide!"

Immediately three members of PLP and InCAR stormed the stage and pelted him with eggs. He then ordered the cops to seize and arrest them.

When the working class takes power, we'll be aiming more than just eggs at the bosses and their mayoral servants.

Old-timer who remembers

French Legalize Mali Invasion

Changing "legalities" to suit bosses' needs is a worldwide capitalist scam. The recent French imperialist invasion of Mali is the latest example.

A recent UN resolution precluded any military intervention in Mali. So in order to conform to a sort of international legality, French Socialist president François Hollande asked Mali's president to send him a call for aid, in writing. On January 10, the latter's letter arrived in which he called on Hollande for "help." No sooner said than done. Five hours later — after a rapid meeting of France's Defense Council — French troops were landing in Bamako, Mali.

All this followed Hollande's pledge not to invade. On October 11, 2012, he said, "There will not be French troops engaged in Mali.... We cannot intervene in place of the Africans." Then Le Drian, the French Defense Minister, reiterated: "It's up to the Africans to intervene, not the French" (La Croix newspaper, 12/24/2012).

When Hollande arrived in Mali for speechmaking, he made no mention of any UN resolutions. Obviously Mali's uranium, gold and oil reserves were too big a bonanza for French bosses to ignore. (See CHALLENGE, 2/13)

When it comes to legality under capitalism, the overriding one is the law of maximum profits.

Brooklyn Comrade

'If we're breaking the law, then we'll just change it...'

The Postal Service wants to discontinue Saturday delivery of mail AND cut health benefits for postal employees. However, according to the law, the USPS is not allowed to make such a change unilaterally.

SOLUTION: Change the Law! Isn't capitalism wonderful? While the capitalists love to tell us that "we are a country of laws," this only applies to the working class obeying laws that benefit the bosses.

When the bosses make a mistake and find that THEIR laws aren't helping them, they either change the law or simply ignore it.

Here is the relevant quote from the Post Master General (PMG) as reported in the Washington Post on Feb 7, 2013:

"Reading the law ... we think that we are on firm ground," Donahoe [the PMG] said during an interview. Not everyone on Capitol Hill agrees. "Even if we aren't," he added, "I would say to Congress, 'Hey, let's take the opportunity in the next couple of weeks to amend [that is, unilaterally change] the law and just get this behind us and get on our way.'"

Red Reader

Comment on Lincoln Movie Review

The last issue of CHALLENGE (2/13) had a review of *Lincoln* in the letters section. It's true; Lincoln himself was a terribly complex character, plagued by clinical depression. In recent years there has been a load of projective analysis, such as that of the late Gore Vidal, into the seamier side of Lincoln's personal life. But, this top-award film steers clear of extraneous or inexperienced interpretation. Thank goodness for little favors.

The review refutes something we know as bourgeois individualism, saying, "The movie inspires more talk about Lincoln's personality than the fight against slavery." The writing, though a bit verbose, is on the mark. It is instructive to learn about the series of anti-racist events proving the theme being from a "top-down" view.

But there are several such series, or lists, of references, some lengthy for a movie review. An insertion about corrupt politicians is in parentheses and more such humorous asides may be useful in the interest of showing a liking for the readership. Film criticism could almost be seen as having a style of its



own, unburdened, even sardonic, for mass appeal. Certainly less chalkboard.

Ruby

More Attacks on Sandy Victims

The newest hardship Sandy victims face in Manhattan hotels is eviction into homeless shelters. The agency the city has contracted to case-manage victims is BRC, the group that usually picks up chronically homeless people from the streets and puts them in shelters.

They have actually offered no help to Sandy survivors; they probably don't even know anything about low-income stable housing for stable people. They have been treating people extremely rudely and threateningly.

Now they're systematically telling people they have to leave their hotel (before their previously given check-out dates) and go to shelters, one by one. No one knows for sure if they, the hotels or the city are initiating this tactic.

So far three families have been removed. This leaves the families in yet another borough where their children have to change schools once again; where they are treated like prisoners; and where the environment is often unsafe. Others are planning to resist removal.

A campaign to notify politicians and the press is underway, although that is probably useless given their previous unresponsiveness. We are also planning a demonstration of families and supporters this Friday, February 15, 3:30 PM, at BRC headquarters.

Red Doctor

Obama's Killer Drones and the War on Workers

continued from page 2

Nor should the racist aspect of this butchery be overlooked. Drones drop their lethal bombs on Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, not on Europe or North America. Racist attacks are business as usual for U.S. rulers. Consider the routine police tactics, from stop-and-frisk assaults to murder, that single out the overwhelmingly black and Latino workers and youth in every big city in the U.S. As a direct result, these groups compose 70 percent of the country's 2.4 million prison population.

But neither drones nor Special Forces will solve the U.S. bosses' military problems. Only larger standing armies can fill their needs in the wider wars they're planning and the next world war to come. (See CHALLENGE editorial, 2/13, on women in combat.)

Only Communist Leadership Can Kill KKKapitalism

History shows that a robust anti-war movement depends solely on the working class, which suffers the most and has nothing to gain in the bosses' endless conflicts. During the U.S. Vietnam Genocide, the Progressive Labor Party built a base in factories, on campuses, in the military and in neighborhoods. We exposed and militantly attacked the local bosses' ties to the war-making capitalists. Hundreds of thousands joined the rallies, marches and strikes we helped to lead.

We put fear into U.S. capitalists, but not enough. Wars persist because the profit system survives. Only a society free of bosses and profits — and therefore of racism, sexism and war — can enable our class to lead a decent existence. To truly succeed, anti-war workers must be organized in a mass Party with a long-term, revolutionary communist outlook to destroy capitalism. They must be organized within PLP.

This is the message we must bring to our activities in the shops and unions, the schools and campuses, the barracks and communities. The life of the working class is at stake.☺

Django Unchained

Liberation? No, Just Racism, Sexism Re-packaged



continued from page 4

Candie insists that Dr. Schultz shake his hand to complete the buying back of Django's wife. In a true show of uncompromising multi-racial unity, Schultz extends his hand but pulls a gun and blows Candie away. Shultz is killed and Django battles the slave masters' minions for his and his wife's freedom. He blows them away one by one. As Django rides away with his wife into the sunset it is hard not to applaud this anti-racist hero.

But the question remains, what is the image that the audience will take away from this film: is it of Django as an anti-racist fighter or of a gangster who must prove his manhood with his gat?

Tarantino's use of the Blaxploitation genre is problematic and does more to promote racist stereotypes rather than undermine them. Following the civil rights movement, Blaxploitation films replaced

images of black unity with racial stereotypes. In the same vein, Django's character is "chained" to racial stereotypes that cast black men as hyper masculine, prone to violence and out to "get theirs."

Aside from the excessive violence, Tarantino attempts to shock the audience with his excessive use of the N-word (110 times in the film!). Tarantino claimed he wanted to present an accurate portrayal of the racism in the South. But the problem was with how the word was used. It was used not to evoke the horror and inhumanity of slavery, but to evoke cheap laughs. By keeping the N-word alive through comedy, it makes everyday racism more palatable to people because they can perceive it as "just a joke." Racial slurs produce racial stereotypes and allow workers to dehumanize one another rather than organize together.

Throughout the film, Django is described as unique and by the head slave master as "one in ten-thousand" because of the way he stands up for himself. The phrase suggests that those who stood up to white supremacy and slavery were the exception and not the rule. From the Haitian slave rebellion to the hundreds of slave rebellions that shook the U.S. South and the Caribbean before 1860, slave rebellion was an everyday fact of life. It involved masses of slaves, men and women, not an elite few. To present Django as exceptional and

rebellion as individualistic, undermines the true history of anti-slavery fight-back.

None of the female characters in the movie, including his wife, are portrayed as fighters. Women instead, are shown to be victims that must rely on men to liberate them from slavery. Throughout history women, such as "Nanny" of the Jamaican Maroons and Harriet Tubman, have been paramount in the struggle for freedom from oppression.

Django lured audiences with the promise of racist "liberation," but in the end sold them individualism, racism and sexism in a new package. The audience roots for Django because he is fighting slavery. But his battle with slavery is driven not by anti-racist solidarity, but by hypermasculine individualism that plays on the stereotypes of Blaxploitation films and gangster rap. These racist stereotypes served the bosses following the civil rights era as they sought to rob the gains won by a militant black working class. And these stereotypes continue to serve their needs today as they seek to justify racist unemployment, racist mass incarceration, and racist police killings.

The mass appeal of Django shows that working-class people possess anti-racist ideas and want to fight back. In fact, the true heroes are not Django and Shultz, but the multiracial groups of workers and students who saw the film hoping to be inspired by a story of anti-racist fight back. Ultimately Django does not deliver on its promise of "liberation" just like the bosses and Obama do not and cannot deliver on their promises for "change." The working class cannot rely on the capitalist Hollywood industry to tell our stories. We must tell our own stories about fight-back, learning from past struggles as an inspiration toward building a truly anti-racist communist future.☺

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

Cops lie freely vs. poor workers

NYT, 2/3 — Thousands of people plead guilty to crimes every year in the United States because they know that the odds of a jury's believing their word over a police officer's are slim to none. As a juror, whom are you likely to believe: the alleged criminal in an orange jumpsuit or two well-groomed police officers in uniforms who just swore to God they're telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but? As one of my colleagues recently put it, "Everyone knows you have to be crazy to accuse the police of lying."

But are police officers necessarily more trustworthy than alleged criminals? I think not. Not just because the police have a special inclination toward confabulation, but because, disturbingly, they have an incentive to lie. In this era of mass incarceration, the police shouldn't be trusted any more than any other witness, perhaps less so.

...But numerous law enforcement officials have put the matter more bluntly. Peter Keane, a former San Francisco Police commissioner, wrote an article in the San Francisco Chronicle decrying a police culture that treats lying as the norm....

The State Supreme Court in Brooklyn condemned a widespread culture of lying and corruption in the department's drug enforcement units. "I thought I was not naïve," [the judge] said when announcing a guilty verdict involving a police detective who had planted crack cocaine on a pair of suspects. "But even this court was shocked, not only by the seeming pervasive scope of misconduct but even more distressingly by the seeming casualness by which such conduct is employed."

...At worst, the case will be dismissed, but the officer is free to continue business as usual....Criminal defendants are typically poor and uneducated, often belong to a racial minority.... "Police know that no one cares about these people," Mr. Keane said.

Guerrillas are not truly terrorists

NYT, 1/27 — The effort to link guerrillas and terrorists does not come off....It is common for powerful armies to decry their weaker opponents as terrorists — this is how the [Nazi] Wermacht described European partisans during World War II. But in reality, the two categories have very little in common.

Rebel Rosa Parks planned bus action

NYT, 2/2 — Most of what you think about Rosa Parks may well be wrong.

On the verge of the 100th anniversary of her birth...comes a fascinating new book, "The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks," by Jeanne Theoharis, a Brooklyn College professor. It argues that the romanticized, children's-book story of a meek seamstress with aching feet who just happened into history in a moment of uncalculated resistance is pure mythology.

As Theoharis points out, "Rosa's family sought to teach her controlled anger, a survival strategy that balanced compliance with militancy."

Parks was raised mostly by her grandparents. Her grandfather...often sat vigil on the porch with a rifle in case the Klan came. She sometimes sat with him because...she put it, "I wanted to see him kill a Ku Kluxer."

When she was a child, a young white man taunted her. In turn, she threatened him with a brick. Her grandmother reprimanded her as "too high-strung," warning that Rosa would be lynched before the age of 20. Rosa responded, "I would be lynched rather than be run over by them...."

She spent nearly two decades before the bus incident struggling, organizing and agitating for civil rights....Parks was by no means the first person to perform an act of civil disobedience on a bus. She was very much aware of many of the people whose similar actions had preceded her own, even raising money for some of their defense funds. She also encouraged others to commit these acts....

Parks explained that "I had felt for a long time, that if I was ever told to get up so a white person could sit, that I would refuse to do so."

That day came....She refused. This was not a spur-of-the-moment decision. It was a political calculation informed by a life of activism....



Official number of U.S. Workers Injured on the job in 2011: 3,820,000

"The Rosa Parks who surfaced in the deluge of public commentary was, in nearly every account, characterized as 'quiet,' 'humble,' 'dignified' and 'soft-spoken,' she was 'not angry' and 'never raised her voice.'"

Parks, like many others...who over the years have angrily agitated for change in this country has been sanitized and sugar-coated for easy consumption.

Desperate workers fill lethal jobs

NYT, 1/28 — The patients come with burns from hot water, with hands and fingers crushed by steel tongs, with injuries from chains that have whipsawed them off their feet. Ambulances carry mangled, bloodied bodies from accidents on the roads packed with trucks and heavy-footed drivers.

The furious pace of oil exploration that has made North Dakota one of the healthiest economies in the country has had the opposite effect on the region's health care....Swamped by uninsured laborers flocking to dangerous jobs, medical facilities in the area are sinking under skyrocketing debt [caused by] a flood of gruesome injuries....

Just three years ago...the hospital averaged 100 emergency room visits per month; last year that average shot up to 400.

Part I: U.S. Rulers' 'War on Terror' Re-making the Laws to Wage War on Workers

Fascism is the response of a ruling class in crisis. U.S. bosses are preparing for such a crisis, composed of a critically unstable financial system along with increased competition from imperialist rivals such as China. A dominant section of the ruling class recognizes that the future includes wider and deadlier wars, perhaps a world war. Their response is increased militarism and internal discipline necessary for the bosses to wage and win wars.

In addition to intensifying racist attacks, the rulers are remaking criminal law and processes on the grounds that the "war on terror" requires special laws, and then applying the new procedures to all workers. During the recent U.S. presidential campaign, Obama and Romney competed with each other to see who could be tougher on terror. This posturing occurred even though the main threats to U. S. capitalism come from rising powers like China, not from small terrorists.

Most recent acts of "terrorism in the U.S." — which Obama claims is the main threat facing America — are usually orchestrated by the FBI or the New York Police Department using informants to entrap a person or group to launch an attack, something they would have been incapable or unwilling to do without the informant.

These traps have been set against the Arab/Muslim community to build fear of, and racism against, this group among other workers. The "war on terror" remains central to the plans of the U.S. ruling class. This lie is part of the plan to lull workers into accepting a future of wider war and increased racist attacks.

Secret Courts Maintain Bosses' Dictatorship

The laws about "terror" have been written so broadly that 92 percent of those charged are convicted. For example, the "Material Support" Law, which existed before 9/11 but was significantly broadened when the USA Patriot Act was passed in 2001, makes it a crime to provide anything, including humanitarian aid, to any group that the State Department has designated as "terrorist." The Supreme Court upheld the conviction of lawyers providing advice about why to give up violence, as well as groups trying to provide aid to tsunami victims in Sri Lanka and human rights monitoring in Turkey. The government has turned this law into a tool against any group not supporting the overall plans of U.S. imperialism.

Although this law sounds like it's aimed at groups outside the U.S., it's also been used to convict people and groups inside the country. This includes the defense attorney Lynne Stewart as well as Sami Omar Al Huassayn, an Idaho student accused of running a website where radical Islamists posted materials. This trend will continue. All the Feds have to do is classify dissidents and communists as "terrorists" — who advocate violence — and it becomes a crime to give support of any kind.

The main fear of the ruling class is that workers will follow the communist ideas of workers overthrowing capitalism and running society in their own class interests. That's the only thing the ruling class can't survive. And that's why workers must be won to understand that attacks on communists are attacks on their own class interests.

The "material support" law has been the cutting edge for expanding the use of laws once used primarily in criminal cases: "conspiracy" laws which

allow conviction for the "crime" of cooperating with people who talked about doing bad things, and "false statement" laws which make it a crime to tell cops anything which is not completely true. This is particularly vicious when the cops ask, "Is that all you know?" If you say "yes" then they can arrest you if you forgot the slightest detail.

After the 1970s' scandals about warrantless snooping in the name of "national security," Congress passed the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), allegedly to prevent illegal spying on U.S. citizens. However the Act created a secret court that could issue warrants for covert spying against foreign enemies including activities within the U.S. The law was also expanded by the Patriot Act in 2001.

The "war on terror" has been used to justify issuance of FISA secret warrants against anybody accused of "terrorism." This is a very broad category, enabling thousands of warrants to be issued each year. Not satisfied with having to go to court — even a secret one which approves more than 99 percent of all requested search warrants — the USA Patriot Act gave the FBI authority to issue "national security letters." They ordered banks, phone companies and other institutions to hand over records without telling the person whose records were being seized. When five small phone companies refused to comply with such letters, the Justice Department pounced, suing them for interfering with national security.

By 2011, there were 16,511 national security letters, plus tens of thousands of more informal requests from the Feds for information from phone companies and banks. These "anti-terror" rules have defined the new norm. Judges have long been able to "seal" (keep secret) search warrants, but that used to be very unusual. However, one outraged judge revealed that in 2008 in Houston, 99.8 percent of all electronic surveillance orders were sealed. He estimated that 30,000 sealed surveillance orders are issued each year nationwide by Federal courts alone (state and local courts issue more).

The cops increasingly dispense with court orders, just writing phone



companies. Cell phone carriers report that in 2011 they received requests for information about 1.3 million subscribers. What started out as a special authority to be used in special circumstances (first against "spies," then against "terrorists") has now become a normal practice by every police department.

Return of the Red Squads

In the 1960s and '70s, special police units called Red Squads were used to harass and attack communists. After 1970s scandals in which the FBI had been openly investigating protestors (strikers, opponents of U.S. imperialism, anti-Vietnam war demonstrators, anti-racists), the ruling class switched course and instructed the FBI to concentrate on crimes rather than protests. Meanwhile, it created FISA to quietly proceed with domestic spying.

This two-pronged approach has been scrapped given the "war on terror." Now the 2011 FBI Domestic Investigations and Operations Guide explicitly allows the FBI to use all its intelligence-gathering techniques against people not suspected of any crime. Agents are allowed to open an "assessment" "proactively" (without any indication a crime is being planned), and, as part of that assessment, to follow people, search their trash, send in informants, and troll the internet — all in the name of capturing terrorists. The Feds have had to admit using "community outreach" meetings with the Muslim community to recruit informants and identify those whom they will prosecute.☹

(Conclusion next issue: New technology made exempt from privacy rules.)

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