

CHALLENGE

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Capitalist Schools Fail Working-Class Youth

Schools should be wondrous centers of discovery and learning. They should be places where students develop life-long interests and abilities, where they gain confidence and knowledge, where they find cherished friends and mentors, and where they feel protected and cared for.

But public schools under capitalism fail on every count. First, they sort students into racist tiers to determine who will obtain the better-paying jobs at the top, and who will be left with the least desirable, lowest-paying jobs at the bottom. Put simply, schools define who will occupy the corporate executive suites and who will clean them! They also decide who will be the unemployed pitted against other workers; who will be the soldiers to kill workers around the world.

Of course, there are still plenty of people in the middle, including teachers. But the number of good-paying jobs in the U.S. is dwindling, while low-paying jobs (many with few or no benefits) are on the rise. According to the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, of the 30 occupations with the most projected job growth between 2012 and 2022, only five require a four-year college degree.

Jobs requiring master's degrees are not exempt from these cuts. More than 75 percent of college teachers are on non-tenure (non-permanent) tracks. Many adjunct professors earn poverty-level wages with no healthcare benefits.

Starving the Schools

For the capitalists, it makes no sense to fund a school system generating lots of college-ready graduates when fewer and fewer jobs call for a college education. In fact, the bosses are understandably nervous at the prospect of millions of college graduates who are frustrated and angry about their limited future.

Since it costs more than \$600 billion a year to operate K-12 public schools, and money is needed for war preparations with its imperialist rivals, the U.S. ruling class can kill two birds with one stone. By cutting spending on public schools, it will turn out more workers for the low-paying jobs that U.S. capitalism is creating. To deflect the anger of young

workers, they need to sell the racist myth that people have disappointing careers because they weren't capable of "higher-level" thinking — or because they didn't work hard enough in school.

Across the country, public schools employ about 250,000 fewer people than before the recession, according to figures from the Labor Department. Enrollment in public schools, meanwhile, has increased by more than 800,000 students. To maintain pre-recession staffing ratios, public school employment should have actually grown by about 132,000 jobs in the past four years, in addition to replacing those that were lost, said Heidi Shierholz, an economist at the Economic Policy Institute in Washington.

The New York Times (12/22/13) goes on to describe what the loss of school positions has meant for students: larger class sizes, reduced services, fewer guidance counselors and reading and math specialists.

The decay in public school conditions — on top of the higher fail rate in the Common Core exams — means that most students will be labeled unprepared for college. In New York City, for example, only 22.2 percent of 2013 graduates were considered "college-ready" by Department of Education standards. But it gets worse: In the bottom half of New York's high schools — that's 170 schools — only 4.5 percent of the graduates were college-ready.

Most students in these low-performing schools are black and Latino. The public school sorting machine is racist at its core. This continues the growing



May Day 2013: High school students lead the march for communist revolution. Onward to May Day 2014.

stream of black, Latino, and immigrant workers who suffer the racist super-exploitation that nets U.S. capitalists hundreds of billions of dollars in super-profits. Meanwhile, this deterioration of the entire school system drags down the conditions for white working-class students as well.

The Game is Rigged

U.S. bosses like to pretend that schools offer "equal opportunity" for all. In reality, affluent families gain a huge advantage by sending their children to expensive private schools or public schools in wealthy suburbs. Because most of public school funding comes from local property taxes, the result is stunning inequal-

ity. In New York State, the wealthiest 10 percent of school districts spent an average of \$35,690 per student in 2012-2013, nearly double the average spending (\$19,823) for the poorest 10 percent of districts.

Tests such as the SAT and ACT and standardized exams play a central role in sorting students for the top colleges and the best jobs. When students do poorly, they are told it's because they are dumb or lazy and therefore deserve a future of low-wage and precarious labor.

The politicians, at the bidding of their corporate masters, recently added a new wrinkle. They have convinced

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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. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and 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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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

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.

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Editorial

Crimea: Flashpoint for Next Great War?



U.S. rulers and their European allies are locked in a fierce struggle with their imperialist adversaries in Russia for control over Eastern Europe. Among recent developments:

- Russia's seizure of strategic Crimea — after the coup backed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Ukraine (see CHALLENGE, 3/12) — foreshadowing a wider world conflict;
- The crisis in Crimea intensifying inter-imperialist rivalries already in place;
- U.S. rulers scrambling to oppose Russian bosses even as they must continue to "pivot" toward a military confrontation with China and try to police the Middle East;
- The hostilities between the capitalist regimes of Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin escalating to shifts of military assets and longer-term coalition building. U.S. Air Force fighter jets have left Italy and England for Poland and Lithuania, while Russian tanks threaten Ukraine's eastern borders;
- NATO vowing absolute defense of the now-threatened Baltic states, a promise the Western powers may be unable to keep;
- A standoff that "has made Russia, Iran, and China more united in attempting to create a new power pole, counterbalancing and resisting the West — particularly the United States," according to Majid Rafizadeh of Harvard's International Review (FrontPageMag, 3/20/14).

Workers' Only Answer: Communism

The international working class has no interest in either side of this imperialist dogfight. Our only answer is to organize for communist revolution to destroy the profit system and its mass racist unemployment, poverty and war. (For conditions of workers in Ukraine, see page 4). Building the communist Progressive Labor Party is crucial to the goal of creating a society free of profits and bosses, one run by workers for workers' needs.

When Putin says he seized Crimea to help the ethnic Russians who reside there, it is a bald-faced lie. Putin is in power to serve his fellow-Russian capitalists, the corporate oligarchs who share a strategic interest in Crimea's energy pipelines and Russian naval base. The Russian president is offering similar "service" in a play to win over the Russian-speaking 25 percent of Estonia and Latvia. Under the headline "Disquiet in Baltics over Sympathies of Russian Speakers," Reuters reported (3/23), "There was disquiet when as pro-Russian forces took up positions in Crimea, the Russian ambassador to Latvia offered Russian passports and pensions for Ethnic Russians."

But unlike Ukraine, the Baltic nations — Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia — belong to the U.S.-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which views invasion of a member state as an act of war. NATO boss Anders Fogh Rasmussen recently reaffirmed this war pledge at the Council on Foreign

Relations (CFR), the leading think tank for the finance capital wing of U.S. imperialism.

A CFR interviewer asked, "How confident should the government of, say, Estonia feel that, if Putin decided to send Russian forces into Estonia on the pretext of protecting the large ethnic Russian population there, NATO would respond with force?" Rasmussen replied, "I am 100 percent sure ... that the alliance as a whole would take action to ensure effective protection and defense of an ally that is attacked" (CFR website, 3/21/14). A NATO-Russia conflict would put the two sides with their millions of troops and thousands of nuclear bombs in direct confrontation.

U.S. Bosses Not Ready?

But others in the U.S. ruling class insist that NATO is not yet prepared for a broader conflict. On the day of the CFR-NATO interview, the Brookings Institution (another finance capital think tank) published "The Geopolitical Realities of the Ukraine Crisis, the Limits of U.S. Energy Assistance, and the Need to Tone Down the Rhetoric." It noted that the U.S. goal of using its natural gas exports to break Russia's stranglehold on Western Europe's energy supply remains years from reality.

Brookings warned Obama to "de-escalate the tensions currently surrounding the crisis unfolding in Ukraine before we either reach an impasse with only suboptimal outcomes or expand the crisis into a truly global one." In other words, the U.S. rulers and their allies must fully militarize before taking on a power like Russia. Otherwise, their present course will lead to regional defeats — or a third world war for which they stand unprepared.

Naturally, Brookings failed to note the bosses' most dangerous weakness. The U.S. will be hard-pressed to march to war as long as the U.S. working class has yet to be won to the capitalists' cause, as reflected by popular opposition to a military draft and intervention in the Syrian War.

No wonder that U.S. bosses are protesting that Germany and France contribute far less to NATO than they could in both cash and cannon fodder. Even weaker is their alliance with NATO member Turkey. At present, Turkey allows Russian warships passage between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea through the chokepoint of the Bosphorus Strait. At the same time, citing safety reasons, Turkey bans all liquefied natural gas (LNG) tankers from the strait. This prohibition blocks the U.S. bosses' plan to use LNG from Qatar (and eventually from Texas) to undercut Russia's energy export leverage against the European Union. In any case, the infrastructure to handle these exports is at least a year away in Qatar and five years off in the U.S.

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'CHALLENGE essential to my life...'

While at an Advisory Board hearing for parents and teachers in Newark, NJ, we had several hours to distribute 400 CHALLENGEs. There was time to take in the bitter cold. I glanced at the nearby cemetery. It was there I made my decision to join Progressive Labor Party. I used to study there, as it's a beautiful spot, full of trees, shade and quiet.

My boyfriend back then had urged me to get a subscription to CHALLENGE, though he was not himself a PLP member. After a year of reading the paper, I wrote PL asking if I could do Spanish translation. Not long afterward, a newly married couple came to my door, them-



selves students and members of the Party. They had checked with my (now former) boyfriend to see if he vouched for my honesty and asked if I'd like to meet for a few months with them. (Back in the day, a six-month period of candidacy was required.)

That very week I went to "my" cemetery to contemplate about what I'd been reading in CHALLENGE: the organizational powers of the wealthy had waged the Vietnam war; the logical conclusion being that a revolutionary party was the only way to end the atrocities of capitalism. I recalled how words like revolution and communism had at first grated on my mind. Gradually, they took shape with each article as part of the logical beauty of science. Though joining seemed like the right thing, I knew to do so would put me in difficult situations, and sometimes danger. I might lose my life.

I pictured closing the lid on my own coffin, there in that cemetery. I then knew I couldn't die with integrity unless I lived a life making progress for the working class. While my anti-sexist pride takes joy in the fact that I joined without my boyfriend's urging and before he did so, it's only right to thank him today for insisting I pick up the subscription.

These are the reasons why, for forty-eight years, CHALLENGE has been so essential to my life. It is much more than a newspaper — it's more like a comrade.

Longtime Roja

Capitalist Mark for Schools: 'F'

continued from front page

large sections of the public that teachers — and not the big capitalists — are responsible for their children's lack of success on the exams. Therefore, the bosses' argument goes, teachers are undeserving of tenure, seniority rights, decent pensions or wage increases.

Teaching Obedience and Patriotism

The second crucial aspect of schools under capitalism is ideological indoctrination. Schools say they teach critical thinking; if students were really taught "critical thinking," they would rebel against a social order in which 400 U.S. households have as much wealth as the bottom half of the population. They'd refuse to accept a "global war on terror" based on lies, a war that masks inter-imperialist rivalry to control valuable resources, markets and investment opportunities. They'd organize against a political system where Big Money calls the shots, and where the richest companies get what they want and the rest of us endure wage freezes, lower benefits and high permanent unemployment.

Instead of critical thinking, students are taught passivity from an early age. They are taught to follow orders and be patriotic and support the U.S. military, no matter how many countries it invades or how many workers it displaces or kills. Students are told they are responsible for their own success or failure, which is the rulers' strategy to build individualism and hide the system's fail-

ure to provide meaningful, rewarding jobs for all. Finally, students are taught the anti-communist myth that only capitalism works and any attempt to build an egalitarian society must fail.

This last bit of instruction is particularly important as more and more people are beginning to question capitalism. According to a recent Pew Research Center poll, 49 percent of young adults (ages 18 – 29) have a positive view of "socialism," while only 43 percent had a negative opinion. In this age group, more people support anti-capitalist ideas. This is an indication that youth are open to communism. Let's take this opportunity to build a movement for communism and explain to our friends the differences between socialism (state capitalism) and communism (see Our Fight on page 2).

Teachers in Progressive Labor Party tell students the truth: that they are bright and capable of tremendous learning. In fact, they can learn how to run society, not for the profit of a few but for the benefit of the entire working class. A critical part of that understanding lies in anti-racism and multi-racial unity. When students and workers grasp the fundamental truth that our class can transform society into one that runs by the communist principle of "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs," we will have aced the most important test of all. ☺

Celebrate International Women's Day

CHICAGO, March 8 — A multiracial group of 30 workers gathered here to celebrate International Women's Day. The purpose of the event was three-fold: to give a presentation and speeches concerning the history and importance of the holiday; to be social with friends and comrades; and to formally invite those present to May Day in Brooklyn and raise some of the funds for transportation.

After everyone got settled and ate their fill of some delicious international cuisine, the presentations began. A new comrade, originally from Michoacan, Mexico read aloud in Spanish a letter she had written to CHALLENGE recently. It highlighted her satisfaction with finding an international communist party, committed to the working class and the destruction of capitalism. Coming from a region of Mexico suffering from poverty and drug cartel/police violence, she expressed that she knew firsthand the importance of fighting back.

Next, a slide presentation was given by another PL member which provided history of women-led struggles in the former Soviet Union, revolutionary China, and Cuba. It showed the massive social, political and economic advancements that can be made when sexist and patriarchal capitalist ideology is

rejected and workers of all genders are allowed to contribute to many different types of labor.

Both presentations generated important conversation and criticisms. It was pointed out that while the slide-show explained the importance of women filling roles traditionally held only by men, it didn't go far enough to recognize the immense significance of domestic labor (child-rearing, cooking, cleaning, and so much more) and why it is best when those tasks are equally shared among all genders.

The comrade explained that men also suffer because of sexism because without performing the activities of raising a child, male workers don't reach full human potential.

The event was a success. The local Financial Committee was able to raise some money for May Day, and a number of friends committed to taking part in the celebration. I was very happy to have learned a great deal more about International Women's Day, and even happier to have spent the evening with other workers involved in the fight to destroy the sexist and racist society in which we currently suffer, and replace it with one that will value all labor which moves humanity forward.

Red Nurse

Protests vs. Hospital Bosses Rock Pittsburgh

PITTSBURGH, March

5 — Militant protests rocked this city on March 3 and 4, bringing traffic to a standstill. Over 1,000 workers, some beating drums and others carrying banners, gathered at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) headquarters here to protest the anti-worker policies of the UPMC bosses. Members of the Service Employees International union, they are paid starvation wages while the bosses rake in millions, similar to tens of millions of other workers nation-wide. These protests in Pittsburgh demonstrate that workers are prepared to fight back against the bosses. ☺

Rap artist Jasiri X fired up the crowd with his song, "People Over Profits" which seemed to sum up the sentiments of all the workers. However, workers must fight for a society without profits. It will take a communist revolution to gain true equality and justice for all workers. ☺



How World Capitalism Ravaged Ukraine's Workers

In a recent conversation, a friend asked about the life of workers in the Ukraine. In brief, workers in Ukraine, like those in U.S. cities and around the world, are suffering from massive assaults from the imperialists of the world. But given the current war over Ukraine between the interests of U.S./European imperialists and Russian imperialists, it's important to understand that workers' interests lie with the workers of the world, that we cannot take sides with any imperialist power. U.S. calls for "democracy" are justifications for increasing the exploitation and oppression of the world's working class.

In 1993, a strike wave hit Europe. Airline workers in France, steel workers in Germany, civil servants in Great Britain struck against wage cuts and privatization. So did tens of thousands of coal miners in Ukraine, who were joined by workers at large factories in the industrial centers of eastern Ukraine who were facing price increases and a rapid decline in living standards as a result of Ukraine's independence. The strikes in Ukraine were eventually settled when the government promised pay raises.

But, as with workers in the rest of the world, capitalists in Ukraine were not conceding much to the working class. Instead they instituted an attack in a new form — a banker-led devaluation of Ukrainian currency that undercut wages and increased privatization of production.

In 1993, Viktor Yushchenko (who later became president in 2004) was appointed head of the newly formed Bank of Ukraine. He was a main architect of a 1994 agreement between Ukraine and the IMF (i.e., U.S. and European capitalism). As a result of this agreement,

the price of bread increased overnight by 300 percent, electricity prices went up 600 percent, and transportation prices soared by 900 percent.

Ukrainian grain production was also under assault. The World Bank imposed a first phase of trade liberalization which lifted tariffs on imported grain. As cheap (and U.S. government-subsidized) wheat flooded Ukraine, its farmers, once the major grain producers of Europe, were forced into bankruptcy.

By 2003, Ukrainian per capita income was rising, only to come under attack during the "Orange Revolution" of 2004. Funded by U.S. agencies such as the National Endowment for Democracy and multi-billionaire George Soros's Open Society Institute, the Orange Revolution began another phase of the U.S. effort to reorient Ukraine under U.S. imperialism and away from Russia. The U.S. favorites in this period were Yulia Tymoshenko, who had made a fortune skimming profits from the sale of Russian natural gas in Ukraine and the U.S.-trained banker Yushchenko.

The Orange Revolution completely undermined the wages of workers who earn some of the lowest wages in the world. According to the German Economic Institute, labor costs in Ukraine are at €2.50 per hour, well below the average of €3.17 in China, €6.46 in Poland, and €21.88 in Spain. An hour of labor in Germany costs €35.66 (one euro = 1.38 U.S. dollar).

The economy and workers' living standards were further hit with rising oil and gas prices in 2006–08, and then by the global economic crisis of 2008–10. What kept workers alive in this period were continuing (though ever smaller) subsidies of commodities such as

natural gas, essential for home heating. These subsidies were paid for by government borrowing. Ukraine, like Greece among others, was in debt to the international bankers.

In 2010, voters, angry at their losses, rejected the Orange Revolution politicians for Viktor Yanukovych, a politician more closely associated with the social welfare system of pre-1993. But pressed by international finance capital to repay Ukraine's international debt, Yanukovich, like those before him, began negotiations for closer ties to the European Union and the U.S. The deal he negotiated called for massive austerity, like that instituted in Greece. The subsidies that allowed Ukraine's workers to heat their homes, pensions and other forms of social spending were to be eliminated. In November, 2013, fearing he could not sell this deal to his political base, Yanukovich accepted a temporary loan from Russian imperialists.

Ukraine has some of the largest reserves of coal and iron ore in Europe, and is still a major producer and exporter of iron ore (to China and India) and steel (competing with Germany, France, Russia and others). The privatization of these industries was rapidly accelerated under Yanukovich. Privatization has led to the closing down of steel plants that need modernization, and of many mines. Coal production has fallen by two thirds since 1991, as imported natural gas replaces coal in plants producing electricity. The result has been a situation in eastern Ukraine where many mine workers work in illegal mines often run by criminal networks that offer no protections to workers. That is what capitalism has wrought in the Ukraine.♦

Crimea Crisis: Imperialist Dogfight

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A Scenario for World War

ExxonMobil currently provides crude oil from Kurdistan (an autonomous region in Iraq) for the long-term purpose of winning Turkey fully to the U.S. side. But this deal antagonizes the Iraqi government, which is vying for control over Kurdistan oil. Prime Minister Nouri Maliki is threatening to cut off the vast operations of Exxon and allied oil companies in southern Iraq, established during the last U.S. invasion.

But the U.S. may run out of time to consolidate its bloc before the next great-power clash. On March 18, three days before Russia's parliament ratified the annexation of Crimea, U.S. ruling-class mouthpiece Roger Cohen fed war fever in his column in the New York Times. He imagined a scenario that begins with the assassination of the Russian defense minister by a young Ukrainian nationalist, an obvious parallel to the events that helped trigger the imperialist murder of tens of millions in World War I. And then:

Russia annexes Crimea. It declares war on Ukraine, takes Donetsk in short order, and annexes the eastern half of the country. The United States warns Russia not to advance on Kiev. It reminds the Kremlin of America's binding alliance with Baltic states that are NATO members. European nations mobilize. Desperate diplomacy unravels. A Ukrainian counterattack flounders but inflicts heavy casualties, prompting a Russian advance on the capital. Two NATO F-16s are shot down during a reconnaissance flight close to the Lithuanian-Russian border. Russia declares war on Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Invoking Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty — an attack against one member shall be considered an attack against all — the United States and its European allies come to their defense. China, in what it calls a pre-emptive strike, invades Taiwan, "a potential Crimea." Japan and India declare war on China. World War III has begun.

Cohen's scenario may not materialize in Crimea in 2014. But given enough sparks, one of them must burst into flame somewhere. U.S. imperialism is locked onto a violent collision course with its equally ruthless competitors. Unchecked, the result would murder hundreds of millions of workers. It can only be answered by the might of a communist-led international working class, which has the power to wipe out the capitalist system. That's the goal of Progressive Labor Party. Join us!♦

France: 'Frozen Wages, Job Cuts, Enough!'



PARIS, March 18 — Nearly a quarter million workers marched in 140 rallies across France — 60,000 here and 42,000 alone in Marseilles — under slogans like "Frozen wages, job cuts, enough!" They were protesting the "Responsibility Pact" (read: Profitability Pact) engineered by Socialist president François Hollande who appeared to give a virtual blank check to French bosses. Hollande's "Pact" would reduce employers' contributions to social security and place fewer restraints on corporations, including lowering their taxes in the billions.

In 2013, the 16 multinationals listed on the Paris stock exchange made profits of € 28 billion (USD \$40 billion) while receiving a tax credit of € 1.72 billion (USD \$2.4 billion).

The newspaper Le Canard enchainé reported that Hollande wants to finance the "Pact" by cutting another €10 billion (USD \$14 billion) from the government budget, meaning cutting public services and giving the money saved to French bosses.

The demonstrations appeared to be aimed at arousing people to turn out in the coming municipal elections. But for workers to seek solutions to the problems created by capitalism in the system's electoral process is a losing proposition. The winning alternative would be to destroy that system along with its bosses' elections and create a worker-run society, communism.

Recent electoral victories of LePen's fascist National Front and attacks on workers' standard of living show the need for a communist party to organize the revolution.♦

Feminism: Bosses' Tool to Divide Working Class



Many workers believe that feminism, a militant fight by women with allies among some men for women's rights, is the way to defeat sexism and the discrimination against women both by individual men and society at large.

Feminist movements have, indeed, fought for reforms in the workforce so that women workers would be paid more and face less gender-based discrimination and harassment on the job.

However, while these achievements are important, the majority of working-class women, especially black and Latina women, who are triply oppressed by sex, class and race, have not benefited much from these gains. For instance, in 2001, women's median annual paychecks were only 78 cents for every \$1.00 earned by men.

For black, Latina, and immigrant women, the gap is even wider. In comparison to men's dollar, black women earn only 69 cents and Latina women, just 59 cents.

Feminism cannot defeat sexism. Like nationalism, it has been used by the ruling class to keep workers, male and female, from uniting against our common enemy — capitalism.

Like black nationalists who view white supremacy as the primary obstacle to liberation, feminists believe patriarchy is the leading cause of women's oppression. This is due, in part, to the fact that most of the violence perpetrated against women in society is by men. Ninety to ninety-five percent of all sexual assaults and serious domestic violence cases in the U.S. are committed by men. Men make up ninety-nine percent of the people in jail for rape. Men are also the victims of violence committed by other men.

The capitalists would like us to believe that this aggressive behavior is a reflection of man's nature. On the contrary, male violence depicts the role that masculinity plays in the society as defined by capitalist culture: telling men to be tough, invulnerable and to assert power and gain respect through violence. The capitalists use this as a way to keep working-class men fighting their brothers and sisters in order to maintain an illusion of male privilege and power, while the rulers maintain true power over the entire working class.

Frederick Engels argued in his classic work *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* that sexual inequality as we know it today did not exist before the

advent of private property. In pre-class societies, although there was a division of labor, the work that women did was equally valued. At times, the jobs were even interchangeable between the men and the women, as they were in the native Iroquoian Seneca tribes in North America. The work was complementary, not hierarchical.

Conversely, in class societies, whatever became designated as women's work was devalued. "Women's work" was no longer seen as a special kind of work, but rather, as a certain grade of work (Charlotte Perkins, *The Home, Its Work and Influence*). As a result, capitalists are able to pay women the lowest wages

around their similarities to overthrow their oppressor. This is the case with feminism, as women work to liberate themselves from the grips of sexist oppression, while viewing other forms of oppression as separate from their own and excluding the class struggle from the diagnosis.

While there are some feminists who do consider class in their analysis, such as Gloria Jean Watkins who goes by the pen name bell hooks, the analysis is weak. It does not speak of eradicating the class system but rather ensuring that women, irrespective of class, have better lives, which they consider possible

while reaping huge profits. Bosses maintain their power by indoctrinating the workers with sexist ideology through media, religion, schools and other outlets. They propagate the myth that sexism is an innate human trait, when in reality, it is a learned behavior.

The rulers use identity politics, such as nationalism and feminism to their advantage. It emphasizes the differences between us, encourages division, and keeps workers from organizing

through reforms.

"All over this nation individual feminists with class power who support a revolutionary vision of social change share resources and use our power to aid reforms that will improve the lives of women irrespective of class." (*Feminism is for Everybody* by bell hooks).

In other words, those who make it to the top of the "ladder of success" should share with those who are at the bottom. But as Assata Shakur says in her autobiography, "Anytime you're talking about a ladder, you're talking about a top and a bottom, an upper class and a lower class, a rich class and a poor class."

Feminism doesn't want to remove the ladder; only make room for more women to climb it. Communism, on the other hand, seeks to smash it.

And, we will smash all aspects of sexism as it plays out on a systemic level as well as its appearance in our personal relationships. However, for us to root out sexism entirely from our lives and our society, we must reckon with the primary contradiction of capitalism: workers cannot be fully paid for the value of their labor.

The fight against sexism cannot be fought outside of class lines. With the abolition of class, and with fierce struggle, sexism will slowly wither away in all of its manifestations. We struggle with ourselves, our comrades, and friends to eliminate sexist beliefs and practices on an individual level. Primarily, our fight against sexism must be at the point of ideological and material production: in schools and in all sectors of labor, including unpaid work.✿

Venezuela: Nationalist Rulers Still Serve Capitalists

The crisis generated by capitalism is causing division within the ruling class that sees their profits decrease because of market competition while daily living conditions worsen for workers. Bosses use individualism, racism and nationalism to divide us and win us over to defend their wars for maximum profit.

While workers participate in this struggle, they wind up defending the ruling system, representing one or another capitalist side. The end result is the same or worse than the previous condition.

Historically we see endless examples of how the working class is manipulated and deceived by false "pro-working-class" movements. This is how — in Syria, Ukraine, South Africa, Bolivia, Venezuela and Colombia, among others — workers are involved in imperialist wars. Unfortunately the working class falls prey to this deception, which does not change our pitiful political and economic situation.

This is the case in Venezuela. Its traditional government as a lackey for the U.S. bosses became a nationalist one with a somewhat socialist front but now beholden to the rulers of Russia, China and Cuba — meaning to other capitalists. So now the Western bloc led by U.S. bosses which support fascist governments, as well as the media in Colombia, Panama, Chile and elsewhere, are trying to destabilize the "democratically" elected Venezuela government and portray it as the foremost violator of human rights.

These same critics had supported the murder of more than 5,000 workers under Venezuela's fascist government of Carlos Andres Perez. The international working class should never support any ruler who only looks to dampen the class struggle by buying political consciousness with crumbs that only maintain human misery and degradation. These modern "progressive" movements move the working class away from communism by defending private property, free trade and the investment of private capital — all of which enforces wage slavery for workers.

The imperialist power game over oil means capitalist genocide for workers. It has submerged Venezuela's working class in a fratricidal fight that defends one group or another and results in killing each other.

What must be done? PLers are involved in some Bolivarian organizations and discontented sectors, reaching out with our messages of support and solidarity to build a revolutionary communist movement. We denounce "supreme saviors." We do not worship the Chavezes, Maduros, Petros or Obamas. We put our communist program forward in the class struggles to strengthen proletarian internationalism and introduce our paper CHALLENGE to spread our revolutionary philosophy, using it as our tool of combat. Join us!✿

WORKERS



LETTERS

Plea Bargaining A Ploy in U.S. INjustice System

In the U.S. criminal injustice system, plea bargaining is far more common than convictions based on evidence.

Two articles in CHALLENGE (3/12) described struggles at Chicago Transit and DC Metro, respectively, against the firing of, or failure to hire drivers and mechanics who were convicted of a felony. The pretext given by the two transit systems is "protection of passengers." But PLP in both cities have exposed the falsehood of this claim by showing that there is no evidence that they pose any such danger.

PLP has also shown that the transit policies are extremely racist, since the number of people convicted of felonies among black and Latino workers is disproportionately higher than for white workers. This is due to the outrageous racism in the injustice system in which far more black and Latino workers are arrested and convicted of felonies than are white workers, though the same injustice also affects many white workers, and indeed others.

However, one vital point must be added to these otherwise excellent articles. The DC article stated, "...more black and Latino workers...are arrested and convicted at higher rates [emphasis added]." It is important to recognize that to be convicted of a crime does not mean one was found guilty by either a judge or a jury based on evidence presented in a trial. The technical legal definition of conviction includes plea bargaining, in which the accused is coerced into confessing to a crime of which they were actually innocent.

Some day the international working class, under communist leadership, will make this criminal system pay for their outrageous "crimes against humanity." But we should never assume that someone who has a record as a felon was ever convicted based on evidence in a trial — as they will be the first to tell you, and in most cases truthfully so. The odds are overwhelming that they were coerced into a confession — almost 20 or 30 to 1.

How does this coercion work? It arises from an indication by the prosecutor that the accused is going to be charged with an even greater crime that carries a much longer sentence, if not the death penalty. This is done frequently, even though the prosecutor knows fully well the person is innocent of this greater crime. This vicious ploy is used to force a confession to a lesser crime, in order get it over with quickly without the need for a time-and-money-consuming trial.

Of course, even in the course of a trial many innocent workers are convicted because of a combination of false evidence planted by police, prejudice on the part of judge and/or jury, and/or an incompetent or uncaring public defender or other defense lawyer, among other possible reasons.

Convictions by trial are, in fact, very rare in the making of felons, on both the federal and state levels. A majority of prisoners turned into felons are put in that position not on the basis of trials, but rather of plea bargains. In fact, an article in the Wall Street Journal (9/23/12), titled "Federal Guilty Pleas Soar As Bargains Trump Trials," reports that in 2011, 97 percent of federal cases were resolved through plea bargains rather than trial convictions. The Bureau of Justice Assistance states the same approximate percentage applies at the state level.

Plea bargains are a trick used by prosecutors all over the U.S., who — with impunity and without fear of retaliation from the working class (in the absence of a revolution) — can accuse arrested workers of any crime they choose to invent, with punishments that involve many years in prison. When caught red-handed, they claim that they do this to unclog the overstressed court system in the face of huge numbers of arrests by cops. But they mainly use such methods to increase their numbers of convictions in order to advance their own political careers. They even use false accusations and plea bargaining against their political rivals for office. Civil rights lawyer Harvey Silvergate's 2009 book *Three Felonies a Day: How the Feds Target the Innocent*, fully describes this unstoppable criminality by prosecutors.

We are well aware that cops plant evidence all the time in order to obtain convictions or, more often, to promote fear-inspired plea bargaining. Funding of police departments is proportional to the number of arrests and "convictions," which is falsely taken as a measure of need — the more arrests the more money allotted. But the equally criminal behavior of prosecutors is less known publicly.

It is futile to expect justice from a racist system. The

racist courts clearly do not function in the interest of the working class. There will come a day when the working class will demolish the bosses' injustice system.

Saguaro Rojo

Bosses Stamp on Food for Workers

We have to be aware that the problem of food stamps has been cooking for some time now. The principle ingredients are government privatization and government politicians.

The end result is a stew in the form of reduction of resources for families of low income while, at the same time, the rich and their politicians line their pockets and fill bloated stomachs. They are not in our shoes and will never comprehend our necessities.

I believe that we shouldn't wait any longer. We have to defend our rights day in and day out and support the less fortunate. We are people and not animals and that as part of the working class, we have the right to demand respect.

Enough with abuse of power: we want a real change, not the usual lies. We will not stumble over and over again with the same false promises. We are fighters and as fighters, we will continue to fight fascism here.

Red Cook

Get Off Rulers' Treadmill

September 13 will forever be remembered as when Mexico's corrupt parties such as the PRI, PAN, PRO and PT, the number one loyal servants of the capitalists, showed us once again the kind of politicians we have here. This is the future that awaits us and our children of the working class unless we rebel.

The teachers are not intimidated because they have confronted this problem with sharp struggle that has given them the force and courage to face this and raise their voices for their rights.

If we don't fight to make a change we will continue on a treadmill from one generation to the next. All of us exploited by capitalism need to leave as an inheritance to our children the defense of our rights in this country.

Let's make a call to the working class worldwide to always unite in support of each other in the fight for social equality and for communism.

Where there is unity, there is a solution!

Internationalist

Forward to Clean Up the Garbage of Capitalism

Re: "The Mass Fight Against Public School Privatization in Mexico," Oct. 16, 2013:

I am a mother involved in the fight for a better education for my kids and other students who have suffered from a mediocre education filled with obstacles keeping them from advancing.

The government complains about the reaction and protests from the teachers and community but because of their lack of respect they leave us no other option. They want to keep us as puppets and take away the right to our opinions. They defend privatization not just for the schools but for everything that affects the working class. Now is the moment to act and unite our forces.

We know that the political parties in Mexico are self-serving and corrupt. They ascend their throne without caring that the poorest and hardest workforce of their country should suffer from hunger and lack of medical attention while the bosses and their politicians enjoy the profits stolen from all the citizens.

I invite every person that is suffering all this — do not stay quiet! Everyone can raise their voice to be heard because there will always be someone to support you and together we can clean up all this garbage. Don't surrender. Let's continue forward.

Anticapitalist Reader

How Racism Spoils Baltimore Food Market

Recently, the Baltimore Sun has been writing about the Lexington Market, which is a large public marketplace that's been there since 1782. The Sun's recent coverage about the market has been one-sided, and borders on being racist. The reportage about the Market has focused almost exclusively on negative things, talking about "middle-income shoppers who abandoned" the Market, and "hoped-for" shoppers who currently avoid it "whether because of discomfort with the setting, dissatisfaction with the offerings or both."

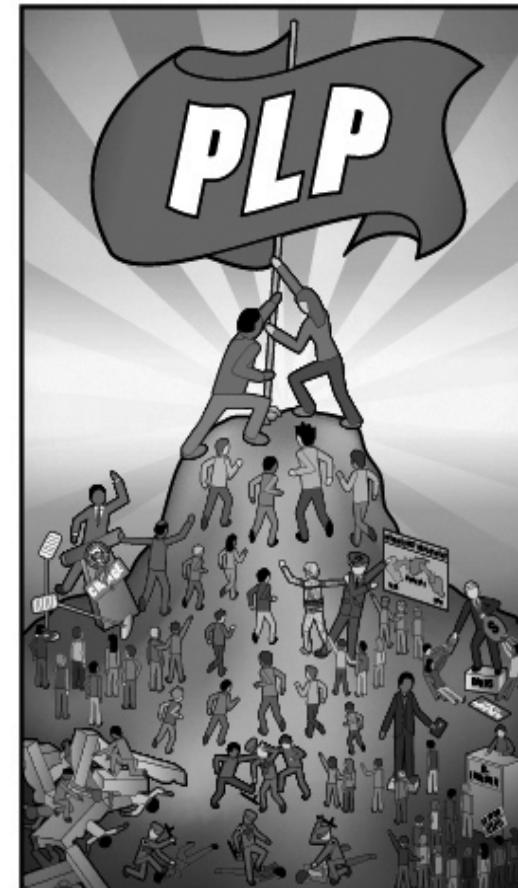
But that's not how the Lexington Market seems to me and many of our friends.

I am a teacher at one of our city's public high schools. Each year, for more than three decades, I have taken my English students to Central Pratt Library for a full day kicking off the work on their research papers. For many of those years, at lunchtime, we have walked to the market. Just last month, we conducted one of these scholarly field trips, with about 100 students, and, as usual, we had a really nice lunchtime experience. In fact, students from another school happened to be there at the same time, officially on stage, performing in honor of Black History Month. Many diners enthusiastically watched the performances from the second-floor seating area.

Of course, like all things, the Market could improve. It would be nice, for example, to be able to buy unsweetened iced tea, not just the sugary variety, as part of the delicious "half-and-half" beverages which are locally unique and mixed-to-order at one of the Market's customer-friendly stalls.

I went to Lexington Market recently for lunch with a former teaching colleague, now retired. While waiting for a stall, I got into a conversation with the gentleman in front of me. He recruits at local high schools for Hampton University. He joined us for lunch. The Market

**CAPITALISM
BREEDS SEXISM
RACISM
& IMPERIALISM!**



**FIGHT FOR A COMMUNIST WORLD
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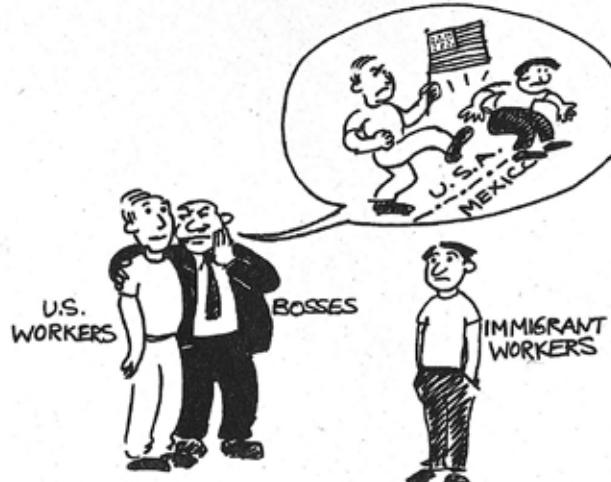
LETTERS

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was bustling, and we had to look hard to find a table for three.

A young man passing by noticed our grey hair, tapped one of us on the shoulder and, with a sincere and respectful smile, said, "There's a lot of wisdom at this table!" It was quite a tribute. The young man was black; we three elders were a multi-racial group, two black and one white.

It seems to me that what the recent Sun articles are really saying is not that too few people go to Lexington Market, but that too high a percentage of the diners and shoppers are black. It reminds me of the racial make-up of the teaching force in Baltimore City. When I began teaching in the 1970s, the vast majority of public-school educators in Baltimore were black, serving as great role models for our predominately black student population.



Nationalism



Internationalism

Now, however, utilizing large numbers of teachers from Teach-for-a-Minute (the program's real name is Teach for America, but the nickname is more accurate) and by other means, the forces controlling our city have significantly reduced the percentage of black teachers, who have dwindled to being a minority of the staff. This unfavorable transformation has been engendered purposely even though 84 percent of our students are black.

Are The Sun and its owners now seeking to racially transform Lexington Market? Is that what this is really all about? If not, why are stories like mine, about years of good experiences at the

Market, largely absent from The Sun's coverage?

Baltimore PL'er

Lack Valid Criticism on Syria

In the letter (3/26) entitled "Syria Editorial Misleading," the two comrades seem to have overlooked or misunderstood most of the points made in the 2/12 Editorial.

First, the letter says that the word "capitalist" is not mentioned even once in the article when, in fact, it appears twice, and in the very first paragraph.

Second, in the next-to-last paragraph, the letter says the article is weak in pointing out how shifting imperialist alliances only aided the needs of the ruling classes. However, the article's title, "Syria: Centuries of Repression, Division and Exploitation" and most of its content are devoted to how colonial and imperialist powers have done exactly that.

Finally, in the last paragraph, the letter says the article omits an explanation of internal class conflicts in Syria or any other Middle East country. On the other hand, the article discusses the role of the "Communist" Party in the internal politics of Syria and the region and how nationalist, religious and ethnic divisions have led to workers fighting other workers against their own class interests.

The letter makes a correct point that it would have been better if the article had said "The French rulers" instead of "The French," but that doesn't negate the lack of validity in most of the criticism. Our Party's growth depends on our ability to promote criticism and self-criticism. More collective discussion by letter writers and editors is needed.

A Comrade



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

China: Local Sprouts of Communism

NYT, 3/13 — LINCANG, CHINA — Members of this idyllic utopian commune...share an agrarian life that would probably have delighted Chairman Mao: Every day they volunteer six hours to work the fields, feed their jointly owned chickens and prepare enough food to fill every belly in the community. The bounty of their harvest is divided equally and apparently without strife, part of a philosophy that emphasizes selflessness and egalitarian living over money and materialism.

"What we're doing here is basically communism," said...the...founder of...New Oasis for Life whose 150 members include illiterate peasants and big-city corporate refugees." People do what they can and get what they need."

But Marxism doesn't look like that in modern-day China ...and has unnerved local officials....

Months of official intimidation and acts of sabotage have destroyed New Oasis's water and electrical supply and driven many residents away, emptying two of the group's three communes...

At Lincang, though, a few holdouts remain, determined to stay on. They are steeling themselves against a final raid by public security agents who have threatened to expel them from their proletarian patch of Eden. And their hopes are pinned to a court appearance...when they will defend their land contract that they say officials are trying to nullify....

...Said Xu Mengting...officials told her their real objections to New Oasis was that "what we're doing is against the status quo of our country."

...the New Oasis communes were a beacon for people...who sought to escape from the smog, graft and social conservatism of contemporary Chinese life. Over the last five years, whole families, rural neighbors and disaffected young urbanites moved to Yunan and built the three settlements....

But the ["] Communist["] Party has never had much tolerance for independent organizations....Even small groups like New Oasis run afoul of the party's deep fears of independent movements....

...The...founder...insists....[that] "We've discovered a new path for people to live while consuming fewer resources and existing more harmoniously..."

The lethal jobs go to the poor

NYT, 3/17 — NAHARA, Japan — Out of work? Nowhere to live? Nowhere to go? Nothing to eat?" the online ad reads. "Come to Fukushima."

That grim posting [is Japan's] targeting the destitute by a company seeking laborers for the ravaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant... [for] workers willing to carry out the hazardous [jobs]...at the site.

Kids' books ruled by color line

NYT, 3/16 — Of 3,200 children's books published in 2013, just 93 were about black people, according to a study by the Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin....During...years of making children's books,...editors and publishers bemoan the dismal statistics....but there are numbers and truths that stand in stark contrast to the reassurances....

Crimes by rich go under the rug

NYT, 3/16 — In the years since the financial crisis of 2008, the Justice Department has been regularly questioned about a lack of criminal prosecutions related to the mortgage mess.

Its responses have just about always been the same....Believe us, they would say, we've been working overtime on these matters; if there had been cases to make, we would have made them....

But last week, a report from the inspector general of the Justice Department...set the record straight. Sure enough, the report told us how hard the nation's law enforcement officials have been investigating these cases. That is, hardly at all.... [The] nation's top law enforcement agency is simply...unwilling...to combat complex financial frauds....

"We found...that the F.B.I. Criminal Investigative Division ranked complex financial crimes at the lowest of the six ranked criminal threats within its area of re-

sponsibility, and ranked mortgage fraud as the lowest subcategory....

Even when investigators decided to pursue cases, they wound up closing many of them after doing little work....

People ready to abandon greed

NYT, 3/16 —Generosity among strangers can be socially contagious. According to this theory, if you receive or observe an act of help, you become more likely to help others, even if your own action won't be directly reciprocated or rewarded...you "pay it forward" — a phrase popularized by...[the] novel of that title (later turned into a movie of the same name).

Trouble for GM's killer policy

[General Motors (and the Feds) have spent 10 years covering up a faulty ignition in 1.6 million Chevy Cobalts that could make the engine just stop on the highway or in traffic, killing up to 300 people — Ed. note]

NYT, 3/15 — For three years, [attorney Lance Cooper] tussled with lawyers...hired to defend G.M. against his clients, the parents of Brooke Melton, a 29-year-old woman killed when her Chevy Cobalt lost power and collided with another vehicle. He sought internal documents and crucial witnesses, but at G.M.'s direction, lawyers from...King & Spaulding fought him every step of the way....

And King & Spaulding...has undergone a role reversal....G.M. asked the firm...to conduct what the G.M. chief executive...has called an "unvarnished" investigation into why the company failed for more than a decade to alert regulators and consumers to the defect.

To Mr. Cooper, King & Spaulding's switch from a fierce defender of G.M. to a potential inquisitor into the company's actions may pose a conflict. For one, some of the firm's lawyers may have to ask their own colleagues if they advised G.M. about whether to recall the vehicles at the time the Melton case was settled. "They are part of the story," said Mr. Cooper....

Anti-Racism: Key to Class Struggle in the Schools

UNCIVIL RIGHTS TEACHERS, UNIONS, AND RACE IN THE BATTLE FOR SCHOOL EQUITY

JONNA PERRILLO

As part of Progressive Labor Party's ongoing discussion of how to balance political activities among students and work in the unions, several teachers' study groups in New York City have been reading *Uncivil Rights: Teachers, Unions, and Race in the Battle for School Equity* by Jonna Perrillo. This history of NYC's teachers' unions reveals a history many of us had not known before and shows us many parallels to the contradictions communist teachers and their friends find when dealing with today's teacher unions.

Perrillo traces the developments of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), the current NYC teachers' union, with its emphasis on teacher salary and electoral politics, and its predecessors — two separate unions with sharply different politics and ideas on who to work with and what to work for.

Many of us had not been aware that teachers in the 1930s had to choose between two separate unions (or none!) — neither with collective bargaining rights. The two, Teachers Guild, influenced by socialists and the Teachers Union (TU), eventually led by members of the Communist Party — both saw their calling as improving the schools. While the Guild thought this should be done by allying with the school administration, the TU built ties with parent and community organizations. Among other tactics used to fight the racist character of schools in black neighborhoods, the TU led picket lines outside schools to defend black students abused by white principals.

The division between the two unions became more stark in the 1940s as pressure forced the Board of Education to try to repair inequities in the schools by transferring more experienced teachers to black schools. The Guild saw its role as defending the teachers "threatened" with transfer to "undesirable" situations, while the CP-led union fought for black parents to have a greater influence on the school system.

In the 1950s, the Red Scare and anti-communist hysteria took a toll on the TU; communist teachers were investigated and fired as part of a general attack on communist leadership in U.S. unions, and many others grew fearful. During that period, the Teachers Guild grew through vigorous recruitment campaigns, telling teachers they would defend their professional rights, rather than involve them in anti-racist politics. By 1963, the TU was so marginalized and demoralized that the members voted to join the UFT, which

had been created by uniting the Guild and several smaller teachers groups.

By that point, the UFT had started on the path that led to what we see today: reliance on politicians and prioritizing teachers' rights over the conditions of students. They had won the right to collectively bargain with the city, and this was their main focus.

In the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the UFT's hypocrisy in matters of racism had become clear. While the leadership sent a small number of members to the segregated South as Freedom Riders, they did not call on members to join a community boycott of New York's equally segregated schools. By 1968, the UFT was leading a racist walkout as a response to the efforts of black parents to exert community control over schools in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Ocean Hill-Brownsville. At this point, the union proved that it would defend teachers' "professionalism" against any demands, including the needs of their students. Perrillo mentions that some teachers (including PL members) opened schools in unity with students and parents.

After the Ocean Hill-Brownsville racist walkout, the UFT only deepened its role as the defenders of teacher salaries and conditions — so much so that for most of its history it would not support even such a mild pro-student request as smaller class size because it might jeopardize their demands for teacher raises. We now have a union where choosing which politician to back is more important than any concerns about student conditions.

Perrillo is not a communist, and she does not conclude that the loss

of communist leadership when the TU dissolved caused the end of anti-racist struggle among NYC teachers unions, but she tells the story clearly. She also does not draw any conclusions about what teachers should do now, although she is critical of the current focus of the UFT.

As members and friends of PLP, we have been thinking more about our own role in the union and among our students and their parents. In some ways, conditions are no different now than in the history Perrillo describes: segregated, crowded, under-funded schools still keep our working-class students feeling like they are in prison. We are still supposed to teach capitalist ideas and reproduce the racist division of workers.

But knowing our history tells us that teachers have fought in unity with students and parents in the past, so we can do it again. Those of us who are active in

teachers' unions must demand more of our unions, make anti-racist, pro-student demands. The leadership tells teachers that the province of the union is limited to salary and work rules; they say that we are professionals whose interests are separate from those of our working-class students and their families who we serve.

Communist teachers owe it to our friends, colleagues, students and communities to counter these messages. The only way to really fight for better schools is through the unity of teachers, students and parents. And we must fight for more than "improved" schools — even with more money, even with any reform, these are still the schools whose role is to teach workers to accept capitalism and patriotism. The real struggle, the final victory, is when we can unite all workers to destroy capitalism through communist revolution.★



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